

A Study of Inpatient Alternatives to Traditional Acute Psychiatric Hospitals

**Helen Gilbert, Bryn Lloyd-Evans
Mike Slade, Sonia Johnson**

BACKGROUND

When people with mental health problems become very unwell, the traditional response has been to admit them to an acute ward in a mental hospital. However, it is now widely accepted, by both patients and professionals, that these wards are far from satisfactory in both their physical and therapeutic environment and that they may not offer value for money. As a result, alternatives to acute wards are starting to be developed.

AIMS

The aim of the present research is to investigate facilities that provide residential care but in an environment that is an alternative to traditional acute wards. 'Crisis houses' are an example. The research is of importance as very little is known about the number and nature of such facilities or whether they have better outcomes for patients than traditional care.

OBJECTIVES

This work employs a multidisciplinary, multiple methods approach. The study has 9 objectives:

1. To identify a whole range of residential alternatives for people in crisis and develop a typology of the kinds of alternatives that exist.
2. To examine the social and clinical features of people admitted to these alternatives and compare them to people admitted to traditional care.
3. To understand the experiences of people who use alternative services.
4. To understand the experiences of carers of people admitted to alternative services.
5. To assess the cost and cost effectiveness of alternative services.
6. To investigate the development of alternative services and service models.
7. To investigate the function of alternatives to traditional in-patient care within local mental health service systems.
8. To investigate the content of care in alternative and traditional services.
9. To determine service user's views about alternative and traditional services.

On completion of objective one a number of alternative services (6-8) and matched traditional services will be chosen for further investigation and to contribute to the fulfilment of the further objectives.

The study commenced on 1st January 2005 and will be completed by 31 December 2007.