Praise for advanced approach to mental health services

A team of advanced nurses working in mental health services have been sharing their insights with Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, during a visit to Crosshouse Hospital. The Cabinet Secretary was at the hospital to find out more about the Mental Health Advanced Nurse Practitioner Service, which was set up in 2009 and is the only one of its kind in the UK.

The service not only ensures that NHS Ayrshire & Arran has a team of professional, specialist nurses providing a high quality, responsive service, it also supports our psychiatric trainee doctor rotas and encourages career development in the nursing profession.

Derek Barron, Associate Nurse Director – Mental Health Services, explained: “The Mental Health Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANPs) enable us to provide a more person-centred, high quality service across the Crosshouse Hospital site. Between them the team have a great many years of experience. This experience, along with the advanced training they have undertaken, enables them to provide a service which focuses on the needs of the individual. They can offer and provide treatment options to people referred to mental health service, both in people’s own communities, and if they have to be admitted to hospital.

“They also work on a shift basis as part of the ‘Hospital at Night’ team, so can provide mental health expertise for the whole hospital through the night, not only for people in our mental health inpatient wards.”

The ANPs’ extensive experience has enabled them to take on some of the role previously filled by junior doctors. Derek Barron explains: “Our mental health ANPs have years of experience working in mental health services, as well as specialist training – unlike the junior doctor who may have had little or no experience of mental health services. Skills
include mental health assessment, diagnosis, physical health skills / intervention, immediate life support and non medical prescribing. Thanks to this experience and expertise they are able to offer a greater choice of treatment options to people referred for assessment."

Between September 2009 and August 2010 1120 people have been referred to and assessed by the service.

Nicola Sturgeon commented: “This is a very innovative service which is ensuring that patients here in Kilmarnock are being offered highly specialist care which is tailored to their needs.

“It is also giving staff the opportunity to develop their careers and enhance their skills, and at the same time supports and offers expertise to other staff who may not be as experienced in dealing with mental health issues.

“I am delighted to see the benefits of this project first-hand and am sure that other health boards across Scotland will be watching the progress of this scheme with interest.”

Ends

Photograph:
Back row (left to right): Advanced Nurse Practitioners Brian Lennon and David Pleym; Nurse Consultant Eddie Docherty; ANP Pauline Occardi. Front row (left to right): Senior Nurse - Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Forensic Service; ANP Lorna Bruce; Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing Nicola Sturgeon MSP; ANP Carolyn Calder
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For more information contact:

May Smith
Communications Manager
NHS Ayrshire & Arran
Communications Department
Telephone: 01563 826107
Out of Hours: 07769 648 975

www.nhsayrshireandarran.com