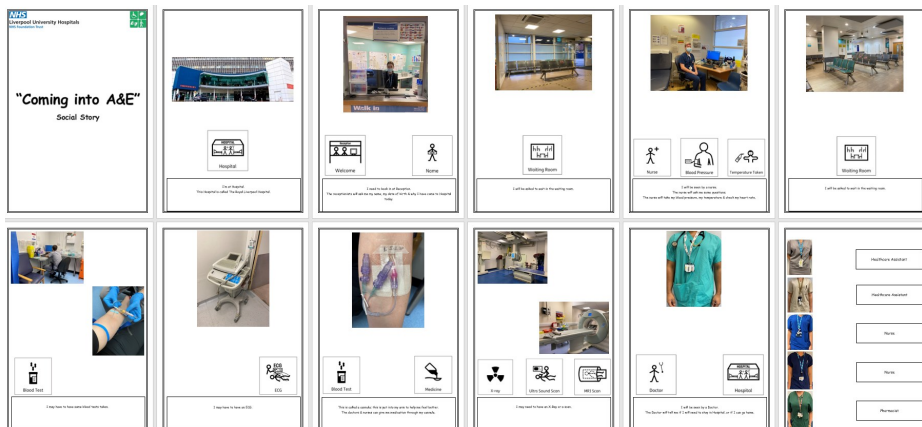# "Coming into A&E" Social Story

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 & The Equality Act 2010 identified the importance of delivering equal care to all patients. For many individuals, coming into an acute Hospital setting & more specifically an A&E Department can be an overwhelming experience. However, for patients with Learning Disabilities, Autism & other Sensory processing difficulties, attending an A&E Department can be a particularly worrying & stressful (NHS England, 2018) time, with added pressures, noisy waiting rooms & lengthy waiting times. It was identified by staff that there was a need for a communication aid to support the understanding of patients whilst in the Department. After discussing the topic at length & identifying the areas in which we can support with, we decided to create a Social Story. The National Autistic Society identified Social Stories to be a useful tool to support changes in routine, unexpected or distressing events (2021). Social Stories are short descriptions of particular events in which provides specific information about the situation, what to expect & how the situation may make you feel. This allows the reader to become familiar with the environment & gives them more of an awareness of some of the emotions/feelings they may experience.

Aims of project:

* To reduce anxieties
* To support understanding
To breakdown any potential barriers of assessing healthcare

Methodology:

The focus of my Quality Improvement Project came initially from our Learning Disability Awareness Day. During the day, a session was delivered around "Reasonable Adjustments", a topic in which we value greatly as a Trust.

It was from here that staff members identified that they felt patients with Learning Disabilities & Autism required additional support to be offered to them whilst in our A&E Department.

It was suggested that staff felt it would be useful to implement a tool in which enhanced communication & supported understanding of patients in our care. Staff discussed in great detail the use of a visual prompts & more specifically a Social Story.

As a team, we worked closely together in order to create such a detailed plan for our Social Story. We wanted to ensure that we were able to make it as accessible as possible for patients, & meeting the aims of the project throughout.

The future plans of project:

Feedback that has been received from the project has identified clearly how useful & worthwhile developing such a tool has been for patients attending A&E. In addition, some of the feedback has suggested that we expand the project further by placing the Social Story onto Social Media & our Trust Website in order for patients to access the communication tool from their own homes. It was also identified that the use of a virtual reality may support patients additionally with their general understanding of an A&E Department. Now working closely with our Liaison Team based within the Trust & our Communications Team, we aim to have this VR sim set up & running by December 2021.

References

The Mental Capacity Act, 2005.
The Equality Act, 2010.
National Health Service, England - NHS England, 2018.
National Autistic Society, 2021.

Plan, Do, Act, Study:

Throughout the duration of the Project, there were three areas in which I constantly worked towards:

What are we trying to accomplish?
-We are trying to ensure we are able to support patients with Learning Disabilities & Autism who attend A&E to understand to some extent their individual care plan during an admission.

How will we know that a change is an improvement?
-Feedback from Patients, their Families/Carers & Friends will able us to develop the Project further, taking into consideration possible barriers that we may be faced with.

What changes can we make that will result in improvement?
The Project can only develop & as a result, patients will have a better experience in A&E.

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