



For better
mental health



How to get it right locally

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Mind is pleased that both the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) have endorsed this good practice guide.



“ACPO warmly welcomes this guide, which is a really important piece of work that showcases some of the excellent police practice going on around the country. It is hoped these examples will prove useful to other forces looking to develop their policies and practices towards people with mental health problems.”

Chief Constable Phil Gormley, ACPO Lead on Mental Health

“I highly recommend that all frontline and senior police officers read and use this guide. Mind and the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health have between them a wealth of knowledge about the difficulties faced by victims, witnesses and offenders with mental health problems when they come into contact with the police. Here they share some of the innovative work police and voluntary sector groups are already doing to tackle these barriers. I urge other forces to emulate this work, to ensure good police practice towards mental health is embedded and routine.”

Sergeant Kevin Huish, PFEW Mental Health Lead



Introduction

As a police officer, many of the people you deal with day to day will have experience of mental distress:

- One in four people experiences a mental health problem during their lifetime (ONS, 2001).
- People with mental health problems are 11 times more likely to be a victim of crime than the general population (Levin, 2005).
- Up to 90 per cent of prisoners and two-fifths of offenders on community sentences have a mental health problem (Sainsbury Centre, 2009).

Persistent stigma surrounds mental health, which leads society to adopt stereotyped ideas of offenders, of violence, and of crisis situations when dealing with individuals with mental distress. In fact, people with mental health problems are more likely to come into contact with the police as a victim than as an offender (Mind, 2007). And mental distress does not just mean severe conditions like schizophrenia or personality disorder – many people you come into contact with may experience anxiety, depression, panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive behaviour or phobias.

Engaging with the issue of mental health can seem daunting. Yet good practice around England and Wales shows this need not be either burdensome or a distraction from the demands of operational policing.

Small adjustments to normal working practices can reap huge rewards – making your job easier, improving community confidence in the police, and ultimately helping you to serve and protect the public. All the local examples in this guide are transferable to other areas across England and Wales, though the precise time and investment required will naturally depend on local circumstances. We hope you will consider how you might replicate or adapt them in your own force.

Voluntary sector placements

A low-cost and low-maintenance way to improve police understanding of mental health is to arrange voluntary sector placements for student officers or probationers. Direct contact with mental health service users is hugely beneficial for individual officers – and the wider knock-on effects for positive police and community relations are invaluable.

Cleveland Police initiated a scheme for police probationers to spend two or three days with Redcar and Cleveland Mind. They receive mental health awareness training, have informal chats with mental health service users, and accompany group activities.

Newquay Mind provides week-long plain clothes placements for trainee constables. Familiarity with the scheme over two years has increased trust and rapport between services users and the police.

In Northamptonshire, **Rushden Mind** has a formal arrangement to take six police trainees per year, who muck in like regular volunteers for two days. After the placement the trainees make a presentation to the rest of their class, to share the learning. All the trainees have reported they learn more with the local Mind than in formal training, because meeting 'real' people helps challenge stereotypes about mental health.

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"Consistently positive feedback shows the placements are hugely valuable for both police and our service users. The probationers gain huge insight from spending time with us, which in turn has encouraged them to visit us later, when they are in uniform, helping to break down barriers and reduce the fear some of our service users have of the police. Through the scheme we have established better links and ongoing relationships with the local police."
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Sharon Street – Chief Executive, Redcar and Cleveland Mind
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Carlisle Mind's community placements for student officers have generated strong relationships with their local force, with formal work now planned around mental health training and police wellbeing, and mutual assistance and support provided on an ongoing basis.

Outcomes

- Improved mental health awareness.
- Productive relationships with mental health community.

Third-party reporting schemes

An important way to build public confidence in the police is to facilitate effective third-party reporting schemes. Victims and witnesses with mental health problems can be reluctant to report crimes directly to the police owing to fear, mistrust or negative past experiences. Third-party reporting helps overcome this barrier, increasing reporting rates, making your job easier and improving community safety.

Local Minds across Cumbria function as third-party reporting centres, which can liaise with the police to help identify and investigate crimes against people with mental health problems.

Bolton’s Be Safe partnership between the council, police and local voluntary groups operates a network of community venues across Bolton designated as hate crime reporting centres. These include disability groups, religious centres, housing offices and victim support services.

Until recently, Hunts Mind was a reporting centre for **Huntingdon’s Open Out scheme**. Hunts Mind offered a safe environment for reporting, provided information and advice, facilitated police relations, and supported victims through investigations. Regrettably the scheme recently ended owing to funding constraints.

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"By reporting a hate crime through the Open Out officer, the victim felt relieved, safe and supported throughout the process. The scheme was really valuable and a number of crimes came to light and were investigated. Without the scheme, these crimes may have remained unknown to the police or other organisations available to support the victim appropriately and sympathetically."
.....

Sara Isaacs, Hunts Mind

Innovative practice: online reporting

Strathclyde Police have launched an online reporting form for victims and witnesses of hate crimes. The form can be completed anonymously or by staff at a third-party reporting centre if the victim wishes. The system provides another access point for reporting, gives people more confidence to come forward, and speeds up the process from reporting to investigation.

Outcomes

- Higher reporting rates.
- Increased community confidence in the police.

Antisocial behaviour services

Often perpetrators of low level crimes or antisocial behaviour may have mental health problems which are not being addressed by mainstream services. These people may be well known to the police and other agencies and have fallen into a cycle of behaviour, where enforcement approaches fail to either address their needs or tackle their negative behaviour, meaning they come into repeated contact with the police.

In Oxford, the voluntary organisation Elmore Community Services runs an Anti-Social Behaviour Intensive Support Service, which operates in close partnership with enforcement agencies including the police.

This pioneering approach promotes early intervention and intensive support as a standard first response to antisocial behaviour, over the routine use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) or Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

After referral by police or other enforcement agencies, people receive intensive assertive outreach support from Elmore support staff to recognise the patterns of their behaviour and its consequences, engage with the right support services and advocate for them in custody or court as required. Support staff are partly co-located with enforcement practitioners, all working towards the common goal of reducing antisocial behaviour.

In two years the service has demonstrated that early intervention is more cost effective than pure enforcement. **Measurable improved outcomes** include:

- fewer incidents of antisocial behaviour
- reduction in the number of ABCs and ASBOs
- fewer breaches of ASBOs
- less use of custodial sentences.

.....
"The numbers coming to the police with complex needs have reduced and those that do come are better supported."
.....

Outcomes

- Lower rates of antisocial behaviour.
- Reduction in reoffending.
- Improved community safety.

Support card schemes

When someone with a mental health problem comes into contact with the police, either as a victim, witness or offender, they may often be in acute distress. This can make it difficult for you to communicate effectively with them or assess any additional support needs, which can escalate a crisis situation further.

Lancashire constabulary have developed the 'E Card', a unique emergency information card, which aims to assist people with disabilities to communicate with police or other emergency services. It is credit-card sized and has space for the person's name and photo, medical condition, details of an emergency contact person, and other useful information such as communication needs or requirements in an emergency. The E Card is free of charge and distributed via various channels including NHS mental health teams and Chorley South Ribble and Blackburn Mind. **Over 5,000 people have already benefited**, with a further 15,000 E Cards set to be distributed.

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"I have been told face to face by people with experience of mental distress that the E Card has given them more confidence that if they come into contact with the police, they will receive a more understanding, patient and equal service because they have something that they can present to police officers."
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PCSO James Holland –
Lancashire Constabulary

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"Helps mental health service users get quicker and safer help while in police stations"
Manager of a mental health charity
.....



Outcomes

- Upfront information about potential support needs of victims, witnesses or offenders.
- Officers better equipped to respond to people with mental health problems effectively and appropriately.

Appropriate adult schemes

In some areas local mental health organisations are commissioned by local authorities and health services to provide the Appropriate Adult Scheme in police stations. The Appropriate Adults then have the right skills to support the individual fully and help ensure productive interviews. Proactive engagement with these schemes is a good way to ensure you have independent expertise on hand when required and such schemes create enduring beneficial relationships with the mental health community.

Hillingdon Mind provides the Appropriate Adult scheme for Hillingdon Police. A team of 20 volunteers responds to calls every day of the week, whenever an adult with mental health problems or learning disabilities is arrested. The volunteers also respond to calls to assist victims and witnesses with similar needs. In 2008–9 the team responded to over 250 calls and spent over 500 hours in police custody suites supporting people.

In Southampton, **Solent Mind** supplies the Appropriate Adult service. They arrange a private consultation with the person in custody, giving them an opportunity to disclose any condition, medication or suicidal thoughts without the police present. During the interview they look out for the person’s welfare and aid communication.

“Solent Mind Appropriate Adult Scheme works alongside, but not for the police. We have worked hard building a good rapport and reputation with police officers and making the scheme ‘officer friendly’. The investigation process cannot proceed easily without us present, so we support the police by helping potentially difficult interviews run smoothly.”

Wendy Black – Solent Mind

“Without exception in my experience all of the Appropriate Adults that [Solent] Mind have supplied for custody matters [...] have been worth their weight in gold. [They] build bridges between the police service and the detainee [and are] brilliant in helping both calm and support the detainee as well as helping the police to progress the investigation of the alleged offence.”

Custody sergeant

Outcomes

- More productive custody interviews and investigation process.
- Support to handle distressed detainees appropriately.

Award-winning practice: London Borough of Hackney

Innovative work in Hackney to improve links between the police and the mental health community has been recognised by the prestigious Una Padel Award. PC Richard Harwin is the Mental Health Intervention Officer for the Metropolitan Police in Hackney and has taken forward a package of initiatives:

- An **information-sharing protocol** between police and community mental health teams, to facilitate early intervention and appropriate support before someone experiences a crisis.
- A **monthly working-party meeting** between the police and the Mental Health Trust to monitor and address local issues.
- **Mental health awareness training** for all police officers in Hackney, involving people with mental health problems presenting their experiences to increase understanding and challenge stereotypes.
- **Monthly police ‘surgeries’** at City and Hackney Mind, where its service users can seek informal advice from a police officer about whether to report a crime or any other community issues.
- A **dedicated advice leaflet** to support victims and witnesses with mental distress to report crimes.

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“My goal is to tackle the traditional barriers that exist between the police, mental health services and people with mental health problems. Together these initiatives have vastly improved trust and communication – leading to more effective policing, a reduction in offences and an increase in reporting rates.”

PC Richard Harwin – Hackney Police



PC Richard Harwin receives his award

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Case studies: improving outcomes in Hackney...

...for victims

John* is a victim of abuse whose case was uncovered – and resolved speedily – because he attended the police surgery.

During a relapse in his mental health, John was befriended by a female who had moved into his flat, exploited him financially and allowed other unwanted guests to use drugs in his home. As a result of this abuse, John was admitted to hospital. Upon discharge a few weeks later he was reluctant to return home and was forced to move into temporary accommodation. He reported his experiences at the surgery, which meant the police officer was able to search police databases and identify the female, who was already wanted by the courts for non-appearance on a drugs possession charge. The officer coordinated with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team who immediately arrested the female. John then returned to his flat the following day.

...for offenders

A report of harassment at the police surgery led to early identification of someone experiencing a mental health crisis, with subsequent diversion away from the criminal justice process and towards appropriate support.

Mary* told the officer on duty at the surgery that she was seriously considering filing a police report for harassment against her neighbour, due to her incessant false accusations and verbal abuse, which were causing Mary considerable distress. A search of police databases revealed the neighbour had made similar complaints about a different neighbour two years previously, with remarks in the report indicating a possible mental health condition. The officer visited the neighbour and identified she may be experiencing paranoid delusions, so immediately referred her for an urgent assessment by the Community Mental Health Team, whereupon she agreed to admission to hospital for a period of time.

Mary no longer faced harassment, while the neighbour received care rather than a charge, reducing the likelihood of her reoffending.

*Names have been changed.

Surgeries and drop-ins

Mutual mistrust between the police and people with mental health problems can often prevent effective policing – victims and witnesses are reluctant to come forward, while incidents involving offenders or people in crisis can easily escalate. Setting up regular police surgeries or dropping in to existing support groups at local voluntary organisations can help overcome these barriers.

This can be built into regular working patterns as an essential part of community engagement, particularly for officers working in Safer Neighbourhood teams.

Dorset Mind runs 'Mind Out', a service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people with experience of mental distress. Police officers regularly attend sessions to give crime prevention advice, improve relations, and encourage reporting of any incidents.

"We have officers coming in every week and some have built up great personal relationships with many of our service users. They really are a friendly face, which helps people feel safer."

John Hyde – Dorset Mind

"The police surgeries at City and Hackney Mind have gone from strength to strength, with around eight people seen each time. Regular contact has bred familiarity and trust – mental health service users gain confidence in the police, while we get intelligence on community incidents – which all amounts to higher reporting rates."

PC Richard Harwin – Hackney Police

"Dorset Police understands that engagement with the Dorset Mind group is extremely important, so our local Safer Neighbourhood officers attend on a weekly basis to offer support and get involved in group activities. This has enabled us to break down barriers resulting in increased confidence and increased reporting of crimes, incidents and intelligence gathering."

Sergeant Anna Harvey – Dorset Police

Outcomes

- Higher reporting rates.
- Better community intelligence gathering.
- Increased community confidence in the police.

Places of safety schemes

Building strong links with local health services and voluntary groups can help ensure places of safety that are not police cells are readily available for individuals detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, with multiple benefits. People with mental distress feel less stigmatised by the experience and receive the care they need sooner, while custody suites are freed up for suspects and police officers are no longer committed for lengthy periods in the station.

While s136 gives powers to police officers to remove people to a place of safety for their own protection or the protection of others, Government policy states that a police station should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Yet people detained under s136 are twice as likely to be taken to police custody rather than a hospital, often because of a lack of available health facilities (IPPC, 2008). The continued use of cells as places of safety diverts police resources from fighting crime and criminalises people with mental health problems, potentially causing further distress.

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"The support of the Strategic Health Authority has been influential in developing a protocol. This multi-agency approach is vital to ensuring that people who need to be removed to a place of safety can be treated efficiently, effectively, and with dignity by NHS professionals, closely supported by the police where this is necessary."

Inspector Michael Brown –
West Midlands Police
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West Midlands Police have been working with NHS West Midlands to develop a region-wide approach to the medical management of people detained under s136, underpinned by an operational protocol. This protocol has yet to be completely signed off by all primary care trusts but there is agreement in principle from the Strategic Health Authority, Ambulance Trust and four police forces involved.

Outcomes

- More appropriate assessment and support for people detained under s136 of the Mental Health Act.
- Reduced need to employ police cells as places of safety.

Liaison and diversion schemes

Diversion teams identify people in courts and police stations who have mental health problems and refer them to treatment. Most areas will have a court diversion scheme and while few currently work directly with the police the Government has said this should be common practice within the next five years.

Active police co-operation with diversion schemes ensures offenders with mental health problems are diverted into health services, while not necessarily away from justice. Information-sharing practices and frequent contact with diversion teams helps identify people at the earliest point in their offending career, so they get support alongside sentencing to break the cycle of reoffending – ultimately improving community safety.

Successful diversion schemes led by probation and health services in **Reading and Sussex** are underpinned by strong relationships with the police that have been built up over years. Benefits of this close cooperation for the police include speedy and systematic identification of any offenders experiencing mental distress, and subsequent support provided by health staff during custody.

The DIVERT team in Reading works with criminal justice partners to ensure offenders with mental health problems are identified, assessed and treated as early as possible. Referrals come from police officers and other agencies and the DIVERT team will visit offenders in police or court cells, interview rooms, prison, or their own homes to make the initial assessment and devise a care plan that prioritises reducing reoffending.

Proactive relationships with the DIVERT team ensure police officers are equipped to handle offenders with mental health problems appropriately and effectively. The DIVERT team regularly speaks to custody sergeants about any new arrests, to check them against an extensive database of everyone DIVERT has had contact with. Equally, police officers will use the DIVERT team as a first port of call for advice before taking decisions about offenders who may be displaying signs of mental distress.

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“In the past we had to rely on phone calls with busy custody officers to see if they were worried about any particular offenders. Now our system of proactive screening means we can assess the raw arrest data ourselves, taking the onus off the police and enabling us to provide a rapid response, making the whole arrest and sentencing process operate more smoothly.”

Martin Corfe – Sussex Partnership
NHS Trust
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Sussex Police work closely with the **Sussex Court Liaison Team**, run by the local NHS Foundation Trust. The scheme prioritises overnight arrests, which involve a higher rate of offenders with mental health problems – and the police account for around 90 per cent of referrals to the team.

A robust information-sharing system is in place, whereby the team receives notification from the police of all overnight arrests. There is a dual system of assessment, to ensure offenders with potential mental health needs are not overlooked. Custody officers can add mental health or suicide markers themselves, and the team checks the information against the NHS Trust’s own database, so people known to mental health services but unwilling to disclose to the police are also identified. A nurse from the team will then make a visit to the cells to assess the offender’s needs and discuss sentencing options and what information may need to be disclosed to the police and courts.

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“Sussex Police view the court liaison service as not just important, but vital. The team offers independent mental health assessments and ongoing advice to all criminal justice agencies, which afford the police and the court information on defendants which otherwise may never have been discovered. This ensures people with particular needs are identified and supported, so everyone who is on a journey through the criminal justice system receives a fair and appropriate service.”

PC Sarah Gates – Sussex Police
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Outcomes

- Quicker and more thorough identification of offenders with mental health problems.
- Support to deal with distressed offenders appropriately and effectively.
- Reduction in reoffending.

Expert-by-experience training

Investing in training is the only way to ensure all police officers attain a consistent level of mental health awareness. But instead of traditional classroom-based learning, police forces around the country have teamed up with community groups, local health trusts or universities to deliver innovative and interactive training with the input of mental health service users themselves.

Nottinghamshire Police has introduced mental health training developed with Framework, a local community mental health organisation. The training focuses on myth-busting around risk and mental health, appropriate language, challenging stereotypes, and self-awareness of mental health. DVDs produced by and featuring mental health service users are used to stimulate thoughts and discussion.

In Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University and Kent Student Officer Programme have developed training in partnership with Gerry, a consultant with experience of mental distress. As part of the standard policing degree, cohorts receive training in social exclusion, communication styles, different mental health conditions and their impact, with a focus on empathy and sensitivity.

Merseyside Police approached Edge Hill University to provide one-day mental health training for all officers who serve as the point of contact for victims and offenders. A service user was involved in planning the training, which goes to 500 officers each year.

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"Police who receive the training say the part delivered by mental health service users was the most beneficial. Since the training rolled out, officers report being more informed and confident in their role, while some people who have recently been detained under s136 have described the service as 'very good'."

PC Richard Harwin – Hackney Police
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"The training is voluntary but has proved incredibly popular, so we formed a Mental Health Working Group to develop further training in this area, focusing on service provision. It's essential for effective policing that all officers have good mental health awareness."

PC Gary Clayton – Nottinghamshire Police
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Outcomes

- Improved mental health awareness.
- Better equipped to handle people in distress effectively and appropriately.

Award-winning practice: West Wales

A scheme in Wales brings police officers directly into acute psychiatric wards to develop their awareness and understanding. A joint initiative by **Dyfed Powys Police** and Hywel Dda NHS Trust, the 'Community Police Development Programme' won best nurse-led project at the 2009 All Wales Mental Health Nursing Awards for its rolling programme of training.

Following a successful pilot study where police officers worked alongside nursing staff in Cwm Seren Psychiatric Unit for three days, all student officers now receive training including:

- Two days on a Mental Health First Aid training course.
- Four days working in the acute psychiatric unit that is attached to their Base Command Unit.
- Contact with patients, Community Mental Health Teams, Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Teams, Assertive Outreach Teams, Social Services Teams.

Student officers reported such positive feedback that Cwm Seren unit has since provided training for Custody Sergeants, PCSOs, Firearms Commanders, and IPCC investigators and caseworkers to name a few – with **over 700 officers of different ranks trained**.

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"I called the police to help me [...] last week and it was the first time they did not handcuff me."

Mental health service user
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"Any opportunity whereby there is a greater understanding of what people with mental health problems go through can only be for the good."

Student officer
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Improved outcomes as a result of the training include:

- A positive change in police attitudes reported by mental health service users.
- Stronger links between psychiatric wards, community mental health services, and police officers in the areas they oversee.
- Greater mental health awareness which equips police officers with the skills to deal efficiently with crisis situations.

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Acknowledgements

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The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health is an independent charity that aims to help to create a society in which people with mental health problems enjoy equal chances in life to those without. It focuses on improving the lives, mental health and wellbeing of offenders, and on enhancing the lives of people with mental health problems through employment.



Mind would like to thank everyone who was involved in the production of this guide by sharing examples of good practice, offering general advice and support, and particularly those who provided quotations or endorsements.

About Mind

Mind has been speaking out for better mental health for over 60 years. We work in partnership with around 200 local Mind associations to directly improve the lives of people with experience of mental distress.

Mental distress affects people from every ethnic background and walk of life – one in four people experiences mental distress at some time in their lives and a third of all GP visits relate to mental health.

Mind believes everyone is entitled to the care they need in order to live a full life and to play their full part in society. Our vision is of a society that promotes and protects good mental health for all, and that treats people with experience of mental distress fairly, positively and with respect.

Mind is an independent charity supported by your donations. We campaign to influence Government policy and legislation, work closely with the media and are the first source of unbiased, independent mental health information via our publications, website **www.mind.org.uk** and phone service MindinfoLine **0845 766 0163**.



**For better
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Contact: action@mind.org.uk

T: 020 8215 2424

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