

# Mental Health Social Care Leadership Symposium: Workshop notes

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## Improving joint and partnership working with local authority statutory services: children and families, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, older people's and housing services

The focus of the workshop was to discuss the social care and mental health leadership imperatives related to maintaining and developing links with different parts of the local authority. The workshop commenced with a discussion of the ongoing struggle to keep social care and social work issues well supported within integrated NHS environments. The group noted there remained a need to promote social care and social work leadership at the front line, enabling social care staff to define effectively their professional priorities and concerns within NHS trusts.

The discussion moved on to consider the ongoing problem of maintaining local authority engagement with the mental health agenda once social care provision has been delegated to an NHS partner. The question was asked, 'where is the mental health agenda within the local authorities' priorities?' Within social care, local authorities are engaged with the mental health agenda to the extent that their delegated duties are being demonstrably delivered by the integrated NHS provider. The group discussed the key policy drivers that are keeping local authority social care departments engaged, including delivering on the Mental Capacity Act, delivering on all the CSCI performance indicators, the financial and others risks associated with ensuring that Section 31 partnership agreements are well managed, and maintaining good relationships with seconded staff and enabling transfer of staff where appropriate.

There are many new challenges emerging in local government and health policy which may reinvigorate the engagement of local authorities with local health organisations. These include the role of the director of adult social services, in conjunction with public health colleagues from primary care trusts, in overseeing the wellbeing agenda for whole populations. The development of local area agreements and the implications of the local government White Paper (2006) may also be an important lever to ensure local authorities engage or reengage with mental health agendas in the need to find joined-up solutions to complex health, social care and community problems. The local government White Paper sees local authorities as having a role in leading the community agenda, and in creating and maintaining sustainable communities [? or '...to create and maintain...']. This agenda and policy framework potentially offer a means of bringing together housing, health, social care and other aspects of welfare and community wellbeing across the age range. The assessment of social care performance in relation to the seven outcomes from the social care Green Paper [add title...] and White Paper *Our health, our care, our say* [or delete title] will require adult social care

services to engage in different ways with partners in health and elsewhere. These outcomes are not achievable without excellent cross-cutting partnerships.

If the relationship between mental health services and the local authority is driven in part by policy and by visionary ideas about what services should be like, it is, of course, fundamentally driven by the economics of delivering services. There are currently significant financial strains in both health and local government, particularly in some parts of the country, which could lead to poor relationships, retrenchment and backing away from partnership solutions to complex problems. This is undoubtedly happening in some areas. It is a risk in other areas but a time of cross-sector financial crisis can also be an opportunity for imaginative, partnership solutions. High-level strategic leadership is needed within mental health and within local authorities and other partner bodies to take brave decisions about how budgets are used most efficiently and effectively.

The workshop discussed the need for structures of governance and cooperation that can enable local authorities, mental health organisations and other partners to develop a shared vision within localities at a very senior level. It was suggested that the notion of 'recovery' as it is used within mental health might be an important link between the cultures and intentions of modernised mental health and social care.

Some of the other particular strategic changes on the horizon which will affect social care leadership in the future include the development of foundation trusts and the development of primary care mental health services. The workshop asked the question, can foundation trusts be socially inclusive and promote social care or is the pressure entirely towards monopolistic health care? It was suggested that if commissioning is socially inclusive in its orientation, it will mould the expectations of a local foundation trust towards outcomes that are socially inclusive. The crucial importance of effective leadership of joint commissioning was discussed.

The role of local authorities and local authority resources in the development of primary care mental health services was discussed as a challenge and also a real opportunity. Integrated health, social care and social inclusion services in primary care settings offer real opportunities for earlier intervention and bring health and social care much more closely into alignment with immediate community and neighbourhood concerns. There is clearly a challenge for local authorities in understanding how their resources might be realigned into primary care-based integrated mental health services. Most social care mental health investment is currently in the secondary service sector. The workshop concluded with a consideration of 'what is social care leadership in mental health now and in the future?'. The following ideas were suggested:

- promote self determination and self directed support
- promote a community focus in mental health activities
- implement and put into practice social inclusion
- understand the economics and the financing of social care and inclusion within mental health
- keep ahead of the game in a rapidly changing operational and strategic environment.

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