

We are pleased to introduce Lorrain McPherson (interview on back page) as MHRN PPI Administrator providing admin support for both FACTOR and Service Users in Research. Lorrain will be the main PPI telephone contact within the Coordinating Centre.

We now have 160 carers involved with FACTOR. To enable us to provide updates and calls for involvement quickly we will be having our database updated later this year. Involvement takes many forms and we recognise that some carers find it difficult to take up involvement opportunities because of their caring commitments but still wish to be kept informed on FACTOR's progress. In March the MHRN ran the first PPI Conference; more than 160 people attended which included a high percentage of carers. Talks from the day are currently available via the MHRN website <http://www.mhrn.info/index/ppi/carer-involvement/events.html>

Involvement news

Since the last update there have been many excellent examples of carer involvement with mental health research. Here is a selection:

Ongoing research

IMPACT is a 5-year programme of research looking at physical health and substance use in people with psychosis. Two carers attend IMPACT team meetings and our monthly Carer Reference Group works on the programme. We have edited the following:

- Newsletter for participants
- Manual for care coordinators
- Better Health Handbook for participants and care coordinators

One issue we regularly discuss with the team is how people might be motivated to change to healthier lifestyles. A Carer Group has now been introduced into the randomised controlled study so that relatives will know more and can encourage their family member to take part.

REFOCUS is a study of recovery. We have a carer on the Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) being run by Rethink.

Consultations on proposed research.

Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team (led by Dr Sonia Johnson). 6 carers attended and provided information on working in people's homes.

Photovoice (led by Deborah Chinn) will record Black people's experience of mental health settings via photographs and written

commentaries. The project will be using an action research methodology meaning that the researchers will respond to how the study works in practice.

Borderline personality disorder study

Carers advised on the methods of recruiting people to this study. They suggested recruitment via A&E departments where people admitted with overdose are treated; it is possible that controls could be recruited from the same setting.

Clinical Research Groups (CRGs)

These are groups set up to develop and attract funding for research projects. FACTOR has been significantly involved in 3 of these groups.

SUCCESS (Service users' experience of secure settings—this CRG finished recently) FACTOR involved two forensic carers in the CRG.

Carer-themed CRG was established in 2009. The coordinator of this CRG consults the two carer representatives about research proposals both in the meetings and outside meetings.

Autism CRG We have a carer who advises the group on issues relating to autism spectrum disorder.

Conference presentations

See over for an article on a FACTOR group presentation at the London Showcase conference. We are pleased to inform readers that Geraldine and 3 carers will be presenting at the INVOLVE Conference in November.

Introducing Lorrain McPherson

What made you apply for this post? *I decided the next job I applied for had to be challenging, versatile and offers training opportunities to allow me to progress and develop to my full potential. This job covers everything I was looking for.*

Was there any particular reason you wanted to work with carers? *I didn't know much about the job role until I started working here; I don't think you fully understand what the role entails until you do it.*

How are you finding the job? *I'm really enjoying the job, in the 5 months I've been here, I've learned so much, at times it can be demanding but every day is different and time passes quickly. I*

enjoy the interaction with service users and carers at meetings.

Is there anything you find difficult? *Taking minutes at meetings is difficult as I have no knowledge about the topics. Developing an understanding of how to support service users and carers in challenging situations to provide the best service is something I am developing.*

What would you like to achieve in the next year? *To be more confident within the role, develop my skills/experiences, take on more responsibilities and develop the job role the way I want it to be.*

The Website

Please take a look at the PPI pages of the MHRN website www.mhrn.info we have been adding new information and would like to know your views on our content. We recently added our payment documents—this work was specially commissioned and provides comprehensive information on payments and the benefits system.

Carers speak at the London Showcase Conference

The North and South London Hubs of the MHRN held a Showcase Conference at the Russell Hotel, Bloomsbury. FACTOR's presentation was scheduled last in the afternoon. Geraldine's PowerPoint presentation was followed by Philippa Lowe and Josie Forshaw speaking about the group. They said that members had found it rewarding being able to make a difference and give something back. Ruth Hennem, another group member, spoke about her work on the Clinical Research Group developing research on carers issues. People in the audience said they were particularly interested to hear from carers and wanted to hear more. After a late finish to our talk we were invited down to the bar to celebrate our first conference presentation!

What FACTOR does

FACTOR was set up in April 2007 to support NIHR MHRN to improve the quality of mental health research through promoting and supporting carer involvement in roles across the network. We involve individual carers in research projects and we run a Carer Reference Group which offers a source of knowledge on the daily lives of people affected by mental health problems. This group is based in London and another group is being set up in Birmingham.

Ways in which we can help includes the following.

- Talking through proposals or ongoing studies with researchers.
- In depth knowledge of practical issues for service users.
- Advising on ways of reaching potential research participants.
- Editing written information to make it more readable and attractive to people participating in research.

How to contact us



Lorrain McPherson, Administrator
0207 848 0644
mhrnppi@kcl.ac.uk

Geraldine Mason, Coordinator
0207 848 0643
geraldine.mason@kcl.ac.uk

Freepost RSCK-GSTZ-TJYY
FACTOR, Institute of Psychiatry,
PO77
16 De Crespigny Park
London SE5 8AF