Dear Colleague

EARLY DISCHARGE PROTOCOL FOR PATIENTS IN SECURE HOSPITAL SETTINGS

1. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland: Report of the Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Noel Ruddle, recommended that, “The Scottish Executive should, together with local authorities and NHS Trusts, consider the development of a National Care Plan based on the principles of its strategy for Mentally Disordered Offenders to assist the planning and provision of community care for patients discharged from the State Hospital who have high needs and pose a risk to public safety”.

2. The Scottish Executive appointed a working group with a remit to develop a Protocol, based on and complementing the use of the Care Programme Approach (CPA), to cover the needs of the small number of patients primarily in the State Hospital who no longer met or did not appear to meet the criteria for continued compulsory intervention, had complex needs, and continued to pose a significant risk. The Group consulted on a draft in August 2001, and has extensively revised this in light of the responses received. The Protocol is for use primarily by the State Hospital and partner agencies to facilitate care planning for these patients. Where the Protocol refers to the State Hospital this should be read as referring as well to those exceptional cases where patients who meet the described criteria are being considered for discharge from local forensic services.

3. Copies of the Protocol have issued for action to all consultant psychiatrists and supervising social workers currently involved in the management of restricted patients, as well as Directors of Nursing, Directors of Social Work, and all hospitals with mental health facilities. It has also been issued widely for information in view of its requirement for improved inter-agency working and co-ordination. An electronic version of the Memorandum can be found on the NHS Scotland website at www.show.scot.nhs.uk/sehd/publications/dischargeprotocol.pdf.
4. The Protocol has been issued in loose-leaf format to facilitate updating; amendments and/or additions may be issued from time to time. Recipients may find it helpful to keep the Protocol together with the Memorandum of Procedure on Restricted Patients which issued on 4 October 2002. Any enquiries regarding the Protocol should be addressed to Mr John Storey, Scottish Executive Health Department, Community Care Division 1, Room 1E.01, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG or by e-mail to John.Storey@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

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