

Support During the Pandemic

London and South Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust

The Psychological Interventions Clinic for Outpatients with Psychosis (PICuP) is based at the Maudsley Hospital, South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. PICuP is a specialist service in psychological approaches to psychosis and bipolar disorder. We are entirely psychology led and are headed by international clinical academic experts in the area of psychosis.

PICuP offers Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for individuals with distressing symptoms of psychosis or bipolar disorder, and secondary emotional problems, and Family Interventions. We offer a compassion group for those on the waiting list and an art group facilitated by our Peer Recovery Lead. Clients also have the option to work alongside our peer support team more generally. We provide a Friends and Family Service, offering support to friends and family of the clients we see.

PICuP offers a range of supervision, workshops and training packages for staff.

NICE guidance on Psychosis and Schizophrenia in adults (2014) is clear that carers should be offered support from mental health services including written or verbal information about psychosis in addition to carer focused support. However, meeting these recommendations is a challenge particularly when services and organisations have reduced resources. The F&FSS team at PICuP have developed a structured support service of 6 sessions to the family, friends and carers of individuals who are accessing therapy within our service. The sessions are CBT informed and can be delivered either in person or on a virtual basis by assistant psychologists and trainee clinical psychologists in the team.

In addition, given that assistant psychologists lack the clinical experience and skills of those more qualified therapy staff, the F&FSS team provide in-house training every 6 months to new staff on delivering the carer support interventions. At the most recent training they invited a carer to co-facilitate the training and the feedback from staff was that hearing about the carers experiences of both caregiving and accessing the support service was a hugely valued part of the training.

This service began in 2020 in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic and was set up quickly and without funding in order to meet the needs of carers, many of whom were confined to home and living with very unwell service users. The team went above and beyond to set up this service within weeks, thoughtfully ensuring they were guided by the evidence base and research.

They believed we could enhance the service that we currently provide carers, in line with NICE guidance, in order to really show them that we care about them, that they have an important and valued role in the service users care, and that their wellbeing is also important to us. At present the service continues to run despite still not being funded and therefore staff volunteer their time to speak to carers each week to provide the necessary support and to attend supervision with a clinical psychologist.