

The Portsmouth Care Consortium*

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The co-ordination of services for the long-term mentally ill in the community poses difficulties of organisation. Each country has its own health and social service structure which influences the development of such services. This paper outlines an approach to co-ordinating care in Portsmouth. The mental health services were well known in the '30s because of their community orientation due to the leadership of Thomas Beaton, the superintendent of St James' Hospital (Freeman, 1962). The city has a population of 210,000. Previous seaside holiday accommodation is now utilised for residential care homes for the elderly and the mentally ill.

Three psychiatric teams work within the city. The Southsea team has a large population of the long-term mentally ill living within the community. A computer register has nearly 300 such patients in its data bank. The large continuing care commitment prompted the idea of a consortium consisting of representatives of health and social services, the Portsmouth Housing Association together with representatives from the voluntary sector, the Portsmouth Council of Community Service, MIND and representatives from the local branch of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship.

At first the consortium represented only the Southsea area of the city but in 1989 it became city-wide when a major change in its style of working was initiated. The consortium began to promote working groups in the main areas of its interest and widen its representation with greater involvement of both users and carers. The working groups are in Housing, Day Services, Ethnic Minorities, Employment, Users, Carers, and Promotion and Public Relations, with the addition of a Development Group.

Housing. The group comprises representatives from Social Services, Health, Housing Associations, the City Council, the Residential Care Home Association and Consumer Groups. The main aim has been to identify housing needs of the long-term mentally ill and make recommendations to develop housing schemes and support services.

*A poster presentation of the work of the consortium was made at the World Congress of Psycho-Social Rehabilitation, Montreal, Canada, October 1991.

Day Services. A similarly wide representation of interests is involved. Its task is to provide a comprehensive and flexible range of day facilities.

Ethnic Minority Group. This group has sought to give equal access and care from the Mental Health Services for the groups it represents. It encourages representation from such groups within the city.

Employment. This has brought together those interested in improving the employment prospects of those with mental illness who may be in the field of paid employment or in sheltered provision.

Promotion and Public Relations. The group promotes and publicises the work of the consortium to general public and service providers. It has organised several workshops and conferences.

The Mental Health Users Group. This gives users of the Mental Health Service a voice on matters concerning the facilities provided. The group is supported by mental health professionals but it is hoped that it will run eventually independently. User participation has been nurtured and users are represented on sub-groups and the Consortium.

Carers and Support Group. This group offers support and practical advice to carers. The focus has been the Compass Club which meets monthly.

The Development Group works up specific plans for development within the Service and estimates their cost. These are discussed with health and social services administration and may be included in annual planning submissions.

How the consortium works

The chairperson of each sub-group sits on the consortium, as well as the representatives of the groups. The consortium is at present chaired by a respected retired senior social worker. A recent addition has been a representative of the general practitioners. As a consultant with a special interest in rehabilitation, attendance at this type of meeting has been a new area of work. A medical view can be given to community leaders and misconceptions about current practice and attitudes to care corrected.

Funding has been on piecemeal grants from health, Social Services and other sources. Secretarial and administrative help comes from various organisations represented in the consortium. The consortium generates ideas for improving the service. Local people identify with and help to build it. It has proved so successful that similar groups known as "Fora" have been built into other care groups now included within the local Community Unit of the District Health Authority to assist in forward planning.

The recognition of the views of the consortium in the formal planning of health and social services has guaranteed its continuing influence. It was revitalised with the formation of the sub-groups which promoted the involvement of a greater variety of people. The sub-groups do best when they have set goals to try to achieve. Their life will probably wax and wane and new groups may be necessary as service needs change. Although the consortium is seen as part of the formal organisation of the community service, it is important that it maintains an independent voice

and continues to have an advocacy role on behalf of its care group.

Portsmouth, enclosed by the sea and with its traditional mental hospital placed within the city, is well placed to adopt a community approach. The life of the consortium may be determined by the enthusiasm and involvement of its members. The idea of the consortium is being promoted among other care groups and it will be interesting to see whether the same style of multidisciplinary participation and energy can be replicated.

Acknowledgements

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References

FREEMAN, H. (1962) The Portsmouth Mental Health Service 1926-1952; an historical note. *The Medical Officer*, March, 119-151.

Lecture

The Portman Clinic annual Edward Glover Lecture will be given by Professor John C. Gunn, Professor of Forensic Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry on *The Politics of Personality Disorder* on 26 October 1992 at 8.30 p.m. at the Edward Lewis Theatre, Windeyer Building, University College & Middlesex School of Medicine, 41 Cleveland Street, London W1.

Admission by ticket only; applications to: Mrs P. Harrington, Admin. Secretary, Portman Clinic, 8 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London NW3 5NA (telephone 071 794 8262). Any other information: Mr C. Fishman, Principal Adult Psychotherapist, at the same address.

European Network for Mental Service Evaluation (ENMESH)

In collaboration with the European Office of the World Health Organisation, a European Network for Mental Service Evaluation (ENMESH) is now being established. Active researchers in the field are invited to request a registration form to join the network from

Dr Aart Schene (ENMESH Secretary), Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Academisch Medisch Centrum, Polikliniek Psychiatrie, Meibergdreef 9, 1105 AZ, Amsterdam (ZO), The Netherlands.