

Proposals for survey of mental health service users

Purpose of this paper

Louis Appleby recently wrote to you about outcome measurement and clinical audit, and indicated that there will be a survey of mental health service users this year. The results will feed into the 2003 star ratings of mental health trusts, including mental and social care trusts. Performance indicators are expected to be published for PCTs that provide specialist mental health services.

This paper provides an outline of the content of the forthcoming survey. We would welcome comments about the methods and the practicalities of conducting the survey.

A response is required by 12 December 2002 so that your comments can be taken into account in on-going development work.

Background

The survey is the first mental health survey in the rolling programme of patient surveys in all NHS trusts which CHI is now managing. Last year a survey of inpatients was carried out in acute trusts. This year there will be surveys of outpatients and emergency departments in acute trusts, and a survey of service users on CPA registers in mental health trusts and PCTs providing specialist mental health services.

Objectives of the surveys

The objectives of the surveys are to provide:

- feedback from service users which can be used by providers to identify areas for quality improvement;
- measures of the experience of service users using mental health services, including performance indicators for use in the ratings process. It is intended that results of this survey will form part of the 2003 performance ratings for mental health trusts.

Content of surveys

Research about what matters to service users has been used to develop the questionnaire, and further testing of the questionnaire with users is taking place. There will be a standard questionnaire for all trusts: because of the tight timetable for carrying out the survey, it will unfortunately not be possible for trusts to make local variations to the questionnaire.

The survey covers the topics shown below.

Domain	Survey topics
Access and waiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- access to services which user identified as needed- access to care coordinator and crisis care
Safe, high quality, coordinated care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- care plan within appropriate period, usefulness of care reviews- views on services provided eg day centre activities- time spent in appointment- confidence and trust in staff
Better information, more choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- information about condition and treatment: medication, side affects- service user involvement in care: decisions about medication and treatment, involvement in care plan, involvement of carers- understanding of care plan and treatments
Building relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- communication with the doctor and other professionals: being listened to, being treated with respect and dignity;- ability to express views to professionals- handling of complaints- rights to see medical records- rights when detained- discrimination
Quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- provision of support in the community (including accommodation, employment etc)- safety- loneliness

Sample, methods and timing

The survey will be postal, with two reminders. We are currently reviewing ways to increase response rates, such as publicity about the survey, and would welcome trusts' views on this.

For each survey, a sample of 850 service users will be drawn from the CPA register in each trust, with the aim of achieving 500 completed questionnaires.

The survey will be carried out in March-May 2003. We plan to provide trusts with the questionnaires and guidance for the survey by the beginning of February.

Conducting the survey

The questionnaire, survey methods and guidance are being developed by the NHS patient survey advice centre, at the Picker Institute Europe, on behalf of CHI.

It will be trusts' responsibility to carry out the survey, or to contract for this to be done: DH have identified a list of approved suppliers for conducting patient surveys, and trusts can contract with one of these organisations, without further tendering. The list of approved contractors is on the NHS survey advice centre website (www.nhssurveys.org). Given that the timetable for this year's survey will be tight, we recommend that you use one of the approved contractors for your survey, and that you identify which contractor you will use as soon as possible.

Results

We plan to:

- derive measures of performance for each aspect of patient experience.
- provide trusts with national benchmarks, which will enable them to interpret their own results. This data will also inform CHI/CHAI's CGRs and inspections.
- produce a national report which will cover: the overall picture of service user experience of mental health services in the NHS; analysis to identify variations, geographically, for different trust types, and for different patient groups.

Further information

You can feedback comments or clarifications via patient.survey@chi.nhs.uk. Further information about the NHS survey programme can be found at www.nhssurveys.org, or from the NHS survey advice centre on 01865 208127.

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