

A FRAMEWORK FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCOTLAND
SECTION 1. PROCESS ELEMENTS

INFORMATION SYSTEMS¹

Service Element	Description of Needs	Ways in Which Services May Respond
Basic administrative support	<p>The most basic information-related needs are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify accurately people who receive services; • arrange contacts between an individual who receives the service and their team worker efficiently; • make the right information available to the right person at the right time. <p>Effective and efficient information management and technology to support these activities requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unique identification of patients using Community Health Identifier number; • rigidly defined key data items; • a patient administration and communications system; and • add-on systems which support analysis and reporting, clinical audit and quality management. 	<p>Systems give most benefit when they are able to offer such services at the point of patient contact, wherever and whenever that takes place. If the administrative aspects of the care process are carried out efficiently then some of the burden of record keeping is relieved.</p> <p>The Read codes and thesaurus are already in widespread use in general practice and offer a common language for systems. Considerable investment is being made in national systems for primary care and opportunities exist to match clinical co-operation and partnership with an electronic information structure.</p>
The Recording of Activity	<p>Services require a historical record of contacts with individuals which covers who, when, what, why, and with what effect.</p> <p>Record information should be fit for this purpose. Primarily this purpose is to support the team in their work with individual who receives the service. Secondary purposes are to provide management and national statistics as a by-product, by selective abstraction.</p>	<p>Record information should only be entered once, if possible in an easy-to-use way by staff member themselves.</p> <p>Systems can support direct services: eg the semi-automatic production of communications such as clinical letters and discharge summaries.</p> <p>Ideally there should never be a requirement for an additional information collection system to provide management or audit data.</p>
Communication to support the process of care	<p>The biggest challenge - but still a basic information need - relates to exchange of day-to-day information between workers in primary and secondary mental health teams. Such information includes treatments given and progress made in delivering care to an individual. It should be available to team members on a 'need to know' basis.</p>	<p>Secure e-mail facilities and NHS Net and network infrastructures can help meet this need.</p> <p>Joint databases involving social work and health can establish a network for better care provision.</p> <p>This promotes better team working and mutual confidence.</p>

¹ The Medical Record CRAG/SCOTMEG Working Group on Mental Illness NHSiS (1996)

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Clinical decision-making support	To maintain best practice, staff need to be given access to any existing clinical knowledge and guidelines. The ideal moment for being given access to appropriate material is around the time of 'live' involvement with a person using the service, hence information needs to be delivered to staff rather than the other way around.	Easy-to-use access to electronic databases such as MEDLINE and CINAHL. Many of these sources are becoming available on the Internet. Alerts or reminders, for example of drug interactions. The British National Formulary is available on CD ROM.
Confidentiality	<p>People who receive a service, and those who care for them, need to have confidence that the data collected will be used ethically and that only those with a need to know will have access.</p> <p>The Data Protection Act provisions will apply.</p> <p>Aggregated data for commissioning bodies, provider agencies, and the National Health Service in Scotland's Information Services Division purposes will be anonymous.</p>	<p>Agreed protocols governing the collection, use and passing on of information will be developed and audit maintained.</p> <p>Staff will require initial training and continuing support in the safe handling of information and the secure use of systems for its collection.</p>