

Lay summary

Kulik W, Shah A. Role of peer support workers in improving patient experience in Tower Hamlets Specialist Addiction Unit. *BMJ Open Quality* 2016;5:u205967.w2458. doi: 10.1136/bmjquality.u205967.w2458

This study describes a project that was done in the Tower Hamlets borough of London, at the Specialist Addictions Unit. The Specialist Addictions Unit is a drug treatment facility run by the United Kingdom's National Health Service. The aim of the project was to learn about ways to make a better experience for people getting services from the Tower Hamlets Specialist Addictions Unit.

The project team learned from observing and asking for feedback from patients and staff about what could be done to make the services at the Special Addictions Unit better. The project team then used this feedback to suggest program changes, which were then tested on the Unit. The project team wanted to make sure that any changes they suggested would cause a good experience for patients and staff on the Unit. This was challenging because sometimes, patients and staff wanted very different things. If any suggested changes that were tested didn't help with patient and staff satisfaction, then they were no longer used.

The most successful change that the project team introduced and tested was adding peer support facilitation for the "Breakfast club," a patient meeting about recovery with less focus on medical treatment. The project team found that it was important to hear from patients about what the patients wanted in order to make this group better, and that having peer support workers participate was helpful.