NOMINATION DETAILS

Who is being nominated?

Organisation

Name of organisation:

Birchwood Highland

AWARD DETAILS

Which category are you entering?

Category 6: Making Research & Evidence Real

Please confirm that the work carried out relates to the last two years (up to January 2018):

- Yes

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SSSA Entry Form 2018 :

Q1. Overview: (max 200 words)

European Union migrants moving to Highland experience poorer mental wellness relative to the Highland population with increased incidence of suicide. A Change Network was formed, comprising Birchwood Highland; HUG Action for Mental Health; Highland Council; NHS Highland; Samaritans; and University of the Highlands and Islands. Birchwood Highland led and coordinated research that aimed to gain a holistic picture of attitudes and experiences of migrants regarding mental health and services from their home country and Highland, and thereby identify drivers and barriers to mental wellness and accessing services, improve mental health outcomes and increase resilience for migrants.

The research found migrants feel disempowered and not listened to. Migrants often live dispersed lives and are reluctant to talk about their problems including struggles with mental health. The process of migration has a profound impact on both physical and psychological health. Cultural stigmas surrounding mental health erect barriers to migrants having the confidence to voice issues and get support. Migrants feel isolated and do not know where to access help and services. Research identified areas to be addressed indicated to have a positive impact for migrants, these were highlighted to stakeholders and are the basis of a new peer support and advocacy project.

Q2. What did you do? (max 500 words)

A peer research approach was used and people with experience of migration and/or mental ill health co-produced the "Migrants Matter" research study alongside academics, using online survey, focus groups and interviews which were recorded, transcribed, coded and reviewed by the peer researchers. This enabled evidence to be gathered on this very sensitive subject in a way that was acceptable to the target community. The findings from this research enabled issues and concerns raised to be highlighted at a successful symposium attended by over 115 delegates that included migrants, politicians, interested members of the public, statutory and third sector representatives, clergy, academics, and the media, which promoted further discussion of both issues and possible solutions with migrants and those who support them, including raising awareness in the media. Funding has since been obtained via The Scottish Government to establish the Highland Migrants and Refugee Advocacy Alliance Project which will take forward the work based on the needs identifed, specifically to:

Give migrants and refugee communities the tools to enable them to help themselves and reach their potential.

Build an advocacy training package to train volunteer advocates from migrant and refugee communities.

This further learning will be disseminated to communities across Highland to educate more people about their rights.

Develop drop in services and hubs across Highland as a safe space for migrants and refugees to access support, connect, and share knowledge.

Peer support networks developed will build self-reliant cohesive communities.

Creation of a Multi-language online support resource for migrants and refugees to access will provide a lasting benefit.

Establishment of a peer support hub and access to advocacy will enable and empower local migrant and refugee communities to access information and support. We have developed partnerships with organisations that have experience of working with specific migrant and refugee communities to pool resources and expertise to optimise the difference we can make and make best use of resources. Going forward people using the service and peer advocates will be key partners in co-producing developments to ensure that the focus remains person centred and continues to meet the needs of those being supported, and that the project is an acceptable and attractive place for people to approach for the assistance that they require, either directly for themselves, or someone they care for or support.

SSSA Entry Form 2018

Q3. What did you achieve? (max 500 words)

The Peer research model engaged effectively with this "hard-to-reach" population to explore a potentially sensitive topic of mental health and personal experiences and situations. Understanding attitudes and experiences of mental ill-health, including in country of origin, migration and it's impact on wellbeing highlighted limited awareness of mental ill-health, and reluctance to request help and access services. Peer support and addressing work related stress for migrants were indicated as support strategies. Findings translated into a Symposium to enable community capacity building, a leaflet produced to highlight help available, and the evidence base to secure funding for further targeted work to offer support to enable migrants to improve their mental health outcomes and build greater resilience. We also presented papers at the Department of Psychology Annual Research Conference in August 2017, and at the NHS Highland Research, Development and Innovation Annual Conference in November 2017, which had a theme of "resilience". Invitations to attend these events provided the opportunity to disseminate key information about the needs and preferences of migrants to an audience of clinicians, academics, and others with a concern for delivery and development of services for migrants. This provided further opportunities to make the needs of migrants more visible, and enable the voices of migrants to be heard, and to prompt further awareness about how migrants may be best supported and empowered to identify and find ways to address their own needs in the current social, economic and political climate, including in the face of uncertainties created by "Brexit."

Further to this we are leading on a project with statutory and voluntary sector partners to put the findings into action. A volunteer peer support model forms the basis of an innovative service offered to migrants in Highland to support people in experiencing mental wellness and developing resilience. The project is based at Scottish Highlands and Islands and Moray Chinese Association which runs a café there. The project is positioned there to enable the project to be accessible for migrants and refugees and to make it as easy as possible for people to use a peer support hub and access advocacy, so that local migrant and refugee communities can access information and support when needed and develop confidence and trust in doing so. We will also be fostering co-production for further developments of the work going forward.

Q4. Why should you receive an award? (max 100 words)

This work has united partners with a common concern for people migrating into Highland. The research has identified fresh local evidence via peer research, highlighted findings and raised awareness via a very successful symposium and additional two papers presented at research conferences. This translated into action with multi-agency work to tackle this issue, and provide roles for volunteer peer supporters to build community capacity as well as enable migrants to access support from peers. Research is being used to reduce social isolation via peer supporters, bringing benefits to physical and mental health, increasing individual and community wellness and resilience.

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