

***Justice Health – Cobham Court Consultation & Liaison Project***

**1. Introduction**

Justice Health – Adolescent Community Forensic Mental Health Service (ACFMHS) has created a position of a Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) to offer mental health consultation and liaison to Cobham Children's Court. The role of the CNC is to conduct comprehensive mental health assessments and document care plans with a view for possible diversion or detainment by the Court. The CNC will recommend appropriate services for adolescents presenting to court who may have, or be at risk of having, a mental health problem.

**2. Operational guidelines**

The Adolescent Community Forensic Mental Health Service target clients are male and female between the ages of 10-18 with mental illness or emerging mental illness and or drug and alcohol dependence who, because of their behaviour, represent a direct and serious risk to themselves and/or others and require comprehensive assessments.

**3. Set Up**

The Cobham Court Mental Health Consultation and Liaison Service commenced on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006. The CNC was initially housed in the court support office, however, can now be contacted through the Cobham Centre intake office. The CNC is available to conduct assessment on site at Cobham Court on Mondays, Tuesdays all day and Wednesdays (half day) for a period of six months until the end of June, when a review of the service will be conducted.

**4. Referral process**

The young person will typically:

- Be under the age of 18.
- Have come into contact with the criminal justice system.
- Present with a mental illness or emerging mental illness.
- Present a risk to self or others.
- Referrals are accepted by the ACFMHS CNC by phone or in person.
- The referring agent informs the young person of the referral.
- The CNC consults with the referrer to obtain specific demographics and information.
- The CNC obtains consent from the young person to conduct the assessment and to contact relevant agencies to obtain any recent health reports.
- The CNC communicates with relevant service providers to gather background information.
- Referrals are accepted from the Department of Juvenile Justice Officers, Police, Legal Aid, Intake Officers and the Magistrate of Cobham Court. Individual consultations are conducted upon request.

**5. Protocol**

The priority for this project is to offer assessments to those young people who have been brought into custody overnight and are attending court the next day. Many of these young people may have a mental illness or symptoms suggestive of an emerging mental illness. These young people are the target for diversion from incarceration (dependant upon the ruling of the Magistrate).

**6. The Nurse's role**

Review referral, consult with referrer, ensure consent to assess, gather relevant information, communicate with relevant agencies, conduct comprehensive mental health assessment, conduct

family assessment, document assessment outcome, prepare care plan for diversion and detainment, feedback to referrer. The role also involves making appropriate referrals to specified agencies dependant upon outcome of hearing.

Mental Health Assessments can be arranged as part of the bail conditions if the Magistrate requests this to be conducted prior to the next court appearance.

## 7. **Court process**

The CNC is available to attend court to give a verbal or written report of the health findings in relation to the mental health assessment. The CNC will have documented a care plan that will reflect recommendations for either a diversion or a detainment. The CNC will refer to the relevant agencies to be included in the ongoing care of the young person either via a referral to a community agency or in person to the Cobham Centre Clinic, psychologist or AOD counsellor.

## 8. **Statistics**

### **January**

Mental Health assessments	6
Family assessments	3
Clinical consultations	11
Staff consultations	10
Written reports	6
Verbal reports	5
File reviews	1

### **Source of referral**

JJO	5
Legal aid	4

Court attendances 6

Days at court 9

### **February (to date 23)**

Mental Health assessments	4
Family assessments	2
Clinical consultations	9
Staff consultations	7
Written reports	5
Verbal reports	3
File reviews	12

### **Source of referral**

JJO	1
Legal aid	1
Police	1
Other (centre)	1

Court attendances 16

Days at court 9

## 9. **Review**

During the short time that this service has been made available, referrals and consultations are increasing in numbers. This service is developing over time and offers invaluable mental health assistance to young people presenting to court with a mental illness. Secondly, it is envisaged that

with the increased involvement and mental health consultation available to the court and centre staff, there will be improvements with external linkages and referral processes for young people in need of alternative placement.

There will be a formal review of this service in July 2006.