

Healthwatch Sheffield VCF Health & Social Care Forum

Thursday 16 March 2017, 9.45 am – 12noon

The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield S1 4FW

‘Tell Theresa’: What would you say to the Prime Minister - what needs to be done to improve mental health in Sheffield?

Chaired by Judy Robinson, Chair of Healthwatch Sheffield.

Introduction and welcome

Judy Robinson welcomed everyone to the event and explained the aim of the morning: to agree three or four key messages about improving mental health in Sheffield to convey to Theresa May.

Mental health is a key issue for Healthwatch Sheffield, as can be seen in our report [“Care or Crisis? A study of people’s experiences of care before and after a mental health crisis”](#).

In her speech to the Charity Commission in January 2017, the Prime Minister said “For too long, mental illness has been something of a hidden injustice in our country, shrouded in a completely unacceptable stigma and dangerously disregarded as a secondary issue to physical health. Yet left unaddressed, it destroys lives, separates people from each other and deepens the divisions within our society. Changing this goes right to the heart of our humanity; to the heart of the kind of country we are, the attitudes we hold and the values we share.”

Guest panel

Judy introduced the panel, who each spoke for 5 minutes.

Margaret Lewis – Sheffield MIND (presentation slides to follow)

Margaret highlighted some of the stories in the media and how this reflects a growing awareness of mental health issues, but that there is still a long way to go.

Fiona Goudie – Sheffield Health & Social Care Foundation Trust (presentation slides to follow)

Fiona presented some suggestions and questions to consider for feeding back to the Prime Minister.

Becky Batley – Young Healthwatch / Healthwatch Sheffield

Becky talked about the ongoing concern expressed by Young Healthwatch (YHW) about transitions, for children and young people moving to adult services. Healthwatch wants to hear people’s experiences so as to be able to feed them back into the system. Many young people are supporting friends or caring for parents with mental health issues. Young people report not being believed by their GP and not referred for support. There needs to be more education generally, and more mental health training for doctors.

Roz Davies – Recovery Enterprises

Roz emphasised the importance of mental health in every aspect of life, and that we must recognise that body and mind are connected. The mental health issues for which people access formal health

services are estimated to represent less than 10% of the issues affecting people's wellbeing. A universal basic income would help alleviate anxieties. Time banks and skills sharing provide a mechanism for valuing people's unpaid work. Everyone should have a chance to get involved in society. We need to "hold the line" in our values: kindness, empathy, tolerance of diversity.

Questions and comments

Judy then invited questions and comments from the audience.

Parent of someone with mental health issues

More help for young carers and unpaid carers – any system would collapse without their input. Sheffield Health & Social Care Trust should have more training for staff so they can recognise needs.

Social worker in mental health who has also been a service user

Need to focus on mental health not just mental illness. Everyone has a mental health problem to some degree. Support is often done to people not with them. Wellbeing in the workplace needs to be managed better – the NHS struggles with this itself. A change of culture is needed.

Former teacher

Children receive sex education at school but not mental health education. Also notable how many homeless people also have mental health problems. Teachers need training to help them recognise young people's mental health issues.

Retired GP and HW Board member

Need research to establish causes in society so we can tackle them and improve prevention of mental health problems.

Parent of young man with Aspergers

Massive gap in the system for those on the autistic spectrum. More training needed for frontline services. Treatment needs to be more accessible. Fiona Goudie explained there is a current mismatch in the number of staff needing training and the funding available to provide it, in the Sheffield Adult Autism and Neurodevelopmental Service (SAANS).

Depression survivor and national adviser

Training is available for teachers to recognise mental health problems in young people, but not for the young people themselves. People should be treated holistically.

Key messages

The meeting then split into discussion groups. Each group was asked to suggest 3 messages to "Tell Theresa", and then everyone was asked to vote for their two favourites.

- Research, education and training across the board, including for the workforce and children and young people. (11)
- Ring fence local funding (8)
- Staff in mental health system – retention, training, support (5)
- More resources (parity with physical health) – community mental health teams, respite specialist etc. (4)

- Carers – support, funding local leadership. Integrate support. (3)
- More money for research and development into autistic spectrum and mental health (3)
- Interventions to stop root cause & homelessness & recidivism (1)
- Normalising distress – education (1)
- Incomes for individuals and families
- Wellbeing and changing targets: sickness to wellness.