Improving hospital care for older people: a call for action

Key messages for commissioners and NHS hospital providers

From the ‘Improving hospital care for older people’ summit event held on 26 October 2012 by the Royal College of Nursing, in partnership with Age UK, the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, NHS London and Macmillan Cancer Support.
Background

The 'improving hospital care for older people' event brought together a range of stakeholders including leading members of royal colleges, charities, think tanks and practitioners who have an interest in the care of older people in hospital. Invited delegates from 25 organisations met in London on 26 October 2012 to discuss key issues and concerns, to identify good practice and latest thinking, and to form consensus on some key areas for action. Outputs from this event are being widely disseminated with the aim that they will support sharing good practice, trigger action to improve hospital care for older people, and inform future planning, commissioning and delivery of hospital care for older people.

Overall, seven main themes were identified as being necessary to support improvement in hospital care for older people. These were:
1. Person centred care*
2. Dignity and compassion
3. Training and competence*
4. Staffing levels
5. Safeguarding
6. Resources
7. Culture and structure.*

*Although all of the above seven themes are in need of improvement, it was agreed to class the three highlighted here as top priorities.
Call for action

We call on commissioners and hospital providers to give assurance that the following priority areas have been identified and addressed, and to respond with evidence that we can publish and promote as examples of good practice in the care of older people in hospital.

Priority areas for action by commissioners and hospitals

Hospital providers: Can you demonstrate that you are meeting these priorities?
Commissioners: Are you specifying that hospitals demonstrate that they achieve them?

Priority area 1: training and competence of staff.
All hospital staff should be competent to care for older people.
Can you demonstrate that:
- all staff who have contact with older people receive core training in caring for older people, including communication skills, caring for people with dementia and principles of comprehensive assessment (clinical staff)
- the values, behaviours, skills and performance of hospital staff in caring for older people are assessed as part of robust recruitment and appraisal
- hospital staff have access to professional development pathways in gerontological care and clinical supervision and support?

Priority area 2: culture and structure within hospitals.
All hospitals should develop a culture of openness that enables staff to raise concerns, share good practice and use patient feedback and stories to improve care.
Can you demonstrate that:
- the hospital has a culture of honesty and openness that enables staff to raise concerns and challenge poor practice?

Priority area 3: person-centered care.
All hospitals should demonstrate that they provide person-centred care for older people, which acknowledges the importance of carers and significant relationships.
Can you demonstrate that:
- older patients and carers have the opportunity in all wards and departments to engage with care, expressing their preferences and choices including opportunities to meet with their doctor or nurse to discuss their care
- the hospital board and organisational leaders value their staff and support them in valuing their patients and visitors
- the hospital has identified and addressed barriers to responsive care, such as inadequate staffing, ineffective systems for patient communication and diversity issues?
Many organisations that were represented at the summit have already published reports and calls for action relating to hospital care for older people, and are promoting good practice. Some of these can be accessed via the following websites:

- **Age UK**  

- **NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, Older People’s project**  
  [www.institute.nhs.uk/quality_and_value/introduction/quality_and_value.html](http://www.institute.nhs.uk/quality_and_value/introduction/quality_and_value.html)

- **Royal College of Nursing Safe Staffing for older people’s wards**  
  [www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice/older_people](http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/practice/older_people)

- **Royal College of Physicians, Future Hospital project**  
  [www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/future-hospital-patients-and-compassion](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/future-hospital-patients-and-compassion)

- **NHS Confederation / Age UK / Local Government group. Commission on dignity in care**  
  [www.nhsconfed.org/priorities/Quality/Partnership-on-dignity/Pages/Partnership-on-dignity-in-care.aspx](http://www.nhsconfed.org/priorities/Quality/Partnership-on-dignity/Pages/Partnership-on-dignity-in-care.aspx)

- **Macmillan Cancer Support – Age Old Excuse project**  
  [www.macmillan.org.uk/GetInvolved/Campaigns/AgeOldExcuse/The%20age%20old%20excuse.aspx](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/GetInvolved/Campaigns/AgeOldExcuse/The%20age%20old%20excuse.aspx)

- **Townswomen’s Guild – Hear My Voice campaign**  

- **Centre for Workforce Intelligence – Integrated care for older people**  

- **Royal College of Anaesthetists – an Age Old Problem**  

- **Royal College of Surgeons – older people and surgery**  

---

Would you like to celebrate and share good practice from your organisation? Send your good practice examples for us to showcase. Please contact [olderpeoples.project@rcn.org.uk](mailto:olderpeoples.project@rcn.org.uk)
Improving hospital care for older people: a call for action

List of participants at the ‘improving hospital care for older people’ summit

Cecilia Anim, Deputy President, Royal College of Nursing
Louise Backhouse, Head of Nursing Senior Health, St George’s Hospital
Juliet Beal, Director of Nursing: Quality Improvement and Care, NHS Commissioning Board (invited speaker)
Marian Bulley, Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
Peter Carter, Chief Executive & General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing
Chris Davidson, Hull and East Yorkshire NHS Trust
Janet Davies, Director of Nursing and Service Delivery, Royal College of Nursing
Jagtar Dhanda, Head of Inclusion, Macmillan Cancer Support
Meredith Ettridge, Royal College of Surgeons
Ann Farenden, National Clinical Adviser, Care Quality Commission
Yvonne Franks, Associate Chief Nurse and Programme Director for Older People, NHS London
Tom Gentry, Policy Adviser – Health Services, Age UK
Clare Gorman, Policy Manager Older People NHS Confederation
Margaret Harries, Lead Nurse Older Adults, University Hospital Birmingham
Nicky Hayes, Older People's Adviser, Royal College of Nursing
Fiona Howell, Matron Older Adults, University Hospital North Staffordshire
Ruthe Isden, Public Services Programme Manager, Age UK
Paul Jebb, Acting Assistant Director of Nursing/Patient Experience Manager, Blackpool Teaching Hospital
Heidi Jensen, Head of Nursing, Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust
Soline Jerram, Chair, Nurses Special Interest Group, British Geriatrics Society
Katherine Murphy, Chief Executive, Patients Association
Pauline Myers, National Chairman, Townswomen’s Guild
Dr Caroline Nicholson, Research Fellow, National Nursing Research Unit, King’s College London
David Oliver, National Clinical Director Older People (invited speaker)
Liz Onslow, Clinical Adviser in Nursing, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman
Linda Patterson, Clinical Vice President, Royal College of Physicians
Darlene Romero, Matron, Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust
Peter Sharp, Chief Executive, Centre for Workforce Intelligence
Rachel Thompson, Dementia project lead, Royal College of Nursing
Peter Venn, Council member, Chair NCEPOD working party, Royal College of Anaesthetists
Alice Williams, Senior Associate, NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement
Rachel Wilkinson, Dignity in Care Programme Lead, Age UK
The Royal College of Nursing

The Royal College of Nursing represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies. It is the largest professional union for nursing in the UK, representing around 410,000 nurses, health care support workers and nursing students, both in the NHS and the private sector.

The RCN has published extensively during 2012 on staffing issues in hospitals including:


November 2012

Published by the Royal College of Nursing
20 Cavendish Square
London
W1G 0RN
020 7409 3333
www.rcn.org.uk

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies