

Understanding the jargon

People coming into the mental health system for the first time often think that they have landed in a foreign country.

Professionals use terms and abbreviations which are unfamiliar to the layperson. However, if someone is speaking to you and using abbreviations or unknown phrases that you do not understand always ask them to explain what they mean. Don't feel that you will look foolish or ignorant; people often forget that not everybody uses the same language on a daily basis. Below is a list of some of the more common terms used.

Approved Social Worker (ASW)

Each local authority has a responsibility to provide sufficient numbers of social workers specifically trained and approved by the local authority under the Mental Health Act 1983. Their role is to assess people for hospital admission and if they consider there is no alternative, to authorise admission and make the necessary arrangements. This is an enhanced role and different from the usual remit of Social Workers. However, the Social Worker who may be involved as part of the care team does not have to have this extra qualification and is still able to make a valuable contribution in advising on suitable housing, appropriate benefit claims and generally giving support in the community.

Assertive outreach team

This service aims to help people with a severe mental illness who may be difficult to engage with. The service is available in the community 24 hours a day, usually visiting the person in their own home. Team members have smaller caseloads than colleagues in Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT's), which enables them to spend more time with their clients helping with practical tasks as well as encouraging the use of medical treatments.

Atypical/anti-psychotic medication

These are recently introduced forms of medication used to treat psychosis. Some of the more frequently prescribed are Amisulperide, Clozapine, Olanzapine and Risperidone, because they are thought to cause fewer side effects. Clozapine may be used when two or more of the above are ineffective.

Bi-polar (manic) depression

The name of the illness which causes excessive change in mood from deep depression to hypomania.

Care co-ordinator (or maybe key worker)

This is the member of the team who will co-ordinate the Integrated Care Programme Approach (CPA) and act as the link/contact for the Service User, Carer/s and other team members.

Clinical psychologist

Someone who can use psychological knowledge and techniques to help in understanding and treating illness.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT)

This is a way of helping people to cope with stress and emotional difficulties by making the connections between how we think, how we feel and how we behave.

Community mental health team (CMHT)

The providers of mental health services on a local basis. These Teams include Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologists, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Social Workers and Occupational Therapists, all of whom will work jointly in trying to develop a care plan to meet the needs of the person using the services.

Community psychiatric nurse (CPN) or community mental health nurse

A qualified nurse who will provide out patient and follow-up care when the individual is living at home/or in the community.

Crisis resolution and home intervention service

This service can be an alternative to in-patient hospital admission. Its aim is to resolve crisis in the home. It may be that this will provide a short-term solution.

Depot injections

Long acting medication often used where people are unable or unwilling to take tablets regularly.

Dual-diagnosis

This can be a combination of a mental illness with other conditions such as alcohol abuse, drug abuse, learning/physical disability.

Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)

It is most commonly used for severe depression where medication has failed. ECT is always administered under general anaesthetic and produces a mild shock to the

brain similar to an epileptic fit. People are often concerned when ECT is discussed but administered in the right way it can be an extremely effective, life saving treatment.

Emergency duty team (EDT)

The team provides a social work service outside of office hours at night, weekends and bank holidays.

Forensic service

This is the area of mental health service which deals with people who commit criminal offences whilst being mentally ill - known in AWP as secure services.

Holistic

This means considering the whole person in the treatment of the illness - i.e. their physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and social needs.

Care programme approach (CPA)

This is a means of planning and monitoring the care of someone recovering from the effects of severe mental illness and who is considered to be a vulnerable member of society. The central features of CPA are assessment of need, involving the Service User and Carer/s, the allocation of a Care Co-ordinator and an agreed Care Plan, which is reviewed at regular intervals.

Mental Health Act, 1983

These are the regulations in place at the moment - a new Bill is currently under review. You may have heard of 'sections'. This refers to a section of the Mental Health Act. These allow certain mental health care professionals to make assessments and admit people compulsorily to hospital, where they are thought to be a risk to themselves or others, or in danger of serious deterioration if compulsory intervention is not under taken.

Section 2. This is a period of assessment in hospital that lasts for up to 28 days. It can be applied for by an Approved Social Worker (ASW) or the person's nearest relative and must be backed up by recommendations from two doctors, one of whom must be a senior psychiatrist.

Section 3. This is an admission for compulsory treatment lasting for up to six months. Application is similar to Section 2.

Occupational therapist (OT)

OT's are trained to work with people to help them to improve their ability to cope with daily living as independently as possible. They not only help with practical tasks, but can improve coping strategies as well as helping to encourage participation in recreational, educational and vocational activities.

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)

These are the legally established bodies who provide and commission personal medical and dental services.

Psychiatrist

A medical doctor who has trained and specialised in psychiatry - the branch of medicine concerned with mental health, diagnosis, treatment and care.

Psychosis

A broad term that describes a severe mental disorder where a person loses touch with reality. Their emotional responses, thinking processes, judgement and ability to communicate are so affected that day-to-day living becomes unmanageable. An individual's experiences of psychosis can be quite different and it is often valuable to talk to the person about what its like for them.

Schizophrenia

A specific term for a mental illness where symptoms can include psychosis. (See Main Mental Disorders for a more detailed definition.)

Voluntary organisations

Bodies governed by unpaid members, registered as charities with some paid members of staff. These are some which are specifically helpful for people experiencing mental health problems:

- Mental After Care Association (MACA).
- Mind
- Rethink
- Samaritans
- Saneline

(For more details see Useful Contacts sheet.)

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