

Mental Capacity Act Practitioners

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Project method

The *House of Lords Select Committee on the MCA* (2015) confirmed poor implementation of the Act; prompting us to pilot a more hands-on, supportive approach.

For three months the MCA Senior Practitioner made himself available to multidisciplinary teams, patients and families in one of our acute hospitals. He taught capacity assessment through example; empowered professionals to make best interests decisions based on well-being as well as physical safety; and supported staff in relation to the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. To ensure sustainability, he worked alongside staff – not ‘doing it for them’ but instilling the confidence to do things themselves.

The success of this innovative project led the UHB to fund its roll out. Two additional full-time MCA Practitioners were employed and between them, the MCA Team supports clinical staff, patients and families with all aspects of the MCA across the UHB.

Furthermore, since Cheshire West the focus has been on Supervisory Bodies; ensuring sufficient numbers of Best Interests Assessors and s 12 Doctors, with little thought for the Managing Authority staff for whom the impact has also been significant. The Hywel Dda MCA Team are part of the Managing Authority, rather than the Supervisory Body, and they provide staff with on the ground support and advice re DoLS.. This has had a significant impact on staff awareness and understanding of the concept of deprivation of liberty.

Project results/evaluation

Data has shown more timely capacity assessments and best interests decisions, leading to better patient outcomes and reduced delayed discharge (from 10 to 3.6 days during the pilot). In addition the latest HIW report shows that Hywel Dda had the second highest increase in DoLS applications in Wales, as a consequence of increased staff awareness.

More importantly, feedback has been extremely positive.

“I felt helpless and inadequate...[the MCA Practitioners] clear, calm approach made me realise it was something I was able to do.” (Ward Sister assessing a patient’s capacity)

“[The MCA Practitioner] simply and cleverly made a stressful, painful and guilt-filled experience for the family, into one that was logical, clearly structured and gave [them] dignified respect.” (Nurse following a Best Interests Meeting for an older lady with dementia).

The Senior MCA Practitioner was ‘Runner Up’ in the RCN Nurse of the Year Awards 2015 (Older Persons Commissioner category) for the development of this service.

Project area classification

Hospital care	x	Emergency care	
GP care		Dementia	x
Social care		Learning disability	x
Voluntary sector		Other mental health	x
Financial services		Palliative care	
Police		Advance planning, LPAs	
Legal		Commissioning	
Community health care		Training	
Nursing and care home		For professionals?	x
Acute care	x	For public and service users?	x
Chronic care	x		