

The Mental Health Social Care Strategic Network

Why a strategic network ?

Over the last five years Senior Managers involved in the planning and delivery of social care services in integrated Mental Health Trusts have been meeting as part of a learning set to share good practice and develop. This learning set was initially sponsored by NIMHE and SCIE. The network is now being established on a self-supporting basis.

The network brings together senior managers responsible for social care in the delivery of Mental Health Services. The social care agenda is crucial to delivering user-centered Mental Health Services. The social inclusion and empowerment agendas, the development of self-directed support, as well as the effective implementation of Mental Health legislation – these are just some of the issues addressed in the network's remit. Senior Managers with Social Care roles are able to discuss latest developments in practice, and in turn share this within their organization.

As social inclusion underpins the aims of the network, the network is hosted by and works in partnership with the National Social Inclusion Programme based at the Kings Fund.

Aims of the strategic network. The aims of the network are to:

- ❑ Promote and develop the role of social care in mental health policy and practice with a particular focus on the contribution of social care in mental health to the social inclusion agenda.
- ❑ Support Directors, Associate Directors of Social Care and Social Care Leads in Mental health NHS Trusts and Local Authorities in England and Wales in their work;
- ❑ Act as a focal point for best leadership practice at national, regional and local levels and work with key stakeholders to achieve this; and
- ❑ Educate the wider public in the role and responsibility of the social care contribution to modern mental health services.

How does the network operate ?

Those eligible to participate in the network activities include:

- Senior Managers responsible for Mental Health services in local authorities
- Directors and Assistant Directors of Social Care in Mental Health Trusts
- Social Care Lead Officers in mental health trusts

The core activities of the network consist of participation in a learning set, facilitated by Professor Peter Gilbert, who is well known for his contribution to the development of the social care agenda within integrated mental health services. The learning set meets four times a year, together with a residential held in the Autumn. At each meeting of the learning set, participants have an opportunity to discuss key topical issues with invited experts as well as sharing good practice.

The network is also represented on the New Ways of Working steering group in order to ensure that the Mental Health social care agenda is clearly articulated. Participants are also expected to contribute to professional and management journals in order to further their professional development as well as the Mental Health Social Care agenda.

What are the benefits for the Organisation ?

Participation in the network enables participants to:

- Meet their personal development needs in a constructive setting alongside their peers from other Mental Health services
- Meet registration requirements for the General Social Care Council
- Disseminate good practice at Board level and throughout the organization in order to keep updated on key practice and policy issues

Membership and Governance Details

Corporate Membership of the network offers excellent value for money, in fact less than the cost of one day's attendance at a conference. For an annual fee of £300, up to two staff can participate in the quarterly learning set meetings as well as the residential (accommodation costs extra). Other senior staff can participate in the network for an additional sum of £100. Membership for the first year runs from 1st July 2008 to 30th June 2009. To join the network you should contact Karen Wren at Karen.wren@kent.gov.uk, stating how many people from your organization will be participating. Karen will then raise the appropriate invoice. Please note that the residential should be booked separately, using the appropriate form.

A constitution agreed in March 2008 governs the management and governance of the network and a committee elected by representatives of the constituent organizations is elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Network which takes place during the residential each September.

Chair: Hari Sewell, Director of Social Care, Camden and Islington Care Trust

Secretary: Ben Bano

Treasurer: James Sinclair

September, 2008.