

# Research strategy 2016-2020



Mental Health  
Foundation

## Preamble

The Mental Health Foundation's Strategy 'A New Way Forward' (2015-2020) directs our research, policy and programmatic work to progress Mental Health for All. Mental health problems cost the UK economy an estimated £70-100 billion each year. Yet public spending is focussed almost entirely on coping with crisis, with only insignificant investment in prevention. Our Strategy sets out the case for a fresh emphasis on prevention including understanding the causation and development of mental health problems, and the patterns of risks and prevalence across different individuals and groups. We recognise that the factors impacting mental health are complex, and that our social and physical environment are key determinants. The answers to public mental health questions lie in a range of domains and require the use of diverse methods. Therefore, we undertake participatory research that values the contributions of all members of society; and draws on the academic and practice knowledge of a wide range of disciplines. This prevention revolution realises our charitable objects, which were written at our establishment in 1949, by focussing on addressing inequalities including poverty. Our ambition is to create a movement for public mental health characterised by equity and human rights. We work across the life course and have developed expertise in working with groups who experience highest risk including people with dementia, refugees and people with learning disability as well as mental health.

As a research charity we advocate placing individual's and communities' lived experience, and those who care about them, at the heart of what we do and champion their leadership in the development of high quality research. We promote the distinctive contribution of voluntary sector research organisations to the production and utilisation of knowledge. Our commitment to collaborative and collective work includes: community, national, UK and international (European and global) partnerships. With our partners we advocate for investment in mental health research in recognition of the lack of equity in current funding and the significant gaps in knowledge.

The vision for the Research Strategy is to generate knowledge that creates substantial impact. We are committed to creating and sharing knowledge that: empowers people to reduce risks, and increase resilience and positive mental health; innovates services; and supports advocacy for changes in policy, investment and practice.



This will be informed by a dynamic relationship between the Foundation's research, programme and policy work in order that our research agenda is current and credible, and contributes to individual, community and societal change.

'A New Way Forward' and the Research Strategy will be achieved by recognising and valuing the excellence and passion of research staff within the Foundation.



# Pillars



## **Research-based Knowledge Production, *We will***

- Deliver high quality research in line with the Foundation's ethos;
- Provide leadership in setting the agenda in public mental health research;
- Pro-actively influence the funding agenda in order to make research relevant, available and accessible to marginalised and less powerful groups so that, together, we can use it to create change;
- Undertaking original research in line with the Foundation's strategic direction, targeting work at those in greatest need, on areas where there are significant knowledge gaps and undertaking studies that will make the greatest difference to people's lives; and
- Establishing peer / citizen mental health research centre(s) of excellence.

## **Research-based Knowledge Utilisation, *We will***

- Set the agenda and build the evidence base for Mental Health in All Policies;
- Underpin development programme innovation with evidence and evaluate delivery;
- Support evidence informed communications and fundraising; and
- Use research findings to give people a voice.

## **Contributing to Research Discourse, *We will***

- Interrogate the character and construction of evidence; and
- Develop and advance a methodology of critical public mental health research articulated in our research standpoint.



## **Building Organisational Capacity, *We will***

- View experience of mental health problems and inequality as an asset for team members;
- Value, build and recognise the skills and expertise of the research team ensuring that the Foundation is an employer of choice;
- Strengthen collaboration between researchers and colleagues across the Foundation;
- Build research literacy across the Foundation;
- Develop leading fellowship, internship, volunteering and student programmes; and
- Give researchers the tools to do their jobs including finance, human resource and ICT systems.

## **Internal and External Partnership Working, *We will***

- Build relationships with key partners across the UK and internationally (European & global);
- Work collectively in a principled manner with the Foundation's Communities of Inquiry, Practice and Experience and the wider public in order to contribute to the public mental health movement and progress equality;
- Recognise the power relationships within research and organisations' culture and work to equalise these; and
- Build the Foundation's reputation as the UK's leading mental health research organisation.



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