

How do mental health workers make decisions about risk? An invitation to service users and to carers

Mental health workers make judgements every day about risk. But even though all clinicians have been trained in risk assessment, we know surprisingly little about how they make these judgements in practice, how these might vary between individuals and teams and, most importantly, how they determine the clinical decisions they go on to make (for example, about admission to hospital). If we can improve our understanding about how clinicians make these complex judgements, I believe we will be in a better position to improve clinical practice, safety and outcomes for users of mental health services.

My name is Martin Stefan. I have been a Consultant Psychiatrist in Cambridge for the last 12 years, working on Friends ward in Fulbourn Hospital, and more recently full time with the Crisis Team in Cambridge and South Cambs. I am putting together a project about the assessment of suicide risk, to try and better understand the factors that influence the judgements and decisions we make as mental health workers, with the goal (of course) of improving them.

I am certain that the involvement of people who have experience of mental health services, either as carers or as service users, will help make this a better project. Therefore, in the first instance, I will be organising an open meeting to outline my ideas in a little more detail and to seek some initial advice. Following on from this, I would like to put together a small panel, perhaps of two or three individuals, to take things forward. Naturally, if you become involved you will be paid for your contribution, and expenses will be reimbursed.

The first meeting is provisionally arranged for 2pm on Monday 1st November at Douglas House in Cambridge:

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If you feel this project may be of interest, please leave a message for me with Melanie de Smith at CLAHRC on 01223 746007 or melanie.desmith@cpft.nhs.uk and I will get back to you with further details.