

the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased in the UK (Mental Health Act 1983).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. The UK Government has set out a strategy for mental health care (Department of Health 2005). The strategy aims to improve the lives of people with mental health problems by providing them with the best possible care and support. The strategy is based on the following principles:

• People with mental health problems should be treated as individuals and not as a group.

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to participate in decisions about their care and support.

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to live in the community.

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to work and to contribute to society.

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to live a full and active life.

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to be treated with respect and dignity.

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to be treated as equal citizens.

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• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to be treated with compassion and understanding.

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