About

In these bulletins, we provide news about mental health research and advertise any relevant service user and carer involvement opportunities and events within the McPin Foundation. We also advertise opportunities for people to get involved in mental health research with other organisations. From time to time we advertise opportunities for people to take part in studies as participants.

If you have an involvement opportunity you would like to include in our next bulletin, please email us at contact@mcpin.org. If you would like to receive future bulletins direct to your inbox, please sign up here. To receive our organisational newsletter, also distributed by email, please click visit our website.

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Involvement Opportunities

Help design virtual reality environments for a new therapy for people experiencing psychosis

Across England
£60.00 payment offered per meeting
Travel Expenses Reimbursed
Register your interest by the end of October, 2018

About
The McPin Foundation and The Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, Royal College of Art, are looking for people to be involved in workshops and interviews who will help to redesign virtual reality (VR) environments used in a new therapy to help people with psychosis or paranoia. This work is part of a larger research project which will be investigating whether VR technology can be used as a form of therapy for people with psychosis or paranoia. For more information about the study please click here.

We are particularly looking for people to support this study who have (or had) experiences of psychosis. You do not need to have experience of virtual reality.

What can you expect?
▪ Workshops will last for 3-4 hours with a break, refreshments and lunch will be provided
▪ Payment of £60.00 per workshop will be offered, and all reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed. This payment includes any preparation for the workshops which may be required beforehand.

The workshops will focus on understanding the background of therapy for people with lived experience of psychosis, practical issues of VR, finding out what VR environments may work best in the therapy, and finalising the overall concepts of the VR environments with some later stage initial testing of the VR. Activities in the workshops will include VR demonstrations, group work, presentations of prototype VR environments and discussions.

When is it happening?
▪ We will be running a series of six workshops starting in July 2018
▪ The workshops will be held locally to the study trial sites of Bristol, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Oxford, some workshop dates have now been scheduled

To find out more about the workshops and how to register your interest, please click here, or contact Tillie Cryer by email: TillieCryer@mcpin.org, or phone: 020 7922 7874.
Advise on the design and findings of a study looking at the long-term effects of antidepressants on body-weight

London

Small thank you gift after completion of the project will be offered
Travel Expenses Reimbursed
Register your interest by Tuesday 16th October 2018

About
Researchers at University College London (UCL) are looking for people to advise on the design and findings of a study examining the long-term effect of antidepressants on body weight in patients monitored in primary care settings. The researchers aim to determine whether the risk differences between sex, age or consumed doses are significant enough to justify changes to prescribing practices of antidepressants. The researchers hope that the findings may help doctors and patients understand how taking prescribed anti-depressants may affect their weight in the long-term.

What can you expect?
▪ Travel expenses will be reimbursed
▪ Refreshments provided at meetings
▪ A small thank you gift for your time on completion of the project will be offered

When is it happening?
▪ Register your interest in taking part by Tuesday 16th October 2018

To find out more about this opportunity, and how to apply to take part, please contact Juan Carlos Bazo Alvarez by email: juan.alvarez.16@ucl.ac.uk, or phone: 07376 076260
Help develop a grant application for a study looking at medication optimisation for people with severe mental health problems

Birmingham

Payment offered (amount not disclosed)
Travel Expenses Reimbursed
Register your interest by Thursday 27th December 2018

About

The Medication Optimisation Research Group at Aston University, Birmingham, are looking for people with experience of using mental health services, to provide some input on a grant application which they are currently preparing, to apply for funding from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The researchers would like to gain funding for a study hoping to develop and test and a pharmacy-led intervention to improve medication use in people with severe mental health problems living in the community.

What can you expect?

▪ Commenting on the researchers approach to the study and potentially be actively involved in the project if it is funded.
▪ Payment will be offered for taking part in this work
▪ Travel expenses will be reimbursed
▪ Mentoring and support will be available

When is it happening?

▪ Register your interest in taking part by Thursday 27th December 2018

To find out more about this opportunity, and how to apply to take part, please contact Ian Maidment by email: i.maidment@aston.ac.uk, or phone: 0121 204 3002
Become a NIHR Peer Reviewer

Home-Based
Payment offered (amount not disclosed)
Ongoing recruitment

About

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) are looking for service-users, carers and members of the public to review documents from all stages of the research process. You could play a vital part in maintaining and improving the quality of the research the NiHR fund and publish.

Reviewers help the NIHR at every stage of the research process. By identifying research topics, ensuring we fund the best applications and helping to shape our open access reports published by the NIHR Journals Library, reviewers play a vital part in maintaining and improving the quality of our research.

What can you expect?

▪ **Insight into the research funding process.** By becoming an NIHR reviewer, you can develop a valuable insight into health research need in the NHS and the standards of successful applications for funding. We only fund research of the highest scientific standard, so you can increase your insight into best practice in health research.

▪ **Make a difference.** As a reviewer you can make a significant contribution to the NHS and public health by shaping research and improving practice. Our programmes identify the highest impact questions for UK health, so that you know the research you’re reviewing will make a real difference.

When is it happening?

▪ Ongoing recruitment (no specified deadline).

To find out more about this opportunity, and how to apply to take part, please email: publicreview@nihr.ac.uk
About

The Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust research team are looking for volunteers to share their personal recovery journeys with them. This is part of the NEON study (Narrative Experiences Online), which seeks to understand how online access to stories of personal recovery journeys through mental health challenges may benefit others.

The research team are specifically looking for people who have experiences that others see as unusual (e.g. hearing voices, seeing or believing things that others do not) and live without NHS support (other than their GP).

What can you expect?

- Being interviewed by a Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Being asked to share your story of personal recovery

When is it happening?

- Ongoing recruitment

To find out more about this opportunity, and how to apply to take part, please contact Jo by email: research@nottshc.nhs.uk, or phone: 07920 453729
Early Intervention in Psychosis Network (EIPN): Peer Review Panel Recruitment

Location not disclosed

£100.00 per full day and £50.00 per half day payment offered

Travel Expenses Reimbursed

No Deadline Disclosed

About

The Early Intervention in Psychosis Network (EIPN) is currently looking for service users and carer representatives for their peer-review teams. EIPN is a quality improvement and accreditation project that works with early intervention in psychosis (EIP) services all around the UK. The views, ideas, skills and experience of people who have used EIP services are vital for our quality improvement work.

What can you expect?

▪ The following payment will be offered, £100 per full day and £50 per half day. The project will cover reasonable travel/accommodation expenses within the RCPsych policy.
▪ EIPN takes EIP teams through a supportive process of self- and peer-review to assess how the service is performing against an agreed set of quality standards.
▪ The self-review involves completion of a team checklist and gathering of feedback from service users, family, friends and carers, partner agencies and EIP staff.
▪ The peer-review visit takes place over a whole day and involves verifying the self-review data, considering the service in its unique context and exchanging information about best practice.
▪ EIP teams taking part in the EIPN are encouraged to use the results of their self- and peer-reviews to improve the care and support they provide to patients and carers.
▪ This opportunity may involve some travel.

Please click here to visit the EIPN website for more information about the Early Intervention in Psychosis Network. For informal enquiries and to obtain an application pack, please contact the EIPN project team by email: EIPN@rcpsych.ac.uk.
Help shape a new national research programme on ethnic inequalities and severe mental illness in the UK

Voluntary

Deadline to complete survey: Wednesday 10th October 2018

About

The Synergi Collaborative Centre are looking for people to set the research priorities in the field of ethnic inequalities and severe mental illness, by completing a newly launched survey. This is a national public survey which hopes to shape the centre’s future work programme, facilitate the creation of research strategies to tackle mental health inequalities and help launch a national campaign to transform health systems.

The survey is being launched against a backdrop of longstanding ethnic inequalities, including the fact that compared to the majority population, a diagnosis of schizophrenia is five to six times more likely in Black African people and Black Caribbean people, and nearly three times more likely in South Asian people. As for detention rates among the civil population, Black Caribbean people and Black African people are three times more likely to be detained.

What can you expect?

▪ The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes
▪ All answers will be confidential
▪ The survey covers a wide range of topics that accommodate intersectionality, the criminal justice system, housing, education, homelessness, health services, racism and commissioning.
▪ The survey aims to secure the opinions of a wide cross section of the public, including patients, carers, health and social care practitioners, commissioners, NGOs, volunteers and students.
▪ Survey closes Wednesday 10th October 2018
▪ After the survey closes, the main findings will be shared with policymakers, research institutions and commissioners, and will be made available to the public from November 2018.

Please click here to access the National Public Survey on Ethnic Inequalities and Severe Mental Illness.
A research team at the University of Oxford are looking for people with lived experience of forensic mental health services, including secure hospitals or forensic community mental health services, to guide and shape a new study for how outcomes are measured for patients in Forensic Mental Health Services. The study aims to develop a new questionnaire that will ask people who use these services, and the clinicians caring for them, how they think they are progressing with their care.

The research team would like to put together a small group of up to five people, with lived experience, to help guide and shape this study. We are looking to include at least three people who have direct experience of previously using forensic mental health services and preferably have been discharged within the last ten years. The research team would also like to include at least one carer who has had the experience of caring for a loved one while they have used forensic mental health services.

What can you expect?

▪ The research team would like the help of this group at several key points during the study
▪ The meetings will take place in Oxford, unless this is not convenient for most participants, in which case another location may be sought
▪ The researchers plan to arrange around three face to face meetings of the group.
▪ Travel expenses will be covered and payment is offered (amount not disclosed).

When is it happening?

The first meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 1st August 2018, 1.30pm-4.30pm in Oxford. Even if you could not make this first meeting, please do consider getting in touch. The last meeting is anticipated to take place around summer 2019. You would have the opportunity to help decide the timings of future meetings.

If you are interested in joining this group, please contact the study lead Dr Howard Ryland by email: howard.ryland@psych.ox.ac.uk or phone: 01865 618234.
Independent Review of the Mental Health Act Workshops

London, Liverpool and Exeter

Free Event

Register before date of event

About

The independent review of the Mental Health Act published its interim report in May, which set out its priority themes for further work. The review is now developing its draft recommendations for the government, regarding how the Mental Health Act and associated practice should change. The review will be running three workshops during August in London, Liverpool and Exeter to engage with mixed audiences on potential options for change, and of what they might result in for service users and professionals. The feedback gathered from attendees will help inform the review’s final recommendations that will be published later in the year. The review’s aim is to bring together interested parties of all types, but there is a commitment to capture the views and expertise of service users, carers and professionals with direct experience of the Mental Health Act.

What can you expect?

▪ Break-out sessions will provide opportunity for more in-depth discussion on particular themes, and further details on those will be sent to attendees nearer the time of the events.
▪ All three events are taking place in central city locations, easily accessible from mainline train stations
▪ Light refreshments will be provided
▪ If you are unable to register you can join the waiting list by emailing: MHAActReview@dh.gsi.gov.uk

When is it happening?

The three workshops will happen on the following dates, please follow the links for each event to find out more information including how to register for an event and meeting venues.

- London (Monday 13th August 2018)
- Liverpool (Wednesday 15th August 2018)
- Exeter (Tuesday 21st August 2018)

There will be further opportunities to engage with the review prior to its conclusion. If you would like to find out more about those opportunities, please email: MHAActReview@dh.gsi.gov.uk
Participation Opportunities

Are you over the age of 65?
Do you experience difficulties with worrying?

London

£10.00 Voucher Offered, On Completion of the Trial
Register your interest by Thursday 27th December 2018

About

The FACTOID study (ACT Therapy for older adults with long term chronic worry), run by researchers at University College London (UCL), is examining how acceptable and feasible it is to develop a new form of talking therapy for older people experiencing generalised anxiety disorder or chronic worrying, who have not responded well to treatment they have been offered. This new form of talking therapy will be based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, a form of talking therapy that helps people to learn new ways of handling distressing thoughts and feelings. It also helps people to develop ways of taking part in activities that are important and meaningful to them.

Who can participate?

People over the age of 65 who experience difficulties with worrying, who have not responded well to treatment they have previously received.

What does the trial involve?

Participants would be asked to take part in a 16-week intervention with a trained therapist, in London. The participants will all receive the new ACT therapy, there is no control group, so everyone who takes part will receive the new therapy.

A £10.00 voucher upon completion of the intervention will be offered to participants.

To find out more about the study, and how to take part please click here.
To view the recruitment flyer, please click here.
Post-Graduate Opportunities

**PhD Opportunity | Teesside University | £15,000 | Apply by 28th August 2018**

Teesside University are collaborating with Middlesbrough Children’s Trust, to offer a 4-year PhD studentship project. The aim of the project is to provide evaluation and research support for a project designed to improve outcomes for children and families in Middlesbrough where Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) feature in households. It is hoped that the findings from this study will contribute to the development of future interventions that aim to improve the outcomes for children and families in Middlesbrough.

To find out more, and how to apply, please [click here](#).

**Research Assistant | University of Oxford | £28,098 - £33,518 | Apply by 15th August 2018**

The University of Oxford wish to appoint two Research Assistants to the Oxford Cognitive Approaches to Psychosis (O-CAP) group based in the Department of Psychiatry, Warneford Hospital, Oxford. O-CAP is a clinical psychology research group comprising over 20 researchers. The post holders will work on a number of studies being conducted by the team, including a clinical trial of psychological therapy for patients with persecutory delusions in the context of psychosis (‘The Feeling Safe Trial’) and a clinical trial of psychological therapy using Virtual Reality.

To find out more, and how to apply, please [click here](#).

**Part-Time Research Assistant | UCL | £30,316 - £31,967 | Apply by 12th August 2018**

University College London (UCL) are seeking a Research Assistant to work in the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Mental Health Policy Research Unit, run by a research team based at UCL and Kings College London. This unit will carry out a programme of policy-relevant research over the next five years, as agreed with the Department of Health. The post-holder will be involved in conducting research that focuses on mental health policy. The post-holder will also be expected to assist with administrative, organisational, and communication tasks for the PRU, such as helping to update the website and maintain a social media presence. This is a developmental role and would be particularly suitable for someone seeking a career in mental health services research.

To find out more, and how to apply, please [click here](#).
The University of Southampton are offering a fully funded PhD studentship. This project aims to understand the impact of public and patient involvement and engagement (PPI/E) activities on health research. This will be achieved by exploring the evidence base to clarify what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects and how. It is hoped that ways of evaluating PPI/E impact on health research and the use of these approaches in practice will be explored.

To find out more, and how to apply, please click here.
Have you had a chance to read the latest Talking Point Paper yet?

Almost everything to do with mental health has been, or is, sharply contested. From appropriate treatments to the language used to describe mental health problems, can spark ferocious debate. To date, the majority of the discussions in mental health research have been framed from the point of view of mental health professionals and academics. McPin welcomes these platforms but are keen for discussions to broaden, engaging both other disciplines in mental health research and other groups, particularly service users and families.

Service users and their families typically have less access to resources that will allow for their voices to be heard. We, therefore, commission Talking Point papers to encourage people with unique expertise and experience to consider key issues in mental health research, who might not have had the opportunity and platform to do so.

The latest paper in the Talking Point series, “Through the eyes of the observed: re-directing research on psychiatric drugs”, was recently published. Authored by Jasna Russo, an independent survivor researcher and consultant, the paper explores whether experiential knowledge can contribute to the knowledge production on psychiatric drugs.

On Tuesday 27th July, McPin hosted a launch event for the paper which included a panel discussion and debate. The panellists included Professor Peter Beresford from the University of Essex; Stephanie Wooley; European Network of Ex/Users and Survivors of Psychiatry; Derek Tracey, Consultant Psychiatrist and Clinical Director at Oxleas NHS Trust, and Jasna Russo. The discussion was livestreamed and live tweeted thanks to The Mental Elf.

If you would like to watch or re-watch the discussion please click here, to catch up on the conversation on Twitter, search for the hashtag #PsychDrugDebate. Visit the below linked pages to read the Mental Elf blogs about this Talking Point Paper by Sarah Carr and Alison Faulkner.

Talking Point papers are commissioned to provide the opportunity and platform for voices that are traditionally marginalised to be heard. We have so far released three Talking Point papers, you can read these papers by clicking here.
Co-Production in Research: Barriers and Solutions

Written by Vanessa Pinfold, Co-Founder and Research Director, The McPin Foundation

Here at the McPin Foundation, we are pleased to support the third year of the Social Care Institute for Excellence’ (SCIE) co-production week and its focus on learning. This year has seen the introduction of co-production in research principles from INVOLVE. Below are the key principles and features in the guidance:

- **Key Principles Sharing of power** – the research is jointly owned and people work together to achieve a joint understanding
- **Including all perspectives and skills** – make sure the research team includes all those who can make a contribution
- **Respecting and valuing the knowledge** of all those working together on the research – everyone is of equal importance
- **Reciprocity** – everybody benefits from working together
- **Building and maintaining relationships** – an emphasis on relationships is key to sharing power. There needs to be joint understanding and consensus and clarity over roles and responsibilities. It is also important to value people and unlock their potential.

**Key features**

- Establishing ground rules
- Ongoing Dialogue
- Joint ownership of key decisions
- A commitment to relationship building
- Opportunities for personal growth and development
- Flexibility Continuous reflection
- Valuing and evaluating the impact of co-producing research

In my experience it is the “how to” part that is the most difficult, reports from **Australia** and **UK (South West England)** are particularly useful giving tips and case studies as well as exploring ideas that provide a conceptual foundation.

McPin were interviewed for the INVOLVE guidance project illustrated above. We fed in our experiences of collaborative work with university departments for large multi-centre research trials of complex interventions for mental health. Something we emphasised was the importance of collaboration between three main groups: (1) service users and carers, (2) practitioners and clinicians and, (3) researchers; this is known as tri-part collaboration. We have used this model several times now for developing and delivering a research project. While it is not always easy, it does lead to work that draws on the expertise and experience of all three groups. The combined expertise of people who fall into more than one of these categories is useful in the promotion of sharing ideas and learning from each other.
One example of this in practice at McPin is research on loneliness with a team at UCL, which bloggers Angie and Jackie describe in a summary about their involvement in recruiting staff to deliver a new approach. Drawing on the example of the same study, I recently spoke about the importance of relationships and building trust within working groups. At an end of study feedback session, expertise was shared, and different contributions were valued which included:

- The lead researchers talking about the key findings, having shared their slides in advance with other members of the research team;
- A discussion panel that was formed involving a research team member, a person delivering the intervention and practitioner working group member.
- Working group service user members deciding to talk about their work through a question and answer interview session, supported by some background information our co-production approach.

Nothing is perfect, and we all still have much to learn. Each project can be improved, and it is our intention to learn from each and seek to develop new ways of co-producing research. Openly discussing the barriers and looking together for collective solutions is key. Each project is different and how power is shared can be negotiated and each research project varies.

Recently I have been trying to write a paper about co-production with twenty-one authors! This is not an easy task but a very important one. Peer review journals are not set up for collaborative writing. Who is the ‘lead’ author? And who decides on the ordering of authorship? This is not a unique challenge, but in mental health, where too often those ‘in power’ have made decisions impacting on the lives of service users and carers, with negative and oppressive consequences, this really does matter.

In our co-production paper, everyone is inputting into the writing, so should we write as a collective with no individuals named? No decisions have been taken yet. How such decisions are made in our experience is part of the co-production journey and careful thought is required. That is a familiar theme – thoughtful and careful working – because co-production in research needs to be well planned, time is needed to build and maintain relationships, honest and open conversations (difficult ones too) are necessary.

I have learnt so much in the last five years of working at the McPin Foundation and continue to do so on every research project I am involved with. Thank you SCIE for putting the spotlight on co-production. Let’s keep sharing the learning as that will improve all our work.
Spotlight Study

Virtual Reality for Psychosis

What is this research?

Many people experiencing psychosis find social situations difficult and consequently withdraw from everyday activities. Isolation and lack of activity means that people often develop physical health problems and their mental health deteriorates. It has been suggested that the use of modern technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), could be used as a form of therapy for some people affected by psychosis.

Currently, only 5% of people experiencing psychosis receive psychological therapy, and that therapy seldom directly addresses social withdrawal. Professor Daniel Freeman and his team based at the University of Oxford received funding from the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) in 2017, to test the effectiveness of VR therapy for people with psychosis. It is hoped that the use of cutting-edge VR technology to enable people to practise skills in a computer-simulated world, which may help to reduce problems in real life. This innovative approach could help to reduce anxiety and paranoia in people experiencing psychosis, and may also help to improve their engagement in everyday activities.

It is planned that 432 people with psychosis will be recruited and enrolled to take part in a clinical trial to test this out. Half of the people enrolled will receive their usual treatment, and the other half will receive six sessions of the new VR therapy. People will be randomly selected to be placed in either of these two groups. It is also planned that people’s physical activity levels, symptoms, and quality of life before and after treatment will be assessed. Other members of the study team will also analyse the treatment cost-effectiveness, and produce a commissioning case and implementation toolkit for the VR therapy to be used in the NHS nationwide.

How are McPin and people with psychosis involved in this research?

The McPin Foundation will be facilitating the service-user involvement for this study in the form of a Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) of 11 service users who have been recruited. So far, the panel have met 3 times. The panel have been introduced to the study, shortlisted some virtual reality environments for the therapy and discussed how the trial of the therapy will run. The LEAP will
provide advice and assistance to the wider study team as the research progresses.

McPin and the LEAP are also working with the Royal College of Art, who are running workshops and interviews focused on helping to understand people’s experiences of psychosis and applying this to the design of the VR environments used in the therapy. The workshops and interviews began in July 2018, some workshop dates have now been scheduled.

To find out more about these workshops and interviews, and how to register your interest, please click here.

McPin peer researchers will later be assisting with designing and running the patient qualitative studies.

Where can I find out more information?

The website for this study is currently under development. Please contact Tillie Cryer or Thomas Kabir by email: tilliecryer@mcpin.org | thomaskabir@mcpin.org or phone: 0207 922 7874 for more information.

For more information about this study please click on the links below:

- Virtual Benefits for the Real World
- £4 Million Project to Make Virtual Reality Treatment Available in NHS Mental Health Services
- To watch a video of Professor Daniel Freeman talking through the background of the study, please click here

Please see below for links to press releases related to this study:

- ‘After, I feel ecstatic and emotional’: could virtual reality replace therapy?
- Automated virtual reality therapy helps people overcome phobia of heights
Your Experiences in Research

Written by Andrew Grundy

I have been involved in a programme of research called EQUIP (Enhancing the Quality of User Involved Care Planning) funded by the National Institute for Health Research. Following a ground-breaking training course in research methods, I was invited to be a co-applicant and co-investigator on the EQUIP research programme.

The EQUIP research programme was divided into packages called workstreams. Workstream 1 of the programme focused on developing a training resource for mental health professionals. From the outset, I was involved in co-creating focus group and interview topic guides. I then co-facilitated a number of focus groups with stakeholders in Manchester, and conducted interviews with service users, carers, and professionals around Nottinghamshire. I then led work on analysing the service user data-subset. By synthesising all of this data we produced our training package. From questionnaire studies, we also co-produced a new tool to measure involvement in care planning (a Patient Reported Outcome Measure) and an audit tool.

In Workstream 2 we evaluated the training package through a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial. After a ‘train the trainers’ course, I was involved in co-delivering the training intervention on service user/carer involved care planning to community mental health teams around the East Midlands. I led work reviewing the delegate evaluations of each training session. I also assisted Workstream 3 (implementation of the training) by co-facilitating clinical supervision with teams and mapped the organisational context of care planning within one local Trust.

For Workstream 4 (training dissemination) I have co-delivered the training to other Trusts who have been ‘willing adopters’. My paper has been turned into an animation and I have contributed a book-chapter to our forthcoming research methods book. Finally, I’ve also helped produce a video outlining something of our co-production model.

Being involved in EQUIP has given me so many research skills, and I now feel that I’m a well-rounded service user researcher!

About the Author

Andrew Grundy is a mental health service user/researcher. He is currently working as a postgraduate student in the School of Health Sciences, University of Nottingham. His PhD will explore service user perspectives and experiences of ‘risk’ and its ‘assessment’ and ‘management’ in an acute psychiatric setting. Andrew tweets about all things mental health: @acgrundy.
Would you like to contribute to Your Experiences in Research?

We invite people with lived experience of mental health problems to either:

- Write a short article (no more than 300 words) by hand or on the computer (we can transcribe handwritten pieces into computerised text for you if required)
- Produce a drawing or piece of art by hand or computer

The content must be on the topic of mental health research or your experience of involvement in mental health research, for example working on a lived experience advisory panel or patient advisory group.

We would love to see some of your creative flair and hope that the brief we have provided may give you some ideas. It is completely optional if you would like us to include your name with your work in the bulletin, or if you would like it to be anonymous.

If you would like to produce some content or have any questions, please contact Tillie Cryer by email: tilliecryer@mcpin.org, or phone 020 7922 7877. We will be happy to discuss what you plan to produce and if you would like it to be anonymous. We can also arrange for how you would like to send us your content (either by email or post). A £20 Amazon voucher will be offered to you as a thank you for your contribution.
I suffered severe post-natal depression after the birth of my son. This ended my career as a teacher and started a period of nearly twenty years as a service user of mental health services. However, being encouraged to get involved in service user and carer activities helped me back into the world. Involvement contributed to my regaining a positive sense of myself as someone who had something to offer. Over the past 20 years, I have been involved as an: activist (challenging service provision and policy); a contributor to the discussion in various Trust meetings; Chair of my local MIND; a peer supporter; service user and carer involvement co-ordinator in adult mental health (Southern Health); a researcher; an educator and trainer; an independent service user consultant; and now in my current role at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust where I have two distinct but complementary roles. My involvement journey has gone from one side of the fence to the other – i.e. from the role of poacher (where as a challenger of the system, I was invited to meetings and asked to engage in ways determined by others) to gamekeeper (part of the system). I am now in a position to set the PPI agenda and decide on strategic goals. Interestingly though, in my wider role within the management structure of research & development, I can still be the challenging poacher!

Within my role as Lead for Service User and Carer in Involvement in Research & Development, I lead a team of three PPI co-ordinators who organise LEAPs (Lived Experience Advisory Panel) for individual research projects and research theme groups (e.g. dementia, psychosis, mood and anxiety and AIR). This involves consulting with researchers, overseeing and support all service user and carer involvement in research and development. We also have a LEAF (Lived Experience Advisory Forum) which provides the strategic overview for Involvement across all R&D activities. I am passionate about PPI being meaningful and more inclusive and diverse, and we are developing a new recruitment strategy. I believe that PPI should offer the opportunity for regaining confidence, utilising an individual’s experience, skills and interests and by providing training to upskill those who wish to get involved. I also expect PPI and researchers to work collaboratively. Truly co-produced research leads to studies that are both enriched and more likely to be translated into practice.

Developing on-going relationships is very important, including having conversations with people who do ‘involvement’ differently [e.g. engage and consult]. It is important to: challenge the rhetoric, models, practice and language of PPI and co-production; and to reflect on what we actually do and what difference it makes. My post is part-funded by McPin. I am keen to contribute to the national service user and carer research and PPI agenda.

My other role as the AIR theme lead utilises both my PPI role and my own research interests. I recently completed my PhD in personal narrative development and mental health recovery. Using Participatory Action Research, my co-researchers (all service users) developed an 8 week peer-led
developing a personal narrative workshop programme. I will pilot this programme in the near future.

The following areas of research can be supported within the AIR theme:

- Mental health recovery research
- Research in mental health service provision that involves service users, carers, peers and staff (e.g. ENRICH and RECOLLECT)
- Research where service users, carers, peers and staff are the researchers
- Research on involvement and the impact of involvement

I welcome the opportunity to talk to researchers (and would-be researchers) about their ideas, questions and concerns, please email: sam.robertson@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk

We are holding an AIR Conference: Exploring Involvement, Research and Working Together on Tuesday 6th November 2018. Sign up by clicking here.

**About the Author**

Dr Sam Robertson is the Lead Service User and Carer in Involvement in Research & Development and AIR Theme Lead (Approaches to Involvement and Recovery) at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.
Mental Health & Research in the News

The following articles include edited content. The original material can be found using the links provided. The summaries were prepared by Tillie Cryer.

The Mental Elf

In each bulletin, we pick one of The Mental Elf research article reviews to highlight in the bulletin. In this issue, we highlight:

The Mental Elf recently reported on a study investigating whether nature-based therapies are as effective as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for treatment of stress-related illnesses. Nature-based (or nature-assisted) therapies, are therapies which incorporate plants, natural materials, and/or outdoor environments, without any therapeutic involvement of animals or other living creatures (Annerstedt and Wahrborg, 2011).

The study was conducted in Denmark and recruited 84 participants with diagnoses of acute stress reactions, PTSD, adjustment disorders and other reactions to severe stress to take part in a trial. Participants received either a 10 week programme of nature-based therapies (three sessions per week of three hours of group therapy with individual therapeutic conversations whilst outdoors, gardening activities, mindfulness, and relaxation); or 10 sessions of individual CBT for stress-related illnesses (delivered as one hour of individual therapy per week). The researchers measured whether the mental health status of the participants improved after treatment, and at 3, 6, and 12 months follow-up; and whether there were significant differences in mental health improvement between the two different treatment groups.

It was found that there was significant improvement in perceived wellbeing and significant decrease in ‘burnout’ in both the people who received the nature-based therapy and the CBT therapy. But, there was not any significant difference between the two treatment groups. The researchers concluded that the form of nature-based therapy used in the trial may be as effective as CBT for acute stress reactions, PTSD and adjustment disorders.

- Read the abstract for the paper by clicking here.
- Read the Mental Elf Blog by clicking here.
- To read more of The Mental Elf research reviews, please click here.
New Editorial: Patients’ Roles and Rights in Research

*The BMJ* have recently published an editorial on patient’s roles and rights in research written by Paul Wicks, Vice President of Patient Innovation, (*PatientsLikeMe*), Tessa Richards, Patient Partnership Editor, (*The BMJ*), Simon Denegri, National Director for Patients, Carers and the Public (*NIHR*) and Fiona Godlee, Editor in Chief (*The BMJ*). The Editorial discusses how full partnership with patients is essential to any modern research. People from the BMJ’s own patient panel have commented on this editorial.

To read the editorial, please [click here](#).

“Giving real power to patients and those who care for them will entail shaking up existing research hierarchies, not merely smoothing out a few bumps in current practice. Senior researchers should lead by example and embrace this essential culture change.”
Our new and developing projects

In 2016-7, the McPin Foundation was involved in developing new proposals to secure funding and start new research projects. We raised £450,000 in project grants.

- We developed and sought funding for 32 projects.
- We secured funding and set up of 17 of these projects.
- We have completed 9 projects.

Our involvement panels

We continue to grow the number of Lived Experience Advisory Panels (LEAPs) we set up with universities. These are panels made up of people with relevant expertise from experience linked to the research topic being studied.

- April 2013
- April 2014
- April 2015
- April 2016
- April 2017

Our partners and projects

In 2016-7 we worked on 35 projects, of which 30 included direct peer involvement. Projects were delivered with 25 different partners and we were commissioned by 21 organisations to undertake research and evaluation activities for them. We worked with:

- 12 public sector organisations including Health England, South London and Middlesbrough County Council

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