

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

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 of a new mental health system, which will be based on the following principles:

• People with mental health problems should be treated as individuals, with their own needs and wishes.

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

• People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to live in their own homes and communities.

• 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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