Key messages aimed to improve the care of people admitted to a mental health inpatient setting who are also physically unwell

MESSAGE 1. ASSESS PATIENTS FOR ACUTE PHYSICAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ON ARRIVAL AT A MENTAL HEALTH INPATIENT SETTING AND THEN UNDERTAKE A DETAILED PHYSICAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT ONCE THE PATIENT IS ADMITTED

- Patients admitted for mental healthcare but who are also physically unwell need complex care. Patients may need a transfer to a physical health hospital for an acute condition, and/or they may have at least one long-term physical health condition that needs monitoring.
- A detailed physical health assessment was not undertaken appropriately for 28/126 (22.2%) patients.
- Physical health conditions were not included in the initial clerking for 29/150 (19.3%) patients.

MESSAGE 2. DEVELOP A PHYSICAL HEALTHCARE PLAN FOR PATIENTS ADMITTED TO A MENTAL HEALTH INPATIENT SETTING

- The ongoing physical healthcare of patients should be monitored to prevent deterioration.
- A plan for physical health observations was not documented for 48/217 (22.1%) patients.
- No advice was given about who should be notified in the event of physical health concerns for 47/169 (27.8%) patients.
- Physical healthcare plans were formulated for only 155/291 (53.3%) patients.

MESSAGE 3. FORMALISE CLINICAL NETWORKS/PATHWAYS BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH & PHYSICAL HEALTHCARE

- Mental healthcare staff need support in providing effective physical healthcare.
- 127/268 (47.4%) mental healthcare professionals surveyed who reported feeling ‘fairly’/‘less than fairly’ confident or competent in caring for patients with long-term conditions.
- Local care pathways or pre-existing arrangements with physical healthcare providers were used as part of the care plan for 71/291 (24.4%) patients.

MESSAGE 4. INVOLVE PATIENTS AND THEIR CARERS/FRIENDS/FAMILY IN THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTHCARE AND USE THE ADMISSION AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS, AND INVOLVE PATIENTS IN THEIR GENERAL HEALTH

- Hospital admissions are an excellent opportunity to assess and help improve a patient’s general physical health and including family/carers can be a great form of support.
- 15/29 (51.7%) organisations with a physical health strategy had a specific commitment to improve communication about physical health with patients and carers.
- No record that the physical health review had been discussed with the patient’s family/carers in 100/188 (53.2%) sets of notes reviewed.

MESSAGE 5. INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ON ELECTRONIC PATIENT RECORDS

- Effective electronic patient records for physical as well as mental health, that could be shared across providers, would improve patient safety and make communication easier.
- 20/56 (35.7%) organisations reported that all elements of the clinical record were available in the electronic patient record.
- 244/405 (60.2%) clinicians using the systems thought the electronic patient record allowed easy viewing/input of the patient’s physical health needs.