

Designing a virtual reality (VR) therapy for Depression

Frequently Asked Questions for people interested in applying to join our Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) or VR workshops -

Q: What is meant by a primary diagnosis of depression?

A: If you have a primary diagnosis of depression, it means that depression is the main mental health issue that you experience. Although you may also experience other mental health problems or symptoms, having a primary diagnosis of depression means that depression is the core condition. In other words, depression has not been a result of another mental illness (such as OCD).

Q: I have a full-time job. How can I commit myself to this role if I am working full time?

A: This role involves attending occasional meetings. If you decide to join this group, you will be required to attend a few meetings. The meetings are usually 2-4 hours long and are held on weekdays. Anja, a member of staff at McPin staff will always endeavour to organise meetings on dates that people are able to attend, and you will be told about them in advance in order to give you as much notice as possible.

Q: What do you mean by IAPT services?

A: IAPT stands for [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies](#). If you visit your GP for depression, they will typically refer you to IAPT, where you would usually be offered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or counselling. Sometimes, these services have other names such as a 'psychological wellbeing service'. Not all these services are provided by the NHS. For example, it may be that your local Mind charity is providing these services. We are particularly looking to recruit people that have experience of these services, but still encourage those without this experience to apply.

Q: What if I cannot attend a meeting?

A: If you cannot attend a meeting, let Anja know as soon as possible. If you miss out on a meeting, there will be some opportunities to send feedback via email or telephone if you wish.

Q: What will the meetings be like?

A: You will have the opportunity to voice your opinions on how to make virtual reality therapy as effective and as appropriate as possible for people with depression. The meetings will be informal, and you will be free to speak as much or as little as you like. There will also be a chance to share your views in smaller groups or by making a note of them on paper or post-its. During the workshops, you will have the chance to test out the virtual reality for yourself to give the team some feedback. The meetings will be roughly 2-4 hours long, with breaks for lunch (if the meeting falls during lunch time) and snacks.

Q: I don't know anything about virtual reality, can I still take part?

A: Yes! You don't need any specific knowledge about virtual reality or technology in general to join this group. At McPin we champion expertise from experience. This means that we value the

knowledge you've gained from your experiences of mental health problems, rather than any specific research or technical knowledge.

Q: What sort of things would I need to share during a meeting?

A: Whatever you feel comfortable with. There is absolutely no expectation of you sharing anything that you are not comfortable with other group members. Instead, the idea is to use your experiences to make suggestions about the virtual reality therapy (e.g. if you thought that something in particular could be triggering for people, you could voice that, without disclosing anything about yourself). It is one of our ground rules that anything that is shared in the group remains confidential.

Q: What if I feel distressed during a meeting?

A: You will be able to leave the room at any time if you wish. Staff will be available to support you. If you felt you needed to leave a meeting, please let staff know beforehand so that they do not worry about your whereabouts.

Still have questions that you'd like us to answer? No problem, please get in touch with Anja. Email anjahollowell@mcpin.org or 02079227871