

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)-01-05-(p4)

Meeting date: 12 January 2004

Meeting Venue: Committee room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Evidence to Health and Social Services Committee on User and Carer Participation in the National Service Framework for Mental Health.

Introduction

Mencap Cymru has over 1,300 members in Wales of whom over 1,000 are people with a learning disability. This response is on behalf of Mencap Cymru. Mencap Cymru aims to help people with a learning disability take control of their lives through campaigns, informing and supporting and providing good quality direct services.

In addition to our members we have over 800 people with a learning disability and their families using our services.

Enclosures

Enclosed with this brief summary paper is a copy of our report "[Treat me Right](#)". We are submitting this as evidence and would like to give oral evidence on the issues of user and carer participation as it is experienced by people with a learning disability to the committee.

Summary of Issues:

People with a learning disability are more likely to experience mental illness than members of the general population. One in three people with a learning disability experience being mentally ill compared to one in four of the general population. In addition the probability of developing schizophrenia is three times that for a person with a learning disability than for a member of the general population.

1. Full and genuine participation for people with a learning disability must start with a recognition of their right to use mainstream services. Some people experience delay or even lack of treatment because they are referred to specialist learning disability mental health services, or simply learning disability services. There is evidence that people with a learning disability who also have a problem with their mental health do not have the same access to services that the general population experience.

2. The barriers are lack of skills and training for health staff in learning disability and in communication styles that will maximise communication with people with a learning disability.

In addition the problem outlined above creates a formidable barrier.

3. The barriers can be overcome by better joint working with consultant learning disability psychiatrists and through awareness raising of the needs of people with a learning disability for all mental health professionals.

In addition making information more available to people with a learning disability in a form that is appropriate would enable people with a learning disability to be more pro-active in obtaining the care and support they need.

4. All the identified bodies should review their current practice to ensure that their policies and information provision meets the needs of people with a learning disability. Further training of community learning disability teams in mental health and the creation of formal links with mental health teams would ensure more examples of joint working and greater access to mainstream therapies. Many people with a learning disability currently miss out on accessing these.

In summary

Mencap Cymru believes that people with a learning disability who also experience mental ill health can experience barriers to accessing mainstream mental health services.

This results in people with a learning disability experiencing delays in treatment and furthermore the range of therapeutic services available to them is more limited than for the general population.

Further Information

For further information about this response or about Mencap Cymru please contact Liz Neal on 02920 747588.