



All Party Parliamentary Group Mental Health Inquiry into the Mental Health Five Year Forward View

The APPG on Mental Health is holding an inquiry into the implementation of the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health.

We are now halfway through the first ever five-year plan to improve the nation's mental health. This is an opportunity to assess where progress has been made and which areas need much more work.

The APPG wants to understand what impact the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health has had so far and what should be included in any strategy after 2021.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) Submission

The RPS is the professional body for pharmacists in Great Britain. We are the only body that represents all sectors of pharmacy in Great Britain. The RPS leads and supports the development of the pharmacy profession including the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy. In addition, we promote the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums.

Pharmacists study the science of medicine and the actions of medicines on the human body for four years at University and they then undergo a year of supervised training. Their knowledge and skills make them experts in medicines and their use.

1. Where has the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health made the biggest impacts and where could they go further? The Committee would like to know which recommendations have seen improvement, which recommendations need more work and which recommendations have not seen any action.

- More action is needed around the 21,000 new mental health specialists. Specialist mental health pharmacists can assure the best use of medicines in mental health. Every mental health team should have access to a specialist mental health pharmacist as a member of the multidisciplinary team, whether based in community teams, mental health hospital wards or acute hospitals. A core priority of the NHS mental health programme is to support community services for adults of all ages to deliver high quality, evidence-based interventions which improve outcomes, enable recovery, manage demand and integrate with other local services. Having a specialist mental health pharmacists as part of the core community mental health team will facilitate this. The RPS believes that a number of these new mental health specialists should be allocated to specialist mental health pharmacists.

Many people with mental health conditions are taking medicines, both for their mental health conditions but also often for other long term conditions they may also have. They may therefore be on a number of different medicines. Pharmacists, as experts in medicines

and their use take a holistic approach to all the medicines a person may be prescribed. They can assess the appropriateness of each medicines, discuss with patients any concerns or beliefs they have around their medicines, thereby improving the quality of their care by ensuring that patients are getting the most from the medicines they are taking. The specialist mental health pharmacists would use their skills and expertise to individualise treatments to get the best outcomes for patients.

- Pharmacists are well placed to support the recommendation that by 2020/21, at least 280,000 people living with serious mental health problems should have their physical health needs met. Physical health monitoring has two components, general physical health monitoring in line with the general population, and physical health monitoring associated with psychotropic or other medicines used in the treatment of mental health problems. Pharmacists working in all settings can support people with mental health conditions by promoting basic physical and oral health through encouraging exercise and providing services such as smoking cessation services. People with mental health conditions want to be able to access services that are accessible at the right time. Community pharmacists in particular are based centrally in a local community and have an opportunity to make every contact count by engaging people in conversations regarding physical health and wellbeing at every opportunity.
- In the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health it says that services should be expanded to support people who have mental health conditions. Care for each person needs to be equalised and individualised. It may take one to two weeks for some patients to experience benefits from an antidepressant. During this time they often experience the side effects from the medicine, some of which are quite unpleasant. Additional support from a healthcare professional during this time can be beneficial and support people to get the most from their treatment. In some cases the antidepressant may not be the best treatment for the patient or the dose of the medicine may need to be changed. This can be discussed as part of the service offered by the pharmacist, and recommendations communicated to the prescriber. Studies show that the New Medicines Service provided by community pharmacists under the national pharmacy contract in England, increases adherence to medicines. Enabling a service similar to this to be delivered to patients prescribed an antidepressant for the first time is likely to improve adherence for these people. The provision of a service, similar to the New Medicine Service, via the local community pharmacy will also help to destigmatise mental health and give people 'permission' to speak and ask questions about their mental health condition.

2. What should any new mental health strategy post 2021 focus on? The Committee is particularly interested in areas that were missed, such as old age mental health, the mental health of people with intellectual disabilities or psychosis treatment outside of EIP, that could be a focus for any work post 2021 and the future ambition for areas where we have made begun to make progress.

- There should continue to be a strong focus on parity of esteem, particularly around recognising mental health issues in people with long term conditions and noticing when the physical health of people with mental health conditions is deteriorating.
- There should be a larger focus on the early detection and diagnosis for people with a potential mental health condition. We are aware that 30% of people with a long term physical condition also have a mental health problem, most commonly anxiety or depression. If the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression are recognised early then

this can lead to early intervention and result in improvements in health as well as financial savings for the NHS. The King's Fund and the Centre for Mental Health found that between 12-18% of all NHS expenditure on long term conditions was linked to poor mental health and wellbeing. Pharmacists often see patients who have one or more long term condition on a regular, monthly basis and are well placed to recognise early signs and symptoms of deterioration in mental as well as physical health.

- Older people who may be suffering from dementia or depression are often not diagnosed in the early stages due to the fact that memory problems could be dismissed as an inevitable consequence of aging or as an untreatable feature of dementia. We know that 25% of over 55s think that depression and anxiety are a normal part of ageing, and a third of those living with anxiety and depression think that it is an inevitable consequence of getting older. Pharmacists can pick up on the early signs and symptoms and sign post people for review and diagnosis. 70,000 plus community pharmacy workers have become Dementia Friends.
- More needs to be done to ensure that people with mental health conditions are only taking the medicines that are appropriate for them as an individual. Many of the medicines used to treat mental health problems are associated with health risks. As the experts in medicines and their use, pharmacists can ensure people get the best outcomes from their medicines, reduce adverse events, minimise avoidable harm and un-planned admissions to hospital, while ensuring resources are used more efficiently to deliver the standard and level of care that people with mental health conditions deserve.
- There should be an increased focus on reducing the number of suicides, particularly in the younger population. There is also a gender component in that more young men are committing suicide. A number of suicides are carried out using medicines. We would be happy to explore opportunities to work together with NHS England and other partners to see how this could be addressed.

3. How can we better scrutinise the implementation of the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health and what role can the public, Government, policy makers, Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) and parliamentarians play? The Committee welcomes thoughts on measuring the progress made by ALBs, data transparency and workforce.

- One measure may be to see how healthcare professionals are being supported in terms of training and education around mental health. This would then enable commissioners to have confidence when commissioning mental health services from healthcare professionals.
- Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and Integrated Care Systems (ICS) provide an opportunity to commission services for patients with mental health problems so that they can be supported with both their mental and physical health needs and to get the most from their medicines across care settings. One way of measuring progress could be to explore how many STPs / ICSs have done this in practice.



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