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# An Evaluation of the Always Events® Pilot Programme

SUMMARY

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# Picker

Picker is an international charity dedicated to ensuring the highest quality health and social care for all, always. We are here to:

- Influence policy and practice so that health and social care systems are always centred around people's needs and preferences.
- Inspire the delivery of the highest quality care, developing tools and services which enable all experiences to be better understood.
- Empower those working in health and social care to improve experiences by effectively measuring, and acting upon, people's feedback.

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Published by and available from:

Picker Institute Europe  
Buxton Court  
3 West Way  
Oxford,  
OX2 0JB  
England

Tel: 01865 208100

Fax: 01865 208101

Email: [info@pickereurope.ac.uk](mailto:info@pickereurope.ac.uk)

Website: [www.picker.org](http://www.picker.org)

Registered Charity in England and Wales: 1081688

Registered Charity in Scotland: SC045048

Company Limited by Registered Guarantee No 3908160

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## Introduction

NHS England, in collaboration with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and Picker have developed a programme to pilot and test the implementation of Always Events® within the NHS in England. Always Events® are aspects of the patient experience that are so important to patients and family members that health care providers must aim to perform them consistently for every individual, every time.

This report provides a summary of the findings from an evaluation of the Always Events® implemented at two 'pioneer' NHS trusts in phase 1 of the programme. It also includes learnings from seven NHS trusts participating in phase 2 of the programme that were in the early stages of implementation. The evaluation was based on data collected between January 2015 and May 2016.

A copy of the full report is available to download from the Picker website.

Sites included in the pilot were:

- Phase 1
  - Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust
  - Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Phase 2
  - Aintree University Hospital NHS Trust
  - Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
  - Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust
  - University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust
  - The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
  - University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
  - Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
  - Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust

## Aim

The purpose of the evaluation was to answer the following seven questions:

1. What project activities were implemented and how successful were they?
2. What challenges were encountered during implementation and how were they resolved?
3. How successful was the partnership with patients and their families?

4. What contextual factors (e.g. time, resources, and culture) influenced the implementation of the programme?
5. To what extent were the intended outcomes (optimal patient experience and improved outcomes) achieved?
6. What unintended outcomes, if any, were observed?
  
7. To what extent were programme activities and outcomes sustained at each pilot site? What factors influenced sustainability?

## Methods

This report draws on information collected from fortnightly update calls with sites, interviews with key staff at each site, and analysis of data collected from patients and service users to understand the impact of the Always Event activities on their experiences.

Interviews with leading members of staff at the phase 1 sites were conducted in July 2015; three were undertaken with staff at Lancashire Care and one with the project lead at Blackpool. The aim of these interviews was to understand how the programme was working and what changes may be needed to facilitate the implementation of Always Events® at other healthcare providers across England.

Six members of staff involved in implementing the Always activities at Lancashire Care were interviewed in January 2016 and the ward manager of one of the pilot wards at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust was interviewed in March 2016. The purpose of these interviews was to understand what impacts implementing the Always Event activities had on frontline staff and to help evaluate the success of their pilot.

In April-May 2016, interviews were carried out with 7 people from five of the phase 2 sites (including one service user representative) to understand their experiences of starting to implement an Always Event, in terms of the challenges, successes and any lessons learnt. It was hoped the information gained from the interviews would be useful for understanding how the toolkit can be developed, and any other changes needed to help support other trusts that wish to use the Always Events® framework.

## Key findings

### Partnering with service users and their families

A key distinction of an Always Event is that it is co-designed with patients, service users and family members. Staff recognised the importance and value in partnering with their service users for the successful piloting of their Always Event. It was acknowledged that co-design is fundamental for quality improvement work and some sites said they would seek to use this approach going forward.

The factors which appear important for achieving a strong and successful partnership with service users are:

- ✓ Ensuring that the area of focus for the Always Event is identified by patients/ service users
- ✓ Patients/service users suggest the ways to improve care and co-design the activities
- ✓ Patients/service users are continually engaged in co-designing the Always Event
- ✓ Staff having good facilitation skills and support patients/service users in their involvement
- ✓ Patients/service users see the benefit of their involvement

### Recruiting patients and service users

The evaluation showed the following factors can help with recruiting service users (and their family/carers) to become part of the ongoing co-design improvement group:

- ✓ Utilising any **service user representatives** associated with the trust to engage service users with the Always Event.
- ✓ Building on any **existing patient groups/panels** and/or relationships formed between staff and patients working on other quality improvement initiatives can be helpful; some pilot sites highlighted that their engagement with patients and their families was made easier as relationships had already been formed with key members of staff in the improvement team.
- ✓ **Personally inviting service users** to become involved in the Always Event is likely to be a more successful approach than sending out a generic invitation.
- ✓ **Thinking creatively** about how to recruit and engage service users with their Always Event, such as using **social media** (e.g. Facebook).
- ✓ Using some sort of financial incentive to help recruitment.

## Maintaining momentum

One of the challenges experienced by sites was maintaining the momentum of implementing the Always Event activities, particularly when there has been turnover of key members of staff.

The evaluation showed that the following factors are important for the successful implementation of an Always Event:

- ✓ Having a **team of people** involved in co-designing the work, including patients/service users and frontline staff working in the pilot ward/unit. This is important to ensure continuity during staff absence or changes.
- ✓ Getting **senior staff support** for both framing the Always Event positively to staff and for providing some accountability and commitment to the work.
- ✓ Linking the Always Event with **other streams of work** and/or building on **existing initiatives** that form part of the trust's overall quality improvement strategy.

## Engaging frontline staff

Ensuring that frontline staff in the pilot ward/unit/service are engaged and supportive in implementing the Always Event activities is important for its successful implementation. The evaluation showed that difficulties in engaging staff were primarily felt to be due to a lack of time, staff shortages and the potential impact on workload.

The following factors may help with engaging staff in the Always Event:

- ✓ Asking for a ward/pilot unit to **volunteer** if they are interested in implementing an Always Event.
- ✓ Ensuring **frontline staff** from the pilot ward/unit are informed and/or **involved at the start** to avoid any confusion and to get their support for implementation.
- ✓ **Not over-burdening staff** with implementing the activities. Once embedded, the Always Event should form part of their everyday role.
- ✓ Staff need to see the benefits of implementing the Always Event for patients/service users.
- ✓ Getting **wider trust support** from colleagues within other departments to engage staff in the pilot ward/unit and to reduce their workload.
- ✓ Utilise any trust-wide staff engagement coordinators.
- ✓ Gathering feedback from staff during the testing phases and then act on this feedback to address any areas of concern.

## Measuring impact

Measurement should commence at the start of implementing an Always Event and continue throughout the different stages from design to implementation and finally evaluation. By having a baseline and then re-measuring throughout it will be possible to see if intended outcomes are being achieved.

Having an overarching outcome measure that you use to monitor experiences can be helpful in disseminating your findings and for showing that a change has resulted in an improvement.

- ✓ Important to consider how the impact of the Always Event can be measured at the start of the project.
- ✓ Identifying if there is any dedicated staff resources/expertise to help with measuring and evaluating outcomes.
- ✓ Continually measure the Always Event activities during testing and make changes to the process to ensure success and sustainability.
- ✓ Filming service users and staff is a powerful tool for gathering feedback and measuring impact

## EXAMPLE: Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust

The goal of this trust's Always Event was to improve the transitions of care for users of learning disability services. In the words of their service users, their vision statement was

*"I will always feel supported when moving on in care"*

### Measurement

Aim	Outcome measures	Process measures	Balancing measures
<b>By December 2015 80% of people discharged from the Blackburn Learning Disability Team will report they feel supported in moving on in care</b>	Qualitative stories from users  Follow-up calls with users	Logging the date a service user was discharged from the Learning Disability service.  Logging when discharge information had been sent to the service user.  Logging when a follow-up telephone call had been carried out by a member of the team.	Feedback from staff

### Key findings

- The process evaluation showed that the Always Event activities piloted were implemented successfully. All service users discharged from the Blackburn and Darwen Learning Disability Services received the newly formatted discharge letter, a contact card, and an invitation to a 'pop in and chat' session. A follow-up call was also conducted with all service users (or their family/carers) around two weeks after their discharge.
- Importantly, there has been a strong and successful partnership with service users who were involved in the co-design of the Always Event; service users identified, and decided on, the focus for their Always Event activities and suggested ways in which the care could be improved.
- Due to the small number of service users discharged from the service, it is difficult to accurately evaluate the outcomes of the Always Event on service user experiences. However, information gathered on the follow-up calls has shown that the majority of service users discharged from the Learning Disability Service since the Always Event started had a positive experience, particularly with regard to knowing who to contact

following discharge. Service users have been positive about the 'pop in and chat' saying that it allows them to see friends again, keep in contact with the service and suggest improvements to the service which may help other service users.

- Staff believe their Always Event activities have improved the discharge process; it has helped them to discharge service users which previously could be difficult due to a lack of follow-up support for users. The implementation of the Always Event appears to have had minimal impact on the individual workload of staff members; activities have been easily incorporated into staff member's everyday work.
- The team have been proactive in making changes to how their Always Event activities are implemented and are considering further changes in order to ensure its success and sustainability.

Picker Institute Europe  
Buxton Court  
3 West Way  
Oxford, OX2 0JB  
England

Tel: 01865 208100  
Fax: 01865 208101

[info@pickereurope.ac.uk](mailto:info@pickereurope.ac.uk)  
[www.picker.org](http://www.picker.org)

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