

the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased in the UK, and the number of people with a mental health problem who are in contact with mental health services has also increased (Mental Health Act 1983, 1984; Department of Health 1999).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the lives of people with a mental health problem, and to reduce the stigma and discrimination that they experience. This has led to a number of initiatives, including the development of self-help materials, the establishment of self-help groups, and the development of self-help programmes (Department of Health 1999).

Self-help programmes are designed to help people with a mental health problem to manage their condition, and to improve their quality of life. They can be used by people who are in contact with mental health services, and by people who are not in contact with mental health services. Self-help programmes can be used in a number of ways, including as a supplement to professional help, as a primary form of help, and as a means of preventing a relapse (Department of Health 1999).

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