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Within our women’s DBT service a key part of a patient’s journey is to support their transition from specialised inpatient care to community living. Clearly, Social Work plays an important role within this aim.

Links with the community team
Maintaining links, through frequent communication with the patient’s community team is vitally important to achieving a sustainable recovery. Women in our comprehensive DBT service sometimes lack the skills required to build relationships. Social Work advocate the patient’s needs with the local team throughout the course of their treatment to ensure that patient needs are met on discharge and within the community. Social Work play a pivotal role throughout the discharge process, from identifying appropriate placements, to advocating for on-going aftercare interventions.

Engaging family members
With consent from the patient, Social Work engage families at the earliest point in a patient’s admission, recognising the importance of the family in a patient’s recovery and discharge planning. They facilitate communication between family members and the patient based on a detailed understanding of both their needs. With a number of the women being mothers in our DBT service this can make a huge difference during recovery.

Social Work provides regular communication to family members on the progress of their loved one’s care, treatment and discharge plan. Where possible, we include the family in team meetings (including CPAs) to help make involvement more meaningful for all as the patient progresses towards discharge. The team are passionate about building on patient and family relationships. To this end, regular Carers Events, including a Summer BBQ and Christmas Party are hosted by the service. These events enable patients, along with their loved ones, to meet with the clinical teams in more informal settings, and create experiences that may have been rare in previous times for them.

For many of our patients returning home is the main goal. Maintaining these links with family members is vital to supporting a safe and successful discharge to the community.

Helping family member understanding
Social Work within our comprehensive DBT programme also works with family members to increase their understanding of their loved one’s need and diagnosis. Family members are offered educational sessions. These sessions include the DBT Therapist, Social Work and patient, covering diagnostic criteria and the impact that a diagnosis can have on the individual. In many cases the sessions create a safe environment in which the patient can share their difficulties and needs to family members, aiding a family member’s understanding yet further. This approach has been hugely successful to build understanding and relationships, supporting a patient’s goals and aspirations.
Understanding DBT
Our comprehensive DBT programme offers women specialised care from DBT trained staff (Foundation or Intensive trained by British Isles DBT Training). An important aspect of the service is that all professions within the clinical team has a robust understanding of DBT. We believe that having nursing and non-nursing staff trained in DBT and personality disorders improves outcomes for patients.

DBT principles fit particularly well with the core values of Social Work, especially when it comes to the empowerment of patients. Social Work aims to promote change within a patient’s own life by teaching them to acknowledge and accept that they are the experts in their own experience (they essentially are driving their own lives). Balancing this, throughout the comprehensive DBT programme, the service teaches patients the skills to change maladaptive coping strategies which has necessitated their admission to secure care and could hinder sustainable recovery on discharge and when living in the community.

For our DBT programme these are key contributing factors towards patient’s recovery and successful discharge to a ‘life worth living’ in the community.