Health Champions: Volunteers supporting the physical health of people using mental health services

Wednesday 27th September 2023 Helpforce Webinar

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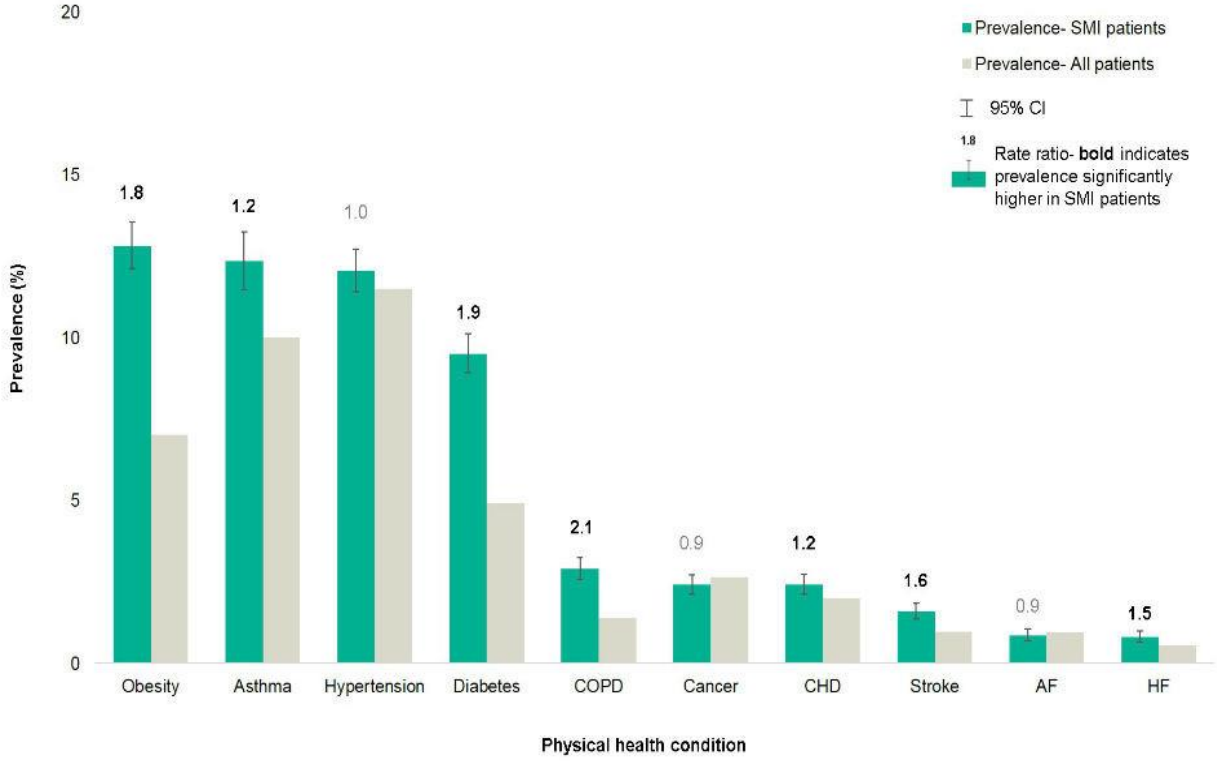
Backing Better Mental Health.

The problem we are addressing

- People with severe mental illness have worse physical health and are 5 times more likely to die prematurely
- There are many and complex reasons for this
- At the individual level people are isolated and dealing with symptoms that can make it difficult to manage their physical health

Prevalence of physical health conditions for severe mental illness (SMI) and all patients aged 15 to 74



The Health Improvement Network (THIN), Active patients in England; data extracted May 2018 in Public Health England (2018). Severe mental illness (SMI) and physical health inequalities: Briefing. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/severe-mental-illness-smi-physical-health-inequalities/severe-mental-illness-and-physical-health-inequalities-briefing. Accessed 30.01.2023.

Developing the intervention-
Volunteers supporting people with mental health diagnoses

JMIR FORMATIVE RESEARCH Pinto da Costa & Phone Pal Advisory Groups

Original Paper

An Intervention to Connect Patients With Psychosis and Volunteers via Smartphone (the Phone Pal): Development Study

BJPsych The British Journal of Psychiatry (2020)
217, 477–483. doi: 10.1192/bjp.2019.42

Effectiveness of a volunteer befriending programme for patients with schizophrenia: randomised controlled trial

Stefan Priebe, Agnes Chevalier, Thomas Hamborg, Eoin Golden, Michael King and Nancy Pistrang

White *et al. BMC Psychiatry* (2020) 20:534
https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02923-3

BMC Psychiatry

RESEARCH ARTICLE Open Access

The effectiveness of one-to-one peer support in mental health services: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Sarah White[1], Rhiannon Foster[1], Jacqueline Marks[1], Rosaleen Morshead[1], Lucy Goldsmith[1], Sally Barlow[2], Jacqueline Sin[1] and Steve Gillard[1*]

Hallett *et al. BMC Psychiatry* 2012, **12**:226
http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/12/226

BMC Psychiatry

RESEARCH ARTICLE Open Access

Volunteering in the care of people with severe mental illness: a systematic review

Claudia Hallett[1], Günter Klug[2], Christoph Lauber[3] and Stefan Priebe[1*]

The Health Champions intervention

New intervention developed by the team that included clinicians, academics, volunteer service and people with lived experience

Volunteers called Health Champions would support people with a serious mental illness to manage their physical health over nine months

We evaluated if it could be implemented and the clinical and cost effectiveness

Williams et al. Pilot and Feasibility Studies (2021) 7:116
https://doi.org/10.1186/s40814-021-00854-8
Pilot and Feasibility Studies

STUDY PROTOCOL Open Access

A feasibility hybrid II randomised controlled trial of volunteer 'Health Champions' supporting people with serious mental illness manage their physical health: study protocol

Julie Williams[1*], Elliann Fairbairn[2,3], Ray McGrath[2,3], Ioannis Bakolis[1,4], Andy Healey[1,5], Ubong Akpan[2], Isabel Mdudu[2], Fiona Gaughran[2,6,7,8], Euan Sadler[9], Zarnie Khadjesari[10], Kate Lillywhite[2,3] and Nick Sevdalis[1,8]

Health Champion Role

- To support people using mental health services with their own physical health goals
- No prescribed way of doing this- depended on what each person wanted
- Not expected to be experts

Support for Health Champions

- Training
- Volunteer coordinator
- Monthly supervision
- Individual support

Participants

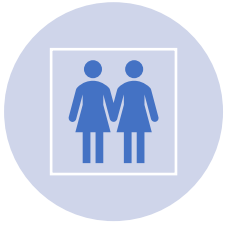
- People using community mental health services with a SMI diagnosis
- Wanting to make changes to their physical health
- Matched with a Health Champion based on location

Process

- Worked together for nine months
- Meeting once a week
- Met remotely at first then face to face

Results

27 RANDOMISED TO THE INTERVENTION GROUP, 21 TO CONTROL GROUP



21 MATCHED WITH A HEALTH CHAMPION

14 (58%) COMPLETED AT LEAST 8 MONTHS

NUMBER OF SESSIONS RANGED FROM 3 TO 32 (MEAN 20 SESSIONS)

Participant demographics

52% male
44% White, 37% Black
48% lived alone
Median age 41

Results-Service users

‘they give good advice, they give practical things that you can do. The one I had was very cheerful, makes you feel good’

‘She helped me with certain things I needed to find out or if I needed to do to any certain things’

‘it’s good to have somebody neutral, so you’re not afraid of saying things to them. Some things you wouldn’t say to your friends, whereas I can say them to my health champion and we can start exploring and looking at things’

Results-Health Champions

‘it was a big learning experience. I learnt more about mental health illness...I learnt more about people who are actually going through it and how it’s affected them’

‘Well, being special. You want to make a difference, don’t you? But sometimes, in making a difference, we do it for ourselves. But he made me feel special just by, ‘Are you alright, Jenny?’

‘I definitely felt supported throughout. I knew that, when I did start to think, ‘This is getting a bit too much,’ I felt like I could approach everyone’

Thank you for listening

If you want to hear more about this work please get in touch:

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Twitter: @mindandbody_khp
Website: www.kingshealthpartners.org/our-work/mind-and-body

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