

Acute inpatient mental health service review

A key aim of mental health care in England in recent years has been to support people to live more independent lives through better care and treatment in the community. One of the concerns arising from the emphasis placed on strengthening community services is that acute inpatient services have not always received the attention needed. *The Mental health policy implementation guide for adult acute inpatient care provision* (Department of Health, 2002), and other policy guidance published since then, has sought to encourage improvement in inpatient services. The five-year review of the National Service Framework highlighted the need for continued improvement in this area and the Healthcare Commission identified it as a priority on which to focus a service review.

Our service review assessed the quality and safety of care given by NHS providers of acute inpatient mental health wards (sometimes called acute admission wards) and psychiatric intensive care units in England. We gave all mental health provider trusts a score, as part of our annual health check for 2006/2007.

We asked services a set of questions that service users, carers and other key stakeholders helped us to develop into an assessment framework. The overall focus of the review assessed whether admissions to inpatient mental health services were appropriate, purposeful, therapeutic and safe. The four key criteria against which we assessed performance were:

- There is an effective care pathway that ensures admission to hospital is appropriate and that discharge from hospital is timely.
- Inpatient services focus on the needs of the individual and provide care that is personalised and promotes recovery and inclusion.
- Service users and carers are involved in care planning, in how the ward is run and in operational and strategic planning, evaluation and development.
- The ward has systems, processes and facilities in place to ensure the safety of service users, staff and visitors.

Details about the focus of the assessment and how the assessment framework was developed can be found below.

We conducted this assessment in relation to 69 NHS trusts that provided mental health acute inpatient services during 2006/2007. These trusts registered 554 acute mental health wards within the scope of the review, providing a total of 9,885 beds. A profile of the services registered within the scope of the review can be found below.

[Profile of the services registered for the review \(xls 90kb\) \(opens new window\)](#)

Publication of results of the review

The results of this review were published on 23 July 2008 and included the first of two national reports. The first report and its recommendations are aimed at NHS providers of acute inpatient mental health services, health and social care commissioners, and those responsible for assessing and monitoring policy. The second report, due for publication later in 2008, will present our findings on the issues of most concern to people who use mental health services, and their carers. It will identify ways in which they can encourage improvements in local services.

Our review showed that there were marked variations between trust performance and, in some places, marked differences between wards within trusts in relation to the quality of acute inpatient services provided. The general breakdown of the overall results showed that:

- We scored most trusts as “fair” (30 trusts, 43%), followed by “good” (20 trusts, 29%).
- Almost as many trusts were scored as “excellent” (8 trusts, 12%) as “weak” (11 trusts, 16%). The trusts that were scored excellent on this assessment demonstrate that personalised, safe and good quality acute care is both achievable and is being achieved.

On the four key criteria against which we assessed performance, our findings were:

- No trust was scored excellent on all four of the key criteria, suggesting there is room for improvement for all service providers.
- Almost two-fifths (39%) were scored weak on involving service users and carers – this was the area with the highest proportion of weak scores.
- Around one in every nine trusts was scored weak on the criteria for providing individualised whole person care and for ensuring safety.
- No trust was scored excellent for the effectiveness of the acute care pathway, although fewer trusts were scored weak here compared with the other three criteria.

Based on our findings, we have identified four key priority areas where improvements are needed to achieve better outcomes for services users and their carers. These are:

- Putting a greater focus on the individual and care that is personalised
- Ensuring the safety of service users, staff and visitors
- Providing appropriate and safe interventions
- Increasing the effectiveness of the acute care pathway

In order to address these issues we made some key recommendations for commissioners, providers of services, strategic health authorities, the Department of Health and regulatory bodies.

Copies of the full report, summary and press release can be found below.

[The pathway to recovery - A review of NHS acute inpatient mental health services \(pdf 2307kb\)](#)
(opens new window)

[The pathway to recovery - A review of NHS acute inpatient mental health services - Summary document \(pdf 481kb\)](#) (opens new window)

[Press release: 23 July 2008 - Healthcare watchdog highlights best and worst in NHS hospital care for people with acute mental health problems](#)

Results of the review

All trusts assessed as part of the review have received a detailed report outlining where they have performed well and where they can improve.

To coincide with the publication of the results for this review, we have launched a new mental health website. This website provides access to the detailed findings of the review: the website can be searched by trust name, place name or postcode. Please follow the link below to this website:

www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/mentalhealth.cfm

A summary of the overall scores by trust, the breakdown of these scores and a summary of the national results can be found here:

[Acute inpatient mental health service review scores table \(xls 1303kb\) \(opens new window\)](#)

[Acute inpatient mental health service review breakdown of scores for all trusts \(xls 126kb\) \(opens new window\)](#)

[Acute inpatient mental health service review summary data \(xls 1302kb\) \(opens new window\)](#)

Further explanation about how we scored the assessment can be found in the guidance document here:

[AIMH final detailed scoring guidance \(pdf 626kb\) \(opens new window\)](#)

We have also collated the national results from the audit of care records that trusts carried out as part of the data collection for the review. These can be found here:

[Acute inpatient mental health service review results of the care records audit \(xls 1318kb\) \(opens new window\)](#)

Plan improvement

We have almost completed follow up visits to 11 trusts whose performance was identified as weak on this assessment. Action plans are now being implemented to improve services, which will be monitored by the strategic health authorities.

Requesting a review of a final score

Now that we have published the final results, trusts can request a review of their acute inpatient mental health service review score. Organisations have 20 working days to submit a review. Any request should therefore be submitted by 5pm on Wednesday 20 August 2008. Further information about the grounds under which a trust may request a review of their final score and the application form can be found here:

[Request a review for a score for an individual trust \(by Wednesday 20 August\)](#)

Queries about the service review

If you have any questions about the service review please email: feedback@healthcarecommission.org.uk or call our helpline on 0845 601 3012.

Sustaining improvement in acute care

The Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) – National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) produced an electronic handbook to accompany the review. The handbook, Onwards and Upwards, aims to help local services to build on the review to sustain improvements in acute care. The handbook includes information and links to the key policies that provided the standards for acute care and it suggests action points for improving services. It also provides pointers to good practice and information about initiatives and approaches to sustaining improvements in acute mental health. The handbook can be found at: [Care Services Improvement Partnership - Standards \(opens new window\)](#)