

BACKGROUND TO THE ACUTE CARE DECLARATION

Introduction

The Healthcare Commission's (now CQC) review of acute inpatient care "*Pathway to Recovery*" (HC 2008) provided a sound basis and clear definition of what good quality acute inpatient mental health care should look like. (appropriate, purposeful, therapeutic and safe). With 41% of trusts scoring good or excellent there is clear evidence that excellent acute care is achievable and that real progress has been made since the publication of the NSF. However, the key challenge of achieving and maintaining this standard for all acute mental health services remains.

Why have an Acute Care Declaration?

- Key stakeholders recognised that the HC review had generated a momentum for driving up quality and offered a real opportunity to collectively build on the progress being made.
- In addition to the need to disseminate good practice and improvement methods, many of the key HC recommendations (ie: improved quality of acute care commissioning; increased strategic priority given to acute care services as part of overall pathway; strengthening the role of ACFs; acute care policy development; more effective leadership and workforce capability; better outcome indicators) require a high level of engagement, ownership, agreement and a high level of collaboration between key stakeholders. Without this, the current momentum for acute care service improvement may be lost.
- We are now at a critical time in the redefining of NHS policy and priorities (Next Stage Review, World Class Commissioning ..) and in determining how best to support and progress future national mental health service development (New Horizons strategy)
- There is a need to ensure that the essential role acute care services play in the provision and development of a future mental health service is not marginalised as initially occurred re acute care inpatient care in early implementation arrangements for the NSF.
- Despite clear evidence of good progress, the majority of media coverage of acute inpatient services remains very negative and too often this is allied to internal criticisms. We need to address issues of exclusion and misrepresentation relating specifically to acute care services and collectively champion changing perceptions of acute mental health services.
- Overall it was felt that there is an urgent need to take this opportunity to develop better connection with and consensus between key stakeholders in order to ensure adequate priority is given to acute mental health, to develop an acute care vision which is fit for purpose.

Acute Care summit and Declaration

In order to collectively address, this an acute care summit of key stakeholders was held on 16th July 2009, which was jointly hosted by the NHS Confederation MH Network and the RCN. The summit event proved to be very positive. Delegates were enthusiastic about the

concept of developing an agreed consensus statement or “acute care declaration” on a acute mental health care which could be signed up to and endorsed. Many commented on the initiative being timely, and saw it as supportive in achieving improvements in the acute care experience of service users and their families, and enhancing the support for acute care staff across the acute care pathway.

Following extensive consultation with members of the MH network, key professional organisations, voluntary organisations, service users and carers, we have now finalised the Acute Care Declaration and are formally launching it at the NHS MH network conference on 12th November in Birmingham.

Next steps

Following the launch of the Acute Care Declaration, our next steps will be to:

- Meet with the endorsing organisations to agree future joint work projects, building on progress already being made from current initiatives
- Work with professional organisations to address key acute workforce issues regarding clinical and organisational leadership and workforce development
- Finalise arrangements for the first regional high level planning forum to be hosted by the NW SHA early in the new year which will look at how to translate the acute declaration into local action
- Organise further regional action planning events tailored to local priorities
- Seek to establish a national acute care network in order to provide a mechanism for sharing best practice and continuous service improvement
- Re-launch our acute care website at the NHS Confederation conference on 12th November
- Widely publicise the Declaration to raise awareness and engage with key national and local organisations regarding its implementation.

Yvonne Stoddart
National Acute Care Programme Lead NMH DU