

Working on services for personality disorders

Background:

South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) are working to improve services for people with personality disorders by:

- 1) developing a system where difficulties can be recognised earlier and the same treatment options are available in all SLaM boroughs.
- 2) helping other parts of the mental health system (e.g. primary care, voluntary sector and community mental health teams) to offer better support and treatment over a longer period of time.

Over the last 18 months initial discussions have taken place with staff and service users. The developing pathway will be a 'live' document, evolving over time and subject to regular audit.

Briefing Event:

On May 16th 2014 over 70 people attended a 'briefing' event about this work. Participants included SLaM staff, service users, and people from the local voluntary sector, local authority and primary care. We told people about our initial thoughts and asked them to consider:

- ***What services are currently available and where are the gaps?***
- ***What areas of good practice are there and where could things be improved?***

Feedback from participants:

Here is a summary of the feedback from participants:

- Currently, people can get support/treatment for personality disorders in Community Mental Health Teams, within psychological therapy services and within specialist services for personality disorder. There is one SLaM community based service offering self referral and open ended support – SUN. Young people may be seen in the Children & Adolescent Mental Health service and treatment/support is available through the Forensic Mental Health Services. People have access to a range of support within general adult mental health services such as vocational support and there are also a number of voluntary sector providers offering general mental health support.
- Areas of good practice – the availability of a range of psychological therapies, working in a recovery focussed way, the engagement skills of some staff, the availability of specialist services across the 4 boroughs, the SUN model.
- However, there is a general lack of clarity about who the personality disorder pathway is for and what is available. Communication and information flow between SLaM services, primary care and other support in the pathway was identified by many participants as an area to improve.

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- A move towards providing shorter 'episodes of care' presents a challenge - people with personality disorder may need services long term and consistency of professional relationships are important.
- The availability of treatments across the 4 SLaM boroughs lacks consistency and there are different approaches and cultures in different services.
- There is a lack of specialised support for people with a diagnosis of personality disorder that is not 'borderline' and for those who have difficulty in engaging in the services on offer.
- More effective and appropriate crisis support is needed. Timely and planned short admissions, more specialist intervention at A&E, crisis houses, and more responsive home treatment teams were some suggestions about how to reduce crisis admissions.
- There is a need to focus on maintaining wellbeing. Increased availability of voluntary sector provision would help people stay well and offering training in coping strategies.
- We need more appropriate services for young adults and need to improve the transitions between children & adult services.
- Staff and family members, carers, and GPs would benefit from increased understanding about personality disorders. This may also help to challenge the stigma that remains with a diagnosis of personality disorder.
- People with personality disorder should be seen as experts & others can learn from people who have had direct experience.

Next Steps

The advisory group of clinicians, managers and service user / carer consultants reflected on this feedback and will continue to use it in the development of services and the pathway. **A work plan has been developed to:**

- 1) work with the service user and carer advisory group to develop a set of Patient Derived Outcome measures that reflect real life goals for patients/service-users
- 2) develop a draft strategy specifying the parameters of what services ought to be available
- 3) host brief, half day workshops to involve those delivering services and their patients in the co-production of the finer details at a local level.
- 4) gain a clearer understanding of the information & support needs of family members, friends & carers of people with personality disorder

For a copy of the full report or for more information about this work, please contact:

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