

Royal College of Psychiatrists Parliamentary Newsletter Party Conference Special 2007

Mental Health Bill becomes an Act— now a robust Code of Practice must be presented to Parliament.

The College hopes to work with Parliamentarians to ensure that the Code of Practice contains promises made during powerful Parliamentary debates on the Mental Health Bill.

After 8 years, we have a Mental Health Act 2007, but the job is only half done. We believe that it is time for us to look forward to the challenges that now face us in relation to this important new legislation.

The first of these is achieving a robust Code of Practice, which is fit-for-purpose for patients, carers and professionals alike. During the passage of the Bill, Parliamentarians put forward a number of amendments, which were supported by the College. Whilst these amendments were lost, their sentiments can be carried forward in the Code of Practice, and we would be pleased to give detailed information to support that aim.

KEY OBJECTIVES

Principles

Ensuring that the principles which guide the use of the Act are drafted to reflect the aspirations put forward by MPs and Peers, and Government promises made at the dispatch box.

Supervised Community Treatment

Ensure that the Code will be clear about best practice when using the much-debated Supervised Community Treatment powers; so that they will only be used on those revolving door patients who will really benefit from them.

PRIORITIES FOR RCPsych

The need for a robust Mental Health Act Code of Practice 1

Mental health and employment 1

Military mental health 2

The Health and Social Care Bill 2

Contact us:
Neil Balmer
Public Affairs Officer
nbalmer@rcpsych.ac.uk
020 7235 2351 x 149
07736 279 272

EMPLOYMENT IS GOOD FOR YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING

Being in employment is good for your mental health. Yet according to the Social Exclusion Unit, only 24 per cent of people with long-term disabilities due to Mental Health problems are in work, which is the lowest employment rate for any of the main disability groups. The College calls for urgent action to address this.



ROLE OF EMPLOYERS

We know that people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders are unfairly discriminated against by employers. The government needs to devise systems to work with employers to encourage them to address the discrimination of people with mental disabilities.

ACCESS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPIES

As Lord Layard has argued, psychological therapies are an effective way of getting people back into employment. It is also a crucial component of the Government's Pathways to Work condition management programme.

For welfare reform to work for people with mental health problems these therapies must be made more widely available. We encourage parliamentarians to advocate for more resources to deliver this.

Statistics:

- * **3 in 10** employees will experience some kind of mental health problem in any one year.
- * Fewer than **4 in 10** employers say they would recruit someone with a mental health problem.



MILITARY MENTAL HEALTH

The Royal College of Psychiatrists wants to ensure that members of the Armed Forces are fully trained and resourced to undertake their duties. This includes the provision of first rate psychiatric services for both serving personnel and veterans.

We welcome the establishment of the Reservists Mental Health Programme and the medical assessment programme. The latter is accessible to all who have served since 1982 and have mental health problems.

We believe these programmes will be helpful in addressing the high prevalence of mental health problems in reservist members of the Armed Forces. However, it is concerning that so few eligible reservists have taken advantage of these schemes, which is something that needs to be urgently addressed.

Whilst we are pleased that the Government continues to support military mental health services, we note the continued lack of uniformed psychiatrists available to provide care for Service personnel.

The College calls for:

Increased marketing of the Reservist Mental Health Programme and the medical assessment programme.

Greater efforts by the MoD to ensure that both regulars and reservists get rapid access to the highest levels of psychiatric care, both on operations and at home.

Work to ensure that all Service Veterans receive appropriate and timely NHS care.

About Us

The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the leading medical authority on mental health in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and is the professional and educational organisation for doctors specialising in psychiatry.



President of the Royal College, Professor Sheila Hollins (pictured), specialises in the field of learning disability and has recently been invited to join the Independent Inquiry set up to respond to the Mencap report, 'Death by Indifference'.

Did you know
— up to 50% of
all NHS
contacts are for
Mental Health

Forthcoming Legislation: Health and Social Care Bill

The Health and Social Care Bill, outlined in the Prime Minister's Legislative agenda, will make major changes to the work of the Mental Health Act Commission. We will be seeking to work closely with Parliamentarians to ensure that the Commission's role of 'safeguarding the interests of all people

detained under the Mental Health Act' is not lost in the creation of the new integrated regulator for health and adult social care, Ofcare. This role includes important tasks such as visiting individual patients who have been detained.

MENTAL HEALTH

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The Royal College provides the secretariat to the Mental Health APPG and organises regular meetings on all aspects of mental health.

The next Group meeting will be on mental health in education, focusing on 'On the Edge' – a health education programme for schools based on interactive drama. It will be on **Tuesday 23rd October between 5-7pm in Committee Room 6.**

Our team at party conference:

Dr Ian Hall - Parliamentary Liaison
(pictured right)



Neil Balmer – Public Affairs Officer
(pictured below)

Dr Jed Boardman (Labour Conference)

Dr Mark Tarn (Conservative Conference)

