

1 September 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. A previous update report was submitted to members in March 2003.

Progress to Date

2. The Working Group has met on an almost monthly basis since January 2003.
3. Evidence has been taken so far from Social Services Department (in the form of case studies) and Education Department (Sure Start and Educational Psychology Service). The County Durham and Darlington Priority Services NHS Trust has played a valuable role in the project, with evidence from officers about Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and adult services - provided by the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs). Visits have been undertaken to Easington CAMHS; Durham/Chester-le-Street CMHT; and the Allensford Ward at Shotley Bridge Hospital. The role of Primary Care Trusts has also been outlined to members and a consultant psychiatrist in a neighbouring health authority, who is an expert in adolescent psychiatry, has given evidence.
4. More recently, the Working Group has heard about the role of the voluntary sector, with presentations from Mind (Chester-le-Street), Stonham Housing and a visit to the Durham Youth Project at End House in Claypath. An informal meeting was held with a small group of young people with mental health problems to ascertain their views and consultation has recently taken place with the County Durham Service User and Carer Forum which will be considered by the Working Group shortly.
5. Evidence will be taken at future sessions about the role of the Youth Service and also about Looked After Children. There are still some issues around careers, employment and benefits which need to be explored and also the role of drugs in relation to psychosis (with possible links to criminality, which could require an input by the Youth Offending Service).

6. Many of the issues raised earlier in the scrutiny process have been reinforced in the later stages of the project and the following may be of interest to members:
- 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 where young people feel comfortable and which are informal, yet confidential.
 - Easy access to services by young people, including 24 hour support.
 - Better information for young people about how to access services, what will happen to them during treatments, and their rights in relation to treatment, outcomes and the workers they engage with.
 - A role for young people in how services are planned, delivered and reviewed and how staff are trained.
 - 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.
7. This has been an extensive project with a substantial amount of evidence gathered. It is anticipated that the report of Working Group will be formulated during October/November, with a view, hopefully, to submitting a report to Communities Sub-Committee in December 2003.

Recommendation

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

Head of Overview and Scrutiny