



Department of Health

Dear Colleague

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND: A NATIONAL REVIEW

Summary

1. This letter encloses a copy of 'Mental Health Services for Children and Young People in Scotland: A National Review', by Professor William Parry-Jones and Ms Roseann Maguire of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Glasgow. The Review is the result of a research study carried out for The Scottish Office, and is being published by the University of Glasgow.

Action

2. As you will be aware, mental health, including child and adolescent psychiatry, is a priority for the NHS in Scotland. Health Boards have therefore been asked, in developing their purchasing strategies in 1996-97, to give particular consideration to their plans for the purchasing of inpatient psychiatric services for children and young people. The Review will contribute to that process.

3. Health Boards are also asked to ensure that child and adolescent psychiatry services are addressed in their mental health strategies and in their corporate contracts. To assist in this process, a strategic framework for developing comprehensive local mental health services is being developed and will be the subject of consultation later in 1996. An external reference group, chaired by Dr Angus Mackay, is also being established to contribute to the process of developing and implementing the strategic framework.

3. Key points relating to the Review are set out in the Annex.

Yours sincerely

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Director of Purchasing

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Background

1. The objectives of the survey were to:

- report how purchasers are approaching the task of buying mental health services for children and adolescents;
- identify and record the services and resources available from NHS provider units;
- outline the contribution to services from social work and education departments and other statutory, voluntary and private agencies;
- analyse services in relation to the population base; and
- describe recent changes, current plans and good practice. This information has not previously been available on a national basis from existing sources.

2. The study established that there is considerable variation in the extent to which purchasing Health Boards have specific strategies for mental health services for children and young people. The increased involvement of social work departments in statutory duties has also resulted in a rearrangement of resources and priorities and, in turn, this has affected the functioning of allied services. Behavioural support services in mainstream schools have been established widely by education authorities, but considerable variation is reported in the proportion of time that educational psychologists can spend on direct work with children and young people.

3. The report notes that purchasers and providers face the novel task of planning and delivering respectively a comprehensive mental health service for children and young people, based on the integration of services already provided by the health, education and social work sectors. There is therefore substantial scope for purchasing authorities to develop innovative strategies for commissioning comprehensive, integrated, evaluated services according to local need.