

Give offenders with mental disorders more say in care plans, argues new report

March 3 2014, by Andy Dunne



A new policy briefing from the IPR suggests that offenders with mental disorders should have more say in their care plans.

Offenders with mental disorders should be more involved in how assessments about the risks they pose and the treatment they receive are drawn up, according to a new policy briefing published today.

The policy briefing, from our Institute for Policy Research (IPR), argues that offenders with a range of [mental disorders](#) are often unaware of the content and the reasoning behind their assessments, contrary to current guidance.

Drawing on research conducted between March 2009 and September 2011 across three mental health trusts, the author suggests that by involving offenders more actively in the process of compiling assessments about their condition, practitioners can help them to

understand and manage their risks more effectively.

Author, Dr Jeremy Dixon from the Department of Social & Policy Sciences explains: "Mentally disordered offenders who are seen to pose a potential risk to others have their risks assessed and monitored by [mental health professionals](#) on a regular basis.

"However, offenders often remain confused about what risks their care teams have identified and what processes are in place to manage them. The research shows that existing guidance should be implemented more carefully to enable offenders to identify and manage their own risks."

Current guidance encourages mental health professionals to adopt a range of approaches when measuring and managing risk. This research looked specifically at the ways in which mentally disordered offenders, subject to Section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983, understood their own [risk assessment](#) and management plans.

The findings suggest that mentally disordered offenders should be asked about their views of their risks when they are first assessed and that they are helped to draw up their own assessment at a point at which their own [mental health](#) is stable.

In addition, it recommends that both staff and offender assessments of risk are incorporated into one document and that the rationale behind a risk assessment is explained to [offenders](#).

In 2012 there were 4,364 patients detained in hospital and subject to Ministry of Justice restrictions in England and Wales, with 462 being given a conditional discharge to the community. Of those interviewed as part of this research, the majority understood that they were judged to have posed a serious risk of harm toward others, however few had seen their assessment or knew what was in it.

More information: To download a copy of the policy briefing "Mentally disordered offenders' perspectives on their risk assessment plans," see www.bath.ac.uk/ipr/our-publications/mentally-disordered-offenders.html

Provided by University of Bath

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