

## Supporting people in Early Intervention in Psychosis services: the role of primary care

### Background

Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) services offer treatment to people experiencing a first episode of psychosis. Service users may be referred from primary care and discharged directly back at the end of their time in an EIP service.

### Aim

To explore the role of primary care in supporting EIP service users (SUs) and to understand how to improve collaboration between primary and specialist care.

### Method

Qualitative study comprising semi-structured interviews with SUs, carers, healthcare professionals (HCPs), managers, and commissioners. Interviews were conducted either online or by telephone. Thematic analysis was carried out using principles of constant comparison. Patient and public involvement were key to all stages, including data analysis.

### Results

In total, 55 interviews were conducted with SUs ( $n = 13$ ), carers ( $n = 10$ ), and GPs, EIP HCPs, managers, and commissioners ( $n = 33$ ). GPs reported difficulties in referring people into EIP services and little contact with SUs while in EIP services, even about physical health. GPs suggested they were not included in planning discharge from EIP to primary care. SUs and carers reported that transition from EIP can lead to uncertainty, distress, and exacerbation of symptoms. GPs reported only being made aware of patients on or after discharge, with no contact for 3 years. GPs described difficulty managing complex medication regimes, and barriers to re-referral to mental health services.

### Conclusion

GPs have a key role in supporting people within EIP services, specifically monitoring and managing physical health. Inclusion of GPs in planning discharge from EIP services is vital.

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