

## Implementing a Continuous Intervention Policy in NHS Lothian

NHS Lothian has co-designed a new Continuous Intervention\* Policy to align the care it provides in mental health services with the 'From Observation to Intervention' guidance. This case study describes the steps taken to co-design this new approach to care, beginning with a refreshed policy and includes the team's top tips for development and implementation.

\*Continuous intervention is when a patient requires the continuous presence of a member of staff to support them to manage their distress and their interactions with other people safely.

*"I remember just how lonely I felt, so many times, when I was on enhanced observation and the person assigned to follow me around, or sit beside me to protect me from myself, had nothing to say. Sometimes they just seemed to be uncomfortable to share space with me. There's something terribly sad about that. When you're at your most distressed and confused, communication can seem impossible."*

## Background

In 2015, the Scottish Government committed to developing new observation practice guidance for mental health care. This was in response to concerns about the effectiveness of observation policy and practice, following incidences of harm and suicide within psychiatric inpatient wards in Scotland.



## The case for change

- Ensuring alignment with [national guidance](#) published by Healthcare Improvement Scotland.
- Ensuring care and treatment is delivered following a contemporary model.
- Co-designing change with staff and people with lived and living experience.



## Key Approaches

Following co-design work, the team started to implement the new ways of working in September 2020. The change happened first with staff and patient across the Royal Edinburgh Hospital adult mental health services, before being tested and adapted by St. John's Hospital adult inpatient settings.

To facilitate the change in policy and way of working the team undertook two key steps:

1. Different clinical areas had an opportunity to develop their own standard operating procedure (SOP) and add appropriate appendices. This facilitated local adaption of the SOP, whilst maintaining fidelity to the core policy.
2. Multidisciplinary meetings were held to raise awareness of the new policy and SOP. This allowed all staff to become familiar with the new ways of working and contribute to the development of local SOP.

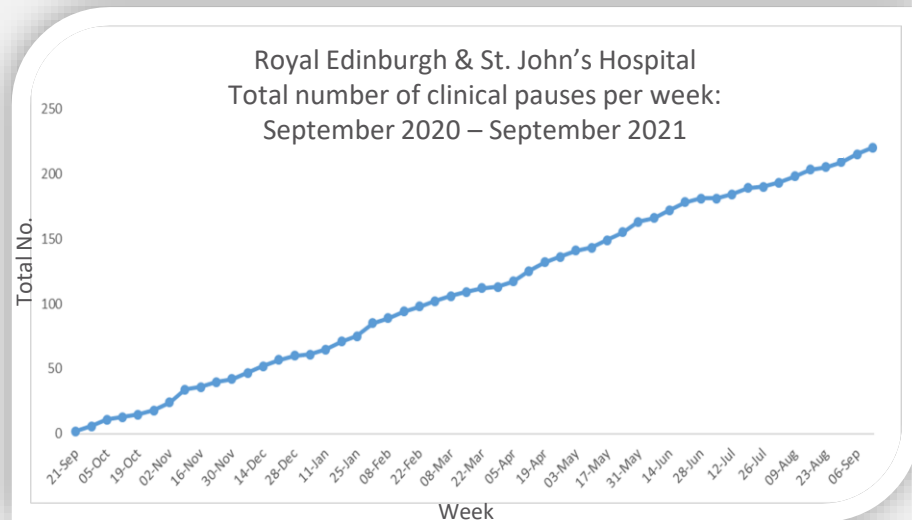


## Impact of the Policy

The new policy has led to changes in therapeutic interventions, care planning and staff roles. An example of the impact the new ways of working are having on staff and patients is the introduction of the clinical pause.

A clinical pause allows decisions about instigating a period of continuous intervention to be made in a reflective and thoughtful way, that engages as many important people as possible.

The use of the clinical pause has grown exponentially with over 200 clinical pauses delivered since its introduction, across Royal Edinburgh and St. John's Hospitals.



## Top Tips



- Ensure investment from senior leaders
- Tailor staff education and practical training to new competencies
- Develop a clear SOP for staff



- Involve a range of disciplines and people with lived and living experience
- Co-design the policy and new ways of working



- Change language used to describe care and treatment
- Use digital tools to enable everyone to contribute
- Build in evaluation to ensure sustainability

## Next Steps

NHS Lothian is committed to learning from the implementation of this policy and responding to the experiences of staff and people with lived and living experience.

In 2022 the team will:

- ensure the Patient Engagement (Foundation) Learn Pro module is completed by staff, and
- continue to monitor and review this exciting change to practice.

## More information

- Visit Healthcare Improvement Scotland's [IOP webpages](#) to find out more about Improving Observation Practice.
- NHS Lothian's continuous intervention policy for mental health can be accessed [here](#).
- For those interested the application of this guidance in non mental health settings, please refer to NHS Lothian's ['Interventions in General Adult Inpatient Settings Across NHS Lothian.'](#)

