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

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Plain English summary

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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.
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