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Parity of Esteem



RCN

Professional Services



What is parity of esteem?

- Broadly relates to inequalities in treating mental health on an equal footing with physical health.
- It is dominating the mental health landscape!
- ‘Valuing mental health equally with physical health’.
- First coined in 2011 – equality enshrined in law in 2012 in England.
- Now used more widely to describe any health inequality.

Parity of Esteem

- ✓ equal access to care and treatment;
- ✓ the same levels of dignity and respect from health and social care staff; and,
- ✓ receive the same quality of physical healthcare as those without a mental health problem.

Overview – Physical Health

- People with a serious mental health problem die 15-20 years earlier than the general population – this is preventable. It is widening! (Hayes et al, 2017)
- Key policy imperative in each UK country



Physical Health and Measuring Parity

1. 'Excess mortality' – the negative impact mental health has on life expectancy.
2. 'Burden of disease' – mental health is the single largest cause of disability in the UK, however is not reflected in NHS budget.
3. 'Treatment gap' – the difference between the number of people thought to have a particular condition, and those receiving treatment for it.

Source: Mental Health Foundation <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/p/parity-estateem>



Physical Health in Serious Mental Illness

Key information - compared to the general population, individuals with SMI (such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder):

- have a shorter life expectancy
- have higher rates of physical ill-health than the general population
- have higher rates of health-risk behaviours, including obesity and tobacco smoking
- are likely to have a long-term physical condition such as cardiovascular disease

Source: Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (2016)
Improving the physical health of adults with severe mental illness: essential actions



Why no improvement? - Tinkering around the edges

“Parity of Esteem...has made very little difference for people with mental health problems. The situation for people with serious mental health has not been addressed. We have to acknowledge that we have done very little...”

Tom Sandford, Former Director of RCN
England

Service provision

- ✓ Focus on symptoms and ‘in the moment’ problems, rather than underlying issues –target driven not necessarily outcome focused
- ✓ Failure to tackle underlying social determinants that drive outcomes

“Why treat people only to send them back to the conditions that made them sick in the first place?”

Social Determinant of Health Conference, World Health Organisation (2012)

Why no improvement? – A complex problem

Interrelated dynamic elements affecting people's physical health



Source: Improving the Physical Health of People with Mental Health Problems: Actions for Mental Health Nurses
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532253/JRA_Physical_Health_revised.pdf

Why no improvement...problems in how we care

- Lack of clarity around responsibilities in healthcare provision in primary and secondary care.
- Gaps in training among clinicians.
- Lack of confidence across the workforce to deliver physical health checks among people with SMI.
- The role of social care and local communities.

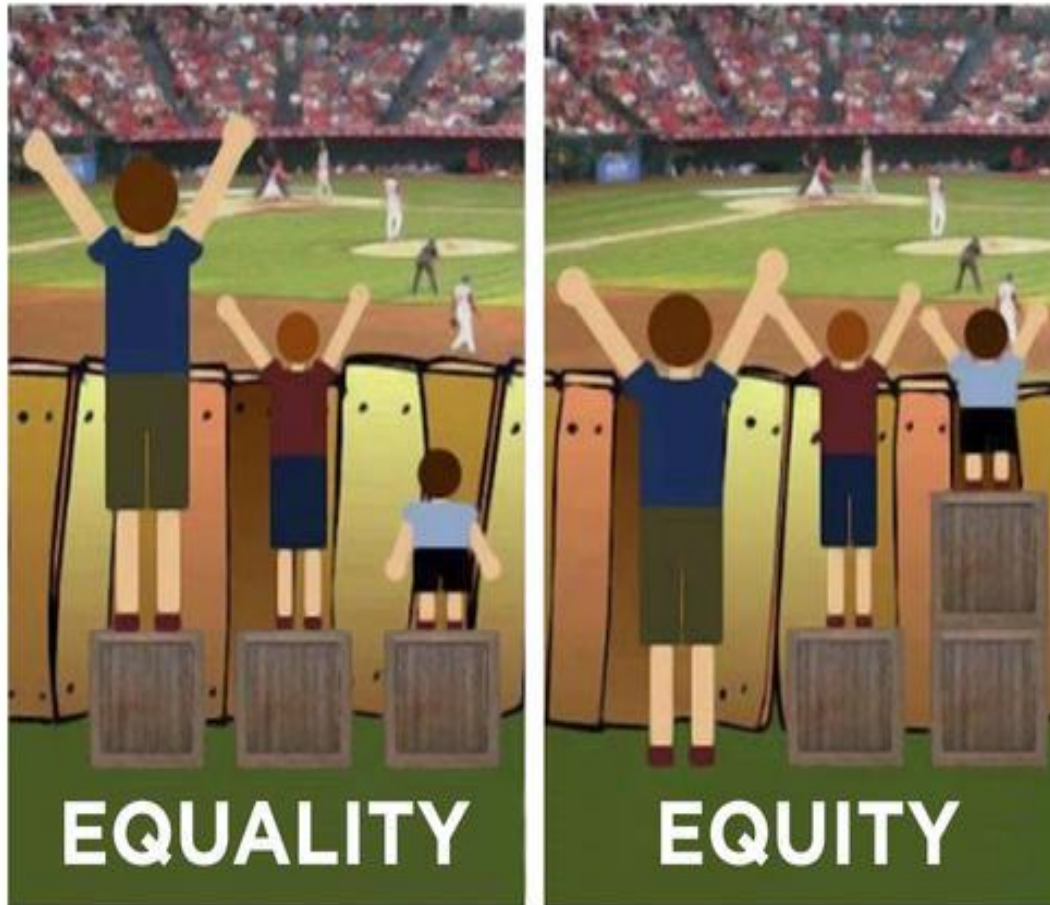
Source:

The RCN's evidence base review 2018 <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/mental-health/parity-of-esteem/improving-care-for-clients-with-a-severe-mental-illness>

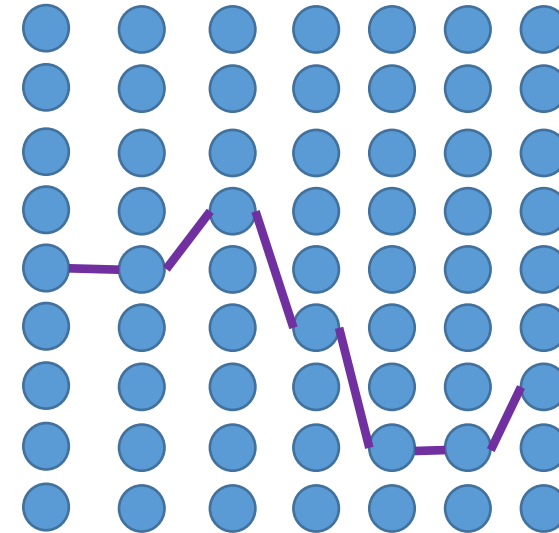
The RCN's member survey 2018 <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-007109>



Equality and equity – prevailing themes



The dominant narrative



- Narratives are socially, politically and culturally constructed
- Power – who wins, who loses?
- What prevails?

Social Determinants

WHO defines social determinants of health as the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.

(MH Foundation 2016)

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (2016) landmark report
- [Coordinated national effort needed](#)
- Based on New Zealand model 'collaborative' underpinned by co-production
- A Charter for Equal Health, setting out the shared principles, aims and objectives of Equally Well in the UK
- Web resource to provide up-to-date information, briefings and case studies
- National best practice events
- Four pillars of work - smoking, obesity/diabetes, deprivation, and alcohol/substance misuse.

The Equally Well UK Pledge

We believe that we all, regardless of where we live, have an equal right to good health and effective health care. No one should have poorer physical health or health care just because they have a mental health condition. Our shared vision is that everyone living with a long-term mental health condition has access to effective, timely, consistent and responsive help at every stage of their life for their physical health and has an equal chance of enjoying a healthy and, ultimately, equal life expectancy.

Proud to be an
**Equally
Well UK** 
Partner

High impact actions

- “We need to take the conversation to the next level – to raise a different kind of awareness that leads to a different kind of action” (Independent, 20th May 2018)
- What does it demand of policy makers?
- What can you do as the next generation of MH nurses?
- What does it demand of you?

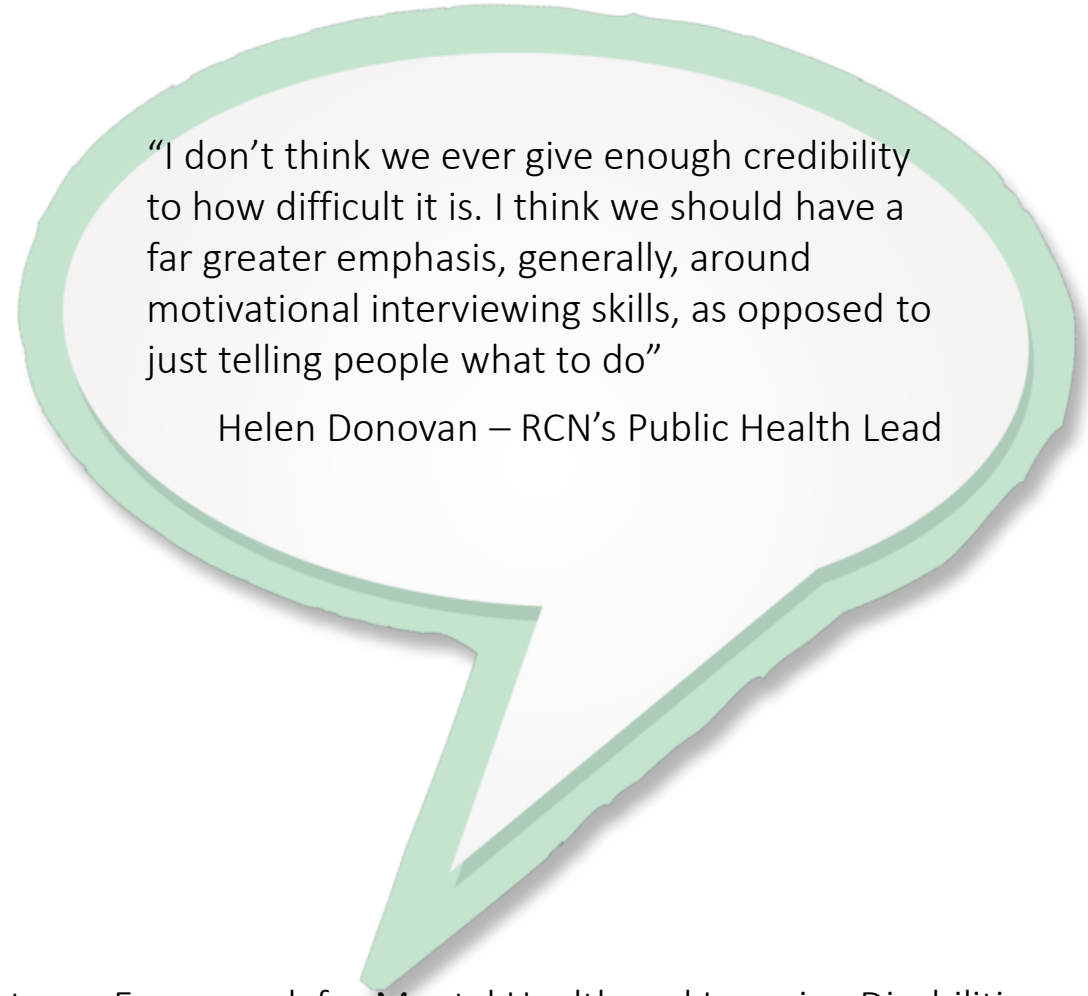


Source: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/mental-health-help-how-change-awareness-causes-treat-a8357741.html>



Core Skills (work completed by HEE)

Potential areas of training and competence in meeting physical health skills for those with serious mental health needs
✓ Vital signs
✓ Infection, prevention and control
✓ Pressure area care and VTE (Venous Thromboembolism)
✓ Cardio-metabolic risk factors
✓ Motivational Interviewing
✓ Nutrition/ Obesity
✓ Diabetes
✓ Smoking Cessation
✓ Alcohol and Substance Misuse
✓ Health improvement and wellbeing



“I don’t think we ever give enough credibility to how difficult it is. I think we should have a far greater emphasis, generally, around motivational interviewing skills, as opposed to just telling people what to do”

Helen Donovan – RCN’s Public Health Lead

Source: Health Education England (2018) Physical Care Competency Framework for Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.



High impact actions

Ask what your local service is doing to integrate some of its services for those with serious mental health needs – research shows joined up pathways and services make a difference to experience and outcome.

Ask what your service is doing to train and support the physical and/or mental health needs for its patients – parity of esteem is equally as important for anyone in any setting.

Ask what your service is doing to develop specialist roles such as Advanced Nurse Practitioners – case examples have shown that these types of roles can and do make a real difference



High impact actions

Ask what evidence-based tools are being used to measure and help improve physical health outcomes for those with serious mental health needs – using tools such as the Lester Tool or the Health Improvement Profile help to bring a consistent and rigorous approach.

Ask the “so what?” question – knowing that someone has completed a physical health check is only one step, always consider what interventions may be required, what information someone may need and what future community-based service could help the person improve someone’s health.

Ask what your service is doing to develop health promotion roles within its service – research suggests that nurses have an important role in helping people, through coaching and behaviour change conversations to help others make positive lifestyle changes



Links & Resources

A practical toolkit for supporting those with serious mental illness <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mentalhealth/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2016/05/serious-mental-hlth-toolkit-may16.pdf>

A range of practical guides and literature to support a better understanding of the need for parity <https://equallywell.co.uk/resources/>

Equally Fit Scotland <https://www.supportinmindscotland.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=ef7ea924-bbb0-4a77-95f2-f953ee27603d>

Improving the Physical Health of People with Mental Health Problems: Actions for Mental Health Nurses https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532253/JRA_Physical_Health_revised.pdf

Making Every Contact Count https://www.makeeverycontactcount.co.uk/media/1152/mecc-resources_a5_revised_print.pdf

The World Health Organisation - Information sheet Premature death among people with severe mental disorders Available from: https://www.who.int/mental_health/management/info_sheet.pdf



Website and Contact

- Case Studies [https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/mental-health/parity-of-
esteem/share-your-story](https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/mental-health/parity-of-
esteem/share-your-story)
- Lived Experience Workshop [https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/mental-
health/parity-of-esteem/lived-experience-project](https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/mental-
health/parity-of-esteem/lived-experience-project)

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