

Update on the Provision of Psychological Therapies in Devon

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

18 September 2014

Introduction

Representatives from Devon Partnership NHS Trust (DPT) and NEW Devon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) attended the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in March 2014 to explain how psychological therapies are provided to people in Devon and to give an overview of areas of success and areas of challenge.

The key areas of challenge that were discussed were significant levels of demand, the capacity available to meet this demand and, as a consequence, long waiting lists for some psychological therapies – specifically those for people with the most severe and complex needs (Step 4).

The purpose of this paper is to give an update on the situation and a summary of the action that is being taken to address the issue.

Update

DPT volunteered to be one of the first mental health providers in the country to be inspected under the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) new inspection regime. The CQC's report was published in April 2014 and, overall, it was very encouraging - identifying a wide range of excellent services. Both the Trust and the CCG drew the issue of psychological therapies to the CQC's attention, prior to the inspection, and the issue was one of a small number of concerns that were highlighted by the CQC in its final report.

In response to the report, DPT worked with its partners to draw-up a comprehensive improvement plan - part of which is dedicated to psychological therapies. The plan reflects the fact that some of the actions that are required to improve the current situation can be undertaken by DPT alone, while others require support and input from other stakeholders – notably both of the county's CCGs.

Recent action

The challenge to improve access and reduce the waiting list for psychological therapies has two components to it. The first is to reduce the 'rump' of the list and the second is to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in place to meet demand, ie to cope with new referrals to the service. Clearly, if there is insufficient capacity to meet ongoing demand, then the waiting list will continue to grow. The plan is to address these issues through a combination of investment in capacity and increased efficiency.

Investment in capacity

As part of an agreed contractual position, NEW Devon CCG has agreed a level of investment to initiate measures to reduce the waiting list. The ongoing strategic development has commenced, and will be focusing on developing a longer-term, sustainable model. This work will include a range of providers as well as people with lived experience, and aims to ensure a co-produced approach where people are empowered to influence the design of a pathway for those needing longer-term interventions.

DPT has invested in seven new members of staff, on a non-recurrent basis, to help tackle the rump of the waiting list. Some of these staff have already been appointed.

Efficiency

DPT is looking to increase the efficiency of the psychological therapies service by at least 10%. Specifically, it believes that clinical professionals delivering the service can see a greater number of patients – and sometimes for fewer sessions. It has enlisted the support of efficiency experts from Unipart to analyse systems and processes across the service and this piece of work will take place during September 2014.

Current position

The positive news is that the waiting list is now steadily moving in the right direction. In August 2013 there were 1,132 people waiting for psychological therapies in Devon. By July 2014, this number had been reduced to 892.

Progress monitoring and involvement

DPT and NEW Devon CCG now meet regularly to review the position regarding access to psychological therapies and to agree a strategy for the future. Importantly, these meetings include people with 'lived experience' of services - to ensure that their perspective is taken into account. Be Involved Devon (the mental health engagement arm of Healthwatch Devon) is also seeking people's views about their experience of using psychological therapy services and, at the end of September 2014, a major stakeholder event is being held to explore the issues and further possible solutions.

Conclusion

A great deal of time and effort has gone into addressing this issue and there has been excellent partnership working between DPT and NEW Devon CCG. Encouraging progress has been made in tackling the waiting list, but a degree of concern remains about the capacity of the service to meet demand on a recurrent basis. The findings of the work to be conducted by Unipart may generate some productive ideas about improving efficiency and productivity.

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