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# Criteria for old age psychiatry services in the UK

Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age

FACULTY REPORT

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# Criteria for old age psychiatry services in the UK

The expertise of old age psychiatry services lies in the care and treatment of people with complex mixtures of psychological, cognitive, functional, behavioural, physical and social problems usually relating to ageing. Current evidence suggests specialist old age services are best equipped to diagnose and treat mental illness in our ageing population. However, restricting access to a service by age alone is not logical and now probably unlawful in the UK.

As an alternative to age as a criterion for old age services, the Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age at the Royal College of Psychiatrists has developed criteria based on need. Extensive consultation was undertaken during their development and the principle that older people have access to dedicated, specialist old age services for functional illnesses and dementia is widely supported.

## Criteria

- 1 People of any age with a primary dementia.
- 2 People with mental disorder and physical illness or frailty that contributes to, or complicates, the management of their mental illness. This may include people under 65 years of age.
- 3 People with psychological or social difficulties related to the ageing process, or end-of-life issues, or who feel their needs may be best met by a service for older people. This would normally include people over 70 years of age.

## Notes

In all cases, the patient's choice should be considered when deciding on the most appropriate service. Patients should generally be transferred between different psychiatric services when stable. Patients should only move services in a crisis in exceptional circumstances, because of patient safety considerations.

For patients with severe comorbidity, conjoint management should be explored. The principles of conjoint management are that one team takes responsibility for the overall care and treatment of the patient, but draws on support in addition to consultation from other services.

Primary dementia excludes acquired brain injury and Korsakoff syndrome. The criteria above are for guidance only.

## Stakeholders consulted

- Age UK
- British Geriatrics Society
- British Psychological Society
- Faculty of General Adult Psychiatry, Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Faculty of the Psychiatry of Old Age, Royal College of Psychiatrists
- Mental Health Network
- National Association of Primary Care
- NHS commissioners
- NHS Confederation
- Royal College of Nursing