



October 10th, 2014

Falls service shortlisted for national award

An innovative health service, which is greatly reducing the number of falls among older people in Sunderland, is up for a national award.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's community falls staff are among the finalists in the Quality Improvement (QI) Awards 2014. This is the second time they have received national recognition this year: they were also finalists in the Patient Safety and Care Awards 2014.

To measure whether they were making a difference, the team carried out an audit and, found that among 142 patients who completed their rehabilitation programme, the number of falls was lowered from 629 before taking part to 117 afterwards (81 per cent). Six months after discharge, 69 per cent of those who had completed the programme had not experienced a fall. The service has proved so successful that it has now been extended to South Tyneside.

Patients are seen in a 'one-stop' clinic, where they have all the necessary tests, such as blood pressure and fracture risk, and are offered joint assessments by a nurse and a physiotherapist to identify possible contributory factors to their falls and the best way to help them.

Depending on their individual needs, they are then given physiotherapy and a tailored exercise programme.

Falls specialist practitioner and physiotherapist Dean Metz said: "Our service is unusual in that the patient is seen by all the relevant health professionals at one appointment. In many other areas, each health professional does an assessment and patients can become tired of repeating the same information and sometimes detail can be left out when answering the next clinician's questions.

"We felt that joint, concurrent assessment would give patients the best experience and that it was the best way of ensuring no information was lost or missed. It is clear from the audit that the incidence of falling and the risk of falling have successfully been reduced. It appears the type of assessment we offer, coupled with the individually-tailored follow-up, works in terms of patient outcomes and patient experience. Patients who attend tell us they feel stronger, that their confidence is improved and that they have not had any further falls."



The winners of the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership's (HQIP) QI Awards will be announced on November 3rd. HQIP is an independent organisation, which works in partnership with patients and healthcare professionals to influence and improve healthcare practice at all levels.

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Pictured above: The photograph shows members of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Sunderland community falls service team.

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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