

Service Development in Waltham Forest

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In 2017 Walthamstow commissioned the Waltham Forest Specialist Paediatric Continence service. The Commissioners recognised that just one paediatric continence nurse, covering three Boroughs, was inadequate. At that time, the caseload was 10 children and young people. Today it is 120 with 56 being discharged since 2017.

From the outset, a continence pathway was set up to notify GPs, Level/Tier 1 nurses and allied health professionals of the purpose of the new Level/Tier 2 service and their relative roles in relation to this. Four training sessions for Level/Tier 1 nurses took place to equip them to provide support to parents with toilet training. Level 1 continence training was also arranged in special schools and with the child developmental unit, highlighting the importance of toileting needs being addressed within Educational Health Care Plans.

Nurses and allied professionals are always encouraged to sit in on clinics at Level/Tier 2 to help their understanding of the management of children with more complex bladder and bowel issues. Children and young people are always central in discussions about their continence problem and treatment programme - and our experience is that they respond well to such engagement. Educational material is used to reinforce treatment plans and to aid the full involvement of children and their parents.

Parents and children on our caseload have open access to the service by phone - and telephone advice is provided to all health care practitioners, including GPs. Making a difference to children and young people is rewarding; their sense of achievement and improved confidence when they become clean and dry is wonderful, as is the clear reduction in stress for parents.

There is still lots more to be done, particularly with children who have never been toilet trained, including children over 6 years old with disabilities. In the latter group there are still too many young people using continence products as they enter adulthood/ requiring adult continence services. An important service aim is therefore to help children to gain as much control as much as possible and as early as possible.

We are in the process of submitting a business case to the Commissioners to set up a robust service to meet the needs of all children with continence problems; increasing capacity from 26.25 hrs over 3 days per week to a multidisciplinary team of band 4, 6 & 7 staff.

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