



Reorganising mental health services will reduce delays and improve outcomes for young people in Birmingham.

What factors contribute to the Delay in Untreated Psychosis?

Background

- This research explores the care-pathway to understand the Delay in Untreated Psychosis (DUP) and their links with delays in accessing Early Intervention Services (EIS) in Birmingham UK.

Results

- Results showed that the longest delays were due to delay within mental health services and owing to poor help-seeking behaviour.
- The care pathways of 343 young people aged 14-35 years with first-episode psychosis were explored to understand where and when structural delays were occurring. This information was supplemented by interviews with 14 families to further understand delays caused by poor help-seeking behaviour.

Turn over to find out more

- The longest delays in reaching EIS were experienced when an individuals' first point of contact is with Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs).
- It appears that delays were caused by under-recognition of symptoms, poor disclosure and/or disengagement with services.
- Only 6% of individuals had a first referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). But 60% of this group with a DUP greater than 6 months experienced onset between the ages of 16-18 years.

Evidence-based service change

In light of these findings a number of service changes have been adopted locally:

- A new clinical youth service has been implemented in South Birmingham to manage young people (16-25 years) who are displaying signs of emotional or mental distress. Preliminary evaluation of this new service shows improvements in service delivery time, engagement and client satisfaction.
- A media based public health campaign has begun which aims to reduce the stigma associated with mental health illness and improve help-seeking behaviour particularly in young people.
- A dedicated team of psychiatrists and psychologists are working together to improve the transition from child to adult services.

Main Reference

Birchwood, M., Connor, C., Lester, H. et al. (2013) Reducing duration of untreated psychosis: care pathways to early intervention in psychosis services. *Brit J Psychiat* 203:58-64
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Recommendations for practice

- Early intervention services are not sufficiently reducing DUP in Birmingham. Structural barriers in accessing these specialist services need to be eliminated to reduce delays and improve outcomes for young people with psychosis.
- Early results suggest that reorganising mental health services will improve delay and engagement with services, particularly for young people who cross the transition between CAMHS and adult mental health services.

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