



PRESS RELEASE

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Mental health funding not reaching the front-line: new survey of finance directors finds

The Government's commitment to deliver parity of esteem between mental and physical health services is not being achieved as funding is currently not reaching all frontline NHS trusts.

That is the key finding from a new survey of mental health trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) that is published today by NHS Providers and the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA). The two organisations surveyed finance directors in trusts and chief finance officers in CCGs to understand how the parity of esteem commitment is being implemented locally. More than half (55%) of England's mental health trusts responded*, along with 10% of CCGs**.

The report, [*Funding mental health at local level: unpicking the variation*](#) reveals that:

- Only half (52%) of providers reported that they had received a real terms increase in funding of their services in 2015/16.
- There is limited confidence that funding increases will be delivered this year, with only a quarter (25%) of providers saying they were confident that their commissioners were going to increase the value of their contracts for 2016/17.
- A higher proportion of providers received a real terms increase from CCGs than from NHS England teams in 2015/16.
- There is a lack of alignment between commissioners and providers over what it means to implement parity of esteem – there is confusion over what services should be covered, and how much investment should be made.
- Over 90% of providers and 60% of commissioners were not confident that the £1 billion additional investment recommended by the Mental Health Taskforce*** and supported by NHS England will be sufficient to meet the challenges faced by mental health services.

The survey comes at a key time for mental health services which, despite the parity of esteem rhetoric, are being further stretched. NHS Providers and HFMA argue in the report that the policy and funding framework in place for mental health does not support providers and commissioners to invest in mental health services and to make required service improvements and transformation. This is compounded by a lack of clear guidance on what constitutes mental health services.

Commenting on the findings, Saffron Cordery, director of policy and strategy at NHS Providers, said: "Much has been said at the national level to improve the disparity between mental and physical health, but this report highlights that the necessary investment is not reaching frontline NHS trusts. These are the very organisations that are facing increasing levels of demand and pressure on their resources, whilst needing to provide the most essential urgent and long term care, treatment and support to service users.

"A majority of providers are not confident that the investment announced to support the Mental Health Taskforce will be enough to address the challenges they are facing. There is now an urgent

need to develop a costed implementation plan by August 2016 to ensure that we are fully investing and supporting NHS providers to make the service improvements they need and want to undertake for the benefit of patients and service users.”

Paul Briddock, Director of Policy at the HFMA, added: “To improve the disparity between mental and physical health provision, providers and commissioners need to work collaboratively and towards the same goal. Today’s report shows that we are not quite where we would like to be and there are still challenges ahead in order to get this right. It is important that commissioners are open and transparent about where the extra funding is being distributed, what it is being spent on and the impact it is intended to have. We feel this approach will give concerned providers the reassurance they need that the right financial investment will reach the front line, and the patients it needs to at a local level.”

The report ends by calling for greater clarity and transparency from the government and leaders of the arms-length bodies in the following key areas:

1. How much is being made available for mental health services, and in which areas
2. Linked to this, greater transparency across the system about how much is actually being spent on mental health services
3. Explicit alignment about what it means to meet parity of esteem commitments – this is because at both national and local level organisations are interpreting the requirements in different ways, which is leading to a patchwork of investment and services for patients
4. Better enforcement and support for local organisations – this is needed to help counter the significant local variation highlighted in this survey about how the rules are being interpreted and responded to. Where organisations are struggling to invest in line with the guidance, support should be required to ensure that challenges are addressed.

Ends

Notes to editors

About the research

- In March 2016, NHS Providers and the HFMA’s Mental Health Finance Faculty surveyed finance directors from the 58 NHS foundation trusts and trusts across England that provide mental health services. We asked about the contracts they had in place for 2015/16, how confident they are that they will see increases in funding of their services in 2016/17, and their perceptions about the feasibility of meeting recommendations made by the mental health taskforce in the current context.
- *Responses were received from 32 NHS providers of mental health services (55% of the sector), representing a mix of standalone mental health providers and integrated providers of mental health and community services.
- **The HFMA also surveyed chief finance officers from CCGs, through its Commissioning Faculty. Responses were received from 21 CCGs (10% of the sector). Although this is a relatively small sample of CCGs, the results have provided an opportunity to highlight the issues also faced by commissioners in making parity of esteem a reality for their local populations. NHS England specialised teams were not surveyed as part of this project.
- *** In the [Mental health taskforce: engagement report](#) more than 20,000 people gave their views on the top priorities for reshaping mental health services as part of a drive to develop a five year national NHS strategy for people of all ages. Three major themes were identified from the feedback: prevention, access, and quality.

About NHS Providers

- NHS Providers is the membership organisation for NHS acute hospitals, community, mental health and ambulance services. NHS Providers acts as the public voice for those NHS trusts, helping to deliver high quality care by promoting shared learning, providing support and development and shaping the strategic system in which our members operate. NHS Providers has 95% of all NHS foundation trusts and aspirant trusts in membership
- Follow NHS Providers on twitter @NHSProviders and Saffron Cordery @Saffron_Policy
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About HFMA

- The HFMA is the voice of 10,000 NHS finance directors and finance staff working in healthcare. HFMA is a registered charity and the only professional body in the UK dedicated to setting and promoting the highest standards in financial management and governance in healthcare, through encouraging more effective use of resources.
- Their membership represents the majority of NHS finance directors and NHS finance staff. As the voice of two thirds of NHS finance staff (with 90% working in the NHS), HFMA's membership includes CEOs, directors of finance, clinicians and practice managers, as well as other staff at all levels of the finance function.
- As well as promoting best practice, they also offer education and CPD resources for the UK health economy through both their local and national networks. Further information about HFMA activities can be found on their website – www.hfma.org.uk or through their Twitter channel, @HFMA_UK
- Contact HFMA@kindredagency.com

