

National Assembly for Wales

Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Inquiry into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Evidence from : Service User

I am 17 and have been with the children and adolescence mental health services for 2 years. In the time that I have been with the services several problems have arisen.

To begin with, the building CAMHS are based in is appalling. The roof always leaks, it's possible to hear other people through the walls, it's too small and it's cluttered. During my care and treatment review meeting a bucket had to be placed under a leak in the roof, and on another occasion I recall being able to hear the staff having a meeting in another room while I was in the waiting room.

I found getting referred to specialist services reasonably quick and smooth, although I have met others who have had considerable trouble trying to access the services. I had an assessment with a psychiatrist within a month of being referred by a primary mental health nurse.

Communication between different teams inside CAMHS seems to be almost non-existent as well. In my case it seemed to be that I was the one carrying around the information between the teams I was involved in, rather than the teams briefing each other. It was extremely frustrating having to explain my situation every time I saw someone from CAMHS. Whenever I got referred to a different team, it would take weeks of reminding that team before getting an appointment.

In an emergency there is only one bed in the area in which I live, Dyfed, I live near Haverfordwest and the bed is in Carmarthen, an hour away. When I needed the emergency services, to begin with when I and staff at school tried to get hold of CAMHS we couldn't get an answer, I then was taken to A+E and was given a bed on the children's ward because it was late at night and no one could take me to Carmarthen. I was on the children's ward three nights and then a day after being discharged I had to go back to A+E and I was put back on the children's ward. I was given an assessment at Bridgend the local psychiatric unit for young people, but was turned away and was told that I wasn't 'bad enough' even though I had just spent four nights in a general hospital because I was a danger to myself.

When I required inpatient treatment there wasn't enough beds at Bridgend so I had to go to a hospital in London, a good five hours away from my home. My parents had to pay the costs of travelling to London almost every weekend and accommodation, which because it was London it was very expensive. I spent three months in London, I was transferred very quickly from London to Bridgend when a bed became available. But the whole transfer was poorly arranged and managed, and raised a few questions about whether funding for me to receive treatment in London had been stopped. At Bridgend the care I received wasn't great either, they didn't do anything in terms of treatment with me, or in terms of activities. The majority of the time we, the patients, were left to our own devices, which is ok for a short amount of time but there was barely any activities. We had school and then the school staff would do one activity with us, the rest of the time we did nothing. The nurses never came to help, they spent the whole time in their offices chatting, and even when they were with the patients they talked among themselves and ignored us. They would talk about how they couldn't wait to get out of work or that they weren't looking forward to going back into work, I was made to feel like I was just a nuisance. The brisk transfer meant that my treatment was messed up, I asked to be

discharged from Bridgend three weeks after the transfer, due to the way the transfer was handled which upset me greatly and the poor care.

My overall experience with CAMHS is that the staff are trying to do the best they can do with the poor resources they have. Most of the time it is not the staff who are at fault, it is the system and the lack of funding and resources which causes the problems. A building with a sound roof would actually make a considerable difference.