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COLLEGE CENTRE FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Accreditation for Acute Inpatient Mental Health Services (AIMS)

Accreditation Process

May 2009

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This booklet describes *Accreditation for Acute Inpatient Mental Health Services* – for working-age adults (*AIMS-WA*), assessment/triage wards (*AIMS-AT*) and older people (*AIMS-OP*) – and provides information about the review processes and the accreditation ratings awarded.

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Diagram Showing Review Cycle

(for example purposes only, assuming a January start)

Year 1	Review Cycle	Accreditation Cycle	Education, Training & Standards Committee				
January	Self-Review	Accredited Period ↓	Accreditation Decision				
February							
March							
April	Peer-Review						
May							
June							
July							
August							
September							
October							
November							
December							
Year 2							
January	Brief Self-Review	Accredited Period ↓	Accreditation Decision				
February							
March							
Year 3							
January	Full Self-Review			Accredited Period ↓	Accreditation Decision		
February							
March							
Year 4							
January	Brief Self-Review					Accredited Period ↓	Accreditation Decision
February							
March							
Year 5							
January	Self-Review	Accredited Period ↓	Accreditation Decision				
February							
March							
April	Peer-Review						
May							
June							
July							
August							
September							
October							
November							
December							

Objectives

The purpose of AIMS is to improve the care provided by acute inpatient mental health wards in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

It will achieve this by:

- Accrediting acute inpatient mental health wards.
- Creating a national network to support staff through:
 - a database of standards for acute inpatient care;
 - the AIMS peer-review process;
 - an email discussion group.
- Maintaining a database of standards for acute inpatient care.

The 'Mission Statement' and Standards

The 'mission statement' for AIMS is:

Acute wards offer a timely and purposeful admission within the context of a safe and therapeutic environment.

The standards are drawn from a range of authoritative sources (details can be downloaded from our website, www.rcpsych.ac.uk/AIMS) and also incorporate feedback from Service User and Carer representatives, pilot studies and experts from a range of relevant professions.

The set of standards is comprehensive and some standards are aspirational; it is unlikely that any ward could meet all of them. To support their use in the accreditation process, each standard has been categorised as follows:

- **Type 1:** failure to meet these standards would result in a significant threat to patient safety, rights or dignity and/or would breach the law;
- **Type 2:** standards that an accredited ward would be expected to meet;
- **Type 3:** standards that an excellent ward should meet or standards that are not the direct responsibility of the ward.

Note: In the event that AIMS finds evidence that the Trust's (or other organisation's) acute inpatient mental health service threatens the safety, rights or dignity of patients, the Trust (or other organisation) will be informed, in writing, and is expected to take appropriate action. If the Royal College of Psychiatrists is not satisfied that appropriate action has been taken, it reserves the right to inform those with responsibility for the management of the service and/or the relevant regulatory body.

The standards have been used to generate a series of data collection tools for use in the self- and peer-review processes. Some standards have not been included in the tools because they cannot be measured objectively and reliably.

There are several data collection tools because it is important that each standard is evaluated using the most appropriate method(s) and source(s) of information. The methods are described more fully in the sections below that describe the self-review and peer-review phases of the accreditation process.

The College Website

Wards which are members of AIMS will be listed on the Royal College of Psychiatrists' website. Once a final accreditation rating has been awarded, this will be posted on the website next to the ward's name.

The Accreditation Process

The time from registration as a member of AIMS to a ward's accreditation status being decided will be between six and nine months (assuming that data is collected and returned within the timeframes set out in the diagram on page 3). There are three main phases: self-review, a peer-review visit, and a decision about accreditation status.

Phase 1: Self-Review

This is an opportunity for the local multi-disciplinary team to review its local procedures and practices against the AIMS standards and, if necessary, to make the changes required to achieve accreditation.

At the beginning of the self-review period, the local AIMS lead will be sent the relevant copy of *Standards for Acute Inpatient Wards* (i.e. for working-age adults, assessment/triage wards or wards for older people) and the self-review data collection tools. The latter should be completed and returned within three months.

The self-review has a number of components. Unless otherwise stated, the tools are completed using direct web-based entry:

- **Carer Questionnaire**
Carers will return these themselves, directly to the AIMS Project Team, using the 'Postage Paid' envelopes provided.
- **Patient Questionnaire.**
Patients will return these themselves, directly to the AIMS Project Team, using the 'Postage Paid' envelopes provided.

- **Staff Questionnaire**
- **Ward Manager Questionnaire**
- **An audit of Health Records**
- **A checklist audit of other key documents** including policies, procedures and protocols
- **A grid to list the training undertaken by staff members**
- **An audit of the environment and facilities**

A summary of the results from the self-review will inform discussions at the visit by the peer-review team.

Phase 2: Peer-Review Visit by an External Team

The purpose of the one-day visit by a peer-review team is to validate the self-review findings and to provide a valuable opportunity for discussion, and for the review team members to share ideas, make suggestions, offer advice and give support.

The peer-review visit will be scheduled for four to eight weeks after the self-review data has been returned. Staff from other wards participating in AIMS will be invited to act as members of peer-review teams, and the team will typically consist of four members (three professionals and one Service User or Carer). The team will have undergone specific training at the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Centre for Quality Improvement.

Only one peer-review visit will normally be made to the ward during the four year cycle. If a further visit is required because it is identified that the ward poses a threat to patient/staff safety, the re-visit will be charged at the rate of £600 +VAT per day.

Review visits which are cancelled by the ward will also incur a charge of £600 +VAT per day. Review visits which are cancelled by the AIMS Project Team, or for reasons beyond the control of the ward, will not incur a charge.

Three further data collection tools are used at peer-review visits:

- **Peer-Review Carer Questionnaire**
- **Peer-Review Patient Questionnaire**
- **An observation tool** (AIMS-OP organic wards only)

Phase 3: Accreditation Decision

Data from the self- and peer-review will be compiled by the AIMS Project Team

into a summary report of the ward's strengths and areas for improvement. Once this has been verified by the lead reviewer who visited the ward, the *AIMS Accreditation Advisory Committee (AAC)* will consider the data and recommend an accreditation status for the ward. This will then be passed to the *Royal College of Psychiatrists' Education, Training and Standards Committee (ETSC)* for ratification. Accreditation is not confirmed until the ETSC ratifies the recommendation of the AAC, and the ward will not be notified of their status until after the ETSC has met.

There are four categories of accreditation status:

- **Category 1: "accredited with excellence".**

The ward would *at the point of peer-review*:

- meet all Type 1 standards;
- meet at least 95% of Type 2 standards
- meet all or the majority of Type 3 standards, with a clear plan for how to achieve the others.

Accreditation at Category 1 is valid for up to four years, subject to satisfactory completion of interim self-review.

- **Category 2: "accredited".**

The ward would *at the point of peer-review*:

- meet all Type 1 standards;
- meet the majority of Type 2 standards;
- meet many Type 3 standards.

Accreditation at Category 2 is valid for up to four years, subject to satisfactory completion of interim self-review.

- **Category 3: "accreditation deferred".**

The ward would *at the point of peer-review*:

- fail to meet one or more Type 1 standards but demonstrate the capacity to meet these within a short time;
- fail to meet a substantial number of Type 2 standards but demonstrate the capacity to meet the majority within a short time.

The ward would receive a report detailing the strengths and weaknesses that had been identified, with an emphasis on those standards that need to be addressed for accreditation to be awarded. Data would be collected through a further self- and/or peer-review within a six-month period to confirm that the ward now met the criteria for Category 2 approval.

- **Category 4: "not accredited".**

The ward would *at the point of peer-review*:

- fail to meet one or more Type 1 standard and not demonstrate the capacity to meet these within a short time;
- fail to meet a substantial number of Type 2 standards and not

demonstrate the capacity to meet these within a short time.

The ward would receive a report detailing the strengths and weaknesses that have been identified and a clear statement of which standards have to be met for the ward to be approved.

Wards which fail to submit adequate self-review data may also be considered for Category 4.

The Final Report and Accreditation Certificate

Once a ward has been accredited, a final bound report (including an action planning template) and an accreditation certificate will be sent to the ward, and their accreditation status will be listed on the Royal College of Psychiatrists' website.

Accreditation certificates are initially issued for two years only. Upon successful completion of the full interim self-review, at the beginning of Year 3, a second certificate for a further two years will be issued automatically, unless there are any significant changes. Please see the section 'Interim Assessments' for more information.

The ward will be recorded as accredited for up to four years from the date of the first available ETSC meeting, and normally extends approximately six to nine months beyond the end of Cycle One membership. Cycles One and Two of the review process therefore overlap, in order to ensure continuous accreditation.

The Appeals Process

The grounds for an appeal against a decision about accreditation category are that:

- the decision has been made on the basis of a summary report that contains **factual inaccuracies** about the ward at the time of the review, and/or;
- the decision is not consistent with stated criteria that determine categories of accreditation.

An appeal must be lodged in writing to the AIMS Programme Manager within eight weeks of the accreditation decision having been communicated to the local AIMS lead. Appellants are asked to provide documentary evidence to support claims of factual inaccuracy and/or a clear statement of in what way(s) they consider the decision to be inconsistent with the stated criteria for the category of accreditation awarded. A detailed description of the stages of the appeals process is available on request.

Activities and Support During a Ward's Accredited Period

In order to maintain their level of accreditation, a ward must continue to meet the standards met at peer-review, or show improvement. Wards which fail to submit adequate interim self-review data may be considered for Category 4.

Interim Assessments

To ensure that accredited wards are continuing to meet standards, they are required to undertake a full self-review two years after their start date (the beginning of Year 3), regardless of the date of accreditation. Wards also complete a brief self-review at the end of their first and third membership years.

The full self-review is the same as that undertaken at the initial self-review. A peer-review visit will not normally be undertaken, excepting the reasons outlined below.

- **Wards with Category 1 accreditation (excellence)**

In order for a ward to maintain Category 1 accreditation it must continue to meet all Type 1 Standards, at least 95% of Type 2 Standards and most Type 3 Standards, at interim self-review.

If, following interim self-review, the ward no longer meets one or more Type 1 Standards (including any standards newly introduced since the original peer-review), the ward will be reconsidered by the AAC and may have their accreditation suspended for a specified period in order to meet them. The AAC will then make a recommendation on whether the ward is re-accredited at Category 1 or 2.

If a ward is suspended, but then fails to meet the Type 1 Standards within the specified time frame, the AAC will again reconsider their accreditation, recommending Category 4 (not accredited). If this is ratified by the ETSC, the ward will then be asked to return their accreditation certificate.

If, following interim self-review, the ward no longer meets at least 95% of Type 2 Standards and/or most Type 3 Standards, the ward will be reconsidered by the AAC and may have their accreditation level amended to Category 2.

- **Wards with Category 2 accreditation (accredited)**

If a Category 2 ward does not meet one or more Type 1 Standards (including any standards newly introduced since the original peer-review) the ward will be reconsidered by the AAC and may have their accreditation suspended for a brief period in order to meet them.

If a ward successfully meets the Type 1 Standards within the specified time period, the ward will be resubmitted to the AAC and accreditation will be reinstated.

If a ward fails to meet the Type 1 Standards within the specified time frame, the AAC will reconsider their accreditation, recommending Category 4 (not accredited). If this is ratified by the ETSC, the ward will then be asked to return their accreditation certificate.

- **Category 2 wards moving up to Category 1 following interim review**

It is possible for a ward to move from Category 2 accreditation to Category 1 within their four-year cycle. To be considered for a higher level of accreditation the ward must:

- return all its interim self-review data by the date requested;
- meet all Type 1 Standards, at least 95% of Type 2 Standards and most Type 3 Standards at interim self-review. Wards who do not meet sufficient standards cannot be considered for Category 1.

If these criteria are met, the AIMS Project Team will contact the ward team. It is for the ward to decide whether to try for Category 1 accreditation at this point, or to wait until their second accreditation cycle.

The ward must be prepared to undertake a peer-review to validate the interim data, and this will incur an additional cost of £800 +VAT to pay the costs for the peer reviewers.

A report based on the self- and peer-review will be submitted to the AAC and a recommendation made to the ETSC. If the ward has successfully demonstrated that they meet the required standards, a new certificate will be issued dated up to the end of the original accreditation period.

Standards Revision

AIMS will undertake an annual revision and update of standards to take account of new developments. Once the updated standards have been published, all member wards will be informed via the email discussion group. Wards are assessed against the set of standards that were in place when they commenced their self-review until the point of accreditation. Subsequent interim reviews are based on whichever set of standards is currently in place.

Email Discussion Groups

Throughout the period of accreditation, ward staff will have access to advice and support from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and their peers through our email discussion groups. Any member of staff from a member ward can join the group by emailing AIMS-Chat@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk (for AIMS-WA and AIMS-AT) or AIMS-OP-Chat@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk (for AIMS-OP) with the word 'join' in the subject line.

How Can You Become More Involved?

Join a Peer-Review Team

It is expected that staff from participating wards and local Service Users and Carers will visit other wards as members of review teams. This will normally involve spending a day at a ward and possibly commenting on a draft of the ward's report. Travel and – where necessary – accommodation expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with the policy of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

In order to become a reviewer, staff, Service Users and Carers must attend a reviewer training day. These take place at least twice a year, with dates advertised via the email discussion groups.

Contact Details for the AIMS Project Team

Joanne Cresswell
AIMS Programme Manager/Nurse Advisor
Tel: 020 7977 4994
Fax: 020 7481 4831
Email: jcresswell@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk

Mark Beavon
AIMS Deputy Programme Manager
Tel: 020 7977 6694
Fax: 020 7481 4831
Email: mbeavon@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk

Rachel Barrett
AIMS Project Worker
Tel: 020 7977 4993
Fax: 020 7481 4831
Email: rbarrett@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk

Sarah Bleksley
AIMS Project Worker
Tel: 020 7977 6647
Fax: 020 7481 4831
Email: sbleksley@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk

AIMS

The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Centre for Quality Improvement
4th Floor, Standon House
21 Mansell Street
London E1 8AA

AIMS@cru.rcpsych.ac.uk
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/AIMS