BASW Policy on Social Work in Multi Disciplinary Mental Health Teams

Executive summary

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Social work in mental health services. Executive summary of a BASW paper on the experience of social workers in multi disciplinary mental health teams.

The British Association of Social Workers (BASW) is the largest professional voice in England for social workers. A significant proportion of BASW members have been expressing concern regarding the lack of support that they are receiving to undertake their role effectively within mental health services. This report details the concerns and makes recommendations to address the concerns. In addition the paper addresses concerning reports of a move away from integrated services. BASW is very concerned that the improved service to service users that integrated services has enabled may be under serious threat.

Executive summary

A series of consultation events, combined with a literature search found the following:

- The concept of integration and the actual degree of integration varies across the country
- Multi disciplinary mental health teams improve services to people who use mental health services when there are clearly defined professional roles and good quality professional support for each professional speciality
- Whilst there were examples of good integrated practice, where the social work role is valued and supported, there were numerous examples of poor practice
- That the recent introduction of Payment by Results (PbR) is having a profound impact on social work, with strong evidence of services being disaggregated as a result of its introduction
- There are fears that the anticipated budget cuts in adult social care may target multi disciplinary working, partnerships and integrated working. This will lead to a loss of the social care perspective, which will reduce the quality of services that service users and carers receive
- There are significant concerns about the impact of the Health White Paper on multi disciplinary and partnership working

The following recommendations are made to ensure that social work in mental health services thrives and flourishes:

1. **Principles to support social workers working in CMHTs and community mental health services**

It is recommended that the following measure are adopted. The measures all refer to principles and ethics that are captured in the BASW code of ethics[1]:

- o The BASW Code of Ethics is adopted by Health Trusts and Social Service Partners to underpin the relationships within and between the partners
- o Health managers must recognise that social work is a profession with its own principles and codes of conduct and unique knowledge and skill set. This knowledge and skill set includes safeguarding, the mental health act, case

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[1] For a summary version of the code of ethics see Appendix 1. For a full version please go to
http://www.basw.co.uk/about/codeofethics/

management and personalisation, but also relates to wider knowledge emanating from research and practice. This includes a high level of understanding of the social model of disability.

2. **Practices and processes adopted in order to achieve the principles**

It is recommended that the following practices and processes are adopted in order to ensure that social workers are well supported in community mental health services and that social work continues to make a significant and positive contribution to mental health services:

- Health Trusts and Social Service Partnerships sign up to the BASW 5 star engagement plan endorsing their commitment to social work
- The implications of the introduction of PbR are seriously considered by Health Trusts and Social Service Departments in order to avoid the disintegration of multi disciplinary teams
- Interagency groups are established to oversee section 75 agreements
- Regular governance meetings at senior management level take place to monitor partnership arrangements
- There needs to be social work representation at Trust Board level. This representation should be from someone who clearly owns the local authority social care portfolio
- Social care is included as an integral part of the Trust's mission statement
- There needs to be strong on-going local authority engagement at senior management level with mental health services in order to ensure that the social care model, personalisation and the social work role are effectively embedded in Health Trusts
- Social care models are incorporated into the training of all mental health professionals
- That clear lines of accountability, leadership and support to middle managers are set up in order to take the social care agenda forward
- Promotion of the value of the social care workforce
- Everyone responsible for personnel issues – recruitment, disciplinary, grievance and absence are trained in the requirements of the local authority, Care Quality Commission, Social Work Codes of Practice and Social Work Task Force recommendations
- Social care leaders should ensure that that support services are in place for social workers – IT HR, finance, learning and development. This includes ensuring that social workers, whether seconded to Trusts, or directly employed have the tools to engage (such as access to local authority internet and intranet and recording systems) with social service departments
- Social workers and social work managers should be engaged from the outset in the development of plans to re configure and change services
- Robust arrangements are put in place to ensure that social workers receive good quality supervision from qualified social workers
    - Professional supervision within the team from an experienced social worker

- - Support for the experienced social worker from an external mentor
  - There should be an adequate number of social workers in CMHTs
  - There should be a social work forum in each locality, that is separate from other professions in order to build and sustain identity.

Appendix 1

Code of Ethics – summary:

Key principles

Human dignity and worth

- Respect for human dignity, and for individual and cultural diversity
- Value for every human being, their beliefs, goals, preferences and needs
- Respect for human rights and self determination
- Partnership and empowerment with users of services and with carers
- Ensuring protection for vulnerable people

Social justice

- Promoting fair access to resources
- Equal treatment without prejudice or discrimination
- Reducing disadvantage and exclusion
- Challenging the abuse of power

Service

- Helping with personal and social needs
- Enabling people to develop their potential
- Contributing to creating a fairer society

Integrity

- Honesty, reliability and confidentiality

Competence

- Maintaining and expanding competence to provide a quality service