

What's in a name? Case Management Organisation leads the way towards professional recognition

Within a growing UK case management industry, which is currently lacking regulation, the Case Management Society UK (CMSUK) is actively leading an evidence-based debate about better regulation and professional recognition for case managers.

A recent investigation, commissioned by CMSUK, found strong support for a professional pathway that would increase professional recognition, registration, credibility and quality of case management provision.

Background

Case management in the UK presents an inconsistent picture with no formally recognised regulatory body to monitor not only quality of case management practice, but also whether a case manager possesses the relevant skills and experience to practice in the role. This raises questions about how commissioners and clients can be certain that they are getting an appropriately trained case manager and what redress they have if things go wrong.

Current changes to the economic structure of health and social care present an even stronger case for clearly regulated and cost effective services that meet client needs.

Against this background, CMSUK aims to assure quality and equity of service delivery of case managers by setting the highest benchmark of standards of practice and code of ethics. Concerns about gaps in education and training to maintain standards led CMSUK to consult case managers and commissioners of case management services, in order **'To identify to what extent there is a need for a standardised, accredited or certified professional pathway for case managers in the UK.'**

Who are case managers?

In the UK, case managers work with a range of client groups, across a variety of service settings, including private, public and voluntary sectors. There is huge role diversity within these settings and different interpretation of what it entails to be a 'case manager'. In addition case managers have differing levels of expertise and while some hold specific professional qualifications (e.g. nurse or occupational therapist) and are bound by professional regulations, others are not.

What we found

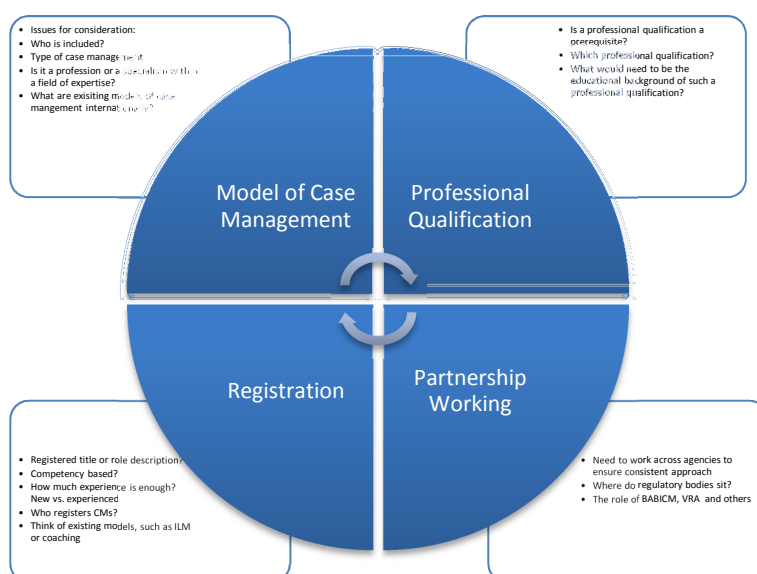
The investigation found over-riding support for better regulation of case management. A formal professional pathway is seen as beneficial in evidencing experience, assessing case management skills, giving credibility to practice and monitoring quality of service provision. The investigation of over 100 case managers and commissioners of case management raised four key areas of concern:

Professional Registration – the need for formal registration of the professional role and/or title of case manager was highly valued. Benefits were seen as clarifying the role, recognising and evaluating existing experience and ongoing monitoring against agreed standards. Questions about who would be eligible to register and which organisation (new or existing) would do this require further consideration.

Partnership working – the need to move forward in collaboration with other case management organisations and sectors in order to present a consistent approach and to be inclusive of the range and diversity of case management practice.

Professional qualification – strong value was placed on the need for case managers to hold an existing professional qualification and formally recognising and evidencing their level of practice, length of service and type of case management experience. Whether this view is representative of the wider case management community needs further exploration, as it raises questions of inclusivity.

Model of case management – emphasis is placed on the need to choose a model of case management practice that is applicable to the UK health and social care system. The chosen model will need to reflect an agreed definition of case management and who it includes. Further exploration is required to clarify differences in the expertise and needs of new and more experienced case managers.



What next?

CMSUK are taking a strategic approach to act on the results and are working towards future, professional recognition of case management in the UK. Two immediate initiatives to progress this strategy include:

- Sharing the results across a broad spectrum (public, private and voluntary sectors) with the aim of enlisting support from relevant stakeholders; thus raising the profile of case management in the UK and lobbying for greater recognition and improved standards of practice
- Enlisting partner organisations with a view to collaboratively identifying common areas of concern, mechanisms for partnership working and clarifying further actions for implementation. Collaborative meetings will take place in the autumn to move this forward

The future strategic plan will reflect the outcome of these collaborative approaches with the overall aim of further developing and implementing a model of case management that suits the UK context. The model will focus on progressing better regulation of case management practice, whilst being as inclusive as possible to recognise the breadth and depth of Case Management.

Further information

The full Project Brief, Final Report and ongoing progress can be found on the CMSUK website at: www.cmsuk.org

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