

Everybody's Business

Integrated mental health services for older adults: a service development guide

Setting the scene

Providing services for people with mental health needs can be complex, as they cut across health and social care, physical and mental health and mainstream and specialist services. Making sure that people's needs are met in a co-ordinated way, and that they don't fall between gaps in the system, is essential.

The aim of the Service Development Guide is to ensure that older adults have their mental health needs met wherever they are in the system, without them - or their carers - encountering discrimination or barriers to access.

Produced by the Department of Health, it is being rolled out by the Care Services Improvement Partnership, which was established in 2005 to support improvements in services and in the wellbeing of a number of service user and patient groups.

The Guide is not about developing new policies - it is about improving health and social care practice at the front line.

We need to bring together existing policies and examples of good practice to develop co-ordinated services that focus on people's mental health and physical needs - not their age - and promote respect and dignity.

The Guide is committed to:

- Improving people's quality of life
- Meeting complex needs in a co-ordinated way
- Providing a person-centred approach
- Promoting age equality.

It has been developed to inform local discussions on how services should be commissioned and delivered. It should also help health and social care professionals to make continuous improvements to local services so that they meet the mental health needs of older people more effectively.

Background to the new Guide

The Guide is the next step in improving mental health and care services for older people.

It builds on the service models outlined in the *National Service Framework for Older People* (May 2001) and supports the principles promoted in *Securing Better Mental Health for Older Adults* (June 2005), by describing the foundations and key elements of a comprehensive service for older adults with mental health needs.

Supporting material and guidance

The Guide is also supported by a comprehensive web-based resource, which provides valuable information for anyone involved in health and social care for older people with mental health problems. The web site includes guidance on best practice, local service examples and links to relevant policy.



This fact sheet has been developed to give service users and carers an initial overview of the sections of the document most relevant to them.

Involving service users and carers in decisions

Involving service users and their carers is a very important part of developing effective mental health services for older people.

We recognise that older people with mental health needs may be excluded from making decisions about their own care, because some professionals assume that they are not capable of expressing their views.

This practice must be challenged so that if people can communicate in some way - however difficult it may be - they are encouraged to do so.

Older people with mental health needs have as much right as anyone to comment on the care and services they receive. Their views can help us to develop and deliver services that meet their needs more effectively.

Carers' views are equally important - in their own right as well as on behalf of people with mental health needs.

Services for older people with mental health needs cannot become truly person centred until they incorporate the views of the people who use the services and the people who care for them.

How can service providers communicate more effectively?

- Involving service users and their carers can be a complex and challenging task, but it can be done. Innovative and creative solutions have already been used in health and social care to improve involvement and we are keen to promote examples of best practice.
- Involvement should not be seen as a one off activity, but as an ongoing process that is part of the way that staff and organisations operate. Care should be based around individual need and so should methods of involvement. Different approaches work for different people.

Organisations providing mental health services for older people have been told that they should focus on:

- Training staff at all levels so that they can communicate effectively with the people they care for.
- Providing service users with appropriate support, advice and information about their condition so that can make informed decisions about their care, treatment, support and the ways in which these will be provided.
- Valuing and respecting the unique qualities of each individual and reflecting these in the planning and delivery of care
- Developing services that are based on people's needs and are flexible enough to respond when those individual needs change.

How can this be achieved?

Making a commitment

- It is essential that the importance of involving service users and carers is recognised throughout organisations.
- Senior managers must demonstrate their commitment to the process and ensure that there is sufficient funding to develop and maintain local initiatives.
- Procedures and processes need to be developed so that users and carers have an effective way of expressing their views to the people who make the decisions. This includes views about how services are provided in general, as well as comments on the care the individual receives.

Providing adequate funding

- Funding needs to be provided to cover the cost of involvement and specific budgets should be set up to cover this.
- Costs could range from staff time and out of pocket expenses to the financial support users and carers need to participate in meetings or focus groups, such as travel costs.

Developing high quality training

- Staff need to be trained in involvement skills and in the ethical issues surrounding communication and consent with services users.
- It may also be useful to provide service users and carers with training to enhance their communication skills and build their confidence.
- Teaming up with other local agencies and services – such as the voluntary sector and statutory services – is to be encouraged.

Investing the time that's needed

- Involvement takes time. It's not just a question of organising activities, such as meetings. Service users and carers also need to be given enough time to prepare for their role.

Encouraging feedback and providing recognition

- Users and carers need to know that the organisation's desire to seek their views is genuine and not tokenistic. This means providing people with clear expectations and feedback to make sure that they know their contribution is valued.
- It is very important that users and carers are told what has happened as a result of their feedback and that there is regular communication.

Other recommendations in the Guide

- Local organisations should get together and prepare joint local health promotion strategies that are aimed at the general population and at-risk groups. These also need to address the needs of carers and aim to reduce suicides among older people with mental health needs.
- They should make sure that they co-ordinate how people are assessed and cared for. Service users should receive continuity of care and be clear about who they, or their carer, should turn to for advice.

- It is very important to develop services that are appropriate for different cultures and make it easier for them to access health and social care. We need to do this by involving voluntary, statutory, independent and community organisations as well as service users and carers.
- Staff need to be provided with ongoing training and development so that they have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver effective services in a range of health and social settings.
- Managers need to demonstrate strong leadership by delivering results and making sure that staff understand what they are trying to achieve.

The Guide also looks in detail at specific areas of health and social care and what service users and carers can expect from staff and the services they provide. It covers:

- Primary and community care - primary care, home care, day services, housing, assistive technology and telecare and care in residential settings. (Assistive technology and telecare covers developments such as sensors to turn off cookers or taps or turn on lights during the night)
- Intermediate care (this includes providing support after a spell in hospital, preventing unnecessary hospital admissions and helping a person to stay independent at home)
- Care for people in their local general hospital
- Other specialist mental health services - integrated community mental health teams, memory assessment services, psychological therapies and inpatient care
- Special groups - younger people with dementia, older people with learning disabilities and mental health care for older prisoners.

If you require a greater level of detail you may find the fact sheet that we have produced for the organisations that provide health and social care services a useful next step.

Mental health needs in England

Mental health problems become more common as people get older and England's population is ageing. The number of people over 65 will increase by 15 per cent in the next ten years and the number of people over 90 is expected to double in the next 30 years.

It is estimated that:

- 40 per cent of older people attending GP surgeries, 50 per cent of general hospital patients and 60 per cent of care home residents have mental health needs.
- Between 12 and 15 per cent of people over 65 suffer from depression - this is more common in people suffering from long-term physical disorders
- Dementia affects one person in 20 over the age of 65 and one person in five over 80.
- It costs more to look after people with dementia than stroke, cancer and heart disease added together.

In a typical district of 250,000 people, there will be 45,000 (18%) who are aged 65 or over. Of these:

- 4,500 to 6,750 will have depression – including 1,500 with severe depression
- 6,000 will have anxiety-related disorders
- 900 will have psychosis-related disorders
- 2,250 will have dementia
- 2,000 will be living with the consequences of stroke – 1,000 of these will experience mood disorders and 700 will need to adjust to living with reduced cognitive skills.

About the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP)

Established on 1 April 2005, after formal consultation, CSIP's main goal is to support improvements in services and in the wellbeing of:

- People with mental health problems
- People with learning disabilities
- People with physical disabilities
- Older people with health and social care needs
- Children and families with health and social care needs and
- People with health and social care needs in the criminal justice system.

We are part of the Care Services Directorate of the Department of Health and most of our staff and services are based in eight regional development centres across England. This enables us to respond flexibly to the needs of people, locally, regionally and nationally.

More information

You can download copies of the Service Development Guide and further copies of this fact sheet from www.everybodysbusiness.org.uk

If you don't have access to the internet please call 020 7972 4606. For further information, please contact your regional office.

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