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Dear Professor Morris

Response to the Consultation on the CSO Draft Research Strategy 2014 from The State Hospitals Board for Scotland

The State Hospitals Board for Scotland welcomes the draft CSO Research Strategy 2014 and acknowledges the breadth of the ambitions outlined within. The nature of our specific remit for Forensic Mental Health care ensures that not all of the strategy is of direct relevance to the Board or the wider Forensic Mental Health Services Managed Care Network. However there are some areas of significance to research within the field of Forensic Mental Health and we would like to take this opportunity to comment upon those.

Chapter 4: Working in Collaboration

Question 15: Are there other areas where CSO funded research could better support the Health Directorates Quality agenda?

Some areas of medical practice cut across health and social care into other agencies but it is important to ensure that research takes place in these areas in order that the Health Directorate Quality agenda is supported. Forensic Mental Health care is multi-disciplinary and multi-agency. It includes partnership and collaboration across Health, Social and Criminal Justice Services with Police Scotland, Criminal Justice Social Work, the Scottish Prison Service, the Risk Management Authority, Crown Office and Prosecutors Fiscal, and the Scottish Courts Service. Research proposals and research funding bodies need to recognise the complexity of the interaction of systems that surround the mentally disordered offender. Responsibility for health in prisons and in police custody passed to NHS Scotland in 2011 and 2014 respectively.

The care and treatment of mentally disordered offenders is a very important area of research with direct focus on achieving each of the three ambitions of the Quality strategy – Safer, Person Centred and Effective.

Safer

One area of primary focus within Forensic Mental Health care is the safety of both the patient and wider public health. Key to this process is Risk Assessment, one of the most prevalent areas of research across the Forensic Managed Care Network. Risk assessment tools and practice are used both in assessing patients prior to detention, and also consistently with patients while in secure forensic care as part of the process of determining when it is appropriate for a patient to be discharged to a lower level of security or back into the community.

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Research to develop and validate Risk Assessment tools and risk management processes is crucial to supporting care for forensic patients and maintaining the highest level of public safety. Specific areas of research that support the safer ambition also include Sex Offender treatment, Violence Reduction and Patient Safety.

Person Centred

Research into risk ultimately concerns the identification of warning signs and their incorporation into individual risk management plans. Ongoing research into recovery pathways for mentally disordered offenders follows a person centred approach. Research into the mental health of prisoners demonstrates significant morbidity and unmet need.

Effective

The Forensic Network has supported the development of a Health Informatics systems to monitor the progress of patients over their stay within Forensic Care and the effectiveness of that care. This was carried out initially following a one day census of forensic inpatients in November 2013. Subsequently, detailed information on 100% (n=522) of patients across the forensic estate has been obtained and is being analysed. The development of a continuous Forensic Network Patient Database is ongoing with funding sought for standardised electronic data input across all health boards. Data for 100% of forensic inpatients in Scotland will be accessible on application for research purposes from the database. The database offers an important opportunity to conduct longitudinal research within the forensic population, but also to provide a far greater level of understanding of mentally disordered offenders by linking this data to other data sources, for example through the Administrative Data Liaison Service,.

Forensic Mental Healthcare should be evidence based but work on the Forensic Psychological Matrix has shown clear and significant deficits in knowledge base for the therapeutic approaches taken. A considerable amount of research and evaluation is required to assess the efficacy of a wide range of treatments and interventions. The Forensic Psychological Matrix is a specific approach to providing Psychological Intervention to forensic patients on a person-centred basis. The matrix interventions with varying levels of intensity fit together to provide a range of treatment options. An ambitious national evaluation of the Forensic matrix is in development.

Forensic Mental Health research is key to addressing the quality ambitions not only for the small Forensic Mental Health inpatient population, but also for the larger criminal justice population and in regard to public safety for the Scottish population. While we understand the focus on encouraging the use of Scotland as a 'global destination' for external research organisations, we would also encourage further internal focus particularly for those small population areas of research that find it difficult to attract eligible research funding due to the size and nature of their patient population.

Yours sincerely



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