



Adult Acute Care

We were pleased to welcome Mr Chris Wheway to our meeting this month. Chris is the Healthcare Foundation Trust's General Manager for mental health care in the South of the County. In this role he covers both Adult and Older Adult services in hospital and in the community. Chris had offered to attend one of our meetings to talk about the aims and intentions of the Adult Acute Care review which is taking place at the moment.

Chris confirmed that this review covers in-patient care, day hospital services and crisis and home treatment services and, whilst there are definitely cost savings to be made, he assured us that they are looking to make improvements wherever possible. So they are interested to hear the views of any service users and carers about what is working well and what needs to be improved.

We discussed at length with Chris the gap in support services that many of our members find themselves faced with at times of crisis. It was acknowledged that this may not all be down to the Trust to provide but it still remains the case that the only out of hours service from the Trust is in-patient care or the Crisis & Home Treatment Team. The latter is a service available only as a direct alternative to hospital admission and as such is not available to the vast majority of mental health sufferers. Chris said he was mindful of this situation and understood that people wanted support sooner rather than later. He agreed to feed that into the review and into discussions with commissioners.

On behalf of one of our older members we raised with Chris the matter of out of hours support for older adults. Chris said he was very aware that the Crisis & Home Treatment Teams are officially only available until a person reaches 65 years of age. This is also the case for the Focusline Service which is the other main source of support for people after hours. We were stunned to hear that the Crisis teams have a cut off age and Chris himself said he was surprised that some services are still commissioned with a cut off age of 65 years. Again he assured us that he would highlight this issue as part of the review.



On a final note we had some general discussion with Chris about the quality of the engagement which the Trust is employing on this review. We have been concerned about the seemingly narrow band of service users who are being consulted about this very important issue. MHAG for example did not receive an invite to the initial Summit but had to seek one out! Likewise day hospital patients and out-patients did not appear to have been notified nor those using psychotherapy services. This is not to mention the many other people using community services who might have a vested interest in the review. Chris said he would look into this and thanked us for our observations and helpful discussion. He assured us that he is keen to keep in touch with MHAG and is happy to attend any future meetings.

Transport Working Group



MHAG's Transport Working Group were recently invited to attend a consultation event about the future of DPTAC (Disabled Person Transport Advisory Committee). The event took place at the Dept of Transport on 11th July and two of the Groups members were able to attend.

DPTAC is being reviewed under the Public Bodies Bill which is currently going through parliament and it is likely to be abolished if the Bill is approved. This inevitably means that all disability issues relating to transport will receive less attention let alone mental health. The Minister is currently considering what provision should be made to replace the advice provided by DPTAC and we were keen to speak up for mental health.

We were fortunate to find ourselves on a table next to Dr Rachel Perkins who some of you will know as a well respected mental health campaigner. She is also currently the Chair of Equality 2025 and as such has opportunities to engage with all Government Depts on disability issues. Together we were able to have a strong voice for mental health urging the Minister to make sure he is inclusive of transport issues for mental health sufferers.

Rachel was also very keen to receive a copy of our Mental Health & Public Transport Report and said she would be happy to make sure it is circulated to all relevant Government Depts. She is an excellent contact for us and we will be very fortunate to have her support. We plan to officially deliver our Report in the Autumn when Parliament comes back from recess.



Mental Health Helpline Consultation



We have been advised by the County PCT that funding for the **Focusline Service** currently run by Rethink is due for renewal after 31st March 2012 and the PCT are keen to consult on the future of mental health helplines in Derbyshire. A consultation event was originally organised for early July with very short notice and not surprisingly very little response. MHAG have asked the PCT to re-organise a consultation event with far more notice and we are pleased to say that they have done just that. The event will now take place on **Monday 26th September 12.30 – 16.30 at the Riverside Conference Centre on Pride Park in Derby.**

The PCT are consulting to decide whether mental health specific helplines ought to be funded and if so, what those helplines should offer. Focusline operates 5pm to 7am Mon to Friday and 24 hours on the weekend (including bank holidays) and is widely advertised as part of peoples care plans. During 2009-10 7140 calls were answered and in 2010-11 7055 were answered. The PCT point out that general helpline support is also offered by the Samaritans Derby branch and are keen to know whether it is necessary to have a mental health specific helpline service as well.

So if you have a view as to whether we need specific mental health helplines in Derbyshire please consider attending the event or send in your views on the questionnaire. If you receive the Mhag-zine by post you should have a copy of the questionnaire enclosed with it. If you receive it by email you can follow this link to complete the questionnaire on-line: http://www.derbyshirecounty.nhs.uk/services_we_buy/service-developments-consultations They need to be submitted by 31st August and the results will be presented at the consultation event on 26th September. To book your place at the Consultation event please fill in and return the enclosed booking form.

Employment & Occupation Workshop

Some of our members recently attended an event to examine the role of employment and occupation in good mental health. The event was a joint initiative by a number of organisations including Derbyshire Voice and Jobcentreplus to explore what can be done to improve the employment prospects locally for people using mental health services.

A relatively recent development within each Jobcentreplus is an Official role of **Mental Health Champion** whose responsibility it is to assist anyone with mental health problems who wishes to seek employment. It is not entirely clear how proactively people are offered the help of a champion but you certainly have the right to ask for it. Assistance can include negotiating with employers to offer more flexible working arrangements and making sure that the person is aware of any local support available to them.



Amazingly but perhaps not surprisingly it appears that these champions have not received much training in mental health themselves so that is something which really needs addressing. It was also noted that there were no employers present on the day so there is plenty of scope for awareness raising work with local employers. A Steering Group has been formed to carry forward issues from this event and one of our members has volunteered so he will keep us up to date on progress.

Benefits Working Group



Latest topic of conversation and concern for our Benefits Working Group members has been the recently drafted criteria for the benefit which will replace Disability Living Allowance in 2013. The new benefit will be called **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** and like DLA it will have a care and a mobility component. Unlike DLA it will only have two levels of award, lower and higher rates, and not surprisingly it will be more difficult to achieve the necessary points to get these awards.

The Government is consulting on these draft criteria at the moment and our working group is preparing a comprehensive response! We will be highlighting all areas where we feel mental health has not been sufficiently considered and where scoring seems to be unreasonably low.

Employment Support Allowance

We have also recently held a meeting with Alan Bains (Chair) and Mike Shewan (Chief Exec) of Derbyshire Healthcare Foundation Trust to discuss what can be done locally to assist people going through the assessment process for ESA. We were able to agree a couple of initiatives to help raise awareness about support for this process which we hope will help mental health service users in Derbyshire. It is vital that as many community support workers, CPNs and social workers as possible provide assistance to their clients with form filling, supportive evidence and at interview stage. This will undoubtedly help people to avoid the lengthy and very stressful process of having to appeal against a wrong decision.

Next Mhag Meeting...

Our next monthly meeting will be on **Wednesday 10th August at the Salvation Army Hall, Heath Road, Ripley DE5 3EN**. The meeting will start as usual at **1.30pm** and finish at 4.00pm with a 20 minute refreshment break in the middle. If you have never been to one of our meetings before please feel free to come along. You will receive a very warm welcome!

A **minibus service** is offered from Swadlincote and Derby for those who would like to make use of it.

The minibus will be calling at the following pick up points:-

Bank House, Swadlincote - 12.00am
Blue Peter Pub, Alvaston - 12.25pm
Assembly Rooms, Derby - 12.40pm
Ashbourne Centre, Kingsway Hospital - 12.50pm

You do not have to book a place just turn up at your chosen pick-up point.



Success at Summer fair

Members of MHAG were delighted to make £94 at the Trust's recent Summer Fair thanks to a generous donation from Boots.

Our tombola stall proved very popular and plenty of people went away with provisions of cosmetics and toiletries.

The money raised will be used to support our Coffee Slot on the 3rd Friday of each month, an informal get-together which is much appreciated by those who attend.

Let's hope we can do something similar next year and raise further funds.

Police Training

MHAG have now been involved in training nearly 200 new police officers in Derbyshire and over the last 6 months we have also been asked to offer mental health awareness training to Special Constables as well.



We have received very good feedback from officers who particularly appreciate gaining understanding from service users who have direct experience of involvement from the police. We hope that it will contribute in some way to a better experience for people in crisis that they encounter in the future.

The Mental Health Action Group is an independent user led organisation. Our purpose is to provide an effective campaigning voice to bring about improvements in the services experienced by service users.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like to find out more!
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Visit our website: www.mhag.org.uk or our Facebook page