Evidence briefing on integrated care pathways in mental health settings

- Leeds Partnership Foundation NHS Trust (LPFT) is undertaking a project to restructure many of its services based around the use of integrated care pathways (ICPs).
- We have found no systematic reviews of the effectiveness of ICPs specifically in mental health care.
- Two well-conducted systematic reviews provide evidence that ICPs can improve some outcomes compared with usual care in some hospital settings.
- Very little of the evidence included in these reviews comes from UK or NHS settings, and some of the outcomes assessed (e.g., in-hospital complications) are unlikely to be of relevance for LPFT.
- Studies that have looked at the implementation of ICPs in mental health settings in the UK have generally reported on the experience of particular services. The findings are of limited value for decision-making because of their lack of methodological rigour and reporting of process outcomes and expert opinion rather than patient outcomes.
- While there is some evidence suggesting that ICPs can reduce hospital costs, their relevance to LPFT is uncertain as most studies were not conducted in either the UK NHS or mental health settings.
- Given the uncertainties around the generalisability of the evidence and the best ways to implement ICPs, it will be important to plan carefully for implementation of any changes to services and to monitor resource use, costs and clinical outcomes during and after any change.

The evidence briefing has been produced for the Leeds Partnership NHS Foundation Trust by the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination as part of TRIP-Lab. Full details of methods are available on request (paul.willson@york.ac.uk or duncan.clarke@york.ac.uk). TRIP-Lab is a research partnership between NHS Bradford and Airedale, Leeds Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and the University of York. TRIP-Lab is one of the five research themes of the NIHR Collaboration in Leadership and Applied Health Research and Care for Leeds, York and Bradford. The content of this evidence briefing is believed to be valid at the time of publication (September 2011). Significant new research evidence may become available at any time. The views expressed in this briefing are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Leeds Partnership NHS Foundation Trust or the NIHR.

Figure 2: Example of an evidence briefing