

Section two

The policy framework for dual diagnosis

In this section we alert practitioners to two frameworks for practice produced by the Department of Health and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. We also provide a brief summary of key areas of policy that are relevant to dual diagnosis. Fuller descriptions of these can be found in Appendix 2 on page 81.

Practitioners should be aware that policy tends to focus on people with more severe problems who have been given a formal label of dual diagnosis.

Frameworks for practice

We particularly refer practitioners to two sets of guidelines:

Dual Diagnosis Good Practice Guide



Published by the Department of Health, this summarises current policy and good practice with emphasis on the provision of mental health services for people with severe mental health problems and problematic substance misuse.

The guide clarifies lead responsibilities and sets out ways in which substance misuse and mental health should work with and support each other. Its key provisions include:

- The primary responsibility for the treatment of individuals with severe mental illness and problematic substance misuse should lie within mental health services. This approach is referred to as 'mainstreaming', and aims to lessen the likelihood of people being shunted between services or losing contact completely
- Substance misuse agencies (both alcohol and drugs) should provide specialist support, consultancy and training to mental health teams
- Where clients have less severe mental health problems, mental health services should provide similar support to substance misuse agencies
- Clear pathways of joint working and treatment should be developed in dual diagnosis strategic planning

Local Implementation Teams (from mental health) and Drug Action Teams (from substance misuse) are responsible for the implementation of the Guide's requirements.

Co-existing problems of Mental Disorder and Substance Misuse (dual diagnosis) - an Information Manual



This is a more detailed resource for practitioners published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 2002. It contains similar sections to those covered in this toolkit but provides greater depth of discussion and good practice detail. The manual can be downloaded free from: www.rcpsych.ack.uk/cru/complete/ddip.htm

Other policy and service frameworks

The Mental Health National Service Framework (NSFMH)

Published in 1999, the NSFMH sets out how services will be planned, delivered and monitored. Several areas are relevant to dual diagnosis including mental health promotion, primary care and specialist services.

Two approaches to care are also particularly relevant:

The Care Programme Approach (CPA) is a framework for inter-agency working. It seeks to ensure that clients have a proper assessment and that services are co-ordinated in line with client need.

Assertive outreach and crisis resolution services are proactive approaches to engaging with clients and managing problems.

Models of Care (MoC)

This is effectively the comparable framework for substance misuse services. Although it does not have the formal status of a National Service Framework, it has similar aims in terms of specifying how services will be planned, delivered and monitored.

MoC emphasises care co-ordination and meeting multiple client needs through an integrated pathway of care. To this end, it groups services into four tiers and outlines the relationships between them. The tiers are set out in this toolkit in the '*In Practice*' section on page 36.

The Mental Health Act 1983

This Act sets out the circumstances in which an individual can be detained (sectioned) in hospital for assessment and/or treatment for their mental disorder without their consent. The '*References and Resources*' section explains the sections that are most commonly used (see page 83). It should be noted that this Act is currently under review.

The Mental Health Act contains several different sections. More information is available from www.imhap.com

The National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England

Published in March 2004, this document sets out the Government's strategy for tackling the harms and costs of alcohol misuse in England. The strategy recognises the need for co-ordination of services and commits to working within the Models of Care framework on integrated care pathways.

Updated Drug Strategy

Published by the Drug Strategy Directorate at the Home Office in 2002, the strategy aims to reduce the harm that drugs cause to society, including communities, individuals and their families.

The Social Exclusion Report – Mental Health and Social Exclusion

Published in June 2004, this document examines how to attack the cycle of deprivation linked to mental health problems (including considering the role of substance misuse). Both the National Institute for Mental Health (England) (NIMHE) and the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) have agreed to take forward work in this area recommended by the report.