

Steady progress but way to go

The fifth annual survey of community mental health service users carried out by the Health Care Commission reflects the views of 14000 service users- a response rate of 35%.

In 2008, 74% of respondents say they know who their care coordinator is, up from 67% in 2004. Over the same period, the proportion of service users who say they received a copy of their care plan increased from 49% to 59%. The proportion reporting not having had a care review in the last year has fallen from 51% in 2004 to 45% in 2008.

However, the survey shows that more attention needs to be paid to involving people in their care. In 2008, almost a quarter (24%) of people say they were not involved in deciding what was in their care plan, suggesting no significant improvement over previous years. Furthermore, 16% of service users say their diagnosis was not discussed with them.

The survey also showed room for improvement around access to counselling services such as talking therapies. Of the 62% of service users who did not receive any counselling almost a third of those (32%) would have liked to.

There was continued improvement in the number of people who say they have the number of someone from their local NHS mental health service to call out-of-hours, up from 49% in 2004 to 55% in 2008. However, this still leaves 45% of service users without access to a crisis number to call out-of-hours.

A greater share of service users report that they are definitely involved in decisions about their medication, up from 40% in 2004 to 44% in 2008. But almost a third (32%) of those who had been given new prescriptions over the previous year say that they were not told about possible side effects - although this has fallen from 35% in 2004.

The survey also showed continued improvement in service users' relationships with healthcare professionals. A greater proportion report that they have confidence in their psychiatrist, up from 59% in 2004 to 63% in 2008, and that their psychiatrist "definitely" listens carefully, from 68% in 2004 to 72% this year. Likewise, 75% report that they "definitely" had trust and confidence in their community psychiatric nurses (CPNs), up from 73% in 2004.

The full report is available from the Health Care Commission
www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

