
NHS Pilot Projects Address Heart Health of Mentally Ill



As part of its work to implement actions from the Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Outcomes Strategy, the Living Longer Lives programme at NHS Improving Quality is launching a pilot study that aims to identify and prevent cardiovascular disease in people with serious mental illness, ultimately saving lives.

The Living Longer Lives team at NHS improving Quality is pleased to announce details of four pilot projects that will implement service improvement initiatives that aim to improve the cardiovascular health of people with serious mental illness (SMI). The pilots will test ways to better identify people with SMI who have or, are at risk of developing, cardiovascular disease (CVD) so they can receive appropriate treatment.

The life expectancy of people with SMI, such as schizophrenia, is 15 to 20 years less than the general population. Many of these early deaths are caused by preventable illness such as CVD, for example heart attack and stroke.

Although the nature of each of the pilot projects is different, they will all use the recently updated [Lester tool \(2014\)](#) to assess the physical health of people with SMI. A summary of each of the projects is below. Three of the four pilot sites are ready to start implementing projects immediately, with a fourth expecting to be ready in the next few months. The four sites are:

- Mersey Care NHS Trust
- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- 2gether NHS Foundation Trust
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

Speaking about the pilots, Hilary Walker, head of the Living Longer Lives programme said, “This is the next stage in our work to improve the physical health of people with serious mental illness. The trusts taking part in the pilot will be playing a vital role in helping to explore what models of service improvement work best to implement new tools and ways of working that ultimately lead to better patient care and outcomes. It is not acceptable that people with SMI should have a shorter life expectancy, particularly when we know there are things we can do to better identify physical health problems and take steps to treat them. The outcomes of the pilots will bring valuable learning for all those working in mental health across the NHS and a big part of this project will be sharing what we learn with others.”

To support the trusts taking part in the pilot the Living Longer Lives team at NHS Improving Quality will offer specialist service improvement capability and support the sharing of best practice and learning between peers and at a national level. NHS Improving Quality will also fund an external evaluation of the pilots and provide the trusts with funding for staff and non-staff costs needed to deliver the pilot project.

John Trevains, Deputy Director of Nursing is a project lead for the pilot taking place at 2gether NHS Foundation Trust, he said, “We are absolutely delighted to be selected for this project. It is a privilege and a great opportunity to develop the work we already have underway to broaden the implementation of the Lester Tool 2014. We intend to use the funding to pay for a nurse who will fulfil a health facilitation role so that our vulnerable service users, both within our inpatient units and our communities, are not only having their mental health needs addressed, but also getting the physical health care they need.”

The pilot study is one of several projects being delivered by the Living Longer Lives programme at NHS Improving Quality that support the implementation of actions from the Cardiovascular Disease Outcomes Strategy, specifically identifying and spreading excellence in delivering the [NHS Health Check](#) Programme to 'seldom seen, seldom heard' groups (action 3) - . Other work includes involvement in the update of the

Lester Tool (2014) and the publication of case studies showcasing good and innovative practice and a series of webinars that will share learning across the NHS.

Source: NHS Improving Quality (NHS IQ)

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