

The **STEPS** project aimed to use the experience of multi-professional teams working in well functioning wards to identify the essential elements of successful therapeutic engagement with patients. **STEPS** provides a set of realistic ideas for frontline staff and managers on **Successful Team Engagement in Inpatient Psychiatric Services (STEPS)**.

The STEPS Positive Practice Handbook, including an action plan for your service is available from NIMHE regional development centres.

To download the full Research Report or the Handbook, go to: www.virtualward.org.uk

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“Within this unit there is not a ‘them and us’ culture...there’s no lip service paid to the service user involvement whatsoever. There is a true partnership working on this unit with service users. That has been the key and is fundamental to all the changes we have put in place.”

“If you are engaging with patients and you are walking the ward, you are talking to people, you are developing a bond. It actually massively reduces the risk of violence and aggression and people move on quicker, so you have got more time to do it. If you tend to be very risk alert and constantly covering your back you are actually doing yourself a disservice...bad things will happen because you are not engaging with patients.”

“Engagement very much depends on us as a team and whether we are successful as a team or not.”

“I’ll never be satisfied and I don’t think anybody is ever satisfied, we would always want more.”

steps
Successful Team
Engagement in inpatient
Psychiatric Services

Key messages about what works:

steps1

Respecting patients

Staff treat their patients with respect and ensure that all aspects of care are tailored to meet individual need.

steps2

Empowering patients

Patients are consulted on, and involved in their own care as much as possible. Individuals are encouraged to contribute to the running of the ward.

steps3

Staff being 'available'

Staff are present and approachable on the ward floor and spend unstructured time with patients. Staff have three dedicated one-to-one sessions a week with their allocated patients.

steps4

Engagement-focused observation

Observations are kept to a strict minimum. Staff explain why observation levels have changed and facilitate one-to-one sessions every shift. Patients continue to be engaged in a wide range of multi-professional activities.

steps5

Homely environment

Patients have maximum access to kitchen and lounge areas and outside space. A high standard of ward décor, furniture and facilities is maintained.

steps6

Good team dynamics and multidisciplinary team working

The team has a shared multi-professional and consistent approach to patient care. Team members are mutually supportive and value each others contributions.

steps7

Nurses and nursing assistants feeling empowered

Nursing staff contribute to the multi-professional team and are valued and supported by their managers. They receive regular training and clinical supervision.

steps8

Support and information available from outside sources

Service user representatives and advocates spend time on the unit supporting patients and facilitating communication with professionals.

steps9

Therapeutic work

There is a flexible group programme, which is driven by the patients' needs and requests, including 'fun-groups'. Groups are facilitated by occupational therapists, nurses and other members of the multi-professional team.

steps10

Good interface between services

Discharged patients are able to visit the unit to smooth their transition back into the community and complete their care package. Good communications exist between all clinical teams across the acute care pathway.

steps11

Embracing change

All members of the multi-professional team continually strive to improve the service. Suggestions by staff and patients are welcomed and acted upon.