

Petitions Committee : Tuesday 16 October 2012

P-04-400 : NICE Quality Standard in Mental Health

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THE PETITION TO THE WELSH ASSEMBLY:

WITNESS STATEMENTS BY CURRENT AND FORMER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE USERS & FRIENDS / CARERS.

The following are from individuals' personal experiences. They are either from current or former "service users" in the Wales mental health system, or friends and carers who have witnessed treatment of service users; whether in hospital or in the community.

These statements have been collated and submitted to support the petition as an illustration of practices which fail to meet the standards of care which service users and their carers should receive. There are many other stories of "lived experience" available through many other sources e.g. Gofal, Mind etc.. Therefore this is just a small sample but illustrates why we strongly feel that the NICE standards for service users should be implemented and provide a standard of service and care which has to be implemented and followed.

1. I have been in hospital under Section (*required to stay in hospital under the Mental Health Act*) a number of times. The last time I was in Whitchurch I was assaulted by one of the workers on the night duty. I couldn't sleep and it was only about 9.30pm so I wanted to watch the TV. I was told I couldn't and to go back to my room. When I wouldn't I was gripped by one arm – which was forcibly put up my back and put back in my room. It was a strong man who assaulted me and it was so painful I thought my arm was at breaking point

When I came out of hospital the psychiatrist told me and my partner that there was no treatment other than medication. It was only through a friend that we found out that there was a range of support that should be available from both the NHS and Social Services. My partner raised this at our next appointment with the psychiatrist – at which point he "remembered" and provided me with A CPN and referred me to Outreach Services. This all happened in the last eighteen months (2011 – 2012).
Mags C.

2. In February of this year (2012) I found out, purely by chance, that a long-standing friend of mine was on Gorwel Ward at the Llanfair unit at Llandough Hospital.

AC, who is sixty years old, had never previously been under psychiatric care or received treatment for mental illness. Following a series of events - a family argument over money, which appeared to lead to his sister contacting his GP; a subsequent argument with his GP; and an ongoing issue with the police (he reported attempted blackmail of

“grooming” by two teenagers – a girl and her boyfriend). One evening when walking his dog he was picked up by the police and taken to the Llanfair unit.

It seems that a police officer (unofficially) told a member of the nursing staff that he was being investigated for suspected child grooming and child pornography. No charges were ever made against him – there was no incriminating evidence either in the house or on his computers.

When I found out he was an in-patient, I went to visit him. He had been on the unit for a number of months – then told he could leave – and then recalled and sectioned. He was understandably angry and confused by his confinement. When I saw the way he was dealt with by the staff I was horrified – they showed an obvious dislike – chose to ignore him as much as possible and were only interested in his taking medication.

It was only after my intervention – organising legal aid – regularly visiting – sitting in on his consultations; that the staff’s behaviour and treatment of him dramatically improved. He was spoken to and treated much better and finally discharged (just before a formal panel meeting was due to take place).

Jane S

3. I have only been in a psychiatric hospital once and that was over 15 years ago. I became psychotic and to avoid being sectioned I agreed to go into Whitechurch. I was so frightened and distressed by the experience that I swore to myself that I would sooner commit suicide than end up in there again. There was no care – other than giving me medication. I had very bad reactions to some of the drugs. On one occasion I had to be given an antidote – it was another patient who realized I was so unwell and took me to the nurses office where the staff spent most of their time.

I also saw another patient being assaulted by several members of staff. None of them saw the event which led to a fight (although I and many others did) – they got the wrong patient and she was so heavily tranquillised she scarcely moved for three days.

When I left I received very little aftercare, was unable to work, plunged into a terrible depression and ended up losing my house. I moved back to my home town. I never told my GP about my diagnosis of Bipolar Affective Disorder but for most of that time did take antidepressants.

I moved back to Wales about six years ago. Two and a half years ago I became very ill. I could scarcely get out of bed and couldn’t even fill in forms for council tax or claim any benefit. I was so desperate that eventually I asked my GP to refer me to a psychiatrist. This time I received wonderful care but I am aware from talking to many other service users that not a lot seems to have changed – particularly in the NHS and on psychiatric wards.

JMS

4. When I was in hospital my psychiatrist told me that I wouldn't be able to cope with independent living. He told me I should give up my flat. Unfortunately I took his advice and ended up homeless. I had to go into a hostel and it's taken me years to get my own place again.

4 Winds Service User

5. I was both sexually and physically abused as a child by my father. This has affected me to this day. I have asked many times to see a psychologist as I feel that this is the only thing that can possibly begin to help. I have never got to see one. The psychiatrist just gives me drugs. I even thought about trying to see a psychologist privately but living on benefits that's just impossible.

Phil M

6. I was homeless for six years and became a very heavy drinker. With help I managed to stop drinking and went into a hostel where no alcohol was allowed. I was so depressed that I attempted suicide on several occasions and was taken into the Poisons Department at Llandough hospital. I did see a mental health nurse but was always discharged without seeing a psychiatrist because I "knew what I was doing".

7. The hostel tried to get help for my depression and suicide attempts from the hospital. This never happened – although the last time I nearly managed to kill myself. I started drinking again because this was the only way I could stop feeling suicidal – but that meant I lost my place at the hostel.

AB

8. I have bi-polar disorder. My psychiatrist prescribes Lithium for this – as it works as a mood stabiliser. This is the most common drug for this condition but it is a heavy metal and in the long term causes kidney damage. It also has to be regularly monitored through blood tests because if the level is too high it is toxic and very dangerous.

9. On one occasion I got a phone call telling me my level was way too high and to stop taking it immediately. There was no suggestion that I should go to a poisons unit or get an antidote and no-one came to check I was okay. But they are quick enough to turn up to take me to a psychiatric unit if they think I am becoming mentally unwell.

SJ

10. I have first hand experience regarding my son who first became ill at the age of 15 - he is 32 now and stable, intelligent, caring and very motivated- but we had horrific experiences in the past, and the way his illness progressed was precisely because of the lack of intervention, proper care, lack of understanding of the needs etc.etc.etc. It was a true nightmare.

AW

HOUSING ISSUES