

Foreword

Community Care can only work effectively if the various statutory and voluntary agencies collaborate.

However, collaboration to provide good community-based mental health services involves more than a statement of intent. It means co-operation by practitioners on a day-to-day basis, practical co-ordination of plans and activities by operational managers and an alignment of strategic goals by all the agencies at senior level.

Successful collaboration depends on establishing a culture of consultation and trust which acknowledges differences of perspective and role while continuing to seek common ground.

The preparation of this manual has been a process of practising this sort of collaboration. It has grown out of a series of multi-agency training sessions, which laid the foundation for closer joint working. By discussing in detail what services are available and how each service works the multi-agency group has started to establish a framework for genuinely integrated services.

Through working together on the manual, progress has been made on some very practical issues, such as agreeing a priority system for people with mental health problems in need of housing and developing joint forms for assessment and care planning.

The work of the multi-agency group will continue over the coming year, for example, joint training in person-centred assessment will further improve mutual understanding and co-operation.

The manual itself should be of use to both specialist and generic staff in all agencies. It is designed to be updated on a continuous basis.