

## Public involvement in the Psychosis Health Integration Team

The **Psychosis Health Integration Team (HIT)** is a team of people who experience psychosis, those close to them, academics, mental health professionals, commissioners, service providers and other experts. We are working together to improve the support, treatment, services and lives of people with psychosis in the Bristol area.

There are many different perspectives about psychosis, a term that encapsulates many different human experiences - from voice hearing to other unusual beliefs. From the start, the Psychosis HIT has been keen to involve service users and carers, as well as members of the public, in everything we do, because we feel it is the only way to improve understanding.

We've done this in three main ways:

- Recruiting peer directors to our HIT leadership
- Hosting a service user and carer forum
- Media appearances and the 'Psychosis on Screen' film season

### Peer Directors

Our HIT is led by Dr Sarah Sullivan<sup>1</sup>, Dr Simon Downer<sup>2</sup>, Dr Martin Jones<sup>3</sup> and James Robinson & Martha Sneyd – our peer directors.

The peer directors provide the crucial perspective of people with lived experience of psychosis within the leadership team. In particular, they:

- Oversee and support (together with the other directors) a user and carer forum (a larger cohort of users and carers that are involved in the HIT).
- Draft, respond to and comment on written materials for the HIT (e.g. creating leaflets for user and carer forum including proposals for research or service development).
- Promote the work of the HIT to others.
- Provide support to public contributors/members as appropriate.

To date, the involvement of peer directors has already made our written communications more sensitive to the perspective of people with lived experience of psychosis. Furthermore, peer directors have increased the number of service users and carers that are interested and engaged in the work of the HIT. Peer Directors contribute actively to our leadership discussions, and have influenced our approach to sign-posting support for people who approach the HIT. Our peer directors will now build on this success to establish a regular programme of user and carer meetings in 2017.

### User and carer forum

We held an initial event on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015 to guide the development of the HIT. This made clear that the following were priorities for people who experience psychosis and those close to them:

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<sup>2</sup> Consultant Psychiatrist, Bristol Mental Health (Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership) and Honorary Clinical Lecturer, Centre for Academic Mental Health, University of Bristol

<sup>3</sup> Chair, Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group

- access to more timely and appropriate care during a mental health crisis;
- better engagement with service users' networks (families, friends and carers);
- better engagement with the voluntary sector;
- engagement with school teaching staff and students to inform them about psychosis and the signs of an emerging psychotic crisis.

Our HIT work-streams directly address these concerns, bringing research and professional expertise to issues such as crisis care, engaging people's networks and improving employment opportunities. We now have 34 people signed up to our user and carer forum and through our peer directors will continue to grow this number and get feedback across a broad range of areas.

### Media appearances and Psychosis on Screen

HIT Directors and members have taken opportunities to explain our work and engage people on the subject of psychosis in a variety of ways. For example, since forming the HIT, we've spoken on the radio several times about our work:

- 13 June: Simon Downer and Conor McCormack interviewed on [BBC Radio Bristol by Emma Britton \(54:40\)](#)
- 23 June: Conor McCormack and Don Swift from the Bristol Hearing Voices Network interviewed on [BBC Radio Bristol by John Darvall \(2:10:50\)](#)
- 2 July: Sarah Sullivan and Simon Downer interviewed on [BBC Radio Bristol by Dr Phil Hammond \(9:50\)](#)
- 13 December: Sarah Sullivan interviewed on [Bristol Community FM](#)

Our major engagement activity so far has been the [Psychosis on Screen Film Season](#). Psychosis on Screen was a season of three contemporary films depicting various experiences of psychosis. Watershed and Bristol Health Partners put together this season to increase awareness of psychosis and to launch the Psychosis HIT. In June 2016, over 300 people attended three films and accompanying events.

The season was successful in raising the profile of the HIT and increasing understanding about psychosis. A selection of comments from the season is provided below:

Mark Cosgrove, Watershed's Cinema Curator, said:

*"We are delighted to have had such strong audience numbers here at Watershed for this important season. Cinema lends itself to exploring and making accessible many challenging issues and this was a perfect example of how film can help to demystify people's different experiences. It's great to hear how the films really resonated with our audiences too."*

Attendees were asked what they learned about psychosis. Responses included:

*"[I learned] that the experience of hearing voices can be enriching and can be a big part of individuals' identity and reflect their spiritual and world view. I have been very focused on helping people in their recovery from a medical perspective and less so in listening to and respecting their viewpoint."*

*"It could be different for every individual. A person is not their behaviour."*

You can read the [full report from the season \(PDF\)](#).