

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 UK Government has set out a strategy for mental health care (Department of Health 1999). The strategy is 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.
- People with mental health problems should be given the opportunity to live in their own homes and communities.

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