Airedale NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Background

The Cardiac Rehabilitation Team support people and their families following recent heart attacks or expected cardiac interventions. The team compromises of cardiac rehab specialist nurses, physiotherapists, a healthcare support worker and administration support. The team support patients both in hospital and in their own homes. They offer a healthy heart service comprising of specialist advice, education sessions and an exercise programme.

The aim of the exercise programme element of the rehab service is to improve overall health and wellbeing and reduces the risk of future heart problems. The exercise programmes currently run at 3 venues; Airedale Hospital, Keighley Leisure Centre, and in Skipton at Broughton Road Community Centre.

They are coordinated by the cardiac rehab specialist nurses and the physiotherapists and are run in groups of between 10 – 15 people. The exercises are cardiovascular and include a warm up and cool down session. The programme can last up to 8 weeks with 2 sessions each week.

In addition to the exercise classes at the hospital or in a community setting, there is the option of a home based exercise programme. This can be organised either by use of an exercise DVD specifically for heart patients or the heart manual which is a 6 week self-led programme which is supported by a cardiac rehab specialist nurse.

Once the exercise programme is completed there is the opportunity to continue with similar exercise classes that are run in the community independently or alternatively we can provide information of other exercise and social activities within the area.

The team wanted to find out more about patients' experiences of the exercise programme in particular.

1.1 Methodology

Views were sought from the following patients who had been referred to the service in the last 6-7 months (May – October 2016)

- People who had attended all of the exercise sessions (16 sessions)
- People who had attended some but not all of the exercise sessions

These patients were invited to attend a focus group session on 8th February 2017. They were each sent a letter explaining the rationale and how they could get involved.

A total of 14 patients attended the session to take part.

Patients who did not attend any exercise classes as part of their cardiac rehabilitation will be telephone interviewed at a later date.

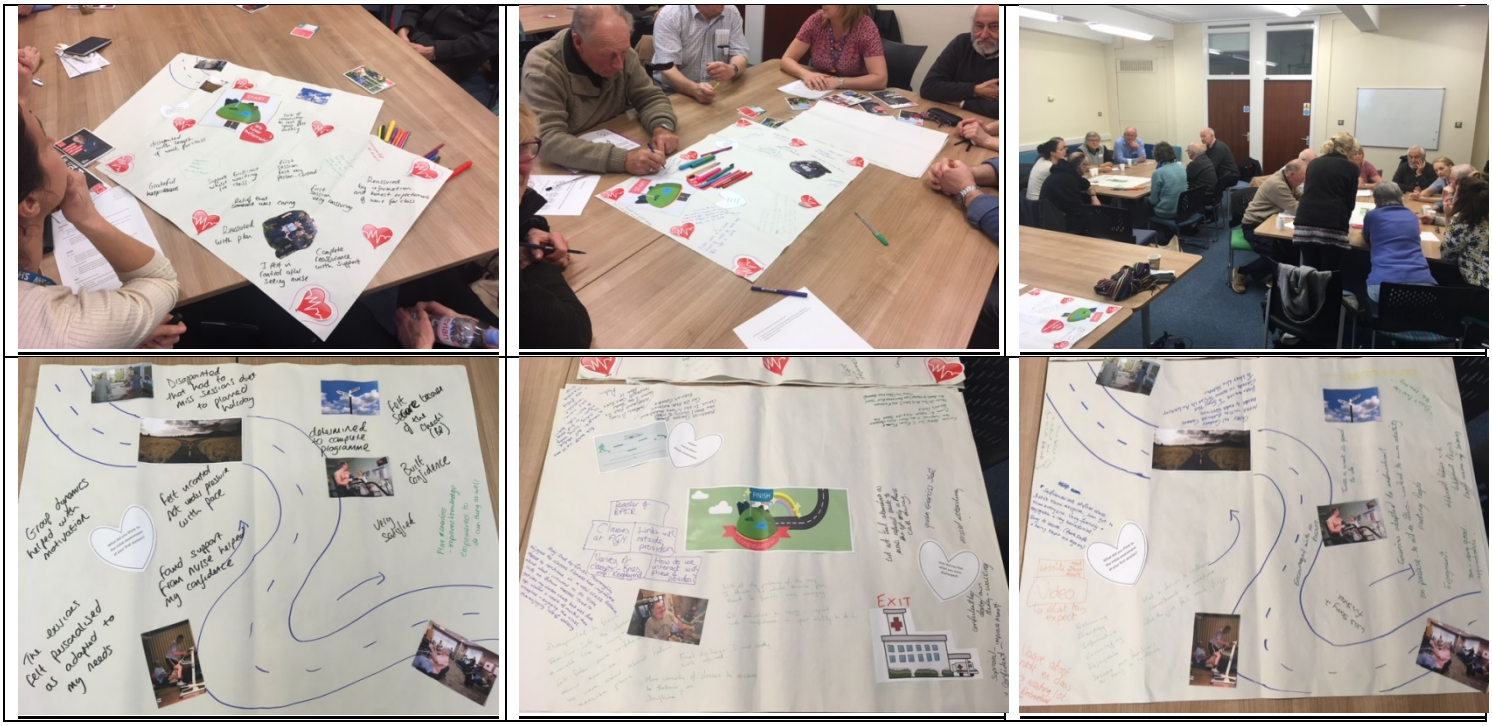
1.3 Discussions

The group was split into two. Each table was asked to spend approximately 15 meetings on each 'stage' of their journey; Beginning (referral into the service), Middle (Attending the exercise classes/ assessments) and End (leaving the exercise programme). The participants were prompted by the facilitators to not only share what they experienced as a process, but how this made them feel.

Using this approach helps to determine the important factors in a patient's journey they may often be overlooked or can overshadow what would otherwise have been an excellent episode of care and treatment. The group was given an ice breaker exercise to encourage this different way of thinking, as it can be challenging for a person to initially engage with this approach. They were asked to think about an experience of either really positive or really poor customer service and were encouraged to think about the emotions associated with their example.

Facilitators from the clinical team were at each table to prompt conversations, with key questions devised beforehand to keep the session structured.

The group were highly energised and the approach evaluated positively.



1.4 Feedback and key themes

A number of comments were identified by the participants and across the two groups.

BEGINNING (Referral into service):

I was told there would be a wait, my expectations were realistically managed
Didn't want to be there, unsure if would go each week. Felt safe to walk
Needed time to recover and rebuild slowly. Looked forward to rehab, became fitter and was happy with the waiting time. Supported and encouraged me to move forward after shock to the system. I felt I knew what to expect
On mobile the contact shows up as 'unknown'
Kept informed
Long time, twice week. Wasn't looking forward. Not sure what to expect
Felt positive, knew what to expect
Well supported whilst waiting to attend
Felt I was not ready to do it when first asked. I was impatient, wanted to move and get on with what I enjoyed before

I thought I did enough exercise already but I went along anyway. It was good
Time to think. The cardiac nurse was enough to put me off! Agreed to do it because I felt it would be beneficial. I was happy with the wait.
Disappointed with length of wait for class
Relief that someone was caring
Reassured with plan
I felt in control after seeing nurse

MIDDLE (attending the exercise classes):

Lack of introduction to rest of group made me feel uneasy
Group dynamics helped with motivation
Support from nurse helped with my confidence
Felt in control, not under pressure with pace
Was able to push myself in a safe environment. I could test my own boundaries, knowing there was support available if I needed it
Exercises felt personalised as adapted to my needs
Was determined to complete it
Built confidence
Learned lots of new exercises to try on my own. Felt empowered to do my own thing
Carry on courses. After initial exercises, maybe 4 more sessions. Video online to show classes in action could be more widely available
Didn't feel like 'the new boy'
Adapted to individual- no pressure to out do others- worked to own ability. Liked meeting people
Tom was very good, approachable
Found warm up tiring
Had desire to continue
Welcoming, friendly, informative, encouraging, enjoyable, became more familiar so easy to continue
Vague about exercise class- waiting list at Westmoreland Street
Self conscious at first class. Didn't know anyone, soon got to. Very friendly and enjoyable and beneficial. Sorry to leave (felt safe and being kept an eye on)

END (Finishing the programme):

Final assessment gave me confidence to continue, which I have done. Got the info I needed
Didn't want it to stop. Joined a gym
Start of a new challenge
Felt confident to do more
Disappointed to finish. Familiar with classes and would have liked to carry on. More confident about exercise, we were asked about future plans for exercise
Final discharge, I was ready and well informed
More variety of classes to access afterwards?
With all the problems of the NHS, I think the whole service from start to finish was amazing. Felt motivated to carry on, inspired with confidence in your ability to do it.
Links to outside providers, list of classes, how do we interact with those providers?
Very sad to finish. Thoroughly enjoyed the classes. Fitness had improved. Hoped to continue in a new class. Asked about what I intended to do. Given information about other classes, was initially booked up. Enjoying lots of walking
Did not feel abandoned
Confidently doing own thing
Finished classes early as pulled a muscle and wanted to go away with caravan. Class at wrong time of

year for retired people. Follow up call to ask why I had finished and asked if there was anything the team could have done.
I wanted to keep going, can we have ongoing evening classes?
Overall a good experience, felt I had taken something good away
Felt bereft as it was a comfort. Started slowly cycling, now more confident.

The emerging themes:

1) People were not generally concerned with the length of time they had to wait to access the exercise class. This is because the rehab team informed them that there would be a wait and gave an indication of how long- therefore expectations were managed from the start. The patients felt a plan was in place, which they were fully informed of and included in. Many patients felt that the wait allowed them enough time to physically begin to recover from their cardiac episode. National guidance suggests patients should start their exercise as soon as possible where appropriate.
2) Majority of participants were apprehensive about attending their first class- however soon felt at ease. There was some feedback about informing members of the team when a new participant was starting their first class, by introducing them to the other members
3) The feedback about the class structure and content was overwhelmingly positive. The classes provided a safe environment to 'test the boundaries' in addition to learning new exercises which could be practised at home.
4) Many participants felt they wanted the classes to continue at the end of the programme. There was mixed feedback about 'phase four' (services in the community for people to continue to exercise). Some of the group felt the level of signposting was sufficient, whereas others would have preferred more information.

1.5 Next Steps

It is important that a range of feedback is sought from people who have accessed the entire cardiac rehabilitation service, in particular those who chose not to attend the exercise class element of the programme.

Those who did not attend the exercise classes will be approached to partake in a short telephone interview to seek their views as to why they were either unable to attend/ felt they did not wish to attend. This feedback will be utilised to inform future service improvements- specifically around ensuring that the accessibility of the programme is inclusive of the needs of the communities we serve.

The Cardiac Rehab Team Leader and Physiotherapy Team Leader will oversee any improvements to the service as a result of the focus group and telephone interviews.

1.6 Evaluation of event

The event was received positively with 13 out of 14 participants selecting the 'brilliant' or 'really good' option on a Likert scale of satisfaction. Some of feedback comments about the event were as follows:

- First class session- good feedback for all concerned
- Good to meet up and hear people's views of the service being provided and constantly looking for improvement. It was a delight to be asked.
- With a diverse group, perhaps the personalities could have been tighter to keep the group more on target. An enjoyable experience.