ancashire Care is an Always Events® pioneer. They were one of the first trusts to implement Always Events after the programme was launched in England in the spring of 2015.

How the journey started
The Trust introduced a new quality strategy for 2015-19 and one of the key expected outcomes was that ‘people who use our services are at the heart of everything we do’.

The Trust recognised that the Always Events approach to quality improvement could help them to achieve their goals; a call was put out for a service/team that would like to participate in the pilot programme. The Learning Disability Service for Blackburn and Darwen responded as they had already carried out an evaluation highlighting areas for improvement.

The Always Event had support from senior members of staff with the Director of Nursing attending the launch event. A strong improvement team of engaged staff met regularly to discuss progress in both the weekly referral meeting and the monthly team meeting. This helped to keep the team engaged in implementing the Always Event and provided an opportunity for any issues to be raised.

Putting a call out to services ensured that the chosen team were enthusiastic, engaged and took ownership of the work.

Partnership with people who use services
Staff working on the Always Event recognised the importance of the partnership with people who use services for the successful co-design of service improvements. The Trust had strong links with user groups and were in a good position to bring people who use their services together to find out what really mattered to them. A series of meetings were held with people who use services to discuss what was good about their care and what could be improved. One area for improvement identified was the way in which a person’s care and support is ended from the learning disability service.

Working together in a team, people who use services and staff developed ideas on how to improve people’s experiences of being discharged from the learning disability service.

Carers and support workers within the team supported people who use services to be involved in the co-design meetings.

“ I can’t think about them not coming to see me – I will always need help."

[Person who used services]
Implementing changes

Through co-design with users of the service, the following activities were identified as a way of improving the discharge of people from the service:

• To inform people who used services face to face that their episode of care was completed.

• To send a discharge letter in an accessible format (easy read with symbols and no difficult language) with a photograph of the clinician on the letter.

• To send people discharged from the service a contact card with the number of a person they can speak to if worried.

• A follow up phone call two weeks after discharge that includes asking people who used services five questions about their experience of being discharged.

• An opportunity for people who used services to still have contact with the team at a ‘pop in and chat’ group. The ‘pop in and chat’ sessions were designed as a way for newly discharged users from the Learning Disability Service to drop in for a chat and if necessary, receive informal support from staff and/or other people who used services.

Through Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, a number of changes were made to the design, wording and layout of the contact card, discharge letter and follow-up telephone questions. Co-designing the changes with people who use services was vital for ensuring that the improvements were appropriate and met their needs. For example, an existing survey question to be asked during the follow-up calls was changed by people who use services so that the question would be more easily understood:

Existing survey question

* Were you given enough notice about when you were going to be discharged?

Revised wording

* Were you told in enough time that you were ready to move on?

Achievements

Reliable implementation

Always Events should be implemented reliably for every patient, every time so that you can be sure that all patients are getting the same standard of care. The team initially experienced some challenges in implementing the activities which resulted in a delay between the people who use services being discharged from the service and receiving the necessary documentation and follow-up call. To improve the process of implementing the activities the following changes were made:

• The team’s administrator electronically recorded the date when people who use services were discharged, the date the letter/contact card/invite to pop in and chat was sent, the date the follow-up call was made and whether or not people who used services would be attending the pop in and chat group. The spreadsheet used by the team’s administrator to log the new discharge process helped to ensure reliability.

• To ensure the follow-up calls were conducted at the appropriate time the team’s administrator added a reminder in the calendar of the member of staff responsible for calling the person who had been discharged from the service.

Impact on people who use services

To measure the impact of the Always Event activities on people’s experiences of being discharged from the learning disability service, five questions were developed by the co-design group. These five questions were designed to be asked to people recently discharged from the service or their carer over the phone.
Data from the follow-up calls show that the majority of people had a positive experience of being discharged from the Learning Disability Service since the start of the Always Event (see chart). The majority of the “not sure” responses are the responses given by carers answering the questions on behalf of the person who had used services.

The early pop in and chat sessions were successful in co-designing the Always Event changes and enabling person who had used services to be involved in other quality improvement work, such as improving the accessibility and applicability of the Friends and Family Test questions for learning disability services.

However, ‘pop in and chat’ was less successful in engaging new people who had used the service. Staff felt there could be a number of reasons for why people who had used the service were not attending the group, such as it not being appropriate due to the level of their learning disability, the challenge for users of getting to the group, or that it was not something that they would enjoy attending. Due to the low uptake, the sessions are no longer running although the need for this group will be reassessed. It is important to reflect on the change ideas adopted and if one of the ideas does not work as planned then this should not be seen as a failure; this is why the PDSA cycle is important for trialling ideas.

The team were proactive in making changes to how their Always Event activities were implemented to help ensure its success and sustainability.

**Other impacts**

To assess any impact of the Always Event on the system, a number of interviews with staff members were carried out as a balancing measure. The interviews showed that since the inception of the Always Event, the following positive unintended impacts were noted:

- The team’s weekly intake meeting now includes a discussion of those people in the process of being discharged from the service. This includes a conversation between the clinicians and the staff making the follow-up calls on how best to contact the person discharged from the service.

  *Myself and the community nurses system, we didn’t tend to work together too much, saw each other in the corridors, really. So this piece of work has certainly got us chatting about our service users and we’re working a lot more, there’s a lot more joint working going on.*
  
  *[Staff member]*

- There was an increase in joint working between speech and language therapy and community nursing staff.
Sustaining and spreading Always Events

Always Events should be achievable and sustainable without substantial renovations or financial resources. Once the process for carrying out the Always Event activities was refined, the implementation had minimal impact on the individual workload of staff members. A key part of the success of Lancashire Care’s Always Event was that it was easily incorporated into staff member’s everyday work and has not incurred a lot of additional time.

The people who use services who were involved in co-designing the Always Event were involved in sharing the work by co-presenting at some conferences, such as the 2015 Health and Care Innovation Expo. Their views and experiences of co-designing were also incorporated into a short film which has been shown at a number of conferences to bring the co-design team into the room and ensure their voices were heard.

By making the Always Event a part of Lancashire Care Trust’s quality strategy, there is an organisational commitment to ensuring the success and spread of Always Events.

There are a number of different Always Events being piloted across the Trust which are at various stages in the co-design process, such as:

- Lancaster Learning Disability Team - “We will always let you know about us and how we can support you.”

- Guild, Medium Secure Mental Health - “My voice always matters.” Hearing feedback from people using the service.

- Children’s Integrated Therapy and Nursing Team - “We will always be included, involved and communicated with, in partnership with the Child Development Team on our journey through services, to meet our child’s needs.”

- Community Mental Health Team - “My care plan is always about me and what matters to me, is timely/up to date and promotes my recovery and health and well-being.”

- Community Mental Health Team - an Always Event is in early development, relating to understanding what matters to younger people diagnosed with dementia.

- Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service - an Always Event is in early development, relating to keeping people connected with support services and networks.

Further information

If you would like more information about Lancashire Care’s Always Event journeys, please email: Helen.Lee@lancashirecare.nhs.uk

For more information about the Always Events programme, please visit: https://www.england.nhs.uk/always-events/