

3 March 2003

**Supporting 16-25 Year Olds with
Mental Health Problems**

Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

1. To report progress on the Scrutiny project which is looking at support for vulnerable 16-25 year olds with mental health problems and their carers.

Background

2. Following a seminar on 26 November 2002, Members of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Strong Healthy and Safe Communities resolved to undertake a scrutiny project to examine support for 16-25 year olds with mental health problems and their carers.
3. There is a perception that there may be gaps in service provision for people in the 16 to 25 transitional age group who have mental health problems. Young people of this age may be leaving school; starting college or university; seeking employment; forming relationships; or looking for a home of their own. The levels and types of support needed may be quite different from those provided for children or older adults with mental health problems. The initial seminar was held in response to issues raised in the casework of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Working Group, Councillor Edna Hunter.

Progress to Date

4. Two meetings of the Working Group have been held to date – on 31 January and 18 February 2003.
5. At the meeting on 31 January, members of the Working Group received presentations from officers from Social Services Department in the form of Case Studies which outlined the types of mental health problems young people encounter; the pathways to care; and the range of agencies, statutory and voluntary, which provide support to young people with mental health problems. An officer from the County Durham and Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust was also present.

6. The meeting on 18 February received presentations from officers of the Priority Services NHS Trust about the levels and types of services provided for young people up to the age of 16 by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and from an officer of the County Council about Social Services provision for young people. It is planned that evidence will be taken at future meetings of the Working Group from officers based in the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) about services provided to people aged 16 years upwards. Work is also ongoing to identify how evidence can best be taken from young people aged 16-25 with mental health problems and their carers.
7. Although the project is still in the very early stages, the following issues, which may be of interest to members, have already arisen:
 - The need for early identification of mental health problems in younger children, and intervention where appropriate, so as to prevent more serious problems developing in young adulthood which then require greater intervention/treatment.
 - The often complex needs of young people in this age group, requiring support from more than one agency and the need for this to be delivered in an holistic way.
 - Support and activities that engage with young people and are delivered at the right time and in the right place, in settings which are non-stigmatising and informal, yet, confidential.
 - Easy access to services by young people, including 24 hour support.
 - Better education, both of the public and professionals, about the mental health issues relevant for this age group.
 - More joined-up delivery of services and the need to overcome “silo mentalities”.
 - Funding issues and skills shortages

Recommendation

8. Members are asked to note progress on the Mental Health Scrutiny project.

Head of Overview and Scrutiny

Contact: Tom Bolton Tel: 0191 383 3149
