



**6 March 2006**

## **'Minding the Gap': Review Report**

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### **Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To up-date the Sub-Committee about the latest review of 'Minding the Gap' which looked at mental health provision and support for 16-25 year olds and their carers in County Durham.

#### **Background**

2. A Scrutiny Group, in February 2004, made recommendations about improvements to mental health services for young people in relation to the following areas:-
  - Early identification and intervention when mental health problems present
  - Considering young people's needs when designing and delivering services
  - A greater role for young people in development of services
  - More and better education about mental health issues
  - More support for looked after children
  - More joined up delivery of services
  - Improved support for mental health services for young people through funding and support
  - Better Assistance for Carers
  - Review
3. The first review meeting took place in December 2004 and was attended by officers from Social Care and Health and the Priority Services NHS Mental Health Trust. At that meeting, members heard that good progress was being made in relation to a number of the original recommendations. A Conference to highlight the issues had also been held in May 2004.
4. The latest meeting took place on 29 November 2005 and was attended by representatives from the County Durham and Darlington Priority Services Mental Health Trust, Primary Care Trusts, Social Care and Health and the County Durham Youth Engagement Service.
5. Jo Paul from the Transitions Service (for 16 and 17 year olds with mental health needs) gave a progress report. She explained that 'Minding the Gap' had played a significant role in shaping the

development of the Transitions Service which placed young people and their parents/carers at the heart of service development. This had involved the creation of a Young People's User Group in October 2005 and a Carers Support Group from January 2006. The approach adopted by the Transitions Service included:

- Recognition that young people needed services to be configured differently
  - Change of worker policy
  - Care planning
  - Choice of appropriate venues for clinics etc.
  - Flexible access (e.g. early evening appointments)
  - Assertive engagement and involvement of other services in young people's care
  - Provision of information which is age appropriate
  - Taking young people's views into account
  - User satisfaction surveys
  - Staff selected who are enthusiastic about working with children and young people.
6. Jo explained that in the period January to September 2005, the Service had seen 260 new young people across the County. Darlington had the highest rates of referral and Easington the lowest. There were two issues which had caused some difficulties linked to placements of young people with eating disorders and placements of young people with personality disorders, although the Adult Mental Health Service worked well with the Transitions Service and assisted in finding suitable placements for those with eating disorders.
7. In relation to recommendation 14 (opportunities for young people with whom Youth Engagement Service engages to see a mental health professional if necessary), members heard from the Youth Engagement Service representative, Gill Eshelby, that a source of funding to assist with this process had now been identified and a pilot project would be undertaken with the Transitions Service in the south of the County, following which an evaluation report would be produced. The Youth Engagement Service was working very closely with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in relation to referrals.
8. In relation to Minding the Gap recommendation 15 (establishment of a website for young people with mental health needs), members were advised that the "Stressed Out" website was now live, although there was no data about the number of hits on the website.
9. Members were also advised about the following developments:
- A leaflet about early intervention issues had been produced for young people
  - The Place2b project was still ongoing and in Catchgate area had been translated into a project involving 6-7 primary schools which would be monitored and, if successful, be rolled out

- There had been a modest increase in uptake of counselling in those secondary schools which provided facilities
  - A training strategy had been established for education staff about awareness of mental health issues
  - Mental health issues were being pursued via the school curriculum with CAMHS attending the Healthy Schools board
  - A Mental Health Provider Forum had been established to tackle social exclusion issues and a Commissioning Manager had been appointed to address young people's issues as part of this agenda
  - Young people's issues were now a key part of the Adult Commissioning Strategy for Day Services (previously they had not been included)
  - Transitional issues arising from the creation of new Adult and Children's Services had been recognised and were being addressed.
10. The Working Group review also considered the arrangements made for carers in County Durham and received a presentation from Lee Alexander (Carer Development Manager, Social Care and Health) which included the following information:
- Structure and organisation of the Carer Development Team
  - Therapeutic intervention
  - Supporting carers who are 17+ and caring for other adults
  - The rights of carers (these differ according to relevant governing legislation)
11. Members heard that there are 5 Carers Centres in County Durham (one in each PCT locality) with approximately 4500 carers registered between them. The Centres receive core funding from the County Council and provide the following services:
- Practical and emotional support
  - One to one or group advice
  - Informal advocacy
  - Access to training (moving and handling etc.)
  - Regular information and newsletters
  - Support for all carers (apart from young carers)
  - Access to alternative therapies
  - Outings and social events
  - Young carers services (up to 17 years) are provided via Barnados and DISC countywide and provide similar support to that for adults.

### **Recommendation**

12. Members of the Working Group were pleased to learn of the continuing progress being made towards implementation of the Working Group's

recommendations and wish to congratulate those officers who have worked hard to drive improvements in service provision forward. It was considered that there might be some benefit in arranging a presentation about the role of the Transitions Service for all members of the Communities Sub-Committee at some future point. However, as regards the Minding the Gap project, it was felt that there is no longer any requirement for any further formal review, unless a specific need arises. Members may also wish to know that the effectiveness of this scrutiny project has been recognised nationally and the Council has been asked to participate in a forthcoming practitioners workshop organised by the I&DeA, LGA and Centre for Public Scrutiny which will examine best practice in scrutiny of CAMHS.

### **Background Papers**

Report from officers to the Scrutiny Working Group and presentations by Jo Paul and Lee Alexander.

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