



ETHNIC INEQUALITIES • SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS • MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE

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NEWS RELEASE

New national initiative calls for 'fresh science' and the prioritisation of lived experience narratives to transform ethnic inequalities in mental health services

A new national initiative called for collaboration and far-reaching change in the use of mental health science and lived experience narratives, welcomed by David Lammy MP, at its launch last night (Wednesday 22 November 2017).

The Synergi Collaborative Centre, a five year programme funded by Lankelly Chase, launched a briefing paper which provides the most up to date analyses on ethnic inequalities in UK mental health systems, looking at incidence, prevalence and pathways to care.

According to a synthesis of 28 studies, Black people are nearly three and a half times more likely to than White people to be detained, yet 11 studies suggest they are only two-thirds as likely to have a GP involved in their pathways to care. Other studies indicate that a diagnosis of mood disorder is between three and four times more likely in Black Caribbean and Black African people than White people.

Kamaldeep Bhui, Professor of Cultural Psychiatry & Epidemiology at Queen Mary University of London and Director of the Synergi Collaborative Centre, said: "This is a problem that has existed for decades. And it is not just over-representation in services, particularly of young black men, but also the under-representation of their voices in attempts to understand and address the experience of mental illness. We will use scientific approaches to make progress. We will air evidence from the full range of parties involved in these issues, but we will do so in a way that puts the experiences of those with severe mental illness centre stage."

David Lammy, MP for Tottenham and author of the government-backed independent review of the treatment of, and outcomes for, BAME individuals in the Criminal Justice System, said: "We desperately need to step up. We have been talking about mental health for years and it is getting worse. Which is why my hopes for the Synergi Collaborative Centre are big hopes. There is a real need at this point to draw on community expertise to advocate, speak up and offer innovation and solutions, and to bring them into the mainstream. We have the solutions, and we need the system to hear and understand them."

PROJECT PARTNERS



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Among the centre's objectives is to collate, interpret and communicate knowledge on ethnic inequalities in mental health, and how this relates to severe and multiple disadvantage. It will also become a focal point for action, leading to systems change, prioritise lived experience narratives, and gather a full range of stakeholders through models of co-production, and co-curation of knowledge, to develop and implement solutions.

Sarah Yiannoullou, Managing Director of National Survivor User Network (NSUN), said: "The launch of the Synergi Collaborative Centre could be the single most significant black and minority ethnic mental health initiative since the Delivering Race Equality programme. If the narratives and experiences of people are truly listened to, heard and positively acted upon, then the 'conscious and unconscious bias' which underlies what we now commonly refer to as 'institutional racism' will start to change. The gap between the rhetoric and reality and the continued inequality must be eradicated."

Kathleen, who is a mental health survivor and is studying for a degree in Community Development and Leadership, said. "The Synergi Collaborative Centre should have been introduced years ago. When I was living in a hostel, I was around people who, like me, were in mental distress. They were taken into hospital, medicated and are now worse than they were before they went in. It hurts because it feels like there has been no change in how services are run or in our experiences as people of colour."

It was also announced that The Synergi Network will be launched in February 2018. The network will meet six times a year and is open to all interested parties, including members of the public, and will provide a thinking space to inform, share ideas, learning and solutions.

Ends

Media contact

For more information about the Synergi Collaborative Centre, and if you have any media interview requests, contact Joy Francis. Email: joy@synergicollaborativecentre.co.uk
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Official hashtag: #SynergiStories

Notes to editors





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Kathleen's story
(For Kathleen's full story, see attached document.)

The briefing paper cited in the release is called: Ethnic Inequalities in UK Mental Health Systems. Synergi Collaborative Centre Briefing: November 2017 (see attached).

Project background:

Queen Mary University of London (Project Lead), the University of Manchester and Words of Colour Productions were successful in tendering for an award of £1,245,000 over five years from Lankelly Chase. They will establish a centre of excellence on ethnic inequalities, severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage. Lankelly Chase wants to foster a deeper collective understanding of the nature and extent of the relationship between ethnicity and severe and multiple disadvantage as ethnic minority people experience disproportionate levels of poverty and structural disadvantage, and discrimination within systems.

The Synergi Collaborative Centre (synergicollaborativecentre.co.uk) is a national initiative, to reframe, rethink and transform the realities of ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage. Taking a collaborative approach, the centre aims to use the principles of co-production of knowledge and a creative mix of robust research methods. The centre will work closely with commissioners, policymakers and politicians, as well as public service providers, citizens and those experiencing mental distress, to create and deliver a vision to help eradicate ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness and their fundamental causes.

Lankelly Chase (lankellychase.org.uk) is an independent foundation working in partnership with people across the UK to change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage. Originally formed in 1962, Lankelly Chase's work is now focused on creating an environment where people have the skills, motivation and freedom to help create a system that effectively responds to the interlocking nature of severe disadvantages, such as homelessness, drug misuse, violence and abuse, extreme poverty and mental ill health. Lankelly Chase is driven by a belief that people are resourceful and have strengths, and that collectively we can find solutions and create a fairer society where we are all able to thrive.

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