

Investigating the Levels of Inter-agency Collaboration Between Health, Social Care and Housing Agencies When Providing Services for People with A Severe Mental Illness

Project summary

This research project is part of the Department of Health *Mental Health Research Initiative* involving three interconnected studies of the provision of services to people with a severe mental illness being conducted at the Universities of Durham, Manchester and York. The project based in the University of York is a major investigation of joint working practice between housing agencies, social services and health agencies in the delivery of services to people with a severe mental illness. It is being undertaken by York Health Economics Consortium (YHEC) and the Centre for Housing Policy (CHP) both of which are part of the University of York and the internationally recognised Institute for Research into the Social Sciences (IRISS).

What the project involves

The Project commenced in January 1997 and will conclude in January 1999. The work is divided into three stages. The first stage, which is now complete, involved the recruitment of a delphi group (a body of highly placed professionals working in mental health services, social services and for housing agencies at the National level) who were asked to develop a series of performance indicators for mental health services, housing services and social services in the delivery of integrated packages of care to people with a severe mental illness. Following this process, an extensive and ongoing review of existing research into services and joint working for people with a severe mental illness also commenced.

The second stage will begin to test the extent to which housing, health and social services agencies are meeting the criteria specified by the delphi group in terms of the delivery of services to people with an severe mental illness. Agencies will be sent a postal questionnaire asking about whether the various performance indicators and other elements of service delivery specified by the delphi group have been developed by that agency and the extent to which different factors on the ground may be either *facilitating joint working or preventing or inhibiting joint working*.

The third stage of the work will involve detailed case study work within areas that appear to have largely implemented the systems and performance indicators that the delphi group suggested. This final stage will examine whether the adoption of these performance indicators and systems for joint working between housing, health and social services in the delivery of services to people with a severe mental illness has actually facilitated the development of joint working procedures that are effective and efficient.

The basic objectives of the research are to *inform strategic development of joint working in relation to people with a severe mental illness and to produce information that will generally inform and encourage the development of good practice*.

Further questions can be directed to Nicholas Pleace or Deborah Quilgars within CHP or Karen Croucher and Liz Newbronner (project director) in YHEC.

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