

Date: **Wednesday 14 July**

Venue: **Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales**

Title: **Capacity for Child and Adolescent Therapy and Counselling Services**

Purpose

1. To provide the Committee with a paper to note on Capacity for Child and Adolescent Therapy and Counselling Services in regard to the treatment of depression in young people with selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

Background

2. In December 2003, following a review undertaken by the Committee on the Safety of Medicines, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued an Advisory notice stating that the majority of SSRIs (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors) are not suitable to be used by under 18s for the treatment of depressive illness.

3. MHRA further stated that fluoxetine (Prozac™ is one well-known brand name for this pharmacological agent) appeared to have a positive balance of risk and benefit in the treatment of depressive illness in under 18 year old people.

4. In March, representatives of the Royal College of Psychiatrists met with representatives of the MHRA to express concerns about the amount and quality of the available research and the balance, presentation and quality of the advice issued. MHRA agreed to issue further advice for professionals and the public in a more reader-friendly format and this is awaited.

5. A recent article in the Lancet (24 April 2004) from the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (which is currently commissioned by NICE to produce forthcoming Guidelines on depression)

reported on another meta-analysis of the available research data on SSRIs. This study included analysis of additional unpublished data. The authors stated that fluoxetine has a more favourable risk-benefit profile while other SSRIs have unfavourable risk-benefit profiles.

6. It is hoped that the more user-friendly advice by MHRA should clarify the position further, particularly on the continued availability of fluoxetine. In the meantime, there may be increased referrals by GPs to Specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Members of the Committee will recall that additional recurring funding of £700,000 has been made available for CAMHS, including primary mental health workers.

Action for Subject Committee

7. This paper is for the committee to note and requires no action at this time.

Financial implications

8. Costs of £700k will be met from identified savings within other areas of the current and planned provision of the LHB's, Trusts and Central Budgets Revenue Expenditure BEL. The Director of Health and Social Care Resources Division (DJS1384) has noted that there are no additional financial implications for the Assembly.

Jane Hutt AM
Minister for Health and Social Services

Contact: Chris Burdett, Children and Families Directorate, tel 029 2082 3936.