

Press Release

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PR 736

13 October 2015

For Immediate Release

Special event aims to break down cultural barriers

The results of an innovative project examining the experiences black and ethnic minority communities have using mental health services in Suffolk will be showcased at a special event later this month.

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) and Healthwatch Suffolk have organised a half-day conference - 'Inspiring progress in improving mental health for BME communities' - to explain more about the initiative, which has been designed to increase understanding of the issues faced by the county's diverse communities.

It follows the Trust's engagement work called 'Open Mind' in collaboration with the Caribbean and African Community Health Support Forum in September 2014. This led Healthwatch Suffolk to run a survey looking at problems BME communities may encounter when accessing mental health services. These may include cultural barriers and previous experiences, which may result in some BME communities being less likely to engage with services, which could lead to social isolation and mental ill health.

Ravi Seenan, Equalities and Engagement Manager with NSFT, said: "There are clear inequality issues among groups of people within the community we serve and the BME group appears to be one of the most disadvantaged when it comes to

accessing and using our services.

“Therefore, we are pleased to be able to work with Healthwatch Suffolk and the local communities to look at how to improve on the way we deliver our services.

“The results of the project will be used to help improve and shape services in the future so that everyone has the same access to high quality services and the opportunity to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

“We will share the findings of this report with our partner organisations including voluntary and statutory, staff members as well as our service users and carers, so that any issues can be addressed and appropriate cultural adaptations made to services.”

At the event, which takes place in Ipswich on 29 October, speakers will explain more about the projects and key findings from the survey. A film will also be shown giving the perspective of service users, while Alison Armstrong, NSFT’s Director of Operations in Suffolk, will explain the next steps and how we aim to take the findings forward.

Tony Rollo, Chair of Healthwatch, said: “We have been really pleased with the response received to this survey. Early results contain a wealth of data that we hope the Trust will use to improve the experience of all communities accessing mental health services in Norfolk and Suffolk. I would like to thank everyone who has helped us with this extensive project including the service users and those who took part to share their story with us on video. We look forward to supporting NSFT at this important event.”

The conference will take place at the Ip-city Centre in Bath Street, Ipswich, on 29 October between 1.30pm and 4.30pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

The results of the Healthwatch survey will be available on NSFT’s website from mid-October at. www.nsft.nhs.uk

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