



For immediate release – 11 December 2008

Press Release

Successful prosecution shows violence against NHS staff is never acceptable

A Somerset man who assaulted two NHS staff causing them physical injury was today sentenced for three counts of common assault at Taunton Crown Court.

Anthony McIntosh, was living at Holford House, a mental health facility on Cheddon Road, Taunton, Somerset, when the assaults took place in April 2007. Two members of staff, who had tried to restrain him after he became threatening, received injuries to their heads and ribs. On an earlier occasion, McIntosh had assaulted a staff member so seriously they required a prolonged period of sick leave to recover.

The NHS Security Management Service (SMS) bought a private prosecution with the support of Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The action was taken in view of Mr McIntosh's prolonged history of violent physical assaults on staff which had resulted in serious injuries.

The Judge at Taunton Court imposed a restraining order on McIntosh which requires him to remain in hospital until the Home Office consider he poses no danger to the public. Further offences of Actual Bodily Harm will be left to lie on his file.

Responding to the sentence, Head of SMS Richard Hampton, said: "It is never acceptable to use violence against the people who are caring for you. As the court heard this was not a flash of temper, it was a continuing barrage of physical and verbal threats which intimidated staff and made their job harder.

"We urge all NHS staff to report physical assaults so that appropriate action can be taken and staff reassured that they are being supported."

Although overall reported assault figures in the Somerset Partnership Trust showed a small increase from the previous year, the SMS firmly believe this is due to an increase in reporting of incidents when previously some staff might have thought verbal or physical aggression by clients or their relatives was 'part of the job'.

Mr Hampton added: "Significant efforts have been made by the Partnership Trust to ensure the safety of their staff – including jointly funding this private prosecution. The small minority of people who abuse NHS staff should understand that their behaviour is unacceptable and legal measures will be used against them."

A spokesperson for Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust said: "We do not take the decision to bring a private prosecution against this individual lightly, however, with such persistently violent and abusive behaviour being shown to our staff we felt this was the right and proper action in this particular incidence."

-ENDS-

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Business Services Authority

Counter Fraud Service

For more information contact Liz Justice at the NHS CFS press office on 020 7895 4524. Further information on the NHS CFSMS can be found at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/security

Notes to editors

1. McIntosh was sentenced to a Hospital Order with a section 41 restriction. A restriction is imposed where the court considers it necessary to protect the public from serious harm, given the nature of the offences, the individual's criminal history and the risk of committing further offences if allowed to go free. Release is subject to Home Office approval.
2. The NHS Security Management Service (NHS SMS) – which is a division of the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) - was set up in 2003 to handle policy and operational matters related to the management of security within the NHS in England. It strives to ensure real and permanent improvements are made to provide the best protection for NHS staff and property.
3. Figures show there were 55,993 reported physical assaults against NHS staff in England 2007/8 – a rise from last year's figure of 55,709. Statistics also show an increase in the number of people receiving criminal sanctions for assaulting NHS staff, with 51 in 2002-3 and 992 criminal sanctions imposed in 2007-8.
4. In April 2004, the NHS SMS developed a national syllabus for conflict resolution training aimed at all frontline NHS staff. This training gives staff the skills to recognise and defuse potentially violent situations. Figures show that more than 428,000 staff have been trained so far.
5. Local Security Management Specialists (LSMSs) are in place in 90% of health bodies around England to investigate security breaches, along with the police, and implement new systems to better protect NHS staff and property. All reported incidents of violence against staff are reported to the LSMS as well as the police. They receive professional training in areas such as witness interviewing and a background in law, and are supported nationally by the NHS SMS.

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