

The management of individuals with enduring moderate to severe mental health needs: a participatory evaluation of client journeys and the interface of mental health services with the criminal justice system in Cornwall

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Declared competing interests of authors: none

Disclaimer: this report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published April 2015

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr03150

Plain English summary

Individuals with moderate to severe mental health needs

Health Services and Delivery Research 2015; Vol. 3: No. 15

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr03150

NIHR Journals Library www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Plain English summary

The Interface Project aimed to explore the journeys of individuals with enduring moderate to severe mental health needs when in contact with the police. Data regarding 80 service user journeys were collected from police and mental health service record systems over a 12-month period. Data were analysed against the backdrop of national and local policy relating to the interagency management of individuals with mental health needs. An economic study examined the actual and modelled costs of managing these individuals across 55 cases. Of the 80 journeys examined, 23 individuals had been detained by police under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act (Great Britain. *Mental Health Act 2007*. London: The Stationery Office; 2007), 52 had been arrested for a suspected offence, and 15 were not detained but had been in contact with the police for low level offending incidents and concerns for welfare. Where police were aware of mental health needs and individuals were linked to a Mental Health Team, there were improvements in interagency working and service user outcomes. The economic study suggests that introducing integrated services such as street triage or custody liaison and diversion services would have minimal effects on individual-level costs. The research revealed examples of good joint-working practices between the services but also showed the importance of protocols to guide interagency working. The evidence supports the need for all agencies to prioritise the joint identification and implementation of the appropriate legislative framework and associated training to facilitate effective information sharing to enhance interagency management.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 10/1011/67. The contractual start date was in October 2011. The final report began editorial review in October 2013 and was accepted for publication in February 2014. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health. This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research, or similar, and contains language which may offend some readers.

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