The vital role of third sector counselling services

Friday 18 July, 2014

A report on commissioning third sector counselling was published today by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Centre for Psychological Therapies in Primary Care (CPTPC). As well as highlighting the valuable contributions made by Third Sector Organisations (TSOs), this report celebrates examples of good practice and offers practical advice to both TSOs and commissioners.

About seven million people experience diagnosable depression and/or anxiety each year in the UK. Currently, taking into account the full range of NHS services, three-quarters of these people – about five million - receive no treatment.

Louise Robinson, BACP's Healthcare Development Manager and co-author of the report, says:

"TSOs are already key partners in the delivery of the NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme. They also provide valuable additional services through contracts with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and local authorities. However, the figures show that there is a dramatic shortfall between the number of people who need treatment and those who receive it.

"Our report shines a light on the valuable contribution TSOs can and do make, while offering practical actions for TSOs and commissioners. Our aim is to help enable the third sector to survive the transition from grant-funding to commissioning, this will go some way to addressing the significant shortfall in NHS counselling provision but not far enough. We need more counselling both within the NHS and alongside it. I'm describing integrated local services that genuinely meet community needs - you can't do that with a single provider offering a limited choice of interventions."

CPTPC, established in August 2011, is a new centre which offers research, consultancy, education and training to support psychological therapies in primary care. The centre has a remit to research, monitor and evaluate mental health developments in primary care in the context of wider wellbeing. It is their research, commissioned by BACP, which forms the backbone of this new report co-authored by Louise Robinson and Joan Foster, CPTPC Support and Consultancy Unit Director.

Patrick Pietroni, Director of CPTPC, says:

"I believe that the survival of the third sector is at risk because commissioners are returning to a more traditional model of putting out tenders. With this system the majority of the time a single large provider is the winner.

"This vital report helps TSOs by offering guidance on how they can promote their services and work effectively with commissioners. The demand for counselling is higher than ever and we need to get the message across to the NHS that it's TSOs who are in the perfect position to fulfil this increased need."

Notes to editors

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. We have over 40,000 members, working within a range of settings, including the NHS, schools and universities, workplaces and private practice, as well as third sector environments including voluntary, community and pastoral settings.

View the report, *Commissioning third sector counselling: valuing and enabling services*, on the BACP website: http://www.bacp.co.uk/commissioning/

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