

Preface

The Mental Health Alliance has been in existence since 1999. Its role has evolved from one of simple opposition to Government proposals for reform of the 1983 Mental Health Act, to one of “constructive dialogue” with government. As a consortium of organisations representing all those on whom the law will have a direct impact or a role to play in its delivery, we believe there was much value in our seeking to present our own policies to underpin better mental health legislation. Accordingly, through 12 subgroups, we have produced policy papers in key areas, which inform our submissions to Government, most recently to the Joint Committee on the 2004 Draft of the Mental Health Bill. Throughout the document we refer to the Mental Health Act 1983, to the Richardson Expert Committee Report, to Government’s White paper and to the Draft Mental Health Bill 2004.

In this summary of our current positions we have, where possible, taken account of the Joint Committee’s 2005 report. On key issues, however, there has been little reason to amend policies. Indeed the overwhelming evidence presented to the Committee from organisations and individual mental health professionals, service users, carers and academics that are not members of the Mental Health Alliance has shown that there is remarkable agreement within the community for the way forward. This has reinforced our resolve to continue to campaign most energetically to see the kind of Mental Health Act which in our view best meets the needs of patients, their carers, those who work for their better mental health and the wider community.

The purpose of this document is simply to put all the past work together as a single record and as a basis for the next stage of the process when the Government produces its new Bill for entry to Parliament. It remains however work in progress. We continue to develop these policy positions in the light of further available research, legal developments and government responses and to formulate them with specific provisions of a new Bill in mind.

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