

Community Triage Pilot launched today



Police in Edinburgh are embarking on a partnership initiative with NHS Lothian to improve engagement with members of the public living with mental health issues.

The Edinburgh Community Triage Service is a pilot service, which launches today (Friday) and over each weekend throughout the next 12 months will allow officers access to trained professionals who can provide valuable advice on how to deal with a range of matters concerning mental health.

Based on models successfully established in other areas of the UK, mental health nurses working as part of the Mental Health Assessment Service (MHAS) will be available for a 12 months pilot.

The aim of the service is to provide police responding to incidents with local health service information to ensure individuals in mental health crisis are assessed as quickly and appropriately as possible.

Members of the public will benefit greatly from the scheme with those in need of specialist services being appropriately signposted to the agencies that can best assist them.

In addition, this approach will help reduce the stigma associated with a police detention or escort to a psychiatric facility.

Superintendent Liz McAinsh said: "This scheme gives our officers access to dedicated professionals whose knowledge of mental health considerations is invaluable.

"The initiative has been shown to work well elsewhere and I

expect officers and local communities in Edinburgh to benefit immensely from its use.

“ During this pilot any officer attending an incident involving someone with mental health issues will have improved access to fully-trained mental health nurses who will advise on the most appropriate course of action.

“This will allow us to provide a higher quality of service to those in need of specialist assistance.”

Kathleen Stewart, Nurse Consultant, NHS Lothian, said: “The Edinburgh Community Triage Service is designed to ensure individuals in mental health crisis who come to the attention of the police in the community are seen as quickly and as appropriately as possible.

“It is hoped that this new way of working will also help reduce the stigma and criminalisation associated with detention in custody or police escort to a psychiatric hospital for assessment.”