

Awards for Learning, Development and Research

Institute of Social Psychiatry Award 2021

Toni King May

The Institute of Social Psychiatry Award in 2021 was awarded to Toni King to embed coproduction in her part-time Doctoral research entitled: Studying Power in Conversations after Self harm. It aims to explore the experiences of power between practitioners and service users in mental health services, and to explore how to overcome barriers to building a shared approach. This research question required a participatory methodology. The £2000 Award was used to employ two Lived Experience Research Advisors (LERA). This report focuses on progress in relation to coproduction.

Aim

In keeping with the research question, the design and approach aimed to recognise the value of different forms of knowledge and sought to minimise the power imbalances within the research. Establishing a coproduced approach and adopting a 'pay it forward approach' to sharing learning from this experience was important.

Progress

The intended research site's Patient Public Involvement team participated in supporting the employment of the two Lived Experience Research Advisors. This included the development of role descriptions, advertising, recruitment, payment processes, responsibilities for wellbeing, supervision, and involvement in research opportunities beyond this employment contract. As a result, two Lived Experience Research Advisors were employed in June 2021.

The Award confirmation arrived earlier in the research process than anticipated (i.e., pre-ethical approval). However, this benefitted both the research design and application for ethical approval. The impact included the Lived Experience Research Advisors leading the development of all participant-facing materials ensuring acceptability for the audience and reduction of barriers created by the researcher's academic or clinical stance. This combined knowledge enabled creation of a study website and a refined recruitment approach through greater understanding of the study site.

A collaborative approach to the research design strengthened our courage to challenge 'the norm.' Examples which have been explored during local ethics processes and retained so far include participant choice to use their own name if they wish to have their contribution to new knowledge recognised, and to hold heterogeneous focus groups of staff and people who access services. We have shared our learning at RCOT Annual Conference 2021 and co-presented at the International Resilience Revolution Conference 2022.

Next Steps

Following ethical approval, we move to data collection with cofacilitated focus groups, co-analysed critical discourse analysis and shared dissemination. This will be part funded by the remaining funds from the ISPA Award. A separate application for top up funding has already been applied for, to secure this whole ambition. It is anticipated this research approach will contribute to our profession's research identity as one which expects meaningful lived-experience engagement. This is in addition to primary research aims of increasing understanding of how power is experienced, and what influences this. These findings will have relevance for staff and people accessing services by increasing understanding of what influences power and in turn enabling consideration of how to enable improved experience and outcomes.