

# Health and Social Services Committee

**HSS(2)-08-06(p4)**

**Date of meeting: Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

**Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay**

**Title: Relating mental health promotion in Wales to action in the EU**

## **Purpose**

1. This paper considers the proposals in the recent EU Green Paper on mental health and outlines action underway in Wales that contributes to the proposals.

## **Summary/recommendations**

2. This paper is being presented at the request of the Committee – the EU Green Paper was presented to the Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005, and tabled for discussion in the New Year.

3. It is recommended that the Committee note the significant work underway in Wales that contributes to the key proposals of the EU Green Paper, and considers whether it wishes to respond formally to the Green Paper.

## **Background**

### **Promoting good mental health**

4. Mental health and wellbeing is a desirable quality in its own right and is more than the absence of symptoms of mental illness. Promotion of mental health targets the whole population, going beyond treating mental ill-health to proactively promoting wellbeing and good mental health.

5. Maintaining good mental health, as with maintaining good physical health requires positive action – a multitude of factors can come into play to positively or negatively affect it.

6. Protective factors – have a positive effect on mental health and exposure to these decreases the likelihood of developing mental health problems, such as: taking regular exercise; maintaining good emotional relationships; having good quality and stable housing; and being free from the fear of crime.

7. Risk factors – have a detrimental effect on mental health and exposure to these increases the likelihood of developing mental health problems, such as: physical inactivity; lack of inter-personal relationships; feeling isolated or excluded; fear of crime and lack of sensitivity.

## **The EU Green Paper and Welsh policy**

8. The EU Green Paper and its strategy proposals are summarised in Annex 1, and suggests that to be successful, a mental health strategy for the EU needs should be cross cutting, promoting and protecting mental health of all. There are many Welsh Assembly Government and non-devolved UK Government policy areas that have the potential to positively affect the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities in this way by combating risk factors and strengthening protective factors.

9. The policy landscape in Wales aligns well with the Green Paper's proposals – at the highest level with Designed for Life and the Review of Health and Social Care in Wales (the Wanless Review) which stress the importance of a twin track approach to improving health by promoting health and wellbeing so preventing the development of illness, and improving the access and quality of health and social care services through modernisation.

10. Health Challenge Wales is the Assembly Government's challenge to everyone to take responsibility for their own health and be more proactive in achieving good health and is therefore supportive of mental health promotion.

11. More specifically, the Revised Adult Mental Health Services NSF and the developing Mental Health Promotion Action Plan, (to be published as a consultation document this summer) further elaborate on programmes to improve mental health. The Assembly Government has also set up a cross-government network to advise on the development and implementation of the action plan.

12. The Welsh Assembly Government will be producing guidance later this year relating to suicide prevention and has commissioned the National Public Health Service in Wales to provide detailed advice on this.

13. The NSFs for Children and Older People also require action to ensure promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of their target populations.

14. Targets were set for mental health in 2004 to:

- Increase the mean Mental Component Summary Score (MCS) for Wales to 50 by 2012; and
- Reduce the European Age Standardised Rate (EASR) from suicide at all ages (including undetermined deaths) by at least 10% by 2012
- Increase the mean MCS score for carers by one point by 2012

15. Progress against these targets will be reported in the Chief Medical Officer's report series.

## **The Revised Adult Mental Health National Service Framework (NSF)**

16. The NSF:

- Sets actions to promote mental health and address the issues of stigma and discrimination, for example through the development of local mental health action plans (by Local Authorities [LAs] and Local Health Boards [LHBs]); and through a national programme to promote social inclusion (by LAs/LHBs and the Assembly Government).
- Seeks to promote opportunities for a normal pattern of daily life for people with mental health problems, particularly requiring LA action to ensure there is a range of housing options with appropriate levels of support available for people with mental health problems.
- Sets a clear course of action to ensure the momentum for improving mental health services, for example by encouraging service user participation in planning, design and delivery of mental health services; making advocacy services available; and eliminating unlawful discrimination through the development of a race equality action plan for mental health services in Wales.
- Sets actions to ensure provision of effective client assessment and care pathways, based on the best evidence and including provision for the medical, physical, psychological and social needs of service users and carers.
- Includes action to produce suicide prevention guidance and protocols for use in primary and secondary care

## **The Mental Health Promotion Action Plan**

17. The Mental Health Promotion Action Plan being developed by Public Health Improvement Division (PHID) in response to Standard 1 of the Adult Mental Health NSF, aims to:

- Improve the mental health and wellbeing of the population of Wales
- Reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems; and
- Promote social inclusion for people experiencing mental health problems

18. The action plan will map current policies and programmes and establish a baseline on which to build. It will identify gaps in current activity and outline plans to address the shortfalls. It will provide direction and impetus across the Assembly Government, the NHS, local government, and the voluntary sector to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing in the development of all new policies.

## **Research in Wales**

19. The Wales Office of Research and Development for Health and Social Care (WORD) is implementing the Welsh Assembly Government's research and development strategy for Wales; a key part of which is the development of an all Wales research infrastructure.

20. A series of networks are being developed, including one for mental health to function as ‘creative hubs’, developing ideas for health and social care based research activity. This will enable Wales to initiate and take part in high quality large-scale research initiatives.

## **Consideration**

21. The ‘background’ section outlines current policy action in Wales that relates to the proposals set out in the EU Green Paper. The Committee may wish to consider whether they wish to respond to the consultation.

## **Financial Implications**

22. The Health and Social Services Resources Directorate have seen and noted that there are no financial implications arising directly from this paper. (GH 2510). Any financial implications associated with the Mental Health Promotion Action Plan will be dealt with in a future submission.

## **Cross Cutting Themes**

23. This paper does not have any implications for equal opportunities or sustainable development

## **Action for Subject Committee**

24. See recommendations

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## **Annex 1 – Summary of the EU Green Paper (Improving the mental health of the population: Towards a strategy on mental health for the EU)**

The EU Green Paper launches a debate about the relevance of mental health for the EU, the need for a strategy at EU level, and its possible priorities.

## **Strategy proposals**

The Commission proposes the strategy focuses on:

### **Promoting the mental health of all**

- Building mental health in infants, children and adolescents
- Promoting mental health in the working population
- Promoting mental health in older people
- Targeting vulnerable groups in society

## **Addressing mental ill health through preventative action**

- Preventing depression
- Reducing substance misuse disorders (drugs and alcohol)
- Preventing suicide

## **Improving the quality of life of people with mental ill health or disability through social inclusion and the protection of their rights and dignity**

- Combating discrimination based on disability
- Shifting attitudes and improving awareness about mental ill health and treatment options
- Encouraging integration of mentally ill and disabled people into work life
- ‘Deinstitutionalisation’ of mental health services

## **Developing a mental health information, research and knowledge system for the EU**

- Harmonising existing national and international indicators on mental health and disability to create a comparable dataset across the EU
- Building research capacities

## **Background – the challenge of mental ill health in the EU**

- More than 27% of adult Europeans are estimated to experience at least one form of mental ill health during any one year, most commonly anxiety and depression
- The incidence of mental ill health is increasing and is set to be the highest ranking cause of disease in the developed world by 2020
- More people in the EU die each year from suicide than the annual deaths for road traffic accidents, homicides or AIDS
- Mental ill health costs the EU an estimated 3-4% GDP, mainly through lost productivity
- There are significant inequalities in mental health across the EU, for example, suicide rates in Greece being 3.6 per 100 000 compared to 44 per 100 000 in Lithuania (the highest in the World)

There is a wide range of spending of health budgets on mental health across Europe. A uniform solution would not be appropriate as there is great diversity between member states reflecting different situations, traditions and cultures. However, there is scope for exchange and co-operations between member states and opportunity to learn from each other

An EU strategy on mental health could add value by:

- Creating a framework for exchange and co-operation between member states
- Helping to increase the coherence of actions in different policy sectors
- Opening up a platform for involving stakeholders in building solutions

## **Consultation**

The paper poses the following consultation questions:

- How relevant is the mental health of the population for the EU's strategic policy objectives?
- Would the development of a comprehensive EU-strategy on mental health add value to the existing and envisaged actions, and are adequate priorities proposed?
- Are the initiatives proposed appropriate to support the co-ordination between member states, to promote the integration of mental health into the health and non-health policies and stakeholder action, and to better liaise research and policy on mental health aspects?

## **The mandate of the European Community**

Article 152 of the EC Treaty stipulates that 'a high level of human health protection shall be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Community policies and activities'

Member states are:

Exclusively competent for the organisation of their health services and care; but

Encouraged and supported to co-operate with each other and address inequalities between them; and

Obligated to contribute to a high level of human health protection through policies and activities