

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADOPT NEW APPROACH TO ENSURE THE FEATURES OF A QUALITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE ARE FULLY IMPLEMENTED

Service providers agree ambitious target and volunteer to have progress measured independently

Friday 22nd January: Key providers of mental health services have signed up to a new initiative designed to ensure agreed policies in mental health services are fully implemented.

The HSE and the Mental Health Commission today signed an agreement with mental health service providers which will allow the parties work together to ensure that services are delivered in a more patient-focused way. The Mental Health Services Collaborative seeks to implement agreed standards in the delivery of mental health services and is the first time that a Service Level Agreement of this nature and significance, and which incorporates independent measurement of progress, has been signed.

In partnership with the HSE and the Mental Health Commission, two independent mental health services - St Patrick's University Hospital and St John of God's Hospital - have agreed to pilot the "Breakthrough Collaborative Model" of policy change in Ireland.

The collaborative approach involves selecting one single issue, setting measurable targets and bringing together policy experts and on-the-ground leaders and staff to ensure the change is achieved in a set time-

frame. One of the most important elements of this approach is service users, their carers and their families are centrally involved at all levels of the process, along with experienced mental health care professionals. An independent external assessor will measure the success or failure of the initiative. A key component of the initiative is the development of a sustainability plan to ensure that changes implemented are maintained in the long-term and spread throughout all mental health services across the country.

The National Mental Health Service Collaborative Agreement was signed today by the Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission Hugh Kane; Laverne McGuinness, HSE National Director of Integrated Services; the Chief Executive of St Patrick's University Hospital Paul Gilligan; and the Chief Executive of St John of God's Hospital, Monica Mooney.

The signatories to the National Mental Health Service Collaborative have chosen to focus initially on turning into reality the agreed aim that each patient should have a meaningful individually tailored care and treatment plan focused on assisting their recovery.

"Enlightened, modern policies and quality standards that could transform the treatment and the experience of patients have been agreed in the area of mental health", according to Hugh Kane the Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission. "Yet it has proved difficult to actually implement these standards. This initiative aims to implement the features of a quality mental health service into practice."

"In 2007 the Mental Health Commission published the Quality Framework for Mental Health Services in Ireland which sets out the high standards and

good practices that should be implemented”, Mr Kane said. “This included the principle that each patient should have an individual care and treatment plan. Today we are committing ourselves to making this a reality, and by doing so we hope to achieve other agreed standards as a result. This initiative is a pilot programme. It will operate at ten sites over an 18 month period, and the success of the initiative is to be assessed independently.”

According to Laverne McGuinness, HSE National Director of Integrated Services, “Specialists in mental health policy will work with experts in making changes happen on the ground which will be in the best interests of patients. This collaborative approach is now seen internationally as an effective way to ensure modern care and treatment practices, agreed at policy-making level and which are patient centred, are implemented on a day-to-day basis by health service providers.”

She said this approach is not only applicable to mental health services, but to health services in all disciplines. “The scale, diversity and structures of national health systems everywhere make it difficult to translate good policy into good practice. This collaborative approach developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in the United States, is seen as an effective model internationally to drive change.”

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