Involvement opportunity

Virtual Reality (VR) for Depression

We are looking for people living **in London and the surrounding regions** to support and develop a virtual reality therapy to help people with depression. We are particularly interested in people who have received treatment **for depression** through Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services. If you have been referred to therapy through the NHS, this is probably IAPT – see our FAQ document for more details. But this is not essential! We need people who would say that depression is the main mental health issue that they experience.

You do not need to have experience of virtual reality or have any technical knowledge to take part in this opportunity.

What is a virtual reality therapy?

The therapy being developed involves wearing a virtual reality 'headset' which immerses the wearer into a virtual environment. In this virtual environment, the user will do certain activities that aim to help improve and better manage some of the symptoms of depression. These activities include things like games, meditation, and attention training. A virtual 'coach' will guide a user through the virtual environment, helping them to deal with challenges they may have and generally encouraging them.

This project will aim to develop the therapy to the point that its effectiveness can be tested in a research study.

What is involved in this opportunity?
People will be asked to attend some user development workshops to develop the VR therapy. The workshops will involve discussions about things like what people with depression might like or not like in a VR therapy, or what might be helpful or not helpful for the virtual coach to say. The workshops will include a small group of people with lived experience of depression, a few staff from McPin, and a few staff who are developing the therapy. The workshops are generally quite informal, and you will have the opportunity to contribute in many ways – verbally and written, in groups and individually; we want to cater to everyone's needs so if you prefer certain methods of feedback, we will make every effort to accommodate you.

We will also be forming a Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) for this project, with about 6 people. This group will provide input on a more regular basis, and about elements of the study other than the actual virtual reality environment, such as how to deliver a virtual reality therapy to people in healthcare situations and what to put in information leaflets about the therapy. This group will be formed after the first workshop; you can express your interest in joining this group in the application form. The link to the application form is in the 'How to Apply' section.

Who are we working with?
We are working with an Oxford University spin-out company called Oxford VR (www.oxfordvr.org). Oxford VR aims to produce effective treatments for different mental health issues using virtual reality.

When is it happening?
The first meeting is likely to take place at the end of October or the beginning of November. The following meetings are likely to be every 3-6 weeks. If selected for this opportunity, you will be invited to one or more of the workshops, depending on availability. If you join the LEAP, you will be invited to attend all LEAP meetings. There are likely to be six workshops and two LEAP meetings in the first instance, and there may be more depending on funding. Meetings will be held in London or High Wycombe.

Payment and expenses
Payment of £75 will be offered to people attending LEAP meetings. £60 will be offered to people attending user development workshops. All reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed up to an average of £40 per person. This payment includes reading papers before meetings.

How to Apply
Please click here to download the application form. If you have any questions or you would like a paper copy of the application form, please contact Anja Hollowell by email: anjahollowell@mcpin.org or phone 020 7922 7871.

Applications will close on 5pm Wednesday 13th November 2019