



Transforming the culture of care

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Drastic cuts to mental health services may lead to higher rates of mental ill health among vulnerable groups, warns health agency

Cuts to mental health services of up to 20 per cent by commissioners will have an adverse affect on already vulnerable groups, warns the Cultural Consultation Service following its recent seminar on mental health commissioning.

According to the '**Competent Commissioning in Mental Health Care**' seminar, people on low incomes, from poorer neighbourhoods and particular black and minority ethnic (BME) communities will be disproportionately affected. Meanwhile there is growing concern among health and social care professionals that the cuts will lead to higher rates of unemployment, substance misuse and crime.

Professor Kamaldeep Bhui, director of the Cultural Consultation Service, said: "In the current economic climate it is vital that commissioners have an understanding of the evidence and the complexity of mental health care and inequalities. Clinicians, managers and commissioners need to look at mental health from a more holistic perspective and shouldn't be put off by the cuts. There are health systems in high and low income countries around the world that function on much less money, are effective and are based on a closer relationship between commissioning, implementation and service provision."

Dr Jonathan Campion, consultant psychiatrist at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust who spoke at the event, added: "In many areas across the UK, commissioners will oversee 20 per cent of cuts to mental health services over the next four years. This is despite a significant proportion of those already affected by mental illness not receiving treatment. Such reductions in capacity will have a broad impact on people's access to timely and appropriate intervention for mental illness and effective interventions which promote wellbeing and prevent mental illness. In response to the need to make cuts, commissioners have overlooked the second part of the Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention framework which states that 20 per cent should be reinvested in prevention and mental health promotion."

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As inequality is a primary risk factor for mental illness, this is one of the reasons why certain groups, which are disproportionately affected by discrimination (such as BME groups, lesbian, gay and bisexual people and homeless people) may face higher levels of mental ill health. Out of the 10.8 per cent of the NHS budget spent on mental health services, only 0.0009 per cent is spent on prevention of mental illness and promotion of mental health.

The Cultural Consultation Service is working alongside commissioners, managers and clinicians to capture narratives that will help improve the quality of care, tackle inequalities and establish a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of care.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The **Cultural Consultation Service (CCS)** (www.culturalconsultation.org.uk) is the only UK-based organisation that provides cultural consultation, training, research and policy at multiple levels, including the individual, teams, organisations and social systems. Its central philosophy is to engage with the narratives of individuals, carers, the workforce and organisations, and to intervene in a way that promotes recovery, person-centred care and empowerment. The service takes account of cultural factors in the expression and management of mental distress.

The **Competent Commissioning in Mental Health Care** seminar was hosted by the Cultural Consultation Service on Wednesday 21st September 2011 in London. It explored the models and methods of commissioning necessary to meet patients' needs, addressed the complexity of care practices and how best to tackle inequalities while delivering on quality and cost-effectiveness. The event attracted commissioners, managers and service providers from the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The economic and social costs of mental health problems in 2009/10 by the Centre for Mental Health put the annual cost of mental illness in the UK at £105.2b.

The **QIPP (Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention) Mental Health** is the framework through which the NHS will achieve better quality care while making efficiency savings, leading to better value.

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