

Health and Social Services Committee

HSS(2)-10-06(p3)

Date of meeting: Thursday 15th June 2006

Venue: Committee Room 3, Senedd, National Assembly for Wales

Title: Men's mental health issues

Purpose

To provide a background paper outlining the Assembly Government's responses to men's mental health needs

Summary/recommendations

1. The Minister for Health and Social Services agreed to provide a background paper on men's mental health to be discussed at the Committee meeting of 15th June. This coincides with 'Men's Health Week' (12th – 18th June 2006).
2. This paper is intended to provide background to the topic and therefore contains no recommendations.

Background

Policy context

3. Improving the mental health and well being of all the people in Wales and delivering improved mental health services continues to be a key health and social care priority for the Assembly Government which is committed to ensuring that equitable, accessible, comprehensive mental health services are provided for all the people of Wales based on need, irrespective of where they live, their age, gender, sexuality, disability, race, ethnicity or their social, cultural and religious background.
4. We are addressing many of the factors that particularly impact on men's mental health through implementation of our revised Adult Mental Health National Service Framework (NSF) and supporting policy implementation guidance.
5. The Mental Health Promotion Action Plan is being developed by Public Health Improvement Division (PHID) in response to Standard 1 of the NSF, and aims to:

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

6. 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.

Specific issues and Assembly Government action

7. There are a range of factors that particularly impact on men's mental health, many of which need to be looked at in the broader social and cultural context of society. There is a general recognition that men are less likely than women to go to their GP with mental health problems. When they do go, men are more likely to present with physical health problems that may not be recognised as associated with mental distress. This may be due to some men perceiving emotional and mental distress symptoms as a weakness, and GPs may be less likely to probe and less likely to diagnose men with depression.

Suicide

8. Alcohol and drug abuse, which is often associated with mental health problems and suicide, is five times more prevalent in men than women. Suicide is also more common amongst men than women, accounting for about 75% of all suicides in the UK.

9. In Wales suicide prevention is a priority for services and is being addressed through implementing our Adult Mental Health NSF. Services aim to deliver high quality, responsive and effective evidenced based care using NICE guidelines and the recommendations of the National Confidential Inquiry into Homicide and Suicides "Safety First". Further good practice guidance relating to suicide prevention is currently being developed by the Assembly Government.

Mental health in prisons

10. Men make up approximately 96% of the prison population, and a significant number have a mental health problem. The suicide rate amongst male prisoners is six times higher than amongst the general population, with young men under 21 particularly vulnerable.

11. The Assembly Government is developing a care pathway for mental healthcare in prisons and ensuring that mental health services work closely with local prison staff and the in reach service to help prevent suicide among prisoners.

Employment and maintaining employment

12. Unemployment is a major cause of depression and suicide amongst men, and research shows that one in seven men who become unemployed will develop depression within six months. Two thirds of men under the age of 35 with mental health problems who die by suicide are unemployed.

13. The Assembly Government recognises that mental health involves not only Health and Social Services working together but also housing, education employment and leisure services, as well as the voluntary organisations specialising in these areas.

14. People with or recovering from mental health problems find it extremely difficult to re enter the workforce or to enjoy the full participation within society that most take for granted. The consequences are that many people with mental health problems are socially excluded within our communities and frequently living in poverty debt and poor housing, and this hampers their ability to enjoy full citizenship and ability to recover their mental health.

15. A number of schemes and initiatives have or are being developed in Wales to ensure support is provided to help people with mental health problems maintain their employment. Schemes include:

- ‘Pathways to Work’ and ‘Want2Work’ which have been successful in helping both men and women with mental health problems back into work
- Healthy Minds at Work – a European Social Funded programme administered through the Assembly Government to specifically keep people with mental health problems in work, and address those problems at early stages
- The Corporate Health Standard – the Assembly Government’s workplace health development tool and award scheme to support and reward good practice in workplace health promotion. The Standard includes a focus on reducing stress in the workplace as well as promoting linked wider aspects of health such as physical health and healthy eating

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups

16. Research shows that men from black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to experience compulsory admission to hospital for mental illness, are more likely to be treated with drugs and are less likely to receive ‘talking therapies’ than the general population. The findings of the ‘Count Me In’ census (a national census of inpatients in mental health hospitals and facilities in England and Wales) conducted in 2005 shows that patients in Wales are less likely to have a recorded injury, be restrained, be in seclusion, be detained or be on CPA (Care Programme Approach), when compared to the standard population of England & Wales.

17. The Assembly Government’s policy is for mental health services to support people from all BME groups to live healthy and independent lives, to work to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations in NHS and social care settings. A race equality action plan for mental health services in Wales has been developed and will shortly be published. The Action plan covers 5 areas:

- Developing the evidence base - inpatient and community monitoring
- Designing appropriate and responsive services
- Training and recruitment
- Delivery of services
- Performance management, monitoring and audit

Consideration

18. This paper does not make any recommendations.

Financial Implications

19. The Health and Social Services Resources Directorate have seen and noted that there are no financial implications arising directly from this paper (2573).

Cross Cutting Themes

The paper contains examples of good practice relating to equality of opportunity.

Action for Subject Committee

None

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