NOURISH PROGRAMME SERVES TO SUPPORT HSE STAFF

MORE than one in four patients admitted to our acute hospitals are affected by malnutrition, and older patients, vulnerable surgical patients and patients with cancer are particularly at risk.

Providing patients with good nutrition and hydration care is a fundamental requirement for good care. It underpins the care and treatment of all patients, no matter what their specific clinical problem. The HSE is progressing several programmes of work focussing on nutrition and hydration.

One of our programmes, Nourish, was established by the Quality Improvement Division in 2015. In keeping with the role of the QID, the programme aims to support staff by developing quality improvement resources that can be used by them at local level in their nutrition and hydration quality improvement efforts.

The programme is focussing on malnutrition in acute hospitals. Malnourished patients experience more health complications, stay in hospital longer when admitted and have poorer health outcomes. Dietitians as nutrition experts assess, diagnose and treat dietary and nutritional problems in hospital patients. However, to ensure patients receive the right intervention at the right time requires firstly that procedures are in place to identify at risk patients, prevent at risk patients from becoming malnourished and when necessary, refer to the Dietitian for nutritional assessment. These methods are referred to as malnutrition risk screening tools and in hospital are usually completed by nursing staff.

A need that was identified early in the Nourish programme was access to training resources for nursing, medical and other healthcare staff on malnutrition and the use of malnutrition screening tools. In response to this need, the advisory group in association with BAPEN* have adapted the Nutritional Screening: A ‘MUST’ for Healthcare. This e-learning programme explains the causes and consequences of malnutrition, the importance of nutritional screening and how to screen using ‘MUST’, the most commonly used screening tool in Ireland.

While the Nourish programme is focussing on acute hospitals, the ‘MUST’ is validated for use in hospital and community settings and so the programme has been developed for use by staff in hospital, residential and community settings. The programme can be accessed through the HSEiandD site (www.hselandd.ie). It is expected that undertaking this programme will provide staff with additional knowledge and skills to improve the nutritional care of their patients.

SCHOOL can be an adjustment many a child with time needed to settle and find their way. However, for some, the school years can present challenges; socially, emotionally and for academically. If such challenges are identified and responded to appropriately at an early stage, much can be done to overcome these.

School principals and teachers, although ideally placed to identify such issues, can have difficulty advising on the recommended services and appropriate support pathways available.

To respond to this, a new cross-agency development between the Department of Education and Skills’ National Educational and Psychology Service and the HSE’s Clinical Psychology Service was launched in the Clare Education Centre at the end of 2015 to help schools throughout Co Clare access psychological support at school for children and young people.

In support of this new development, a booklet entitled ‘Educational and Clinical Psychological Services in County Clare – an integrated approach to supporting students in your school’ was published to guide school principals and teachers toward the most effective community-based supports to assist when concerns arise about children’s learning, social and emotional development, or behaviour in school.

The new booklet summarises the psychological supports available through the school, the community, and the specialist services, and gives a clearer picture of the way psychologists work together to support children who struggle in the school setting.

Psychologists in Clare who work with children and young people have been working together to develop a clearer pathway to access appropriate psychology services. Through good communication, jointed up thinking, and mutual goals, the psychologists in four different services aim to provide the most effective support to children and young people who seem to have difficulty in school.

This collaborative approach is the first initiative of its kind nationally, and is seen as a promising innovation in multi-agency working. The Department of Education and Skills’ National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides an integrated service to all primary and secondary schools in Clare through a tiered system known as the Continuum of Support.

The HSE’s Clinical Psychology Service provides a broad range of psychological supports for children and adolescents and their families as well.