

# Guidance and Procedures

*Adults and Children*

## Approved Mental Health Professionals: Accessing the Service during working hours for Mental Health Act assessments

**Mental Health Act 1983 (revised 2007)**



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## **1. Legislation and policy background**

*Why do we provide Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) in West Sussex?*

The County Council is required by law to provide a 24/7 Mental Health Act assessment service. This assessment service works closely with GPs based in primary health care teams, with forensic medical examiners employed by Reliance Medical Services (providing a medical service in police station custody centres across Sussex), and also with medical and other staff employed by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

The Approved Mental Health Professional (hereafter, AMHP) role is set out in the Mental Health Act 1983, as amended and updated by the Mental Health Act 2007. The AMHP role replaces the role previously known as Approved Social Worker, with effect from 3rd November 2008.

AMHPs must have undertaken an accredited AMHP training course provided at a higher education institution, and on completion of that course be able to demonstrate their competence to practise in the role.

AMHPs may, in the future, not be employed by local social services authorities. However it will be on behalf of a local social services authority (in our case, West Sussex County Council) that they undertake their duties under the Act.

AMHPs are carrying out statutory functions of a public nature. All work undertaken by an AMHP within the context of the Mental Health Act must be consistent with respecting the human rights of all individuals, which are set out in the European Convention of Human Rights.

Where AMHPs undertake Mental Health Act assessments on behalf of West Sussex County Council, the council is required to:

- Ensure that all AMHPs have access to professional supervision and support in their role;
- Provide a minimum of 18 hours of refresher training, relevant to the AMHP role, each year;
- Provide for the health and safety of AMHPs whilst they are undertaking assessments on its behalf;
- Provide for scrutiny of the professional competence of AMHPs, and for appointing, re-appointing, removing or suspending AMHPs as necessary;
- Provide legal indemnity for AMHPs whilst they undertake the role; and to
- Provide access to legal advice whilst AMHPs carry out their Mental Health Act assessment duties.

The Mental Health (Approved Mental Health Professionals)(Approval)(England) Regulations 2008 set out the key responsibilities for local social services authorities in England.

The Practice Development Manager - Mental Health, based at County Hall (telephone 01243 777100, for more information) is responsible for overseeing the governance arrangements for the AMHP Service in West Sussex.

## **2. Guidance for the Contact Centre**

*How should Contact Centre staff respond to requests for an AMHP in West Sussex to undertake a Mental Health Act assessment?*

Contact Centre staff should note that AMHPs will need to be furnished with certain basic information by agencies that make telephone referrals. The task of collecting and collating that information, and passing it on to the duty AMHP (during working hours) rests primarily with the Helpdesks at the adults social care Locality Offices across the county. This is irrespective of the age of the customer being referred for assessment under the Mental Health Act.

Contact Centre staff should re-direct referrers to the relevant adults social care Locality Offices within the county. The relevant Locality Office will be that in whose geographical area the customer is at present.

All referrals that come in outside working hours are picked up through the social care Out of Hours Emergency Service.

More information about how the county council works with people who have mental health difficulties can be found on the county council's website at [www.westsussex.gov.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/mentalhealth)

## **3. Procedures for Helpdesks in Locality Offices (working hours)**

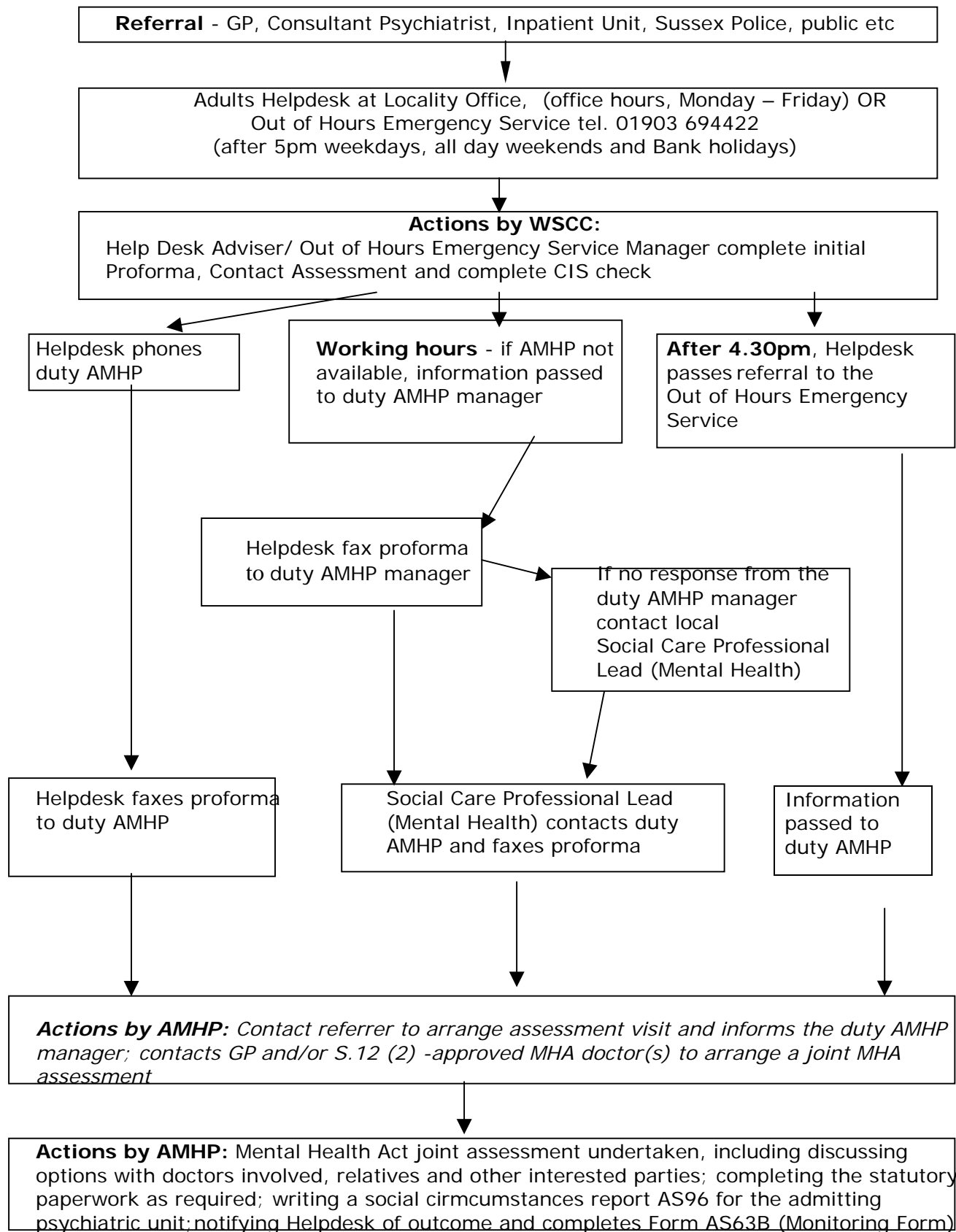
*How should the Helpdesk respond to requests for an AMHP in West Sussex to undertake a Mental Health Act assessment?*

The point of referral for all Mental Health Act assessments – irrespective of age of customer - is the Locality Helpdesk (Adults).

*(During 2008 there have been exploratory discussions about developing a single point of access and a single Helpdesk for all Mental Health Act assessment referrals. However it was eventually agreed by Locality Managers that the existing arrangements would continue for the foreseeable future).*

A flowchart has been produced (see below), together with a proforma for receiving referrals. The Helpdesk adviser should complete the proforma in as much detail as possible and also complete relevant sections of the Initial Contact Assessment Form. A CIS check should also be undertaken.

Sequence for Helpdesks to follow in responding to a request for a Mental Health Act assessment by an Approved Mental Health Professional



**MENTAL HEALTH ACT 1983 (REVISED 2007)  
APPROVED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SERVICE  
AMHP ASSESSMENT REQUEST INFORMATION PROFORMA**

Patients name ..... CIS Number .....  
D.o.B .....

Address .....

Tel Number .....

Referrer ..... Referrer's Tel Number .....

Helpdesk advisor(name) .....

Timescale for intervention .....

Patient's current location .....

Current status under the Mental Health Act .....

Where detained if under Section 136 (and time) .....

GP ..... Consultant .....

Relatives/Carers contact details .....

Care Co-ordinator .....

Previous admissions to psychiatric hospital including name of hospital and  
status of admission and diagnosis (if known) .....

Availability and location of a bed .....

Is there a potential risk of aggressive behaviour? If so, details: .....

.....

Any other information?

.....

Information passed to AMHP(name) /duty manager (name) .....

Date ..... Time .....

The Helpdesk adviser will make contact with the duty Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) by phone and then fax the relevant information gathered. Helpdesks will be supplied with the duty rotas in advance by the local Social Care Professional Lead (Mental Health).

If the AMHP is not available the Helpdesk should make contact and fax the relevant information to the duty manager, who may be a senior practitioner. Helpdesks will be supplied with the duty manager rotas in advance.

If the duty manager is not available the information should be passed to the local Social Care Professional Lead (Mental Health).

If the Helpdesk adviser has any queries about the referral, for example referral by a Nearest Relative (as defined under the Mental Health Act) the local Social Care Professional Lead (Mental Health) should be contacted.

#### *Health and safety of AMHPs*

All AMHPs will be issued with the contact numbers for the duty AMHP managers and the local Social Care Professional Leads (Mental Health). AMHPs will contact the duty AMHP manager before attending the Mental Health Act assessment, during the assessment as required, and then after the assessment has been completed. In the event that the duty AMHP manager is not available the AMHP should contact the local Social Care Professional Lead (Mental Health).

All AMHPs have access to a mobile phone for use during Mental Health Act assessments.

#### *The role of the duty AMHP manager*

The role is to ensure the safe working of the AMHP, including Mental Health Act assessments being completed after 5.00pm, and providing consultation and debriefing if required.

#### *Which AMHP?*

Ideally, if a case is open to an AMHP they should be the one to carry out the assessment. When this is not possible the Professional Lead should be notified or if it is not an open case the assessment will be passed to the duty AMHP.

#### *What needs to be recorded by Helpdesks and by AMHPs?*

Adults Helpdesk Complete proforma, Initial Contact Assessment Form, and CIS check

Input referral onto CIS

AMHP Complete AS63 Initial Information

Complete AS63B Monitoring Form

Complete AS96 Social Circumstances Report

AMHP Send copy of AS63B Monitoring Form to Adults Helpdesk and to HQ

Adults Helpdesk Input outcome to CIS

#### **4. Procedures for Helpdesks in Locality Offices (after 4.30pm)**

*How should the Helpdesk respond to requests for an AMHP in West Sussex to undertake a Mental Health Act assessment after 4.30pm Monday-Friday?*

Once the assessment is started it should be carried through to its conclusion. If this is not possible the AMHP should discuss (with the duty AMHP manager) about handing it over to the Out of Hours Emergency Service.

All referrals that come in to the Helpdesk after 4.30pm can be passed to the social care Out of Hours Emergency Service, alongside other referrals that are passed across to that Service on a daily basis.

Similarly, if it is clear that the Mental Health Act assessment will not begin until after 4.30pm the Helpdesk should pass it to the Out of Hours Emergency Service.

#### **Feedback:**

We welcome feedback about our policies and procedures so if you have any comments about this procedure please email to

[as.complaints@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:as.complaints@westsussex.gov.uk)