

## Collective Advocacy Evaluation Report 2021

CAPS carried out an online survey which was open from May to July 2021. This aimed to gather the voices and experiences of the people participating in CAPS collective advocacy, in order to evidence the impact of the service and offer feedback for potential future development. In the survey we asked people questions based on their involvement with CAPS over the last 12 months.

People were informed that responses were anonymous and would be used to help CAPS understand people's experience of projects, and to improve Collective Advocacy at CAPS. We also let people know that anonymised results may be shared with people we work with, and in CAPS reports.

A summary of the responses and what people said is included in the report:

### **Q1. Have you been involved with a CAPS Collective Advocacy group in the past 12 months?**

100% yes

### **Q2. Was it easy to get involved in Collective Advocacy? For example, access to meetings, finding out about the group, contact with CAPS worker or something else?**

All, (100%) of people who took part in the survey agreed that it was easy to get involved with CAPS.

People spoke about staff and group members helping them feel very welcome. There were also comments around excellent and varied communication. People valued that there are different ways of getting involved and that involvement can be flexible to meet individual needs.

'The staff member was very welcoming and friendly and facilitated me joining the group in a way which took both the group and my own feelings into account.'

'CAPS has been very easy to get involved with and I feel very welcomed.'

'There is also a good email circulation, I am well updated about events/opportunities/meetings.'

'Meetings took place using zoom and were well organised and facilitated. Communications with CAPS workers by email, telephone and zoom all good.'

' I had direct access to the coordinator via e-mail and they always replied in a polite and timely manner. Access to meetings were via Zoom meaning I had instant access to the meetings from the comfort of my own home which was great.'

'Most of my information about the group I was involved with came directly from the Group Lead and Coordinator. Information on the website was a little confusing at the time but again this was cleared up by members whom I had direct contact with, and everyone was keen to help.'

We have been using zoom x mostly it works'

'Everybody was so welcoming'

'I'm lucky that I most often have a reliable internet connection. Email has been an excellent way of learning about meetings and keeping in touch.'

### **Q3. Did you have an opportunity to learn about and discuss the aims of the group?**

Nearly 98% of those who responded felt that there was opportunity to learn about and discuss the aims of the group, but others were less certain. People talked about the opportunities to thoroughly discuss matters affecting the group and to explore

ideas and that everyone has an opportunity to have their say/input. They felt that workers explain the aims of the group very clearly to new participants and that there are opportunities to revisit the aims of the group on a regular basis.

We have discussed our Group Agreement to the satisfaction of everyone in the group. We have been lucky to have our own input on the aims and ambitions of the group

'We are always invited to help make decisions for the aims of the group and there is always scope for flexibility and CAPS are very open to new ideas.'

The worker explains the aims and activities of the group very clearly.

'The worker was very good at explaining what the psychosis group did.'

'We revisited the group agreement recently which was useful for this.'



#### Q4. **Were there different ways to make your views known as part of the group?**

Everyone (100%) who took part in the survey agreed that there were different ways to make their views known - Zoom meetings, email, surveys, meetings and groups. Speaking to universities, to professionals and to members of the public through workshops and storytelling were also highlighted

'We can contribute within the group meetings or via email or through a worker.'

'we discussed x came to a consensus x produced the workshops

'I could make my views known either during meetings or via e-mail and during confidential evaluation surveys like this one.

In addition to email I have found the chat function of zoom meetings an excellent way to communicate my views.'

'Regular zoom meetings with the group were good, and although I wasn't able to take part due to other circumstances there were also initiatives to interact with other groups, such as universities, and more general public engagements, such as storytelling.'



'We were from the LEARN group and produced workshops'

#### Q5. Did the group discuss options for the work that they were doing?

Again 100% of people who took part in the survey felt the group discussed options for the work they do.

'I think the MMTAL group has had some challenges due to a worker leaving and two workers taking over but discussion was open and options were discussed for how work was completed.'

'Yes we did We produced workshops Just completed 2 more workshops last week.'

'Lothian Voices always discuss options. I am impressed by this'

'The facilitator has been very flexible and I have been able to be experimental in my approach to the material I use in workshops.'

'Yes, we always discuss options - what people want to do, feasibility and whether people want to change ideas to suit them. I feel CAPS would certainly consider everyone's ideas.'

'Options for the type of work we would like to do, and how best to engage with other groups, were discussed, and both were very useful.'

**Q6. Has being involved with the Collective Advocacy group given you a way to challenge power imbalances?**

79% of people felt that being involved had given them a way of challenging power imbalances, however (21%) were uncertain. Some examples given on ways people had the opportunity to challenge power imbalances were around attendance at the Scottish Cross Parliamentary Group for Mental Health, work groups had been undertaking -such as leaflet writing and Out of Sight Out of Mind exhibition and the Mad Studies course at Queen Margaret University:

'I think that by designing the leaflet for MMTAL and by thinking about the training we can give people using services more of an awareness of how to make their voice heard.'

'It depends on the issue!'

'Don't think so but it helps to suggest some other groups or other info during discussions.'

'Lothian Voices go to the Cross Party Group at the Parliament. We are treated as equals by them.'

'I was overwhelmed when I was invited to speak at the Cross Party Group on the back of something I'd put in chat. Little simple me had the chance to speak truth to power.'

'Regular engagement with others with experiences of psychosis has enabled me to better understand similarities and differences among us. Attendance at QMU Mad Studies course educated me in some key areas to challenge power imbalances, ability to exhibit at OOSOOM, improved structure and support in my day today activities, learning more about peer work and how others approach it, were all useful.'

#### **Q7. Is it easier to raise a shared issue as part of a Collective Advocacy Group, than as an individual?**

72 % of people felt that it was easier to raise an issue with the remainder (28%) uncertain. People commented that they valued the peer support gained indirectly from being involved in CAPS projects and that sharing experiences with others helped them to feel less alone and that being involved felt validating. It was also commented that being part of a collective advocacy group does give you more power to change systems. However, it was noted that this can depend on the issue and that sometimes individual advocacy is more suitable relating to specific individual issues.

'I think individual advocacy is vital for issues relating to treatment and other specifics but in order to change systems being part of a collective has more power.'

'Lothian Voices is all about this.'

'It's so wonderful to discover shared experiences and shared views with other people. It gives you a sense of not being alone with your issues.'

'Yes, with shared experience you feel more justified to raise an issue;

'It is important for obtaining feedback and consolidating my opinion and position before sharing it with wider society.'

**Q8. As a result of being involved do you feel better informed? For example, have you found out any new information, about your rights, or anything else? Would you like to give any examples and/or say anything else about this?**

Again 85% of people responded that they had felt better informed but 15% were uncertain. Many people commented about learning about other groups being helpful - learning from the lived experience of others, working in a peer way, learning more about rights and challenging the system.

Introduction to Mad Studies at QMU was very helpful. Also, interactions with CAPS staff involved in academic work in the area of mental health rights, the Scottish

'I am more aware of networks around personality disorder and the work CAPS is doing to challenge stigma.'

'I've learnt so much from my peers and from facilitators it's unbelievable. I have found out a lot about my rights but also a lot about gaps and cracks in the system which means I could face being in hospital much better in the future.'

'I have learned a lot about other people's experiences, I now see that there are many differences and similarities between my experience and others - this reassures you (not the only one) and also opens up your mind to how different it can be for others.'

'Yes About other groups etc'



**Q9. Did you experience additional benefits to being involved with CAPS Collective Advocacy? For example, increased confidence, new experiences, learning a new skill, forming new relationships, feeling less isolated, and anything else which has been a benefit?**

Everyone (100%) that took part agreed that they had experienced additional benefits to being involved. People spoke about learning transferable skills such as increased confidence and public speaking that they had used in other contexts such as the workplace. People also commented on the strong friendship they had developed through involvement with CAPS.

'All of the above. My involvement with CAPS was also an important factor in my forming a relationship with people at the Critical and Ethical Mental Health group at Adelaide University.'

'More confidence talking about my experience and it is nice meeting new people with similar experiences.'

'All of these - I feel much more confident about my illness. I feel I can cope much better. Zoom has given me an incredible arrangement of new experiences. Having taken part in workshops and storytelling I can definitely testify to having obtained new skills. As for new relationships and feeling less isolated I have made some fabulous new friendships with people I really care about and with whom I can openly share my feelings. May I add that one advantage of zoom meetings has been that I haven't heard malevolent voices which are present in being in the world outside and in physical meetings.'

'new experiences, learning new skills, feeling less isolated'

'I have found attending meetings improves my own mental health. I have also learned from my fellow volunteers and from the skills of the facilitators ...Being part of the group has also helped me professionally. I work in mental health and my experiences in the group have led me to challenge some of my own assumptions and habits when at work.'

I definitely experienced increased confidence. When I was furloughed for a very long time I was worried about losing the ability to communicate due to being isolated for so long and having my professional development stunted, however, CAPS helped me find an avenue to build my confidence with public speaking and grow new business skills which helped when I returned to work. I also felt more comfortable navigating difficult conversations in the workplace having been challenged to tackle difficult conversations relating to mental health and human rights at CAPS.

Felt less isolated because of meetings weekly during 'lockdown' Formed new 'virtual' relationships'

'During the past 18 months CAPS has been a god send in that it has banished isolation for me'



**Q10. Do you have any suggestions on how CAPS Collective Advocacy can be developed?**

Main areas for development seemed to be around developing awareness around human rights and increasing diversity amongst members /participants.

‘I’m looking forward to seeing the new website and other work to promote CAPS and Human Rights from the BAME and LGBTQ+ communication worker as I think this will introduce new diverse members.’

‘I know people consider physical meetings preferable to zoom but I think there are some advantages to zoom.’

‘More of the same, please. I think the idea of developing the website is a good one.’



**Q11. Is there anything else you would like to say about Collective Advocacy at CAPS Independent Advocacy?**

‘It’s just a great organization to be involved with and they really take the time to listen and learn about you so that they can align the opportunities available to your specific interests.’

'It would be great if you could do more for those with autism or learning difficulties.'

Please be careful to protect the key characteristics that have enabled the organisation to be as good as it presently is. My impression is that other groups are taking an interest in learning from the work of CAPS, and there are risks involved in this, such as bigger organisations marketing themselves as providing similar approaches and benefits, without paying attention to the underlying principles that CAPS operates by. Please be careful about becoming associated formally if such practices emerge in the future

### **Next Steps:**

We will continue to work with people in CAPS projects to ensure that groups are able to achieve their aims and continue to welcome people. CAPS will continue to work with groups to recognise and challenge power imbalances and to support people to recognise and uphold their rights.

CAPS will seek further opportunities to develop experience led training and research. We will also work to develop our website and to promote CAPS projects.

Thank you to all of CAPS volunteers and participants.



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