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| Open and Honest Care in your Local Hospital |
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A patient's story

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A 25 year old patient was admitted to Sunderland Royal Hospital with a history of profound cerebral palsy, a moderate learning disability and was reliant upon his wheelchair.

In November 2014, the patient attended out-patient department appointments prior to undergoing a gastroscopy. Following concerns raised by the patient’s mother (who was also the patient’s main carer), in an online survey, Healthwatch became involved as it felt there were lessons to be learned for all concerned. The patient’s mother was keen to ensure her son’s experience could be used to improve care for other patients.

The Trust’s Lead Matron for Quality Improvement investigated the concerns raised and both she and the Learning Disability Liaison Nurse met with the patient, his mother and a senior representative from Healthwatch at the patient’s home to discuss investigation findings.

One of the issues raised included the fact that the patient had not been weighed for many years and he had not been offered this opportunity during attendance at out-patient appointments. It was explained that weighing equipment is available in the Out-Patient Department which could be accessed if required. The Learning Disability Liaison Nurse also explained that she could arrange for her staff to bring weighing equipment to the patient’s home.

The main area of concern was there had been no adjustments made to outpatient appointments to accommodate the patient’s special needs. We were able to explain that the appointments administration team had been contacted to raise awareness of the need for improved appointment times to be offered for learning disabled patients. The patient and his mother were informed that Help and Advice Service could be contacted if they required support in arranging appointments and they agreed they would be keen to use this service in the future.

The Learning Disability Liaison Nurse also explained that given some advance knowledge of appointment dates, she could prepare a plan of care to support the patient during all visits to hospital.

Another point raised was the fact the patient and his mother often had to repeat information to various health professionals during the course of a visit or admission and it transpired that neither the mother nor the patient were fully aware of the patient passport communication tool and how this could be used to share information. This was explained to them and a copy provided.

The patient’s mother was not aware of all of the services available to support her as a carer. Sunderland Carers Centre was discussed and the patient’s mother agreed that this would be a good information source for her and she now indicated an intention to register with them.

The meeting with the patient, his mother and the representative from Healthwatch proved a very positive outcome, including learning and raised awareness for all parties. The patient and his mother are now aware of how to communicate directly and effectively with hospital staff to ensure that the right care is given at the right time, in the right place and by the right people.