ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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Contents

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 Delivering high quality services requires that service user involvement is embedded in all aspects of service delivery and development. This will include:

- Assessing the extent to which existing services are meeting the needs of service users and their carers.
- Establishing service users and carer's perception of the quality of care being provided
- Understanding problems in the way care is delivered.
- Positively engaging and empowering everyone through shared knowledge, activities, outcomes and best practice.
- Informing continuous improvement and redesign of services
- Monitoring the impact of any changes.

1.2 The purpose of this Engagement Policy is to encourage, maintain and support a culture of best practice in the management and delivery of service user involvement at Urgent Care 24 and to ensure that service user and carer perspectives are an integral part of the culture of the organisation. The policy also recognises the need for establishing frameworks in line with the requirements of the Essential Standards of Quality and Safety (Care Quality Commission, 2010). This is with particular reference to Outcome 1, Regulation 17 and involving service users at key stages from individual contact to service development issues.

1.3 The process of ensuring the above will include:

- setting standards of good practice;
- defining the mechanisms to ensure standards are being met;
- ensuring employees are appropriately trained;
- establishing arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of all service user involvement activity;
- using feedback acquired to inform changes in service delivery

1.4 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 strengthened the existing duty on NHS organisations to involve and consult people when it comes to making changes to services. The duty requires NHS organisations to involve users of services in:

- the planning and provision of services;
- the development and consideration of proposals for changes in the way services are provided; and the decisions affecting the operation of services.

1.5 The National Health Service Act 2006 also places a duty on NHS bodies to make arrangements to involve and consult patients and the public in:

- planning services they are responsible for; not just when a major change is proposed but in ongoing service planning
- developing and considering proposals for change in the way those services are provided; not just in the consideration of a later proposal but in the early development stages
- decisions to be made that affect how those services operate; in decisions about general service delivery; not just major changes.

1.6 For the purposes of this policy, a "service user" can be defined as a patient, relative, carer, visitor, or any member of the public who receives, or is affected by, the care and treatment provided by employees at Urgent Care 24. The views of users can also be represented through voluntary sector organisations, user-led organisations and local community groups. Involvement can range from providing information to decision making with service users.

1.7 When consultation takes place consideration must be taken to comply with other legal duties, such as those that arise under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Data Protection Act 1998, and laws against discrimination and defamation.

1.8 This policy should be read in conjunction with the standard operating procedures which aid service user involvement, the Urgent Care 24 Equality and Diversity (UC24POL11), the Urgent Care 24 Complaints policy (UC24POL34) and the Urgent Care 24 Incident policy (UC24POL32)

2.0 SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to all employees and Associate GPs of Urgent Care 24.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 All employees have a responsibility to adhere to the terms and conditions of this policy.

3.2 Line Managers and Heads of Departments who are specified as the responsible people within the policy must ensure the correct procedure is carried out.

3.3 Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy must be discussed with the author of this policy prior to any action taking place.

3.4 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as appropriate.

4.0 PRINCIPLES

4.1 There are key areas of service user involvement activity which taken together underwrite the framework for responsive and responsible involvement. These principles will be embedded across the organisation and include:

4.1.1 **Service user involvement must be useful and effective:** Service user involvement activities must take into account priorities identified by Urgent Care 24, the potential for impact on service user care and health outcomes, the interests of employees and service users, and national, regional and local requirements; projects must show clearly how service user care can be improved as a result of the activity.

4.1.2 **Best practice:** Models and methods of involvement adopt best practice to ensure the quality of service user involvement. This will include taking regard of:

- Safeguarding principles
- Equality and Diversity principles
- Efficiency and effectiveness standards
- The Essential Standards of Quality and Safety

4.1.3 **Involvement with stakeholders:** whenever feasible, service users and carers should be involved in the selection of an involvement topic, involvement design and feeding back the results in order to ensure that it addresses an aspect of care that is relevant to them. This may be achieved, for example, by following up a patient complaint or consulting with service users and their carers. An acknowledgment of the diversity of cultures within the geographical area is at the heart of all involvement activity. Additionally the process of involvement needs to be sensitive to the needs and abilities of all participants and ensure equal access to involvement for all. Consulting and involving service users, carers and the public in the shaping and development of services also requires considered choices about appropriate methods for different users.

Early consideration must take into account barriers to participation and how they can be reduced to ensure that experiences for all groups are meaningful and well managed; helping to build the capacity of the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs); supporting Urgent Care 24 in delivering information that is fit for purpose and that supports people to make choices.

4.2 **Ethical Responsibilities:** all service user involvement activities must be informed by due consideration of ethical responsibilities towards service users. These are the following:

4.2.1 Consent and confidentiality issues must be specifically addressed in all service user involvement work.

4.2.2 The appropriate use and protection of service user and carer data is paramount, as is their timely and secure storage or disposal when the service user involvement process has been completed.

4.2.3 Health and safety considerations will be addressed, where appropriate, through risk assessment of service user involvement activities.

4.2.4 A system for the recording of adverse events will be used in accordance with Urgent Care 24's Incident Policy.

4.3 The aims of Urgent Care 24 are, therefore,

4.3.1 To improve awareness, knowledge and systems to communicate better with employees, service users, their carers and the public.

4.3.2 If inequality is caused by age, gender/transgender, disability, race, religion/belief or sexual orientation, it is identified and addressed.

4.3.3 To implement and maintain a range of communication methods to meet the communication needs of all individuals to assist and enhance feedback and consultation. For example, the translation of information and literature into different languages, use of interpreters, Braille, larger print type, hearing loops.

4.3.4 To ensure that employees are trained on equality and diversity to ensure that high level of awareness and understanding about equality issues is held within the workforce.

4.3.5 To evaluate the success of interventions around by tracking improvement of engagement of local groups in involvement activities.

5.0 SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Service user involvement is carried out at two levels.

- **The individual**. The involvement of service users and their carers in discussion and decisions concerning their own individual care and treatment. It is closely linked to the overall care experience for individual patients
- **The collective**. The involvement of service users, their carers and the wider public in decisions concerning the delivery and planning of services

5.2 At the **individual level** involvement includes; receiving information about access to services, what to expect from care and treatment, and about health professionals and treatment choices. Importantly it provides the opportunity for service users and their carers to ask questions make suggestions identify needs and concerns or make a complaint about a service or experience of care.

5.3 At the **collective level** involvement includes: the wider public receiving information on Urgent Care 24 and the services provided. It may also include information on services available and mechanisms for feeding back the collective views of service users, carers and communities. Work will take place with local groups, including voluntary sector groups to engage effectively with local 'seldom heard' communities.

6.0 DISSEMINATION OF OUTCOMES

6.1 Dissemination of service user involvement findings will be shared with service users, carers and other stakeholders. A central register of service user involvement activities will be held. This will be evaluated and reported to the appropriate subcommittee and the Full Board of Urgent Care 24.

6.2 This will be in order that service user involvement proposals address the dissemination of the involvement outcomes and the recommendations which ensure that lessons are shared and acted upon appropriately.

6.3 The main outcomes to be achieved for service users are that

- Service user involvement to form a part of core induction and mandatory update training for all staff
- Regular staff training, events and workshops on service user involvement
- Service user and carer feedback available through the Urgent Care 24 websites
- Client Focused Evaluation Programme Patient Surveys will be conducted every quarter to obtain service user feedback on key stages of the patient journey and appropriate actions are taken.

6.4 The overall benefits of improved and increased involvement are:

- Better outcomes of health care
- Increased service user and carer satisfaction
- Improved service user and carer experience
- More responsive and cost effective services
- A strengthening of public confidence in the service provided
- That those involved in experiencing services will be empowered to propose change to support improvement of quality.

7.0 TRAINING & EDUCATION

7.1 Training, workshops and other events on effective service user involvement will be available for all employees and Associate GPs, organised by the Human Resources Department. The aim of the training is that employees and Associate GPs are able to understand equality and diversity and the systems in place which ensure that practice and the service are equal and fair.