Briefing note on Royal College of Psychiatrists members’ survey on mental health legislation

Date: 13/05/2020

Background

- The Royal College of Psychiatrists is the professional medical body responsible for supporting psychiatrists throughout their careers, from training through to retirement, and in setting and raising the standards of psychiatry in the United Kingdom.

- The College aims to improve the outcomes of people with mental illness, and the mental health of individuals, their families and communities. In order to achieve this, the College sets standards and promotes excellence in psychiatry; leads, represents and supports psychiatrists; improves the scientific understanding of mental illness; works with and advocates for patients, carers and their organisations. Nationally and internationally, the College has a vital role in representing the expertise of the psychiatric profession to governments and other agencies.

- Following the outbreak of the Coronavirus, there has been significant changes to the day to day work of clinicians, including psychiatrists. This includes the equipment they need to safely treat patients, the need for tests to confirm whether patients or the clinicians themselves have the virus and changes to practices.

- Further changes may also be necessary as contained within the legislation introduced in response to the crisis. These include those which were introduced immediately as well as those which may be introduced on a temporary basis.

- With these factors in mind, the recent surveys of members by the Royal College have sought to capture the views of our members on these and other key issues. This is to inform our work in engaging and supporting their efforts.

Overview

- The original survey took place from Tuesday 14 April to Friday 17 April 2020.

- The following questions around mental health legislation were asked:
  - Have you witnessed delays in patients being assessed under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 in the past two weeks?
  - Do you think the provisions in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act to amend section 13ZA of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 in relation to incapable adults being moved from hospitals to the community should be enacted?

- Of the 1,360 members of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland, 180 responded (13.2%).
This was followed by a further survey, conducted between Friday 1 May and Wednesday 6 May.

This received 148 responses, with the same questions relating to mental health legislation used.

**Key results**

*Have you witnessed delays in patients being assessed under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 in the past two weeks?*

**April**
- 180 people responded.
- 15.6% reported that there had been delays, compared to 57.2% who had not (27.2% did not know or felt the question was not relevant)

**May**
- There were 147 responses.
- 10.2% said there had been delays, with 71.4% stating there had not been (18.4% did not know or felt the question was not relevant)

**Changes between surveys**
- The percentage of those who had witnessed delays fell by 10.4%, with the percentage who hadn’t witnessed delays rising by 14.2%.

![Survey Results Chart](chart.png)
Do you think the provisions in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act to amend section 13ZA of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 in relation to incapable adults being moved from hospitals to the community should be enacted?

April
- The question had 179 respondents in the April survey.
- Within those, 39.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that these powers should be enacted, with 11% disagreeing. 49% did not agree or disagree.

May
- In the May survey, there were 146 responses in total.
- There was 26.7% of respondents in favour of enacting the provisions. The numbers who disagreed increased to 23%.

Changes between surveys
- The percentage of those who agreed fell by over 13%, with the percentage against enacting the proposals rising by around 14%.

Do you think the provisions in the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act to amend section 13ZA of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 in relation to incapable adults being moved from hospitals to the community should be enacted?

Agree/Strongly agree  Neither  Disagree/ strongly disagree

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree/Strongly agree</td>
<td>39.67%</td>
<td>26.71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>49.16%</td>
<td>49.32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree/ strongly disagree</td>
<td>11.17%</td>
<td>23.97%</td>
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APRIL  MAY