

All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health

# Annual Review

2006-07



All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health

## Message from the Co-Chairs

"In the previous Parliamentary term the APPG has had a particularly important role to play. As the Mental Health Bill progressed through its legislative programme it provided a crucial link between politicians of all parties and the mental health community and was an excellent forum for the Bills' controversial proposals to be discussed.

This year marks an exciting opportunity for the Group to build on the significant interest in Parliament and organised campaigning from outside organisations' to ensure that the importance of mental health is heard both inside and outside of Parliament.

We are keen for you to let us know your ideas for topics which you would be interested in hearing more about in 2008.

We know that mental health is an issue which is a consistent thread through a large part of our constituency work, so if there is a particular area that you think should be discussed, or if there is innovative work going on in your constituency and you think the APPGMH would be interested in visiting it, or hearing about it at a meeting, then do let us know.

Our group has a very important role to play in tackling stigma and discrimination. Mental health is an important area of healthcare which so often is treated as a Cinderella service and so it is even more important that we as Parliamentarians act as advocates for our constituents and make sure the issues are raised in parliament and the Government is held to task.

Well done to everyone involved in supporting the APPGMH last year and we look forward to working with you again in 2008!"

Sandra Gidley MP  
Tim Loughton MP  
Lynne Jones MP



# Review of the Year...

It took 8 years, but in July, Parliament finally passed a Mental Health Act. The quality of debate during the passage of the Bill was incredibly high and the large number of Parliamentarians who took part, both in the Commons and the Lords, emphasised the real interest in mental health that there is in Parliament.

A number of changes were made to the Bill that was first presented to Parliament late in 2006. An amendment tabled by Chris Bryant MP, and agreed to by the Government, ensured that there should be a therapeutic purpose to all compulsory treatment under the Act.

Amendments were also agreed to ensure significant safeguards from the powers of the Act for children, including a requirement that all accommodation should be age-appropriate.

The Bill started in the Lords, where it was substantially amended by Peers from all sides of the House, including cross bench Peers such as Baroness Murphy, Lord Adebowale, Lord Patel, and Baroness Meacher.

In the Commons, the Government rejected the changes, but through constructive arguments, some important concessions were made.

The Mental Health Alliance, whilst disappointed that some key issues were not resolved, have pointed out that the Act is an improvement on the Bill as first presented.

There are still important tasks ahead, such as resolving matters of clarification in the Code of Practice and scrutinising the implementation of the Act. However, it is crucially important to move on from the disagreement over the Bill and utilise the interest, experience, and real passion that there is for mental health issues amongst Parliamentarians to address the challenges ahead.

Over the past year, the Group held five meetings, where Parliamentarians, Mental Health Professionals, Service Users and Carers, and members of mental health organisations gave their views in debates on mental health in prison, the Mental Health Bill, professional boundaries in mental health, mental health in education, and military mental health. Members of the Group also visited various mental health facilities in 2006/2007

---

## Contacting the Group:

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health aims to enable Members of both Houses of Parliament and other interested groups to become better informed about mental health issues. The Royal College of Psychiatrists provides the secretarial support for the All Party Group with input from Mind, Rethink, Together and the British Psychological Society. The APPGMH would also like to acknowledge the support of the Pharmaceutical Schizophrenia Initiative. If you would like further details on the work of the APPGMH, or you would like to attend any of our meetings, please contact:

Neil Balmer, Public Affairs Officer,  
The Royal College of Psychiatrists,  
17 Belgrave Square,  
London SW1X 8PG

Tel: 020 7235 2351 Ext 149 Email: [nbalmer@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:nbalmer@rcpsych.ac.uk)

# Forthcoming APPG Events 2008

**January 21st -**

LAUNCH OF APPG SURVEY  
INTO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS  
IN PARLIAMENT

The APPGMH will be launching a survey on mental health in Parliament, inviting the involvement of MPs, Peers, and staff. Our survey will be in collaboration with Stand to Reason, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Mind, and Rethink.

Mental health, good or bad, is part of all our lives. Well-being is rapidly becoming part of the centre ground of political debate, after many years on the margins. But how well do parliamentarians and the people who work for them understand mental health issues? And how well do they look after their own mental well-being?

This survey is an attempt to gather enough information to answer these questions. But more than that, it represents an attempt by the organisations involved to develop a better understanding of the pressures faced by parliamentarians and their staff, with the aim of ensuring better support for parliamentarians and to foster a climate in which mental well-being can be openly and honestly discussed by those who legislate for it.

The launch will take place at a reception hosted by Stand to Reason at 4pm in the Strangers Dining Room. The keynote speaker will be Mr Kjell Magne Bondevik, the former Prime Minister of Norway, who will talk openly of his experience of having to take several weeks' sickness absence from leading the country in 1998, while suffering a reactive depression from over-work.

For more information, please contact: [helen@westminstersadvisers.co.uk](mailto:helen@westminstersadvisers.co.uk)  
or call **020 7222 9500**

**January 22nd -**

Meeting on the Anti-Stigma  
Training and Evaluation Collaboration  
(ASTEC) project.

Our next formal meeting at 5pm in Committee Room 5 is on the ASTEC project.

This project is part of Mental Health Awareness in Action, an ongoing programme of work being carried out by the Health Service and Population Research Department and the national charity Rethink to find out how best to challenge and change stigmatising attitudes about people with mental health problems.

**March 4th -**

Meeting on Ecotherapy –  
The Green agenda for mental health.

This meeting will be at 5pm in Committee Room 6.

The following provisional dates  
are also booked for meetings  
this year:

13th May; 1st July; 21st October.



All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health

# Meetings & Visits in 2006-07

December 2006



The Group held a joint meeting with the All-Party Penal Affairs Group on Mental Health in Prisons, which was chaired by Lord Ramsbotham, former Chief Inspector of prisons. This was a pertinently timed meeting, as the prison population had reached 80,000 and continued to rise, and the Mental Health and Offender Management bills were before Parliament.

The Group heard a powerful account from Janice Webb, the mother of Richard Webb, who committed suicide in prison.

We were also briefed by Dr John O'Grady, Chair of the Forensic Faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and Dr David James, consultant forensic psychiatrist in the North London Forensic Service.

The story of Richard Webb's suicide was a powerful personal example of why the schemes to divert offenders to appropriate, safe facilities as early as possible, described by both Dr O'Grady and Dr James, are so necessary.

---

## January 2007

The group discussed the Mental Health Bill with the Ageing and Older People, Autism, Disability, Drugs and the Primary Care and Public Health All Party Parliamentary Groups and the Associate Parliamentary Health Group

The then Mental Health Minister, Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP, and Professor Louis Appelby, National Clinical Director for Mental Health, gave briefings outlining the key proposals in the Bill. They stated that the Government was trying to get the system right to help marginalized people.

A more cautious view came from Paul Farmer, Chief Executive of Mind, who highlighted the worry amongst service users that focus on risk associated with the Bill will increase the stigma people already hold against people with mental health problems.

Then, following an update from Baroness Murphy on what had happened so far in the Lords, there was a wide ranging debate where Parliamentarians, service users and other organisations raised points on Community Treatment Orders, the Code of Practice, and autism.





Following the successful visit in October 2006 to a number of London's Mental Health Services, on 12 June 2007 the Group visited Camden and Islington Mental Health and Social Care Trust.

Members had the opportunity to see the care of older people with mental health problems at one of the first ever care trusts that have successfully bought together mental health and social care services. We met community mental health staff and visited continuing care and acute assessment wards.

At Highgate Mental Health Centre we saw new facilities designed to create a healing environment and keep people safe in the least restrictive setting. In contrast, wards at St Pancras Hospital still fail to provide modern standards of privacy and dignity, though we heard of plans to move to improved accommodation.

The Group also held a meeting in June on 'Professional boundaries in mental health – after Kerr/Haslem', where the speakers were Phil Willis MP; Kathy Haq (Staff Nurse, Sunderland Royal Hospital); Jonathan Coe (Chief Executive, WITNESS against abuse); and Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, Minister of State for Quality, Department of Health.

The speakers gave their experiences of the Kerr/Haslam inquiry, which was the biggest inquiry into the abuse of psychiatric patients to take place in the UK. All of the speakers paid tribute to the "exemplary" inquiry and The Clear Boundaries Project, which was set up in response.

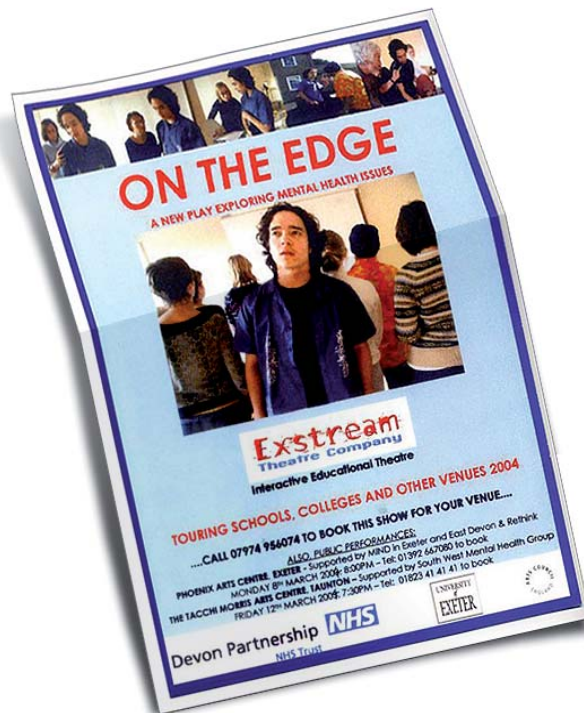
It was agreed that the next step was to implement the recommendations made, in particular, ensuring staff across the range of health settings, better understand how to deal with disclosures of abuse by patients.

## October 2007

Mental health education in schools and colleges was the subject of the Group's meeting in October. This particularly focussed on the 'On the Edge' project - an interactive drama programme aimed at young people aged 14-22 in schools and colleges.

The On the Edge project team gave an interesting presentation on their award winning project, which they aim to roll out to make available for all 15 year olds in Devon schools.

This led to a wide discussion on early intervention in education.



## December 2007

In the final meeting of 2007, the Group held a well attended joint-meeting with the All-Party Royal Air Force Group and the All-Party Group for Reserve Forces on Military Mental Health.

The Minister for Veterans, Derek Twigg, spoke alongside Professor Simon Wessely from the King's Centre for Military Health Research, Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP and Commodore Toby Elliott OBE, Chief Executive Of Combat Stress in a debate a wide-ranging debate, which highlighted the depth of interest in the subject.

This was a timely debate on a much neglected area, which is fast becoming a topic of concern.



The Group hopes to set up our own website in 2008. Meanwhile notes of all meetings are available at:

<http://www.lynnejones.org.uk/mental.htm>



This newsletter has been developed with support from The Pharmaceutical Schizophrenia Initiative whose members are the Astra Zeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Lilly and Janssen Cilag



All Party Parliamentary Group on Mental Health