

mentalhealth

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Today

in this month's issue: Lord Bradley's review
The Care Quality Commission **Childhood matters**
Drugs and weight gain Commissioning services



Out in the open

the impact of the smoking ban on psychiatric wards

New commissioning for a new era

In the April issue of *Mental Health Today* Dr Ian McPherson introduced the new National Mental Health Development Unit (NMH DU).

Kieron Murphy describes its work to support commissioning

As part of the launch of the National Mental Health Development Unit, the Department of Health and its partners have recognised the need to support the delivery of World Class Commissioning, an approach designed to help primary care trusts (PCTs) become better commissioners, in the field of mental health. As with all of the work of the Unit, the commissioning programme – one of the strands in the Unit's work – is taking forward its remit through a process of co-production between the Department of Health, Strategic Health Authorities and active partnerships with other national stakeholders including the NHS Confederation, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and the major mental health organisations in the third sector.

We have developed the commissioning programme after an extended period of consultation that has been led by the Department and championed by Dr Hugh Griffiths, Deputy National Clinical Director for Mental Health in England. In May 2007, a major seminar brought together some 130 key stakeholders from a range of organisations within the field of mental health and beyond. This process resulted in a strong, shared consensus that a period of focused and co-ordinated action was required to help mental health commissioners in the new context of World Class Commissioning and commissioning for health and wellbeing. This consensus led initially to the Department asking the National

Institute for Mental Health to develop a programme to address the issues that were emerging. It is this programme that laid the foundations of the new Unit's mental health commissioning programme.

The programme operates in two distinct and related ways. First, the programme is bringing a mental health perspective to, and influencing the development of, both health and social care policy. In this way it is ensuring that generic national commissioning and procurement policy makes sense within the specific context of the world of mental health. This is of fundamental importance – it would serve no one's interest to have a separate and parallel set of policies designed for mental health. It is in all of our interests to ensure that mainstream thinking always takes into account the requirements of mental health services and those who use them.

In addition to this, the programme has a number of dedicated work streams, each of which is designed to address a particular issue or set of issues that are not unique, but are particularly acute in the field of mental health commissioning. These include:

■ Information and data

This will improve the way in which information and data are used to support the commissioning of mental health services. The work is led by the NHS Information Centre and has begun by publishing for the first time the mental health minimum data set – a comparative information collected routinely across mental health services – in

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full and by a PCT. We have also developed a tool to assist commissioners to carry out Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for the mental health needs of their population.

■ Commissioning for outcomes

This workstream will enable the commissioning of a range of clear and agreed outcomes and is being carried out in partnership with a consortium of companies from the pharmaceutical industry with a commitment to improve mental health commissioning. This will help commissioners to have an agreed set of positive outcomes for people who use services with which to inform their commissioning decisions, such as the percentage of people returning to paid employment after treatment. A discussion paper has been produced to assist local commissioners in taking forward outcomes work within their own localities.

■ Involvement of service users and carers

Users and carers need to play a full and active role in the commissioning process. A service user organisation is being commissioned to lead this work, building on the best international practice around the development of peer specialists.

■ Engagement of clinicians and professionals

This work will enable greater involvement of clinicians across disciplines in the commissioning process. It will build on the momentum achieved in this area through the mental health component of the NHS Next Stage Review in the regions. The work is being led for the programme by Louise Howell at London SHA and aims to produce a guide for clinical/professional engagement.

■ Strategic partnerships and joined up system reform

We will support the development of effective joint commissioning at whole system and locality level. A partnership with ADASS is a feature of this work. This workstream will focus particularly on developments and interfaces between practice-based commissioning and the introduction of individual budgets, allowing people who use social care services to buy their own care.

■ Workforce and competencies

This strand will help to build a highly skilled and competent workforce to deliver effective commissioning and system reform. A wide range of initiatives is currently underway in partnership with East of England Strategic Health Authority.

■ Procurement for quality

This work is being led by the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) and is at an advanced stage of delivery. A mental health roadmap – an online guide to procurement for mental health commissioners – was launched in December 2008 and may be located at PASA's website www.pasa.nhs.uk/PASAweb

■ Commissioning for wellbeing

Commissioners will be helped to commission services that respond to the many determinants of ill health and address the needs of the whole person. This work is being led by the University of Central Lancashire.

Guidance will be available for dissemination between June and September 2009.

I am delighted to lead the Mental Health Commissioning Programme within the Unit and in partnership with a wide range of individuals and organisations. It is very easy for national programmes to develop in a way that is out of step with the everyday experience of people who work in and use services. I am determined that this will not happen in this case.

Each of the work streams will be developed in partnership with commissioners, practitioners and those who use services themselves. Each work stream will have its own expert reference group to guide and steer the work and to ensure it is of direct relevance where it matters most.

The same is true of the programme overall, which has the active involvement of partners both on the programme board and also through the development of an overarching expert reference group. It will also be grounded in the real experience of a local health and social care community as I will be seconded on a sessional basis to work with the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, developing its relationship with commissioners. We are also inviting mental health commissioners and

Richard Webb, joint national lead for mental health, drugs and alcohol with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), has welcomed the Development Unit's drive to strengthen mental health commissioning:

'It's really important that we connect World Class Commissioning and Putting People First, so that people with mental health issues can benefit from better care and support, and can have more choice and control if they want it,' he said. 'In turn, we can all influence the wider mental health of the community through connecting the work that local government does with that of the NHS.'

others who may want to support various aspects of the work to participate as programme associates.

Partnership is the key to making this programme a success and I am delighted that we have agreed resources to support joint appointments with ADASS nationally and with the NHS Confederation PCT Network to take forward this work. In addition, the programme is working closely to support those mental health providers who are working within the Framework for securing external support to Commissioners (FESC) initiative, which is aimed at helping PCTs become world class.

The new era heralded by the development of New Horizons, the policy framework replacing the National Service Framework, is an exciting one for all those involved in mental health. Whatever the new policy framework contains, it will be delivered in a world where commissioning is the means by which transformational change is brought about.

The new national programme has a vital contribution to make to the future of mental health in England by ensuring that mental health services commissioning is supported to become truly world class. ■