

State Hospital Team Shortlisted for National Award



Mark McGeehan and Laura McCafferty are part of the team to be nominated for the Nursing in Mental Health Award which will be judged on Thursday, 14 September 2023.

A specialist team at the State Hospital, Carstairs has been shortlisted in the Nursing Times Awards for their head, heart and hand approach to dementia work.

The team, alongside colleagues from the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), is nominated for the Nursing in Mental Health Award for enhancing care for people who are ageing with mental disorders and dementia in a high secure setting.

Nominated for developing an innovative programme of training during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the training enabled 26 staff to support patients with dementia in the State Hospital.

Laura McCafferty Senior Nurse at the State Hospital, explained: “We had a small number of patients who were living with the condition and we had a staff group who were really motivated to improve their care as much as possible, but who needed specific training.

“I contacted colleagues at the University of the West of Scotland and explained that we were caring for patients with dementia, but staff did not have dementia specific training.

“Senior Lecturer Margaret Brown agreed to develop a training package for us that was responsive to both the needs of the patients and the staff.

“The training was designed specifically for nursing staff to provide them with the knowledge and skills they needed to provide high-quality and appropriate care.

It was also offered to the multi-disciplinary team - made up of colleagues from social work, psychology, occupational therapy, pharmacy and manual handling.”

The package covered a range of topics, including the prevalence of dementia, the different types of dementia, and the impact of dementia on a person's cognitive abilities.

Margaret Brown, Senior Lecturer and Depute Director Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice at the University of the West of Scotland, said: “The learning is designed to be responsive to the needs of patients who are living with dementia. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather bespoke and tailored to the specific needs of each individual living with dementia.

“I am confident that the learning experience will help staff at the State Hospital provide the best possible care for patients living with dementia.”

The training program is based on ‘the head, the heart, and the hand’ approach to patient care. The head refers to the cognitive aspects of dementia, such as memory loss and confusion. The heart refers to the emotional aspects of dementia, such as anxiety and depression. While the hand refers to the practical aspects of dementia care and how to help patients with daily activities.

Mark McGeehan, a Senior Charge Nurse who was also involved in the project said: “As a team we are passionate that all patients have access to effective care and we are really pleased our work in ensuring patients with dementia or who struggle with communication difficulties, is being nationally recognised.

“This project now more than ever is so vital in ensuring the best care for our patients with communication difficulties as often they are unable to have regular visits from relatives and loved ones who know those patients best.

“Although the team is the driving force behind the project, we have collaborated with a multi-disciplinary staff group and colleagues from the University of the West of Scotland, to ensure the success of the project. It’s a great example of collaborative working. We’re absolutely delighted to be shortlisted with other amazing teams from across the UK.”

Karen McCaffrey, Director of Nursing and Operations, the State Hospital added: “I am absolutely delighted that our team has been recognised by their peers in this way.

“They have continually demonstrated our patient-centred care approach, always going the extra mile for our patients. This team is a committed and caring group of professionals who, during the COVID-19 pandemic, went above and beyond to carry out their duty of care to make sure patients were as well-cared-for as possible.

“The State Hospital provides safe and secure care, treatment and recovery with dedicated teams working extremely hard to provide the highest standard of patient care.

“I wholeheartedly believe the adaptability and resilience of this team, working in collaboration with others, captures this approach perfectly and we are very proud of each staff member. I want to add my congratulations on being shortlisted and wish the team good luck on the night.”

The Nursing in Mental Health Award celebrates individuals and teams working in the NHS or independent sector who have developed initiatives that have improved the delivery of mental health care. Entrants should be able to demonstrate the benefits of their work in terms of improved quality of life or increased independence of their patient or client group.

Judging will take place on Thursday, 14 September 2023, where the team will give a short presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session to enable judges to find out as much as possible about the entry. The judging panel will then decide the finalists for each category with winners being announced at a ceremony in October 2023.

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Notes to Editor

In 2021 the team won the Mental Health Nurse Forum Award for Education and Innovation for this innovative programme.