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## Should we ask: whose care plan is it anyway?

It is data collection time for the Care Quality Commission's National Service User Community Survey. This national postal survey provides a snapshot of the views and experiences of people accessing mental health services.

The participating NHS organisations are provided with their own data compared with the national results. The questions within the survey reflect national standards and best practice within mental health, and are amended periodically to reflect changing priorities.

So, the survey is useful in gathering a national picture of the experiences of people on the care programme approach (CPA) and for those not on CPA, but what does this picture look like?

The 2013 results, in relation to care planning, told us that 41% of people had been given or were offered a copy of their care plan in the last year, and of these, 32% said they definitely understood what was in it and 55% of people said their views were definitely taken into account when deciding what was in their care plan.

Of course, there are organisations where the results were better or worse. Regardless, are these results good enough?

People should be involved in developing their care plan, that it should be completed in partnership, be written in a way that people understand, and they should recognise themselves in their care plan – their goals, their networks and supporters. They should own their care plan and services should have a copy.

People accessing mental health services tell us how important it is to be treated as an equal, to be listened to, to be given choice and to be involved in decision making. Research and national guidance tells us that people want to be and should be involved in making decisions about their care, support and treatment.

This is not confined to mental health; those with long-term physical health conditions will be having care coordination and care plans too. I do wonder if there will be evidence of parity of esteem when patients report on their experience within physical health.

The role of mental health professionals within this cannot be overlooked – yes, there are likely some flaws to a postal survey with variation in samples drawn across organisations but all organisations are limited by this.

For some mental health professionals, developing a care plan in collaboration with the person and ensuring the person has a copy is not new; for others it represents a shift in attitude and practice. Perhaps we should ask ourselves 'whose care plan is it anyway?' **MHN**

### News 04

New drive to end deliberate face-down restraint • Call for urgent action to address mental health inequalities • Dementia Friends initiative to change perceptions • Number of people sent out-of-area for mental health beds rises

### Unite/MHNA update 06

A round-up of activity by professional officer Dave Munday

### How to write for *Mental Health Nursing* 08

Are you thinking about writing for this journal? These guidelines will start you off in the right direction and help to ensure the process runs smoothly and successfully

### Speak Up! *Take Shelter* shows a more complex view of ill health 11

Rowan Llewellyn-Williams reflects on a film that features mental illness in the main character

### Information governance and record keeping in mental health practice: shared responsibility and collaborative practice 12

Jane Beach and Jennifer Oates explore the issues and importance of information governance and record keeping in the wake of the Health and Social Care Act 2012

### Metaphors and therapeutic encounters in mental health nursing 16

James Turner outlines the use of metaphors in mental health nursing and the techniques and models that have been developed to help clients in therapeutic encounters

### Reflections 21

- Join Unite/MHNA – inside back cover/back cover



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