

## NIHR Three Research Schools - Seminar Series

### **Developing research priority areas to improve treatment pathways and outcomes for people with co-occurring mental health problems and alcohol use disorders**

23 January 2023

#### **Speaker**

Laura Goodwin, University of Lancaster & Phil Parkes, public contributor (Expert Citizens)

#### **Summary**

In the presentation we will discuss the outcomes of two workshops which involved people with lived experience of co-occurring mental health and alcohol use disorders and public and third sector professionals. We will provide a summary of the findings, which includes i) an overview of the positives and negatives of the four different treatment pathways offered to this group and ii) the development of a top 10 list of research priority areas.

#### **Speaker biographies**

Laura Goodwin is a Senior Lecturer in Mental Health at Lancaster University. She is affiliated to the Liverpool and Lancaster Universities Collaboration for Public Health Research in the NIHR School for Public Health Research. Her research focuses on the comorbidity of mental health and alcohol use disorders. Laura won funding from the 3-schools programme to run a workshop with professionals and members of the public to identify and develop research priority areas to improve treatment pathways and outcomes for people with co-occurring mental health problems and alcohol use disorders.

Phil Parkes is Volunteer Coordinator for Expert Citizens ([Home - Expert Citizens](#)), a community interest company (CIC) built by and for people with lived experience. He worked with Laura in the workshops and is co-investigator on the programme development grant that was co-developed from that work.

#### **Seminar series editor commentary and highlights**

Laura and Phil's presentation takes us closer to the beginning of the public involvement in research journey. The workshops permitted exploration of the ways that mental ill-health and harmful alcohol use can be a barrier to accessing services, with the different treatment pathways available to people in this situation bringing both advantages and disadvantages. Despite the breadth of issues identified in the first workshop, they worked with stakeholders to prioritise a series of research questions in this area. Moreover, they produced a series of cartoon-style illustrations of the pros and cons suitable for dissemination across public, patient and professional networks. The budget included funds to pay a professional company to produce the artwork, helping to bring the messages to life in accessible, bitesize and engaging way.

One highlight of the presentation was Phil's summary of stakeholders' positive and negative observations of the different treatment pathways. Phil's slides were accompanied by the cartoons described above, but Phil also offered poignant reflections using his own lived

experience. In doing so, Phil achieved several things: he reminded us that the issues being presented in this academic setting are not abstract ideas but real experiences; his reflections also added to the authenticity of the issues described, giving them weight and increasing their impact.

Laura and Phil are to be congratulated on winning a programme development grant to further develop research in this area. The 3-schools programme funded these workshops with a view to enabling researchers and the public to co-produce research questions and subsequently apply for research funding together. This early development work and the time required to sufficiently build relationships and trust between researchers and the public to enable them to develop ideas and priorities and ways to execute these is fundamental to undertaking co-production. It is especially important when working with groups who may be distrustful of services or researchers, given their experiences of being unable to access some services, as described in the presentation.

### **References and resources**

Paper on the co-occurrence of mental health and alcohol use disorders by Puddephatt and colleagues:

[Associations of alcohol use, mental health and socioeconomic status in England: Findings from a representative population survey - ScienceDirect](#)

Guidance on better care for people with co-occurring problems by Public Health England:

People with co-occurring conditions: commission and provide services - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Guidance from the James Lind Alliance on priority setting:

[About Priority Setting Partnerships | James Lind Alliance \(nih.ac.uk\)](#)

### **Links:**

- [Download the presentation slides \(.pdf\)](#)
- [Link to YouTube Recording](#)