

Healthwatch Islington helps to raise standards of care for older people leaving hospital

The Older Peoples Reference Group enables older people to comment on issues that affect them. Their feedback can then be used to help improve services.

In 2013, Healthwatch Islington and the Older People’s Reference Group worked together to gather older people’s experiences of leaving hospital. This was in response to concerns expressed by members of the group about untimely discharge from hospital. The reason for the concern was partly due to personal experience, as well as some high profile cases in the media.

We held a focus group to gather older people’s experiences of leaving hospital. We published a report on the findings in July 2013. We identified some important areas for improvement.

In November 2013, Delia Thomas from Whittington Health came to talk to the group about the positive changes that had been made at the Whittington, following on from the report's recommendations:

We said	They did
In all hospital discharge cases (following both planned and emergency treatment) there needs to be a robust procedure in place for three way communication and an agreed discharge plan with the patient fully involved.	Improved planning for discharge with clearer lines of responsibility and revamped checklist for planning.
Ensure that discharge procedures take into account the additional communication required (due to unplanned admission) for emergency patients.	
Remind staff and patients to be conscious of how much noise travels around the ward at night, and to have consideration for patients who may be trying to sleep or rest.	Piloting ear plugs and eye masks on wards to help patients sleep.

<p>Co-ordinate with other areas of the Hospital, so that if one ward is struggling to meet demand, staff or appropriately skilled managers can temporarily join this ward to assist and support colleagues.</p>	<p>Stronger team working for those leaving after short stays.</p>
<p>Ensure that discharge is carried out consistently across the hospital, actively involving patients in their on-going care, and that good practice is shared and encouraged.</p>	<p>A follow up phone call scheme with Age UK for older people being discharged on a Friday (Age UK phone older people who didn't need/ said they didn't need any follow up care to check that they are OK the day after they've left hospital).</p>
<p>When communicating with patients about follow on and social care all staff should answer patient questions with consideration of their concerns and be able to provide clear, non-partial information about how social care is allocated.</p>	<p>Working with staff in the hospital to increase staff understanding of the resources available in the community for people leaving hospital care (who may not be eligible for social care)</p>
	<p>Simplifying their information leaflets for patients about what to expect when leaving hospital.</p>

Healthwatch Islington have also recommended that further consultations with patients, both through small focus groups and larger surveys, should be conducted on a regular basis (at the very least annually) to look at making improvements and maintaining the quality of service for hospital patients.