



An Education & Support Group For Families After Brain Injury: Experience on a Neurobehavioural Unit

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Service rationale

Brain injury results in a variety of physical, cognitive and emotional difficulties.

The nature of these difficulties means that relatives are confronted with new and unfamiliar behaviours which render them helpless and, at times, frightened. Carer stress after brain injury is widely acknowledged. However, this is not always recognised by staff and addressed during the rehabilitation journey.

In our neurobehavioural service there was no formal provision to support relatives and carers.

Informal feedback (Figure 2) prompted the need to establish a Relatives' Education/Support group to provide information about brain injury and the care pathway.

Resources

- The education and support group is based within the Neurobehavioural Service, International Centre for Neurorehabilitation and Neuropsychiatry, Walkergate Park, Newcastle upon Tyne (Figure 1).
- The service has been operational since September 2006
- This is a new service providing support and education to relatives and carers within a neurobehavioural in-patient service.
- Walkergate Park is a new state of the art, rehabilitation centre. The education group is based in the purpose-built international conference and knowledge centre.
- Services are provided to families and carers of all patients presenting to the service with behavioural needs after brain injury.

Figure 1: International centre for Neurorehabilitation & Neuropsychiatry, Walkergate Park



Figure 2: Setting up the Service

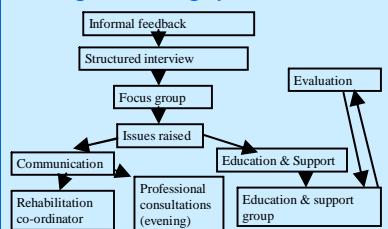


Figure 3: The education group - based in the knowledge centre



Areas to be addressed

Relatives reported a lack of knowledge and confidence in dealing with:-

- Confabulation
- Memory loss
- Executive problems
- Personality changes
- Uncertainty about outcomes
- Knowledge about brain injury
- Communicating with staff

Importantly relatives felt they had no clear role in the rehabilitation process

Education Programme

A nine session, fortnightly, rolling programme covered by all members of the MDT.

- What is a Brain Injury? -Dr Laura Graham Rehabilitation Consultant
- Memory and confabulation -Nicky Brosnan Clinical Psychologist
- Communication-Selena Mathie Speech & Language Therapist
- Behaviour- Nicky Brosnan Clinical Psychologist
- Physical Functioning -Jenny Davey Physiotherapist
- Activities of Daily Living -Mary Campbell Occupational Therapist
- Mood and Depression -Dr Janet Grace, Consultant Psychiatrist
- Sleep & Continence -Neurobehavioural nurses
- Recovery Pathway – Care co-ordinators & Rehabilitation process - Jamie Feather Social Worker, Mary Campbell Occupational Therapist

Future Plans

Evaluation of the group to establish quality of the education package and the impact on relative's confidence is being developed.