

Number 20

"Seamless Service" for Mental Health Services to be introduced

Fundamental changes to the way that people with mental illness are treated were unveiled today by Health Minister, John Hutton.

Following lengthy and detailed consultation, the Care Programme Approach (CPA), the framework which details how to support mentally ill people in the community, has been extensively revised to put new emphasis on:

- 'a seamless service'; integrating specialist health and social care services;
- stripping away unnecessary bureaucracy; there will now be only two levels of CPA, either standard or enhanced;
- securing the safety of both patients and the public, by including robust crisis planning as part of care plans;
- reducing confusion; making sure that there is consistency across the board, at national and local levels, on sharing information, what terms are used and what systems should be in place.

Welcoming the changes, John Hutton said:

"People with mental illness are vulnerable, and often need help from a wide ranges of services. Some individuals pose a risk to themselves. A small number can pose a risk to others, often carers or their families. We need to be confident that mental health services can respond effectively, whatever the level of care needed.

'Modernising the Care Programme Approach' takes account of the lessons learned about the operation of CPA, and how to make it best work. We have listened to those working in the field of mental health and we have listened to the users of the service.

That is why I can be confident about this new approach. It will mean explicit, individually tailored care plans for all patients in contact with specialist mental health services and it will mean co-ordinated delivery and review of that care.

For those on enhanced CPA, we can also be sure that clear and concise contingency plans will be in place to cope with unexpected developments and avert a potential crisis."

Key changes to the Care Programme Approach are:

- the integration of the Health Authority and Social Services care co-ordination approach - now one system, the CPA;

MENTAL HEALTH LAW

RadcliffesLeBrasseur
5 Great College Street
Westminster
London SW1P 3SJ

Tel +44 (0)20 7222 7040
Fax +44 (0)20 7222 6208
LDE 113

6-7 Park Place
Leeds LS1 2RU

Tel +44 (0)113 234 1220
Fax +44 (0)113 234 1573
DX 14086 Leeds Park Square

25 Park Place
Cardiff CF10 3BA

Tel +44 (0)29 2034 3035
Fax +44 (0)29 2034 3045
DX 33063 Cardiff 1

info@rlb-law.com
www.rlb-law.com

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- the introduction of two levels of CPA - standard and enhanced, which will be used nationally to provide a more consistent, high quality service;
- inclusion of crisis planning for those on enhanced CPA so that services can plan for crises and respond more effectively to them;
- constant audit of all information for those who use mental health services within the CPA framework and care paid to the quality of care provided, especially with reference to interagency working;

The enhanced level of CPA will identify and ensure the right level of services be provided to those with the most serious illness and avoid the need to maintain unnecessary and duplicate Supervision registers. This will cut down on bureaucracy and focus clinical support more clearly on the needs of patients.

RadcliffesLeBrasseur

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For more information on Mental Health Law contact Andrew Parsons at RadcliffesLeBrasseur on 020 7227 7282, or email: andrew.parsons@radleb.com.

Out of office advice available 24hrs on 07802 506 306.

Readers are advised to take specific advice before acting in reliance on the matters set out in this briefing.