



Department
of Health

From the Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP
Minister of State for Care and Support

POC3000911110

14 JAN 2015

Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
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To: All Crisis Care Concordat local leaders

Tel: 020 7210 4850

Dear Colleagues,

CRISIS CARE CONCORDAT: LOCAL DECLARATIONS AND BEYOND

I am writing to sincerely thank you all for your hard work in ensuring that your local Crisis Care Concordat Declaration was signed before the end of 2014 by all the agencies in your area that work to respond to people in mental health crisis.

I am pleased to inform you that all localities in England succeeded in signing Declarations before the end of 2014. I believe this reflects a hugely significant development in improving the provision of mental health crisis care across the country. I was very pleased to follow your progress through the online map managed by Mind, and to watch this map turn amber in its entirety (with shades of green) was extremely encouraging. I know that this means that new and existing partnerships are coming together and will work to improve service responses.

I am grateful to you for the leadership you have shown to date in galvanising local partners and bringing together the various different agencies to have these vital discussions. It is clear to me how much energy and willingness there is out there to drive and deliver true change on the ground. I have heard many genuinely moving personal stories from both service users and professionals, up and down the country, and these have been inspirational for me.

Action plans

Whilst local declarations are a critical first step, the action plans represent the substantive vehicles for transforming crisis care for the better. I now want us to build on declaration sign-up and invest intensive efforts in ensuring that the local action plans that you and your partners produce are robust, of high quality and prove to be the catalyst for longer-term change.

In order to maintain the momentum you have generated, I am therefore setting an expectation that you will have an action plan in place by the end of March 2015. This will allow local partners who are members of System Resilience Groups to integrate relevant elements of their operational resilience and capacity plans within action plans and will allow partners to give due regard to contractual arrangements in advance of the new financial year.

I know some areas have already uploaded their action plans to the Mind map and I congratulate local partners in those areas for their ambition; I am also aware of many more of you who are currently progressing well in developing your plans. I know this reflects your appetite to build on solid foundations. Existing action plans are available for anyone to view on the Concordat website at www.concordat.org.uk by clicking on green areas, and there are further resources also available on the website to assist local partners in drawing up their action plans under the 'Resources' and 'Get Inspired' tabs.

I suggest that we all view action plans as 'continuously improving' – so local areas should revisit, revise and update their plans as circumstances change, further challenges arise and results and solutions emerge. Action planning should therefore be viewed as a work in progress, and action plans that are on the website should be updated as necessary.

The focus should be, above all else, on developing plans that will deliver real change. We expect to see the involvement of local declaration signatories in developing relevant actions that seek to identify and address weaknesses in local service provision. Areas are welcome to add to the list of existing declaration signatories if they wish to do so, with new signatories contributing their own actions, as is the case in Gloucestershire, for example, with several third sector organisations becoming involved. The central national Concordat team, consisting of officials from my Department and colleagues from Mind, is putting in place an action plan quality review process which will help guide local partners.

NHS England planning guidance

In designing action plans, local partners should pay particular attention to NHS England's planning guidance for the next financial year, 'The *Forward View* Into Action: Planning For 2015/16' (<http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/forward-view-planning.pdf>); paragraph 4.17 makes specific reference to the Crisis Care Concordat action plans, which should enshrine "the actions required of commissioners and providers to ensure that those experiencing a mental health crisis are properly supported", including "the provision of mental health support as an integral part of NHS 111 services; 24/7 Crisis Care Home Treatment Teams; and the need to ensure that there is enough capacity to prevent children, young people or vulnerable adults, undergoing mental health assessments in police cells."

Local governance & accountability

It is also important that areas have governance structures in place to ensure strong local accountability in monitoring the delivery of actions. The national Crisis Care Concordat works on the basis that all national signatories are jointly accountable to one another and I would encourage partners to consider adopting a similar approach to ensure that the spirit of collaborative working towards a mutual goal is maintained.

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

As you may know, as part of its thematic review into crisis care, CQC is carrying out local area inspections of services that respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis between November 2014 and February 2015 in up to 15 localities. As part of these local



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area inspections, CQC is asking Trusts whether they already have a local Crisis Care Concordat action plan in place. CQC will provide feedback to those localities; this will be very helpful in identifying areas for improvement which can in turn be addressed through action plans. In addition, the final report will outline the plans for inspecting regulated providers that respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis so that key issues are routinely considered within their regulation of services, alongside recommendations for partners across the health and social care sector who have a responsibility towards people in crisis. CQC is seeking to publish the report later in 2015.

Crisis Teams and Health-based Places of Safety have been defined as core services under CQC's new inspection model for mental health services, and will be rated by CQC as part of the comprehensive inspection process. As a key partner to the national Crisis Care Concordat, CQC will take into account the Concordat's principles as part of this process.

Use of police cells for places of safety for u18s

You will hopefully now be aware that on 18 December, the Department of Health and Home Office published a joint Review into the operation of sections 135 and 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983. The Review recommends that the law be amended so that the use of police cells as places of safety is ended for under-18s, and occurs only in very exceptional circumstances for adults. Whilst next steps are subject to a detailed funding and implementation plan, the recommendations of the Review chime with the Government's existing position on this matter and with the standards set out in the Crisis Care Concordat.

As you may know, nationally, the use of police cells has reduced by 24 per cent so far this financial year for adults and children. While I hope to see this trend continue, there is significant variation across the country, which is why Mike Penning, the Minister for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims, and I have recently written jointly to all areas where police cells are still being used as places of safety to make clear that we want to see rapid progress towards significantly reducing overall numbers and ending the practice for under 18s. We expect local action plans to address, for example, the need to end the use of blanket exclusion criteria restricting access to health-based places of safety on account of someone in crisis being intoxicated, and the need to ensure that there are clear protocols to enable under-18s to access crisis services on a 24/7 basis.

Improving the urgent response to people in crisis is one of many important elements of this work. Another I would encourage partners to consider is suicide prevention, with one local example being 'Project Zero', led by the South West Regional Suicide Reduction Collaborative, which aims to reduce suicides in the south west region to zero by 2018 (<http://www.mentalhealthalliancesouthwest.org.uk/resource/project-zero-south-west-regional-suicide-reduction-collaborative/>).

Moving forward

Please do ensure this letter is cascaded to everyone involved in drawing up your declaration. I do hope you all had a refreshing and enjoyable festive break and I look forward to pressing ahead with our collaborative work in 2015 with new energy and impetus. As ever, departmental officials with our colleagues at Mind are on hand to assist you in the next phase of this crucial task. Congratulations once again for your work to date and thank you for your ongoing efforts. I am sure you will all agree it is fundamental that we remember that we are doing this to improve the lives of individuals. We should all therefore give this the paramount priority it deserves, and be excited about the transformation we can achieve.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Norman Lamb', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

NORMAN LAMB