Computers will boost children's mental health services

Friday 15 March, 2013

New handheld computers will boost children's mental health services by helping to quickly tailor treatment to meet their needs and showing them what progress they have made, Norman Lamb, Care and Support Minister announced today.

Backed by a fund of nearly £2 million, children and young people will be able to use tablet computers in their therapy sessions to give them and their therapist instant access to information that details how close they are to achieving treatment goals while also tracking their progress.

This use of new technology is backed by research showing that monitoring treatment outcomes and goals helps improve recovery rates in children and young people and increases satisfaction in services.

The new devices will be rolled out to 42 sites across England.

Care and Support Minister, Norman Lamb said:

Acting early to help children with mental health problems can prevent a lifetime of suffering as half of those with lifelong mental health problems first experience symptoms before the age of 14.

This technology helps children and young people see how their treatment is progressing. Where treatment is not going as well as it could, practitioners can then change their approach to get the best results.

Children and young people have told us how much it helps them to see how their treatment is going and these new devices do just that. I have seen this for myself in Oxford and talked to a teenager who had benefitted.

Therapists can also use the handheld computers to record sessions so that their supervisors and clinical tutors can watch the sessions and comment on their techniques to help therapists to improve.

The time therapists and administrators currently spend recording outcomes will also be cut dramatically.

Chair of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, Barbara Rayment said:

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition warmly welcomes the continued investment of central Government in children and young people's mental health. We hope this commitment will be matched by local decision-making in sustaining services to address their needs.

Children and young people's ability to access help quickly and easily is vital and we have been particularly pleased to see local voluntary sector counselling services becoming active partners in improving young people's access to therapies. This investment in new technologies will offer benefits for everyone concerned to improve children and young people's mental health.

The cross Government Mental Health Strategy takes a life course approach and has a strong focus on promoting good mental health and on early and effective intervention for mental health problems.

£54 million has been given over four years to the Children and Young People's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. This funding is helping to drive service transformation in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to improve access to the best evidence based treatment for children, young people and their parents.

The Department of Health's approach to prevention and early intervention is to support parents and services to help children to start well and develop well, to build resilience, emotional and psychological well being and to provide the best treatment where it becomes necessary.

Earlier this year, the Department published the Mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board with a clear objective to put mental health on a par with physical health and to extend and ensure more open access to the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Programme in particular for children and young people and for those out of work.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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The £1.911 million for devices is central capital funding.

The handheld devices remain in the treatment centre and are used by the patients for their therapy.

Special security software has been installed on the handheld devices to keep patient information secure.

For more information please contact the Department of Health Media Centre on 020 7210 5317.

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