

Psychological therapies and parity of esteem: from commitment to reality

Tuesday 2 December, 2014

Embargo: Wednesday 3 December 2014 (below press release and attached report)

Achieving parity of esteem between mental and physical healthcare has been recognised by politicians, health and social care professionals and the public as an urgent requirement in improving the wellbeing of people living in the UK. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, said earlier this year: "In terms of whether mental health should have parity of esteem with other forms of health care, yes it should, and we have legislated to make that the case."

However, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) recently consulted service users about their experiences, and the responses demonstrate that there is still some way to go to achieve parity of esteem, with considerable progress yet to be made in areas such as access, waiting times and choice. Service users told us: "I have to travel for 45 minutes [to access the psychology service], and as a single parent who works almost full time, this is only possible because I have a car. I wish there was a service available in my local town."

"My most recent experience involved having to wait over two years for sessions with a psychologist... Whilst waiting for psychology appointments I did endure another crisis. Talking treatments are low on the priority list – take the pills and you'll be fine."

A new report, Psychological therapies and parity of esteem: from commitment to reality, by BACP, sets out a series of practical recommendations to make parity of esteem in the NHS a reality in relation to psychological therapies. Dr Mike Shooter CBE, President of BACP, says: "The current disparity of treatment and services for people seeking psychological therapy compared to people receiving physical health treatment from the NHS must be urgently addressed." This innovative report, which has drawn on the knowledge of experts in the field, BACP members and psychological therapy service users, will be launched today (Wednesday) at 4pm at an event at the Houses of Parliament. Attending the event will be senior figures from the major political parties and leading health and wellbeing experts, including service users. Speakers will include: Rt Hon Paul Burstow MP, Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Minister of State for Care and Support, Luciana Berger MP, Shadow Minister for Public Health, James Morris MP, Chair of the APPG on Mental Health, Andy Bell, Deputy Chief Executive at the Centre for Mental Health. Dr Mike Shooter CBE, President of BACP, says: "Too many people with mental health problems are unable to get access to the support they need to recover and enjoy a fairer chance in life. The costs of this disparity are high and the consequences for the people affected can be devastating."

"Improving access to psychological therapies for people of all ages across the NHS is a vital step to create a fairer and more efficient health and care system. We need to ensure that we have an equal entitlement to timely, high quality evidence-based mental health support as we have to treatments for physical conditions." Dr Mike Shooter CBE, President of BACP, adds: "This pioneering report successfully articulates how parity of esteem can be achieved in relation to psychological therapies across key areas, including choice, waiting times and funding. We have made practical recommendations on the commissioning and delivery of psychological therapy services, and we look forward to working to make these solutions a reality." Notes to editors The full report, Psychological therapies and parity of esteem: from commitment to reality, is attached. BACP is a professional body and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice and provides information for therapists, clients of therapy, and the public.

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