

CASE STUDY

Evaluation Support for Mental Health Urgent Assessment Centre

The Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) was awarded funding to launch a Mental Health Urgent Assessment Centre (MHUAC) through the 21/22 Winter Funding initiative. The goal of the centre was to provide a better and quicker response to individuals experiencing mental health emergencies, as opposed to the busier and noisier setting of the Emergency Department (ED). The LPFT was given the funds to operate the centre for six months, with the possibility of additional funding if the results are favourable. The MHUAC team applied for the East Midlands Academic Health Science Network Evaluation (EMAHSN) Fund for support in demonstrating the outcomes and successes of the centre.

Method

The team behind the MHUAC worked with an independent evaluator to devise an evaluation strategy to demonstrate the centre's positive impact on patients arriving in the right place the first time. The evaluator and the MHUAC team chose the appropriate metrics from the A&E departments and within the LPFT. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from staff and patients to test the acceptability of the centre. The evaluation carried out a systematic literature review, data analysis of patient records, and surveys of staff and patients. The evaluation report provided an analysis of the data and identified the areas where the MHUAC had the most impact.

The evaluation also identified lessons learned, outlining changes to the centre's design, set-up, and processes that could be implemented in other MHUACs nationwide. The evaluation process was crucial in securing ongoing funding for the MHUAC and enabling the service to be rolled out more widely. The support of the independent evaluator was essential in ensuring that the evaluation was objective, rigorous, and comprehensive.

Simon Ringland, the Business Manager for the Mental Health Urgent Assessment Centre project, remarked, "Working with an independent evaluator has truly enhanced the evaluation process. The evaluators were excellent in communicating with us and showed a remarkable interest in our project. Their supportive view on the difference our new service is making has been invaluable in evaluating the success of the project."

Results

The evaluation showed that 85% of staff and patients felt that the MHUAC was a better alternative to patients in mental health crises being assessed and treated in the Emergency Department (ED). Most patients attending the MHUAC complete the assessment process within three hours compared to 40% of patients with a mental health complaint presenting to ED who wait over six hours for care. Evidence collected also suggests that the MHUAC is delivering cost benefits – a reduction in inpatient attendances and relapses have amounted to around £1,209,350 of savings for the Trust. These benefits could reach over £14.4m annually if scaled up across the Midlands region.



Conclusion

The evaluation of the MHUAC was critical in demonstrating the centre's positive impact on patients arriving in the right area first time. The evaluation showed that the MHUAC was a better alternative to patients with mental health crises being assessed and treated in the ED. The MHUAC provided a more appropriate and timely response to patients in mental health crises, avoiding the noisy and busy environment of the ED.

The evaluation also identified cost benefits, as a reduction in inpatient attendances and relapses resulted in around £850,000 of savings for the Trust. The evaluation findings from EMAHSN were crucial in securing ongoing funding for the MHUAC, enabling the service to be rolled out more widely. The lessons learned from the evaluation can also help other MHUACs in the future.

Working with an independent evaluator was essential in ensuring that the evaluation was objective, rigorous, and comprehensive. The evaluator's support was crucial in demonstrating the difference that the new service was making and in identifying areas for improvement. The MHUAC team can now build on the success of the evaluation and continue to improve the service, ensuring that patients receive the best possible care in mental health crises.



Contact us

If you have any further questions or would like to learn more about our services, please do not hesitate to contact us at emahsn@nottingham.ac.uk or visit our website at <https://emahsn.org.uk/>. We're always happy to help.