

## The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act and Mary Seacole House

The Government has commissioned a review of the Mental Health Act 1983 to look at how the current legislation is used and how practice can be improved.

There are many areas of concern that need to be considered and the Government want to bring not just the legislation but the practices used within the mental health service and the use of the Act.

The review has been tasked with providing an understanding of the

- rising rates of detention under the Act
- the disproportionate number of people from black and minority ethnic groups detained under the Act
- processes that are out of step with a modern mental health care system

Mary Seacole House is one of the organisations involved in the review because of the nature of our service, the people we have as clients and members and the experience we have over a twenty seven year tenure as a Black Mental Health organisation.

Part of the review is to engage with all people who are involved with mental health and gain their experiences. In this regard we are involved in two ways both by running a focus group and also by being part of the working groups who put the recommendations forward for the changes required to both legislation and practices within mental health services.

In June members of Mary Seacole House took part in a very specific focus group which looked at the experience of Liverpool born black peoples experience of their treatment while being subject to the Mental Health Act. This took them through the following:

- their first contact with mental health services,
- what provisions there were for the first signs of a relapse if any
- the journey through the Mental Health Act assessment
- how the professionals dealt with their ethnicity, didn't consider it or had a negative response to that
- the police involvement and what level of risk they were considered to pose
- the experience of treatment on the wards following detention and the diagnosis given
- how long they were kept on the ward
- how they felt they had been discriminated against and the evidence for that.

This has all been taken back to the working groups and will form part of the evidence base required to identify the areas with the act that can be considered for improvement.

Another reason why Mary Seacole House agreed to be involved in the review was that during the initial discussions we made it clear that there had been too many consultations and meetings that had involved the members but they had not had any feedback from their input. The information and experiences that our members have shared in this focus group will play a role in informing the process and be valued with feedback given as to the benefits of that input.

The other part of the review is the working groups that are being run which I (Simon Torkington, Advocacy Development Officer) am part of. The purpose of the working groups is to get people with experience both professionals but more importantly people who have personal experience of the

mental health services to develop ideas of how the Mental Health Act and its related practices can be improved.

I was invited to join the working group because of my role as a BME advocate and the experiences I have had over twelve years work at Mary Seacole House working with my client group and professionals.

There is an interim report on the review available and more information about the review on the Government's website on the addresses below but if you would like to know more about what our involvement is or what we can do for you please do not hesitate to contact me at Mary Seacole House.

**Government website address**

[www.gov.uk/government/groups/independent-review-of-the-mental-health-act](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/independent-review-of-the-mental-health-act)

**Interim Report web address**

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-the-mental-health-act-interim-report](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-the-mental-health-act-interim-report)