

Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside

Introduction

The [report](#) from the inquiry onto mental health services in Tayside has now been published. NHS Tayside commissioned an independent inquiry to examine the “accessibility, safety, quality and standards of care” provided by all mental health services in the area. This followed serious issues about services being raised in the Scottish parliament. The interim report was published in May 2019. A UNISON chaired Employee Participation Group (EPG) was set up as part on the inquiry. The EPG had reps from all recognised trade unions and professional bodies. They surveyed mental health service staff and submitted a confidential report to the inquiry. The inquiry was chaired by [David Strang](#). NHS Tayside will discuss the report at its public meeting on February 27th

Key Themes of Independent Inquiry

- Patient access to mental health services
- Patient sense of safety
- Quality of care
- Organisational learning
- Leadership
- Governance

More than 1500 people submitted evidence to the inquiry. The report is highly critical of the culture at NHS Tayside. It states that staff have been left “demoralised” by a “culture of fear and blame”. The report also indicates that NHS Tayside could be perceived as being “more interested in protecting its reputation than looking after the interests of patients.

There are 50 recommendations covering :

- Governance and leadership
- Crisis and Community Mental Health Services
- Inpatient services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Staff.

The section on governance and leadership doesn't just look at NHS Tayside but at all the bodies involved in the delivery of the service: The three Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) were formed with NHS Tayside and Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross Councils. The structures following integration are complex and some mental health services are delegated to the IJBs while others are retained by NHS Tayside. The inquiry questions the effectiveness and rational of these structures. The recommendations are detailed and widespread but this briefing will focus on staffing.



POLICY BRIEFING

KEY POINTS:

- The report is highly critical of the structures used to deliver mental health services in Tayside
- UNISON has raised concerns about the poor working relationships between the IJBs and health boards for some time
- The report highlights the need for all staff to be involved in service development



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Recommendations re staff

- Ensure all staff working across mental health services are given opportunity to contribute to service development and decision-making about future service direction. Managers of service should facilitate this engagement.
- Prioritise concerns raised by staff by arranging face-to-face meetings where staff feel listened to and valued.
- Arrange that all staff are offered the opportunity to have a meaningful exit interview as they leave the service. This applies to staff moving elsewhere as well as those retiring.
- Prioritise recruitment to ensure the Associate Medical Director post is a permanent whole-time equivalent, for at least the next 2 years whilst significant strategic changes are made to services.
- Encourage, nurture and support junior doctors and other newly qualified practitioners, who are vulnerable groups of staff on whom the service currently depends.
- Develop robust communication systems both informally and formally for staff working in mental health services. Uses of technology are critical to the immediacy and currency of communications.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated anywhere in mental health services in Tayside. Ensure that staff have confidence that any issues or concerns they raise, will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.
- Ensure there are systems analysis of staff absences due to work-related stress. These should trigger concerns at management level with supportive conversations, taking place with the staff member concerned.
- Ensure there are mediation or conflict resolution services available within mental health services in Tayside. These services should exist to support and empower staff in the rebuilding of relationships between colleagues, between managers and their staff, and between the services and the patients, during or after a period of disharmony or adverse event. This includes NHS Tayside's mental health services' relationship with the local press.
- Ensure that all external review processes are embraced wholeheartedly and viewed as an opportunity to learn and develop. Managers should ensure that all staff receive details of the recommendations from reviews and are included in the analysis and implementation.

UNISON View

UNISON is deeply concerned about the content of this report. Over the last few years we have raised many of the issues which are highlighted in the report. For example, last year (October 2019) we asked for the Mental Health Strategy to be put on hold. In particular we had serious concerns that patients were being transported a long way from their family for treatment.

UNISON also raised the fact that there was a poor working relationship between Joint Integrated Boards and the Health Boards. This is impeding the roll out of the mental health strategy. UNISON highlighted the issues caused by the culture of bullying which has been allowed to continue. This has been a serious concern to our members.

Action for Branches

UNISON is organising meetings with members in Tayside. But all branches will want to read and discuss the implications in this report and what we need to do over the long term to protect staff and service users **Please contact Kay Sillars 0141 342 2819 for further information.**

Further info

The Report

<https://independentinquiry.org/final-report-of-the-independent-inquiry-into-mental-health-services-in-tayside/>

News stories re problems

<https://www.scotsman.com/health/nhs-care-to-be-probed-after-scots-schoolgirl-who-looked-at-suicide-guides-online-took-own-life-1-5030087>

<https://www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/family-of-suicide-victims-blast-nhs-tayside-as-bosses-suggest-edits-to-mental-health-report/>

<https://www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/it-is-a-sad-reality-that-families-bereaved-by-suicide-have-no-confidence-in-the-health-board-fresh-calls-made-after-woman-found-dead-at-carseview-centre/>



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