



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Partneriaeth
Cydwasaethau
Gwasanaethau Ystadau Arbenigol
Shared Services
Partnership
Specialist Estates Services

Specialist Estates Services Notification 16/07

8 June 2016

For action by:

Chief Executives, NHS Health Boards and Trusts
Estates/Facilities Directors and Managers, NHS Health Boards and Trusts

For information only:

Copy to: Head of Capital, Estates and Facilities,
Department of Health and Social Care, Welsh Government

Dear Colleague

ADDENDUM TO HEALTH BUILDING NOTE 35 - ACCOMMODATION FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS PART 1: THE ACUTE MENTAL HEALTH UNIT (ADULT AND CHILDREN) LIGATURE FREE DESIGN.

1.0 Background

A recent Coroner's Report identified that a contributory factor in the death of a patient was that.....*The hospital unit had not been correctly adapted to prevent windows being used as a ligature point.* The report also recommended that Health Building Note 35: Accommodation for people with mental illness..... *should be revised so as to include a provision that, as far as possible, windows in service user areas should be ligature free.*

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this notification is to inform NHS organisations of an addendum to HBN 35, which comes into immediate effect. The addendum highlights the importance of ligature free design in acute settings.

3.0 Addendum to HBN 35

The prevention of self-harm and suicide

Spaces where service users may not be continually supervised by staff (for example in bedrooms and toilets) should be designed, constructed and furnished to make self-harm or ligature as difficult as possible. All fixtures and fittings should be anti-ligature.

Spaces that are expected to be continually supervised by staff (for example communal areas or circulation spaces) should be comfortable and therapeutic. They encourage service users to participate in life on the ward and actively engage with staff, but minimise the risk of self-harm or injury to others.

The suicide prevention strategy should be guided by “Talk to me 2 ” The National Action Plan to Reduce Suicide and Self Harm in Wales 20015-2020 <http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/health/reports/talk2/?lang=en>

Anti-ligature design

All fixtures and fittings such as window and door furniture, door closers and hinges, taps, showerheads and coat hooks should be anti-ligature, robust and able to withstand sustained attack, and meet national safety requirements. In general, all fixtures and fittings should be specified, manufactured, fitted and maintained to help prevent the possibility of accidents, misuse or use as weapons or to aid self-harm. Local risk assessment is necessary, with fitting according to manufacturers’ instructions. Projections, level surfaces that could form hook points, and horizontal rails or similar are also to be avoided.

All fixtures and fittings should be anti-ligature.

As a rule, any fixture or fitting that could provide a ligature support should safely break free under weight.

The National Patient Safety Agency launched the revised Preventing Suicide Toolkit in 2009. The toolkit contains best practice guidance regarding the acute in-patient unit environment as well as audit tools to use to check environments.

<http://www.nrls.npsa.nhs.uk/resources/?entryid45=65297>

Windows in service user areas

Windows should, as far as possible, be ligature-free. All catches, restraints, and where applicable the controls for internal blinds, should be designed to minimise the risk of use as a ligature point. The facility for staff to lock a window in the open position as well as in the closed position reduces the opportunity to use the opening light as a ligature point.

4.0 Action

In a letter from Welsh Government accompanying this revised SESN, all health boards have been requested to carry out ligature free audits on their acute mental health facilities, including CAMHS and other elderly/ adult mental health environments and for these to be reported to Welsh Government. This should include a costed action plan and programme of works to address anti ligature risks..

5.0 Additional Information

In England the equivalent design guidance is HBN 03-01: Adult acute mental health units and the addendum referred to in 3.0 above is based on extracts from that document.

Consequently, NWSSP-SES will facilitate a review of HBN 35 to determine whether it requires more substantial amendment, or, alternatively, whether it should now be superseded by a revised HBN 03-01, amended, where required, to reflect Welsh Government policies and any specific needs of NHS Wales.

6.0 Enquiries

If you require further information please contact Nigel Davies, Head of Estate Development, at NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services on: 029 2090 4088 or e-mail nigel.davies4@wales.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely,



NH Davies BSc (Hons), Dip Proj Man (RICS), MBA, MCIQB, FIHEEM

Director Specialist Estates Services

NWSSP Specialist Estates Services, 3rd Floor, Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff CF14 3UB