



the 1990s, the number of people in the UK with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Act 1983, 1993). The prevalence of mental health problems in the UK is estimated to be 10% (Mental Health Act 1983, 1993).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with mental health problems. The Department of Health (1999) has set out a vision for the future of mental health care in the UK. This vision is based on the principles of recovery, recovery being defined as 'the process of achieving a better quality of life, often involving the development of new coping strategies and the building of new relationships' (Department of Health, 1999, p. 1).

The Department of Health (1999) has also set out a number of key objectives for the future of mental health care in the UK. These objectives are: to improve the lives of people with mental health problems; to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health problems; to improve the effectiveness of mental health services; and to improve the value for money of mental health services.

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