

# Note for adult safeguarding boards on the Mental Health Crisis Concordat

# Introduction

The Mental Health Crisis Concordat (the Concordat) was published by the Government in February 2014. The signatories include the NHS, Royal Colleges, Police, Local Government, MIND, the Home Office, Department of Health and Care Quality Commission (CQC). The stated purpose of the Concordat is summarised in a statement issued jointly by those agencies:

“We commit to work together to improve the system of care and support so people in crisis because of a mental health condition are kept safe and helped to find the support they need – whatever the circumstances in which they first need help – and from whichever service they turn to first.

We will work together, and with local organisations, to prevent crises happening whenever possible through prevention and early intervention. We will make sure we meet the needs of vulnerable people in urgent situations. We will strive to make sure that all relevant public services support someone who appears to have a mental health problem to move towards recovery.

Jointly, we hold ourselves accountable for enabling this commitment to be delivered across England.”

## Why is the Concordat an issue for Adult Safeguarding Boards?

The local adult safeguarding board brings together police, ambulance services, local hospitals and community and mental health trusts, NHS England and local government. In many places the boards also include providers and users of services. The boards provide the opportunity for all partners to be able to share information about the ways in which people in mental health crisis are provided with the appropriate support and treatment. They are also able to benchmark local services against the standards published in the Concordat. When people in mental health crisis are not provided with appropriate and timely support significant harm can occur. A recent analysis of 71 serious case reviews showed a significant number concerned people in mental health crisis. Some had not received timely assessments, some had not received appropriate services and some were not recognised as carers under stress.

# Remit of the Concordat

The Concordat covers four main areas in addition to making recommendations about the commissioning of mental health services.

## 1. Access to support before crisis point

The concordat makes recommendations on availability of, and access to, early intervention services to prevent escalation into crisis. These services are to be locally determined.

## 2. Urgent and emergency access to crisis care

The NICE guidance in this area recommends that people in crisis who are referred to mental health services should be assessed face to face within four hours. The Concordat states that mental health services should be available 24 hours a day seven days a week and appropriate specialist support should be available to GPs. Services should also be accessible to all communities.

There are recommendations about how people in mental health crisis who come to the notice of the police or criminal justice agencies should be supported. This includes the availability of health based places of safety and the requirement that the NHS should take responsibility for people in mental health crisis and provide responsive and timely services. A significant reduction in the use of police cells as places of safety is expected, to below 50 per cent of the 2011/12 figure by 2014/15. There are requirements to ensure information about

people in mental health crisis is shared promptly and appropriately. Local information sharing protocols should support this process.

The Concordat also looks at how 999 services and hospital Emergency Departments should provide support to people in mental health crisis. The Concordat makes recommendations about the availability of services for people in mental health crisis who also have substance misuse problems or who are intoxicated. Emergency Departments are required to ensure liaison psychiatry services are available in a timely way and people who have self-harmed are appropriately assessed. Ambulance services are required to provide appropriate training and support to front line staff.

There are recommendations about how people should be transported safely and without delay to or between NHS facilities, with police vehicles only used in exceptional circumstances.

## 3. The right quality of treatment and care when in crisis

The Concordat requires mental health services to be of high quality and to respond in a timely way. Services are also required to ensure restraint is appropriately used in mental health settings and that police should only be asked to assist in managing patient behaviour in exceptional circumstances.

There is evidence that people from black and ethnic minority communities have higher levels of detention under the Mental Health

Act and higher rates of admission to hospital. The Concordat requires local partnerships to address these issues.

There is also evidence that some people in mental health crisis have to travel long distances from their local communities to access in patient services and this must also be avoided.

The Care Quality Commission has pledged to take account of the Concordat in inspecting and monitoring services and will be seeking evidence of compliance.

## 4. Recovery and staying well and preventing future crises

The Concordat draws attention to the NICE Guidance recommending that people who are using mental health services are offered a crisis plan. Pathways for transition of care between organisations is highlighted as an issue that should be addressed locally ensuring people receive appropriate support throughout.

There are also recommendations about children and young people's services which are not included in this note

## The role of the safeguarding adults board

Attached to this document is a checklist which safeguarding adults boards can use to assess their progress with the local implementation of the Concordat. Local commissioners of mental health services are required to develop the appropriate care pathways and monitor the local compliance with the Concordat. They can be asked to report progress to safeguarding adults boards

Some examples of good practice in safeguarding adults boards' involvement with the implementation of the Concordat are also attached.

This link will give access to the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat.

[Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat.pdf](#)

# Checklist for safeguarding adults boards scrutiny of local implementation on the Mental Health Crisis Concordat

Safeguarding adults boards should consider the following actions:

- 1. Scrutinise the jointly agreed local declaration across the key agencies which should mirror the key principles of the national Concordat – establishing a commitment for local agencies to work together to continuously improve the experience of people in mental health crisis in their locality.**
- 2. Scrutinise the local shared action plan and arrangements to review, monitor and track improvements required by the Concordat.**
- 3. Scrutinise the commissioning plan for support for people in mental health crisis across the whole pathway, including:**
  - local arrangements for support to people in mental health crisis who seek help from Emergency Departments or call 999
  - number of people who have to travel away from the local area to access in-patient treatment
  - appropriate services for people from black and ethnic minority communities experiencing a mental health crisis
  - arrangements for the sharing of information about individuals including crisis plans for those already known to mental health services
  - Care Quality Commission (CQC) reports on inspections of local mental health services, particularly crisis arrangements.

#### **4. Criminal justice and mental health crisis – some suggested performance indicators:**

- a reduction in the numbers of people in police cells as places of safety and use of section 136 detention
- local protocol governing the support police can expect from NHS services when they identify a person in need of an emergency mental health assessment
- the availability and use of health based places of safety
- timescales for local health and social care responses to police requests for assessments
- clear pathway from the criminal justice system for people in mental health crisis
- escalation arrangements in cases of disagreement.

#### **5. Evidence of sound local governance arrangements for overseeing the implementation of the Concordat, for example:**

- oversight by health and wellbeing board
- involvement of the children's safeguarding.

[www.crisiscareconcordat.org.uk](http://www.crisiscareconcordat.org.uk)



**Local Government Association**

Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000  
Fax 020 7664 3030  
Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)  
[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

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