

BASW England Hospital Discharge sub-group:

# Top Tips for a Personalised Hospital Discharge



**BASW**  
**England**

The professional association for  
social work and social workers

# 1

## ASK THE PERSON

Social workers, particularly those who are familiar to working in hospital settings, are used to asking the right questions, bringing constructive challenge to decision making and advocating for people. <sup>1</sup>Working closely with hospital colleagues can mean that views are more likely to be respected, even if they are not always agreed with.

# 2

## Social workers need to be in the hospital and working as part of the team

We see this as critical in being able to work with people to uphold human rights and ensure that the core values of dignity, respect, choice, and control are understood and considered at every stage of the person's journey through hospital.<sup>2</sup>

# 3

## Social workers are visible and present at the start of a person's journey in hospital

– the role and contribution of social work is essential in screening processes, in front door services and in accident and emergency departments. This is skilled work which works best when there from the start establishing relationships with health colleagues.<sup>3</sup>

Social workers have much to contribute to preventative approaches to admission, coming from a strengths-based approach, modelling conversation, utilising communication skills and knowledge of community services, social workers understand the key questions to ask.<sup>4</sup>

## Advocate for and promote ethical decision making

Implement and support BASW England's Ethical Approach to Meeting Need<sup>5</sup> in planning and organisation of hospital discharge. This guidance outlines how social workers can use the BASW Code of Ethics for Social Work to assert their professional judgement where there are concerns that financial pressures are leading to unjust decisions and the needs of people who require care and support being unmet and under-met.

# 4

# 5

## Access to vital information to inform decision making

Social workers can access vital information about people and their circumstances through access to local authority's case record management systems. It is essential that social workers are included as key members of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) in the initial decision-making stages of the discharge process in order to adequately assess risk.<sup>6</sup>

Communication with key people is a necessary part of information gathering, reducing the risk of people being discharged into risky home environments or overly restrictive arrangements in care homes.<sup>7</sup>

# 6

## Prevent unsafe discharges and escalation

Social workers should ensure that if they have any concerns about risk associated with proposals for discharge from hospital or there is a dispute between members of the multi-disciplinary team about the plan that this is recorded and escalated through the appropriate management structure.<sup>8</sup>

Social workers should escalate situations that they consider to be an interference with or breach of human rights, and not in adherence to the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2015) or other legislative frameworks.<sup>9</sup>

# 7

## Reducing the risk of re-admission to hospital

Social workers need to be supported to gather information that enables a holistic risk assessment of a person's needs and their circumstances prior to discharge. Any concerns can be highlighted to inform decision-making.<sup>10</sup>



This will include:

- Taking steps to monitor closely if people are being supported to make choices about their discharge and how this is acted upon.
- Highlighting inappropriate discharges utilising appropriate recording tools and escalation routes.



## 8 **Knowing the difference: medically ready for discharge and safe to leave hospital are not the same thing**

A person may be deemed as safe to leave hospital, but their home environment is unsafe. The term “medically ready” does not mean the person is ready in terms of their therapeutic or reablement needs, social circumstances or environmental considerations. Factors such as these and socio-economic factors such as poverty or loneliness also need to be considered in terms of impact on the person’s wellbeing.

## 9 **It is not just where the assessment should be done, it is also about when**

Discharge starts upon admission<sup>11</sup> and must include the social worker as part of the process. Social workers must be involved at key decision-making points in the person’s journey<sup>12</sup>.

This is necessary to reduce the impact on non-acute services. Some people will be able to return home from an acute unit even if they stay in hospital for a day or two longer in hospital.

## 10 **Providing up to date information and advice**

Social workers need to be up to date with local policies and procedures, be legally literate in terms of legislation and national frameworks and how they apply to individuals as well as the duties and responsibilities of public bodies in such a way that they can provide explanation and advice to people and their families as well as members of the MDT.

This could also include sign posting to relevant information and advice about services and support and providing information about the financial implications of different options.

There are a variety of funding streams and mechanisms for the provision of services, and different pathways for therapy and rehabilitation and continuing health care.

## Liberty and Protection

Situations that prevent access to the outside world or the outside world from coming in i.e., “Closed Cultures” could well constitute a deprivation of liberty. Restrictive practices when and how they are applied raise issues about consent, capacity, objection, and best interests.<sup>13</sup> It is questionable as to whether DOLS can be applied in such circumstances. Social workers need to ensure the person is aware of their rights and that the appropriate safeguards are in place to uphold rights. This includes ensuring that public bodies or those representing them understand their duties and responsibilities and act accordingly.

# 11



# 12

## **Safeguarding is everybody’s business**

– being clear about roles and responsibilities, how to raise and respond to concerns when they are raised. Knowledge about information sharing mechanisms and protocols and the organisation’s policy on recording.

Identify that where a protection plan is in place, that this is known about and adhered to, in order to manage risk whilst the person is in hospital and consider factors which may impact upon the person’s safety and wellbeing upon discharge. Social workers need to ensure that with the person’s consent, this information is shared with the relevant agencies.

## ► References

- <sup>1</sup> <https://thehearingaidpodcasts.org.uk/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-social-worker/>
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- <sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance#structure-roles-and-responsibilities](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance#structure-roles-and-responsibilities)
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- <sup>5</sup> <https://new.basw.co.uk/sites/default/files/resources/basw-england-guidance-an-ethical-approach-to-meeting-needs-in-adult-social-care-july-2022.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> Recommendations | Stroke rehabilitation in adults | Guidance | NICE
- <sup>7</sup> Heenan, D., & Birrell, D. (2019). Hospital-based social work: Challenges at the interface between health and social care. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 49(7), 1741-1758. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcy114>
- <sup>8</sup> [www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/](http://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards/)
- <sup>9</sup> <https://basw.co.uk/policy-practice/standards/code-ethics>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://basw.co.uk/training-cpd/professional-capabilities-framework/social-worker-pcf>
- <sup>11</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance)
- <sup>12</sup> Mystery and Magic: Perceptions of Social Work within an Acute Hospital Setting
- <sup>13</sup> <https://storiesofdementia.com/restrictive-practice-study/>
- <sup>14</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance)

