

# MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISABILITY REVIEW

*News Letter No 1 – November 2003*

## FROM THE REVIEW CHAIRMAN

It is difficult to believe that the Review has now been in progress for one year. Much has already been accomplished. We have an agreed philosophy, objectives and structure. Our entire committee system is both in place and operational. The first wave Working Committees have reached the heartland of their deliberations, and the second wave committees are up and running. The scope of our work may be daunting to the timid, but I am struck by the collective energy and enthusiasm of everyone involved.

This Review is both independent and open, that is, accessible to all who may wish to offer input. All contributions are highly valued, from the experienced expert to the anonymous person in the street – please don't hesitate to make contact with us.

Coming up to our first anniversary, Minister Angela Smith hosted a reception for Review committee members at Hillsborough Castle – a highly successful occasion which marked the fact that the Review now has a visibility and credibility in the Province which augurs well for our eventual recommendations.

The decision has now been taken to phase our recommendations. This means that the first documents available for public consultation and comment will appear during 2004. Meanwhile may I extend sincere thanks to all involved for their efforts – the best is yet to come.

**David Bamford**



Some review members with the Minister, Angela Smith, at the Hillsborough reception.

## OVERVIEW OF WORKING COMMITTEES

Much of the work of the Review is being taken forward by Working Committees examining specific aspects of policy, services and law. These Committees were set up in two “waves”:

- *first wave* – adult mental health, learning disability, legal issues and social justice and citizenship;
- *second wave* – mental health promotion; child and adolescent mental health; mental health issues in old age; alcohol and substance misuse and forensic services.

A cross – cutting committee looking at needs and resources has also been established to support all of the above committees. In addition a number of Review members will be participating in an exercise to be led by David Bingham, Director of Human Resources at DHSSPS, in relation to the workforce needed for the mental health and learning disability programmes of care.

## **ADULT MENTAL HEALTH**

The Working Committee on Adult Mental Health was established in April 2003 and has begun its work on a review of policy and services for adults with mental health needs. This work is grounded on a need to recognise and promote the personal dignity of adults with mental health needs and their carers. We are also paying careful attention to the evidence base for best practice, including local examples of good practice. This will include a consideration of the needs at community and primary care level, secondary care services and the needs of those requiring specialist services.

The aim of the Review is to prepare a Strategic Framework ensuring that adults with mental health problems and their carers are provided with high quality services which are appropriate, responsive to their needs, acceptable and accessible to users and carers, and take account of the plurality and diversity of society in Northern Ireland. That services are comprehensive, well coordinated, effective and efficient. That the workforce providing and supporting mental health services is appropriately planned for, resourced, trained and supported. That services are safe for users, carers, staff and the public. That other relevant organisations and agencies are aware of the opportunities and their responsibilities for improving mental health.

**Roy McClelland**

## **LEARNING DISABILITY**

The Learning Disability Committee has been tasked with conducting a review of policy and services affecting the lives of people with a learning disability and their families. We are seeking to answer a number of key questions:

- How should parents and children with a learning disability be supported?
- What range of housing and support options should be developed?
- How can we ensure that people with a learning disability are enabled to enjoy meaningful day time activities?
- What should happen as people get older?
- How should we address mental and physical healthcare needs?

The work of the Committee is based on a clear value base that affirms the human rights of people with a disability, promotes equality, endorses the importance of opening access to mainstream services and stresses the need for particular consideration of transition issues. Underpinning all of this is a belief that people with a learning disability and their parents/ carers must be facilitated to have their voices heard by policy and decision makers. This is being realised through-

- membership on committees
- support of the establishment of the *Equal Lives* Group which comprises people with a learning disability who are advising us as we progress through the Review
- Facilitation of a Carers Advisory Group comprised of people whose son or daughter has a learning disability.

*(continued overleaf)*

The Learning Disability Committee expects to produce a report in May 2004. In the meantime they will ensure that you are kept updated on their work by the production of a newsheet every 6 weeks. Copies of newsheets produced to date are available from the Review support team or on the review website.

**Siobhan Bogues**

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

At early meetings of the Legal Issues Working Committee it was decided that, in view of the range of issues for consideration, the work should be taken forward within four sub groups, with remits as follows:

Sub group 1:

- definitions and terminology, including inclusion or otherwise of personality disorder within the legislation;
- issues relating to children with mental health needs and the interface with the Children (NI) Order; and
- inclusion of learning disability within the same legislation.

Sub group 2:

- conditions for compulsory assessment and treatment, and the procedures to be followed in so doing;
- the roles of the Mental Health Review Tribunal and the Mental Health Commission;
- guardianship;
- consent to treatment; and
- transfers between jurisdictions (in part).

Sub group 3:

- consent to treatment;
- people unable to manage their own affairs;
- transfers between jurisdictions (in part); and
- Enduring Powers of Attorney.

Sub group 4:

- definitions and terminology, including inclusion or otherwise of personality disorder within the legislation;
- dealing with offenders with mental health needs;
- transfers between jurisdictions (in part).

Each sub group is pursuing its own work programme. The sub group convenors meet regularly to co-ordinate the work.

**Brian Hall**

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CITIZENSHIP**

The work of this committee is being taken forward mainly through two sub groups, one examining human rights and equality issues and one examining social inclusion issues.

The *human rights and equality sub group* has started by considering the current legislation and practice in the light of human rights requirements. Close liaison is being maintained with the legal issues sub groups in this work. It is also hoped that the group will be able to hear of the experiences of some people who feel that their rights have not been upheld.

The *social inclusion sub group* is considering how the policies of each Department impacts on the social inclusion of people with a mental health problem or a learning disability and what is being done or could be done to make things more inclusive.

**Martha McClelland**

### **MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION**

The Mental Health Promotion Expert Working Group held its first meeting on 7 October and comprises a group of very interested and experienced individuals, representing a wide range of backgrounds.

We are already greatly encouraged by the work being done across Northern Ireland and particularly pleased that we have, as a sounding board, the Promoting Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan published as part of investing for health by the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety.

One of our first jobs, we feel, is to consider the contents and action plans of that strategy and to consider how we can provide added value both to that, and to the many initiatives already underway across the province. We are anxious that at the end of the day our work will not only enhance practical approaches to mental health promotion but also ensure that there are underpinning principles at the highest level of decision making to ensure the necessary priority and resourcing.

**Alan Ferguson**

### **MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN OLD AGE**

This committee has not met yet, as work is still under way on agreeing membership. It is expected that the first meeting will consider priorities for the work programme and how best to manage the work programme.

**Nevin Ringland**

### **CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH**

The first meeting of this Working Committee took place in October with further dates planned for November and December. As a matter of priority the interface issues between adult mental health and child and adolescent will be addressed with the adult mental health group of the review, as their recommendations are being formed at present.

Each member of the committee is gathering information as part of a mapping exercise of the services that are currently available across Northern Ireland across the proposed four tiered framework (HAS 1995).

The convenor has met with the Youth Council regarding young people being included in the review. An update of initial contacts was shared with the committee. The agenda for the next meeting in November will include identifying the work priorities to commence. A representative from the Department of Education will be invited to join the working committee.

**Moir Davren**

### **ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE**

Membership of this committee is drawn from professionals working in the field of addiction, with representation from the statutory and non-statutory sectors and representatives from users of services and carers. The program of work identified includes the following items:  
*(continued overleaf)*

- Alcohol services for the adult population in Northern Ireland.
  - Provision of addiction services to children and young people.
  - Provision of addiction services to those with learning disability.
  - The development of services for injecting drug misusers.
- Submissions on these and related topics will be warmly welcomed by the committee.

**Diana Patterson**

### **FORENSIC SERVICES**

The Forensic Services Working Committee will address the area of overlap between mental health services and the criminal justice system. The Committee has a large membership of over 20 people, reflecting the many potential contributors to this field and also its organisational complexity. One of the main challenges for the Committee will be to keep at its centre the individual experiences and the needs of users and carers, as well as taking account of the needs of staff working in the statutory and voluntary services and also the needs of wider society. The tasks of the Committee will include reviewing these various needs, examining existing services and plans and making recommendations for the future. We will be assisted by the existence of a number of plans for components of a Regional Forensic Service. We are likely to devote our efforts particularly to ensuring there is a clear vision for the evolution and development of services, that these services are co-ordinated with all other relevant services and work together to meet the needs of a group of patients who often suffer many disadvantages.

**Fred Browne**

### **NEEDS AND RESOURCES**

The Needs and Resources Working Committee held its first meeting during September. In contrast to the other committees constituted to date it will function primarily as a support committee led by the priorities of the Steering Committee and the requirements of the other Working Committees.

Our remit is:

- to examine the current levels of funding in Northern Ireland for services for people with a mental health problem or a learning disability and to make comparisons with other regions and countries;
- to examine the allocation and use of funding across Northern Ireland and to make recommendations as necessary to ensure an equitable distribution of resources to meet need;
- to examine the impact of spending by other Government Departments on services for people with a mental health problem or a learning disability; and
- to work with and support other Review Working Committees and the Steering Committee in costing recommendations arising from the Review

The Committee is being supported by the team led by Karen Campbell at the DHSSPS Finance Directorate. It has already identified much information which will help us in this work.

**Brian Dornan**

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Review website at [www.rmhdni.gov.uk](http://www.rmhdni.gov.uk)

A separate news letter produced by the Learning Disability Working Committee is also available.