

Venue: The Memorial Hall, Bodhyfryd, Wrexham

Date: Thursday 8 July 2004

Title: Creating a Unified and Fair System for Assessing and Managing Care Guidance April 2002 (Unified Assessment Process)

Purpose

1. At the 'Review of Interface between Health and Social Care' meeting held on 26 May 2004, the Health and Social Services Committee requested a 'paper to note' providing an update on the implementation of the unified assessment process.

Summary / Recommendations

2. Unified assessment guidance was published in April 2002. Local Implementation Boards are implementing the guidance against prescribed milestones. Progress has and continues to be made with a firm commitment to the guidance by health and social services partners. Further initiatives are being taken by the Welsh Assembly Government to support local partnership arrangements and address related key issues at a national level.

Background

3. Creating a Unified and Fair System for Assessing and Managing Care guidance was issued jointly to Health and Social Services in April 2002 and consolidated the former Welsh Office Guidance 'Managing Care' (April 1991). It also provides the required guidance for health bodies to ensure compliance with the targets set in 'Improving Health in Wales - a plan for the NHS with its partners'. The guidance placed responsibility jointly on NHS bodies and local authorities to ensure multi-agency working in assessing and planning to meet individual needs. (A copy of the [Guidance Practitioners Handbook](#) is attached.)

4. The guidance specifies key milestones for implementation. From April 2002 NHS bodies, local authorities and their partners in care were required to achieve key stages in reaching the '12 steps of implementation' specified in the Guidance with full implementation to be achieved by all partners in April 2006. The milestones set out different target dates for assessment and care management for older people and other adult service users. Implementation planning for older people began in April 2002 with full implementation required by April 2005. Planning for the remaining adult service user groups began in April 2003 with full implementation required by April 2006.

Consideration

5. There are twenty-two implementation boards in Wales constituted with Health, Social Services and other partners in care. Most implementation boards have appointed implementation officers. The Social Services Inspectorate and Office of the Chief Nursing Officer have dedicated lead officers who monitor progress towards implementation and provide advice and support to implementation boards.

6. National and local workshops and conferences have been facilitated to support implementation. A further four conferences are planned for late summer and early autumn 2004. The Welsh Assembly Government also plans to publish a best practice 'toolkit' and training material this year to support implementation. Related guidance will also be issued in 2004 covering 'Carers Assessments', 'Confidentiality and Information Sharing' between partner agencies. 'Informing Health Care' and 'Informing Social Care' also support the implementation.

7. The Social Services Inspectorate reviews the action and implementation plans of all implementation boards in September each year. The annual review undertaken in September 2003 highlighted that all Local Authority Social Service Departments have revised eligibility criteria in place and that seven local authorities were achieving timescales that will enable them to meet the implementation milestones set out in the Guidance. The 2003 evaluation report provides an overview of progress to date, direct work with Implementation Boards indicate that they will make further progress in 2004.

8. Key issues have emerged in terms of developing joint Information Technology systems, Information Sharing Protocols and in realizing the health and social care interface. At a recent meeting with the Chief Nursing Officer, Chief Inspector Social Services and members of local Implementation boards, health and social services highlighted common challenges in moving towards full implementation. These included obtaining a comprehensive Information Technology solution to support unified assessment and the need to realign information sharing protocols between health and social care.

9. The Welsh Assembly Government is responding to these issues. The publication of the toolkit and further guidance should serve to help establish a robust health and social care interface which allows shared assessments and service user information to be exchanged. In turn these initiatives and compliance with new guidance will ensure that processes and systems are not overly bureaucratic and that assessment is person centered and proportionate to individual need.

10. In meetings with the Chief Inspector and Chief Nursing Officer both local health and social services underlined their continued commitment to the guidance. There is clear recognition by all that unified assessment positively supports improvements in care management and provides a framework for effective engagement, assessment, care planning and review to support service-users and carers.

Financial Implications

11. There are none arising from this paper to note.

Cross Cutting Themes

12. The guidance establishes a framework for the assessment of all adult service-users including older people, individuals with mental health, learning disability and drug and alcohol problems and physically disabled people. In this context it enables all kinds of needs to be evaluated to inform a co-ordinated approach to support individuals at risk of losing their independence. The guidance aims to promote maximum independence, social inclusion and community integration whilst safeguarding vulnerable people and the public as a whole. The over-arching framework of the guidance links into key policy areas such as the Wanless 'Prevention' agenda and Housing related support services including 'Supporting People'.

Action for Health and Social Services Committee

13. The Committee is asked to note the progress made towards implementation and the consistent support provided by Social Services Inspectorate and Office of the Chief Nursing Officer to implementation boards.

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