

## News

Under embargo until 00.01hours, Tuesday, 28 October 2008

# A better future in mind

## Experts set out a new agenda to improve mental health and mental health care in the North West

A year-long review of mental health services in the North West has found encouraging evidence of service improvement and has set out a new agenda to tackle some of the long-standing issues confronting the North West.

The North West Commission on Mental Health was set up in July 2007 by the Board of NHS North West, the region's strategic health authority (SHA). The Commission was asked to take stock of the current state of mental health and mental health services and to make recommendations for improvements.

The report published today, *A better future in mind*, sets out 12 recommendations for change - including further action to strengthen the voice for service users and carers, a greater focus on preventing mental health problems, more sophisticated commissioning of services and more investment in staff training and development

The recommendations are based on the views of people across the region who use mental health services and their carers; and on what the teams who deliver these services believe is best for the people they care for.

Welcoming the report, SHA Chief Executive Mike Farrar said: "The Commission has identified many strengths in the North West which provide us with a strong platform upon which to build; and it also sets out a clear agenda for action where improvements need to be made.

Recommendations from the Commission include shifting the balance of investment towards prevention and mental health promotion; taking user and carer involvement to the next level; radically strengthening mental health commissioning; and unlocking the potential of our staff.

*More follows/.....*

## **A better future in mind /2 .....**

Sir David Henshaw, Chair of the SHA said, "I would like to extend my warmest thanks and gratitude to John Boyington and his team for all their hard work and efforts over the past 12 months.

"The SHA Board is committed to seeing these recommendations through, in order to do justice to all those people and organisations that submitted their views on the way forward; and to ensure that the North West can provide local people with the world-class mental health services they deserve."

Mike Farrar added, "The SHA Board was delighted with the recently-published excellent Healthcare Commission ratings that were achieved by NHS service providers in our region, and the positive reflection this has on our organisations and staff, but we want to see even more improvement. The Commission's work sets out a new agenda to improve the quality of our mental health and our mental health services even further and faster.'

The Commission's report also revealed the scale of mental ill health and health problems in the North West. The region has the highest level of hospital admissions for depression and anxiety at 55 per cent and 29 per cent above the national average respectively; and at the rate for hospital admission for schizophrenia is also the highest nationally, at 39 per cent higher than the national average.

Chair of the Commission John Boyington, in presenting the report to the Strategic Health Authority, said: "We found that much progress has been made to bring services into line with the National Service Framework for Mental Health, thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of staff and the contribution of service users and carers. And we are extremely grateful for the support the Commission has had from teams providing mental health services, as well as to service user and carer groups.

"It is clear that there is widespread commitment to begin to do things differently and transform mental health services. But some significant problems remain to be tackled, including inequality of access for some groups, relationships between professionals and service users and poor facilities for those who are most acutely ill."

Commenting on the detail of the report, John Boyington added; "There is no one single solution to the issues we still believe need to be tackled. We think that it is important for the NHS to make more information available about what is spent in different areas of mental health so that the public can make comparisons on spend and hold their local NHS to account for the decisions they make.

***More follows/.....***

## **A better future in mind /3 .....**

“We also believe one of the most crucial drivers for change will come when service quality is judged by patient experiences and the outcomes for people who use services. When we really know what difference has been made to an individual’s life, then we will truly be able to assess the effectiveness of mental health services.”

NHS North West published ‘Healthier Horizons for the North West’, its 10 year vision for the health and healthcare services in the region in May, in response to Lord Ara Darzi’s Next Stage Review of the NHS.

Terry Lewis, the Deputy Chair of the Commission, who has had experience of using services said: “Healthier Horizons, Lord Darzi’s report and other policy is making it clear that the patient voice and experience should take centre stage and I believe that the implementation of this set of recommendations will move us all in the right direction and help us to achieve this.’

NHS North West will now be bringing together a wide range of interested parties, including service users and carers, primary care trusts, local authorities, mental health service providers and other partner agencies, to develop an action plan which will see the Commission’s recommendations being put into action.

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### **Editorial notes**

1. To arrange interviews, please contact the Communications Team at NHS North West on 0161 625 7230
2. To see the full report with linked annexes, references and additional information, please visit
3. [www.northwest.nhs.uk/projects/mental\\_health\\_commission](http://www.northwest.nhs.uk/projects/mental_health_commission)
4. The Mental Health Commission members took evidence from over 100 organisations and spoke to over 1,000 individuals, including service users, carers and staff, over the past 12 months.
5. In the North West, the MH Commission’s findings build on and support the work carried out by the Mental Health Clinical Pathway Group, undertaken as part of the Healthier Horizons (Next Stage Review carried out by Lord Ara Darzi) process. The Commission’s work will also contribute a North West view to the national work on ***New Horizons: a future vision for mental health.***

***More follows/.....***

## **A better future in mind /4 .....**

6. The Commission team comprised:
  - John Boyington, CBE (Chair)
  - Terry Lewis (Deputy Chair and former service user)
  - Julie Cullen (Programme Director)
  - Professor Mark Gabbay (Commission member)
  - Professor Max Marshall (Commission member)
  - Colin McKinless (Commission member)
  - Professor Jennie Popay (Commission member)
  - Joanne Nightingale (Project Support Officer)
  
7. The MH Commission's work needs to be seen in the context of a large number of other significant developments in mental health, including:
  - Vision 2015 – ADASS Coalition Report
  - The National Dementia Strategy
  - The National Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Programme
  - Development of a new Mental Health services contract
  - Bradley Review of Diversion from Custody for mentally disordered offenders
  - The Government Officer for the North West co-ordinated initiative on worklessness
  - Establishment of the new Regional Efficiency and Improvement Programme
  - The move to Mental Health Foundation Trust Status
  - The development of World Class Commissioning.

### **8. Strengths identified in *A Better Future in Mind***

- The positive engagement of users, carers and the public in developing better responses to mental health issues
- The commitment of existing NHS mental health service providers and their leaders to seek continually to improve services
- The recognition of commissioners (primary care trusts and local authorities) that better commissioning can and should play a significant part in improving mental health and mental health services
- The capability of existing major service providers to move to exploit foundation trust status, particularly in respect of their access to community membership
- The trend in the North West of continually increasing expenditure on mental health
- The desire to identify new resources to target the promotion of positive mental health, including the need for addressing the important relationship between meaningful work and mental health status
- Many examples of excellent practice recorded and listed in the MH Commission online report

***More follows/.....***

## **A better future in mind /5 ....**

- The positive contribution of the independent and third sector to better services for people with mental health problems
- The opportunity provided by existing North West initiatives such as Advancing Quality, NHS Leadership Academy, North West RIEP, and Customer Services Programme to develop mental health specific content, outputs and outcome

### **9. Areas for advancement identified in *A Better Future in Mind***

- Taking User and Carer involvement in mental health services and mental health commissioning to the next level
- Raising the quality of mental health and mental health service commissioning
- Increasing the focus on promoting positive mental health and prevention of mental illness
- Unlocking the potential of North West mental health staff

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For more information, please contact:

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