

# SHARED CARE IN MENTAL HEALTH

MORE AND MORE SERVICES ARE DEVELOPING THE IDEA OF PEOPLE CARRYING THEIR OWN MEDICAL RECORDS, A SYSTEM OFTEN CALLED SHARED CARE RECORDING. **ROGAN WOLFE** AND **ANNA STAFFORD** LOOK AT TWO PILOT SCHEMES

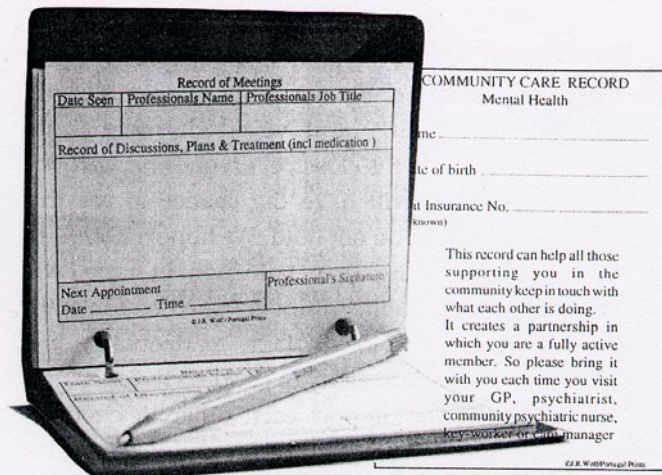
For the past eighteen months a shared care record for people with long-term mental health problems has been piloted in the Paddington area of Westminster, and in the Bow and Poplar locality of Tower Hamlets. The aim is to improve liaison between professionals and increase users' involvement in the recording process - and hence in their whole care and treatment.

The record consists of a pocket-sized ringbinder file, like a filofax. It is the user's own property. Its pages carry the names and telephone numbers of the keyworker and other workers involved, what the user wants done in any emergency, a list of relevant local phone numbers, pages for personal notes, the user's care plan, and pages that briefly record interviews with professionals, medication changes, and so on. The pilots have shown that not everyone takes to it. However, about 200 people are presently trying it out, and the following examples illustrate that it can have real importance for those who do use it.

The shared care record can be used in very varied and individual ways; there is no set formula. For instance, one person used his record to think through and write down what were the early warning signs of a relapse. He also used it to prepare for important meetings and to record the outcome. There were six professionals involved in his care, so for him the record not only helped to make sure those six people were communicating, but was also a way of holding in one place all that was going on for him.

A woman on a supervision order who often experiences a terrifying urge to attack people felt reassured by the booklet. She insisted every professional she met should record accurately how she was feeling at the time, so the next worker could keep close

watch with her and compare. She valued the sense of containment she felt the record provided. Another user could not understand what professionals said to her, so she got them to write the essentials in her record, and then



The shared care record consists of a filofax-style ringbinder (approx. 4"x5"). The contents can be customized by the supplier and the user

asked her keyworker to read it and explain them to her. Other responses to the booklet have included: 'It makes me feel at the centre of things'; 'You can put down how you're feeling if you don't feel well'; 'The phone numbers on it mean I can always ring the nurse if I'm feeling bad'; and 'It's useful for you and the doctor to keep track of the medication you're taking.'

The record was taken on with greatest enthusiasm by users who had workers who were themselves positive about the project and had a trusting relationship with the user. We believe the shared care record is an important development, and truly empowering. However, it should not be imposed as yet another new procedure, but made flexibly available, as a user's opportunity to be an active partner in the care offered. We do not see it as being in competition with the increasingly popular crisis card, but as belonging with the crisis card as one of a range of options available. Above all we believe the shared care record system needs time: time in general to win acceptance and recognition for the real benefits it can bring; and time in particular for professional and user alike to make room for it in their work together.

The shared care record  
can be used in very  
varied ways - there is no  
set formula

## Drop-in Services

If you are a user of Westminster mental health services, you can drop in to the following services for non-emergency help from workers and for the company of fellow service users. In most there is food, tea, coffee, etc.

**Mondays**  
10am-12am WAMH Coffee Bar, 526 Harrow Road  
5pm-7.30pm The Terrace Centre, 1 St Mary's Terrace

**Tuesdays**  
10am-12am WAMH Coffee Bar, 526 Harrow Road

**Wednesdays**  
5.15pm-7.30pm Paterson Wing Day Hospital

**Thursdays**  
12-2pm WAMH Coffee Bar 526 Harrow Road  
5.30-7.00pm The Terrace Centre, 1 St Mary's Terrace

**Fridays**  
11am-1pm and 2.30pm-4.30pm WAMH Coffee Bar, 526 Harrow Road

**Saturdays**  
12.30-2.30pm

Professionals and Carers involved:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Manager/worker  |  |
| Psychiatrist    |  |
| CPN             |  |
| Hostel Worker   |  |
| Day Care Worker |  |

Rogan Wolfe is an ex-manager of community mental health units who is now freelance. Anna Stafford is Care Programme Approach Co-ordinator with Tower Hamlets Healthcare NHS Trust.