MENTAL HEALTH - THE FORGOTEN SERVICE

As well as articles on the current state of our mental health services locally and nationally, this issue includes an update on the campaign to save Substance Misuse services from going out to tender and a personal letter and articles about what is happening to mental health services for young people, a growing scandal.

If the whole of the NHS is being plunged into crises of the government’s making, our mental health services have lurched from one crisis to another for many years – battered by root and branch re-organisation, massive hospital and clinic closures, haemorrhaging of funding and resources and reports of tragic consequences for young and older patients. Furthermore, we think the public is unaware of the true scale of the crisis in mental health provision.

Given that 1 in 4 of us will at some stage in our lives experience mental illness, and that many of us will almost certainly know someone dealing with these issues, our complacency is wholly misplaced.

According to YouGov research in early October last year, the mentally ill are widely seen as the most discriminated group in Britain. Negative attitudes have hardened, and the frequently pushed government line of deserving and undeserving poor has hit people with mental illness very hard.

“People are killing themselves while awaiting a bed. If this was happening to people with heart disease or cancer, there would be public outrage. Why is no action being taken?” (Dr Arun Chopra, author of “Are mental health services in crisis?”)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

B&H Council Policy and Resources Committee Demonstration/lobby meeting (this is where the final decision re the tendering out of sexual health services will be made so a crucial meeting). Thursday 20 March 3.15 for 4pm Hove Town Hall

DEFEND NHS Forum - What is Happening to our Mental Health and Substance Misuse Services?
Duke of Wellington pub Thursday 20 March 7pm

CCG meetings
Main hall, Brighthelm centre
Tuesday March 25th 2-5pm (following meeting – May 20th same time and place)

Lobby of SECamb Board Meeting and protest
Gatwick Friday 28 March time tbc

Defend our NHS organising meeting
Prince Arthur pub, Dean St Tuesday 1st April 7pm

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN BRIGHTON AND HOVE – OVERVIEW

Our local mental health service, like many round the country, is in severe crisis with workloads of staff reaching unsustainable levels.

The Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust provides mental health, learning disability and substance abuse services across Sussex and employs around 5,000 workers. In 2011-
2012 had to make savings of £14.2 million and 380 jobs were to be cut over 2 years. In 2013 £13.5 million savings had to be found.

The beds in two acute in-patient wards are among the 104 (the fourth highest number in the country) which have been permanently closed. The workers have been redeployed to alternative vacant posts and no compulsory redundancies have yet resulted.

Brighton & Hove Clinical commissioning group has commissioned a raft of mental health services, no longer provided by the NHS but by voluntary or charitable organisations. Details of new mental health partnerships commissioned by Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group are at www.mindlive.co.uk/nhs-local-updates/

**Some examples**

Four former NHS mental health recovery homes are now run by Brighton Housing Trust and Southdown Housing. **When the homes went out to tender last year the trust decided not to bid!**

The Lighthouse Recovery Support service at the Allen Centre, for people who have a diagnosis of personality disorder, opened in May 2013. At least the NHS trust has so far retained an interest here working alongside Sussex Oakleaf and MIND.

Campaigners are determined that the NHS Substance Misuse Service will remain firmly within the NHS despite obvious intentions for it to be transferred out. See page 4.

In a very worrying illustration of the undermining of NHS staff terms and conditions (even when supposedly more scrupulous providers such as charities take over NHS provision) – nurses who have been transferred to the recovery centres for example have been redesignated care centre workers, placing their nursing registration at risk. What are the unions doing about that and other pressing issues staff face?

There are broader dangers to such developments. See “**Threats to NHS-provided community mental health services** on page 3.

In an even more concerning development the trust has linked up with Care UK- a private health care provider – see page 4.

All the tendering out of and cuts to services are happening at a time when a third more people are being detained under the Mental Health Act and the number of people committing suicide nationally and locally is rising rapidly. Mental health referrals in Sussex soared by 20% last year alone. Four people per day are detained under the Mental Health Act within the Sussex Partnership catchment area.

**“SUICIDAL PATIENTS TURNED AWAY IN SUSSEX AS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE REACHES CRISIS POINT”** Argus article 23 October 2013 (edited version)

In a frank interview, Lisa Rodrigues, chief executive of Sussex Partnership trust, revealed cuts-hit services were stretched to breaking point. Mrs Rodrigues said: “Last weekend we had no beds at all. Next weekend we’ll probably still have no beds. It’s tough for staff and it’s very tough for patients.” She blamed the problems on government cuts, claiming the trust would soon “reach crisis point” if it was not handed more resources.

As soaring numbers of patients come forward for emergency treatment, hundreds are sent to costly clinics (anything up to £600 a day) like the Priory, often in far-flung corners of the country. In 2012/13 Sussex Partnership paid private firms £228,000 to take care of patients, a figure which has much more than doubled so far in 2013/14.

Amy Whitelock, policy manager at Mind, said: “Having a good support network of friends and family around you can make a big difference to how well and how quickly someone’s mental health improves. Being sent out of your local area to hospitals far from home where friends and family may struggle to visit you is unacceptable.”

Already this year, scores of other mentally ill people have been turned away from local hospitals and sent home to be treated by a community nurse.

One insider who works at the trust said refusing mentally ill people a hospital bed was a “complete scandal”. “When someone is in a serious crisis, there is only one place they should be - in hospital. “Many of these people are being sent home when it is not good for
them, even if they are still receiving treatment. If things carry on like this, it’s only a matter of time before the trust has another horror story on its hands.”

Mrs Rodrigues said patients were always offered some form of treatment if needed, claiming a bed was always found for people suffering the most severe symptoms. “It’s true we are sometimes forced to tell people to go home when previously we might have admitted them into hospital. That’s obviously a real concern”.

**PRIVATISATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN 2014**

Based on extracts from longer articles by Peter Atkinson of Unison January 2014 (on the Defend our NHS website) and Dr Arun Chopra 05 November 2013 – full article can be found at http://www.fabians.org.uk/are-mental-health-services-in-crisis/

In 2012 nationally NHS spending on community based mental health services was £3.6billion compared to in-patient provision at £3.8billion. The private sector currently accounts for 27% of UK mental health hospital capacity (excluding dementia provision).

**The NHS pays for 87% of placements in private mental health hospitals.**

The rate of growth of private mental health hospitals is almost down to zero. This is due to a mixture of public spending cuts and the NHS Trusts expanding into areas normally dominated by the private sector.

A tiny amount of the money spent on community services is currently outsourced, making this sector a prime target for the private sector as their hospital based services fail to grow. The closure of hundreds of NHS mental health beds across the country over the past few years leads to “spikes” in demand for beds but not the continual demand the private sector needs for growth.

**Some “people” facts**

**50,000** - the number of people detained in 2012-13 under the Mental Health Act representing a 4 per cent increase on 2011/12, continuing a rising trend.

**36%** of beds for the mentally ill cut nationally since 2008. **10%** - the reduction numbers of beds in 2013 alone. People are being admitted to hospitals 200 miles away from home, and some are killing themselves while awaiting a bed.

In August 2013, the Health Select Committee reported that Mental Health Practitioners were detaining people under the Mental Health Act illegally, in order to secure a bed as it was almost impossible to admit people who agreed to come into hospital.

Suicide rates started to rise again after 2009 after falling year on year since 1997. The ONS reported a further ‘significant’ rise in suicides in 2011. Statistics are not available for later periods. What is the likely impact of austerity measures?

**“A perfect storm” – causes of the crisis**

£20 billion savings to be made by the NHS by 2015.

The first reductions in spending on mental health services for working age adults since 2001 (according to the Department of Health’s National Survey of Mental Health Investment)

Cuts to Local Authority budgets are leading to social workers being ‘redeployed’ away from mental health teams into other roles and mental health nurses in to other sectors.

Cuts to voluntary sector funding leading to the closure of many programmes which have traditionally supported severely unwell people.

**Threats to NHS-provided community mental health services**

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will probably move away from “block” contracts and the threats will come from:

- Community Interest Companies and Social Enterprises) though only on a small scale
- Voluntary organisations such as CRI, Turning Point and smaller, locally based charities
- Private companies already involved in general community services such as Virgin
- Private mental health hospital companies such as the Priory Group

Where any smaller organisations / companies are running a service they will (in turn) become targets for bigger corporate interests as contracts come up for retendering.
**SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICES**

Vital NHS Services including Mental Health are out for tender and could soon be targeted by profiteering private companies.

Brighton and Hove council has taken over responsibility for public health from the NHS and set the timetable for this and other services to be put out to tender. Fortunately we discovered this and there is now a campaign to stop the council from tendering out the Substance Misuse Services (as well as Sexual Health – see previous newsletter).

**SM services** are currently provided by NHS workers in the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust, who work alongside a third sector organisation. Health workers in the SMS teams are furious they have not been consulted at any stage and that their service faces being contracted out. They are proud to work for the NHS and do not want to work for a private company.

Workers in the Trust have called for a halt to the tendering process. At the SPFT Unison AGM meeting in February, a motion was adopted to fight privatisation and to support the SMS workers.

Come along to the Defend the NHS Forum meeting to hear why contracting out spells disaster for our public health services. And help health workers plan a fight back to keep the service and their jobs within the NHS.

**What is Happening to our Mental Health and Substance Misuse Services?**

**Thursday March 26th 7pm in the Duke of Wellington, 70 Upper Gloucester Rd, Brighton**

**ALL NHS SUPPORTERS WELCOME**

**LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CARE UK –**

[http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/about/news/articles/574-recovery-service](http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/about/news/articles/574-recovery-service)

In 2013 the Sussex Partnership Trust announced it was to almost double its bed numbers after going into partnership with private health company Care UK. This has to be put in the context of over 100 beds for patients having been cut locally over the last few years.

Two projects are under way. One is a new development to provide a home for up to 24 people in Crawley Road, Horsham. The other is an existing 32-place facility at Nelson House, Gosport, which will be operated by the new partnership.

Louisa Rodrigues of the Sussex Partnership NHS Trust has said, “This new arrangement with Care UK means we will be able to support more people and give them hope for the future.” We will see how the new arrangements work in practice !!!

According to Corporate Watch, Care UK is reducing its tax liability by routing £8m a year in interest payments on loan notes issued in the Channel Islands. See also our article on Harmoni and Care UK in the last newsletter. A company we will be returning to ……

**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – A FATHER’S VIEW**

This letter sent to us by a very concerned and angry local father throws worrying light on the impact on young people and their families of cuts to NHS services.

“Following the GP referral, when we called for help it was like we had discovered a fire in the house, dialled 999 and been told that a fire engine would not be dispatched until the whole house was on fire. In the event the delayed fire engine was cancelled because my daughter was about to turn eighteen and had to be transferred to another service.

Following letters to senior NHS managers locally and Caroline Lucas, we managed to get some help. It isn’t right we are still having to fight so hard. Eating disorders are a particular concern because they are the most lethal of mental health conditions. If you have appendicitis there is a half of one percent risk of death and you get immediate surgery. If you get anorexia you have a 15 to 20 % chance of death. Now the NHS response is slow or nonexistent and completely at odds with the NICE guidelines for treatment.

Thousands of young people are being thrown to the wolves, and through Caroline Lucas I am asking the relevant ministers for comparative statistics relating to deaths and serious self harm resulting from eating disorders pre and post austerity. People should be held
to account. This reflects what is going on for the current generation of young people: stress, academic pressure, social pressure, student debt, unemployment. They are a generation of the most lovely, wonderful, hard working boys and girls who have been utterly betrayed.”

ENQUIRY LAUNCHED INTO CAMHS (CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES)

As a result of concerns expressed by the Chief Medical Officer and others about the extent to which children and adolescents are affected by mental health problems and their difficulties gaining access to appropriate treatment, the parliamentary Health Committee is conducting an inquiry into children’s and adolescent mental health and CAMHS. For more information and to contact the enquiry to make your feelings known - http://www.youngminds.org.uk/news/blog/1878_inquiry_launched_into_camhs

HOW CAN WE SAVE OUR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES?

Defend our NHS takes inspiration from the Campaign to Save Mental Health Services in Norfolk and Suffolk

We talked to Jan Ainsley, (representative on the campaign)of Norfolk Keep Our NHS Public and Norfolk Coalition against the Cuts. (You can read more of her notes on our web site)

“We’ve got a crisis here. In 2012 the Health Trust accepted the government’s demand for a £20 million budget reduction. They cut mental health beds by 20% and closed centres and services. And they glossed over the truth by calling it a “radical re-design”!

But local people aren’t fooled by such talk. We’ve made it our business to ferret out information and get the real picture from health workers, patients and carers (we kicked off in November with a meeting of 200!) Since then we have organised lobbies of the Trust Board, Commissioners and Council committees. We have to expose and challenge their hand in these catastrophic cuts.

The crisis has escalated. About £7 million has been paid on redundancies, and then further money wasted on employing agency staff to cover the posts. Of course case loads have been increased, teams cut in number and staff downgraded. Did you know that in the most recent national survey, the Trust is the second worse performing mental health trust in the country?

We’ve argued against bed closures and made that central to our campaign. Whole units are being closed. Bed shortages result in patients being sent all over the country - as far as Harrogate. And there’s been an increase in the number of unexpected deaths.

We make sure our protests and our arguments get good press coverage locally. We are collecting the stories of patients and carers, and making sure their voices are heard. And we’ve got some very committed and well-informed health workers prepared to speak on local radio.

Good luck with your campaigning in Brighton. Go to our web site to get our programme, our latest news and to share views”. http://norfolksuffolkmentalhealthcrisis.org.uk

Links to some important articles

http://morningstaronline.co.uk/a-a30a-The-arms-dealing-company-taking-over-our-NHS#.Ux3owoWF9-4
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-sussex-26530733
http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/02/one-in-10-jobless-yougov-poll
http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/jun/20/police-cells-mentally-ill-9000
http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=4251

Thanks for reading this. Please send any comments and suggestions for future issues to defendthenhs@gmail.co.uk. All contributions very much appreciated...