Welcome to the fifth newsletter for the programme for Better Mental Health in Oxfordshire (BMHO). The aims of BMHO are to provide a setting for adults by 2012 in which:

- People can stay well
- When people become unwell they will get better quicker
- Services will deliver effective, timely and appropriate interventions

We have made a lot of progress in the programme and many changes have already happened with more to come in services that may be important to you. This newsletter will update you on the key achievements and areas of change and will tell you where you can find out more.

Maximising Recovery Interventions & Outcomes (MaRIO)

The MaRIO project has been developing twenty Care Cluster Pathways and a supporting information leaflet. Care clusters group people with similarities in their illness and needs, for example, types of illness, severity of symptoms, and related needs. This is so that the care that people receive is consistent and fair.

Leaflets introducing the pathways will be available to the public from a wide range of sources, including local authority housing support, voluntary sector providers and all statutory health services. The detailed pathways will also be available for the public to see on the Oxfordshire Mental Health Information website at the following link [http://www.omhi.org.uk/](http://www.omhi.org.uk/).

The Care Cluster pathways will soon be available to care coordinators, GPs and other non-statutory professionals working in mental health across Oxfordshire. The pathways help individuals when they come into contact with services and make sure that when people access services they will be well informed. We expect this change will support people while they recover and with their future well-being.

What Care Clustering means to you

If your symptoms are less severe and you do not need to consult a specialist medical service you may not be allocated to a cluster. You will still receive services. If you consult your GP or seek informal support from a voluntary organisation, counsellor or talking therapy service you can still access the services you need.

When you are in a care cluster the care pathways describe the services and support you may receive in a comprehensive and consistent way. The aim is to try to explain what services will be available to you for a range of issues and how you, together with your family and health professionals, can choose the best types of care, support and interventions to meet your needs.

If you are on the same pathway as someone else you can expect to have similar access to services, regardless age, background or disability. Care packages are a menu of possible services which will be tailored to your own needs.

At the moment care packages have been developed for the services provided by the main statutory local provider of specialist mental health services (Oxford Health). Over time it is expected that new care packages will be developed which describe all the services which can be accessed directly from primary care.

You can also choose to access services from other providers and ‘non-health’ activities which can help your recovery, some of which will be free at the point of delivery and others which may be bought, potentially with the aid of personal budgets or direct payments. The care pathways are designed to help people to know what choices they have and to help them to make best use of these to meet their personal recovery ambitions.
Carers Support Services review

We have been undertaking a review of the needs of Mental Health Carers and considered the services already provided through general Carers Support Services provided by Oxfordshire County Council and Carers Oxfordshire, and the new services under the Oxfordshire Wellbeing and recovery service provided by Oxfordshire Mind. This will ensure that we prevent duplication and make best use of the available resources to meet the needs of as many Mental Health Carers as possible. This review needed to ensure that in the future the carers service is relevant for Mental Health Carers today.

You told us
During a public consultation in 2011 there were some clear themes:
- More and better information on the support services available to Mental Health Carers
- The importance and need for crisis support for Mental Health Carers
- The need and benefits of having specialised support services for Mental Health Carers
- Improve accessibility to support services for Mental Health Carers
- The critical importance of the Carer’s own physical health and mental well-being and the need to support this
- Strong support for existing services provided by current specialist carer mental health providers in addition to other Carers Groups
- Positive feedback for specific types of Carer support

Next steps
We accepted the concerns raised in the public consultation. These raise some complex challenges for us. We have decided to extend the current Carers Support Service contract to March 2013, and use this time to design something that will meet the needs of local carers for people living with mental health problems, both now and in the longer term.

New Developments for people with Autism

There have been three important developments for people with Autism – the introduction of an autism alert card; autism awareness training and a supported employment programme specifically for people identified with aspergers.

Autism Alert Card
The autism alert card will:
- Be offered, free of charge, to people of all ages in Oxfordshire providing an easily identifiable and verifiable means of disclosing that they are on the autism spectrum
- Help autistic people in difficult situations find sources of local support
- Help Thames Valley Police, local emergency services and Oxfordshire organisations to identify they are dealing with someone who has autism
- Promote better management of issues and situations involving people with Autism
- Help Cardholders feel safer and more confident when out and about
- Provide Autism Awareness Training to Police Officers and PCSOs in Oxfordshire
- Enable Thames Valley Police to ensure all people with autism receive an excellent, fair and appropriate service from the police
- Enlist the help of the local media to raise public awareness of autism in our country.

To get a card please contact: phone 0844 381 4484 email alertcard@autismoxford.org.uk

Autism Awareness Training
Free training is being delivered to GPs, college staff, health and social care staff in Oxfordshire. The aim is to promote better awareness and recognition of Autism, Asperger’s syndrome and high-functioning autism across the country.

Asperger Supported Employment Pilot Project
A new, Asperger-specific supported employment project has started. It offers the opportunity to prepare for paid or voluntary work, including deciding what kind of work might be suitable and ‘taster’ sessions. This will lead to support to get and keep a job. To register an interest and/or for more information, contact Oxfordshire Employment Service 01865 815782
Supported to Independent Living (SIL)

This service has been running for sometime now and we were pleased to hear from someone who has experienced the service about how they had found their experience of Connection.

“I was taken on as a client of Connection after a period in a mental health hospital. It took some weeks for this application to your service to be approved and I am very grateful and pleased to say that X took on my case…”

“I have found X to be very supportive and positive and he is keen to promote the idea of recovery and restoration of health.”

Mental Health Strategy

In 2011 we asked you to help us design the joint health and social care mental health commissioning strategy for the next 3 years. The current mental health commissioning strategy, Better Mental Health in Oxfordshire expires in 2012. Since the last strategy was published in 2009 the government has published a new national approach No Health without Mental Health, and there have been a number of other changes locally. We are also moving towards much greater integration of health and social care. The focus will be on making sure you get good results from the support you are offered.

You told us that we needed to continue with the emphasis on keeping people well, helping them get better quicker and ensure that they have access to responsive services that meet their needs, when they need them. People also supported the principle changes we proposed:

- To extend the scope of the strategy to include specialist services for children and young people to improve the transition for young people to adult life
- To include a whole population wellbeing approach to support prevention and help people to keep well in the wider community

The strategy is in the process for formal approval now. To deliver the strategy we are currently working on our commissioning plans for 2012-13. These will be published with the strategy in April 2012.

Mental Health of Veterans

The mental health of veterans is a national priority and we have been developing a project with funds from the Strategic Health Authority and Oxford Homeless Pathways. Part of the project has been to work with veterans within the homeless population and part to develop a map of the support available for veterans and suggest the best ways of meeting their needs now and in the future.

We held an event in December 2011 which brought together veterans, veteran groups, serving personnel and their families, mental health and housing organisations, and people from employment and prison/probation services. The very lively and creative day demonstrated how significant this issue is for Oxfordshire. At the end of the day a plan was agreed to:

- Raise awareness with serving personnel and the bases about mental wellbeing, encouraging people to look after themselves and recognise signs of ill-health in themselves and the people they know
- Offer support for the families of serving personnel and veteran’s families
- Develop better understanding of where veterans are and how they might use services when their health deteriorates: do we need to design new services for them, or just make the existing ones more accessible?
- Develop better engagement of GPs in the identification and support for veterans and their families.

Combat Stress, a military charity specialising in the care of Veterans’ mental health, will be developing a regional specialist mental health service and during 2012-13, and we will be mapping into this work.
Chain reaction

Mind received funding last year from the Department of Health to develop a package to support people from BME communities to volunteer within Mind and other organisations. This project has a number of exciting and ambitious aims:

- Increasing the employment prospects for people from BME backgrounds, including people with lived experience of mental ill-health
- Raising the profile of volunteering as a resource that can help people living with mental health problems
- Raising the profile of mental health in BME communities and also the approaches that can be taken to support people around wellbeing
- Informing future developments in terms of engagement around mental health, the needs of BME communities, priorities for commissioners that might help address health inequalities

In its second year, Mind will be publicising the service and identifying potential volunteering opportunities.

Talking Space

Talking Space is a service that provides free talking therapies for people who live in Oxfordshire coping with mild to moderate levels of anxiety and depression. The service provides Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help people cope with mild to moderate symptoms of:

- anxiety or depression,
- post-traumatic stress,
- panic, phobias,
- health anxiety,
- social anxiety
- and obsessive compulsive disorders.

If you would like help you can either self refer or be referred by:
- your GP; a health or social care professional; a mental health voluntary organisation or Job Centre Plus. If you want to refer yourself you can visit the website for more information

http://www.talkingspaceoxfordshire.org/

Call: 01865 325777
Email: talkingspace@nhs.net
Write to: TalkingSpace, Oxbridge Court, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.

BMHO Board Chair

Sadly our excellent Chair for the Board, Dennis Preece has had to resign due to ill health. A big thank you goes to him for his commitment to the Board and keeping all of us, in particular the PCT to task. He was an excellent critical friend and will be missed.

We are committed to having an external non-professional chair, someone personally affected by mental health issues. So far we have not been successful in our search and Dr John Walton, Clinical Commissioning Lead for Mental Health has stepped in. We are thinking about the next steps and may well adopt the model of having an expert by experience as a co-chair.

We will keep you posted on our plans.

How we will know we’re on track

We will continue to gather and use feedback from people on what makes a difference.

To get involved or to find out more, contact:
Email: talking.health@oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk  Web: www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk  Phone: 01865 334626