

Royal College of Psychiatrists' briefing

Long term sustainability of the NHS | 19th April 2018



The RCPsych strongly supports the continuation of a National Health Service that is free at the point of use. International comparisons show that any move away from this model proves to drive up costs and be less sustainable.

To achieve sustainability, we must focus on prevention, empowerment and improving the value of services:

- **Prioritise preventing the onset of illness, to reduce the future burden on services.**
- **Empower and enable patients, carers and communities to manage illness to reduce the burden on services**
- **Urgently review funding in light of new RCPsych figures that show mental health trust income is lower than it was five years ago**

Prevention and Public mental health approaches

There is no health without mental health. Mental health must be put at the heart of not just health policies, but in all government policies that have an impact on the wellbeing.

Implementing the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health is vital to achieving parity of esteem and creating sustainability in the NHS. Investing in services means patients will be able to get help earlier – reducing the burden on the system as conditions worsen without professional input.

Good progress has been made in some areas of the Five Year Forward View. 69% of patients experiencing a first episode of psychosis now begin treatment within two weeks. But there is still a way to go. A recent FOI from Norman Lamb MP showed that only 29% of trusts were meeting the full NICE approved treatment they are entitled to.¹ People who do not get effective help quickly are more likely to experience poor physical health, lower levels of social functioning and poorer occupational and educational outcomes.² Providing high quality treatment as quickly as possible for people experiencing their first episode of psychosis is key to preventing some of these negative consequences and reducing the burden on services.

Children's mental health is another area where prevention is key. The recent Children and Young People's Mental Health Green Paper had the right approach bringing schools and CAMHS closer together. Our members tell us that helping children at school is an effective way to prevent them falling into crisis. The proposed new Mental Health Support Teams have the potential to make a real difference – but they need to be rolled out faster. We know they can't be created overnight but under current proposals, but by the Government's own estimates, a quarter of a million children and young people who could be helped will still be missing out in five years.³

Effective Public Mental Health should start very early. The cost of perinatal mental ill health is estimated at £8.1 billion annually, 72% of which relates to adverse impacts on the child.⁴ Only 15% of areas provide effective specialist community perinatal services for women with severe/complex conditions. 40% of areas currently provide no services.⁵

Empowerment

Patients and communities must be given help to self-manage their health. Evidence-based, free online resources such as MindEd have the potential to educate patients and their families about their condition and empower them to manage it more independently.

¹ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-03-15/debates/0DE3B90B-B12C-4E13-B059-7A7FCED94275/PsychosisEarlyIntervention#contribution-37DCB8F0-70C1-4314-9696-0C52F846AE53>

² Marshall M, Lewis S, Lockwood A, Drake R, Jones P, Croudace T. Association between duration of untreated psychosis and outcome in cohorts of first-episode patients: a systematic review. Archives of General Psychiatry. 2005;62:975–83.

³ Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education. Impact assessment on the children and young people's mental health Green Paper. December 2017. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664442/MHGP_IA.pdf

⁴ Centre for Mental Health, *The costs of perinatal mental health problems*, 2014:

<https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=07afd94b-92cb-4e47-8439-94cbf43548d8>

⁵ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/postpartumpsychosis.aspx>

Community structures and peer support are also key to living independently with a mental illness. Peer support groups can reduce hospitalisation and save costs.⁶ The RCPsych supports the creation of Recovery Colleges where patients, carers and their families can undertake free educational and skills-based courses alongside other patients in the service. These help develop confidence and the skills needed to move towards independent living.

NHS rehabilitation services have been closing at an alarming rate. In 2009 there were more than 130 such services in England; by 2015 that number had fallen by a third to just 82.

Prior to referral to rehabilitation services, most service users have had revolving door admissions that are frequently of an extended duration due to treatment resistant symptoms, co-morbid substance misuse, complex risk and physical health issues. As a result, this group of people have poor outcomes in employment and vocational activities.

People receiving support from rehabilitation services are 8 times more likely to achieve or sustain community living compared to those supported by generic community mental health services.

Income of mental health trusts

Mental health trusts' income is lower in England now than it was in 2011-12 once inflation is taken into account, according to the latest available figures.

The College is calling for mental health trusts to be given more money and for better ways of tracking where mental health money is being spent. It fears some of that money is failing to reach the frontline.

This is despite the Government's assertion that mental health spending is at "record" levels. It comes as demand for services soars, with some trusts saying a lack of funds has forced them to cut services.

The picture across the UK is similar, with mental health spending in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all lower now than it was in recent years.

Our members are seeing more people with less money, and that is not a sustainable way of working. Mental health trusts must be given the money they need if the NHS is to be kept a free service.

⁶ Chinman, M., George, P., Dougherty, R.H., Daniels, A.S., Ghose, S.S., Swift, A. and Delphin-Rittmon, M.E., 2014. Peer support services for individuals with serious mental illnesses: assessing the evidence. *Psychiatric Services*.