



The Winding Road Project

Introduction

In 2019 The SUN Network, with Rethink Carer Support, will be beginning a major new project to understand the experience of people with mental health challenges as they move in and out of services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Many people and their families have told us that they are often as much “service seekers” as “service users”. We know that there many good mental health services – both in the NHS and the voluntary sector – but there are many gaps between them or barriers to accessing them.

This project will find out about the experiences of individuals and families over time as they move in and out of services. It will provide a completely new perspective on people’s experiences of living with mental health conditions locally. And it will inform key commissioning decisions in the years to come.

Method

Initial discussions with people with mental health issues and their families mean that our approach will be as follows:

- Project staff will check in with a group of adults with mental issues (25 to 40 in number) and carers (15 to 30 in number) three times over a period of one year
- A standard semi-structured interview will take place each time with the main aim being to describe fully for each person how they are feeling in terms of their mental wellbeing and what support and treatment they are getting for their mental health issues at that particular time (support being defined to include non – mental health services)
- All interviews will be conducted by people with lived experience of mental health issues as an individual or carer or both
- Reports, which will include quantitative and qualitative elements, will be completed after one year and presented to participants and key decision-makers especially commissioners

Key Elements

The distinctive features of this project are as follows:

- It will be service user and carer led from start to finish
- It will truly reflect “life as it is lived” for local people, rather than assuming that those with the greatest mental health needs receive the most support
- It will be longitudinal, reflecting the idea of a recovery journey

- It will be equally interested in the different perspectives of people with mental health issues and carers, recognising that their needs and expectations may vary
- It will not be research, but it will go a long way to answer urgent questions about to what extent the current mental health system meets individual needs, also opening up further lines of enquiry

What's In It For Me?

We are looking for as wide a range as possible of people with mental health issues and carers to join us in this exciting new project.

Your commitment will be:

- To be interviewed three times over one year
- To share your experience fully and accurately

Our commitment will be:

- To support you to participate fully, paying attention to any concerns that may arise for you during the project
- To undertake the project professionally, clarifying any issues about confidentiality and anonymity with you from the start
- To offer you the chance to get involved in other aspects of the work such as doing presentations and promoting it to others – providing support and training as necessary
- To make sure no-one is out of pocket because of their involvement

Finally

We think this is an important chance to do something that is worthwhile and influential, really making a difference to mental health services locally. We know from lots of projects that speaking up about our experiences can be therapeutic and even fun!

We are recruiting now. If you want to know more, please contact our friendly team at The SUN Network at enquiries@sunnetwork.org.uk or 07712 358172 (text or call) or Jonathan Wells jfgwells57@gmail.com

