Survivor Researcher Network
Mental health knowledge built by service users and survivors

Contact us

Survivor Researcher Network

The Survivor Researcher Network (SRN) is a user-controlled independent network for all mental health service users and survivors with an interest in research with over 250 diverse members.

To join the Survivor Researcher Network, please contact:

info@survivorresearcher.net

This manifesto was published in 2018 when Survivor Researcher Network was hosted by NSUN.

We are now an independent community interest company, Survivor Researcher Network C.I.C., and share information with network members via our newsletter.

For further information and to join the network, see our website at www.survivorresearcher.net

You can contact us by email at info@survivorresearcher.net

About us

The Survivor Researcher Network

The Survivor Researcher Network (SRN) is a user-controlled independent network for all mental health service users and survivors with an interest in research with over 250 diverse members.

The SRN was originally formed after the 'Strategies for Living' Mental Health Foundation project (1997-2003) and was hosted by the Mental Health Foundation until 2001. The network is now with the National Survivor User Network (NSUN), an independent charity led by survivors and service users that connects people with lived experience of mental distress.

Survivor/service user research is carried out from the perspective of people who have experienced mental or emotional distress. It is different from traditional Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in research because service users and survivors have control over the research process. This type of 'user-led' or 'user-controlled' research has grown and developed from the political roots of survivor activism that seek to challenge the psychiatric system, bio-medical 'illness' models and collectively develop different forms of knowledge based on lived experience of mental distress.

Patient and public involvement (PPI) has become an essential component of NHS research, policy and practice in the UK. An increasing number of service users and survivors are now involved in research in mental health in England. But service user and survivor-led research is an independent discipline in its own right.

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Our aims

We aim to:

- provide mental health service users and survivors involved and interested in research a forum for undertaking their work, networking, sharing information and supporting each other.

- support new forms of knowledge making in mental health that are led by people with lived experience of mental distress.

- challenge and broaden mental health research and explore alternatives to bio-medical 'illness' models and clinical methodologies.

- promote first hand knowledge and experiential evidence as fundamental for the knowledge base on mental health, human rights and social justice.

- set standards and promote good practice in service user and survivor research in mental health.

We will:

- Sustain and develop the Survivor Researcher Network (SRN) to provide survivor researchers a forum for networking, sharing information and supporting each other by:

- Challenging the hierarchy of evidence and promoting the validity of experiential and survivor knowledge(s), as well as qualitative, participatory and emancipatory research methods

- Promoting authentic and influential service user and survivor involvement and leadership in research

- Continuing to seek new partnerships with other organisations and institutions to increase opportunities for SRN members and ensure genuine, meaningful co-production and involvement in research.

Our values

The SRN is committed to working from a values-base that is:

Emancipatory

- addresses broad social issues of marginalisation, oppression, inequality, exclusion and impoverishment, and foregrounds the relationship between deepening inequalities and mental ill health in research and knowledge production.
- challenges the hierarchy of evidence that currently prevails in mental health research and the biomedical model of 'mental illness'.
- challenges the co-option of survivor knowledge by PPI (Patient and Public Involvement) in research agendas in mental health services and academia.
- campaigns for a redistribution of power within PPI and 'co-production' initiatives where the independence, agency and autonomy of service user/survivor researchers is being eroded or ignored.
- questions the idea that academia is the only place for 'valid' forms of knowledge production.

Experiential

- draws on our varied lived experiences of mental distress, psychiatry, mental health services, the welfare benefits system, societal structures and systems to create our own knowledge, theory and methodologies.
- promotes survivor knowledge(s) and research as credible, valuable, legitimate research evidence in its own right.

- produces and promotes standards and good practice in user-led/controlled research.

Holistic

- produces and promotes research that sees the whole person (their varied interconnecting identities and different aspects of their wellbeing) within a broader socio-economic, cultural and political context.
- promotes an alternative vision for mental health care that draws on the growing body of research into holistic understandings, methods, treatments, services and models of care.

Inclusive

- promotes knowledge and takes on board perspectives from the most powerless and marginalised groups in society including people with 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act (2010) and those living in poverty and experiencing multiple disadvantages.1 Where possible we will also seek to produce knowledge from these perspectives.
- seeks to include people with a wide range of different experiences and opinions, recognising that sometimes our values will be in conflict, whilst also being consistent and clear about our purpose and what we stand for as a network.
- recognises and challenges the power

Our values

relations that exist within less powerful groups (including the survivor movement itself).

- challenges the marginalisation of some communities in mental health research (including user-led research) in terms of access to resources, participation and leadership.
- lobbies funding bodies for the commissioning of studies which reflect the research priorities of people with lived experience of mental distress and are user-led.

Diverse

- acknowledges, values and promotes the diversity of experiences, identities and backgrounds of service user and survivor researchers.
- connects a diverse range of people from different communities, regions and backgrounds. Eg. people who are employed as 'service user/survivor researchers' (but who may be working in isolation) and those who are new to research and/or those who do not have formal 'research training' or background.

Respectful and anti-discriminatory

- emphasises the critical importance of clarity and transparency in our activities and working practices.
- challenges discriminatory practices.
- listens to the perspectives of others.
- creates a supportive space for members to share information, ideas and experiences.
- creates mechanisms to ensure we work to our values – eg. by having a truly diverse governance and constantly using critical reflection to examine our practices.
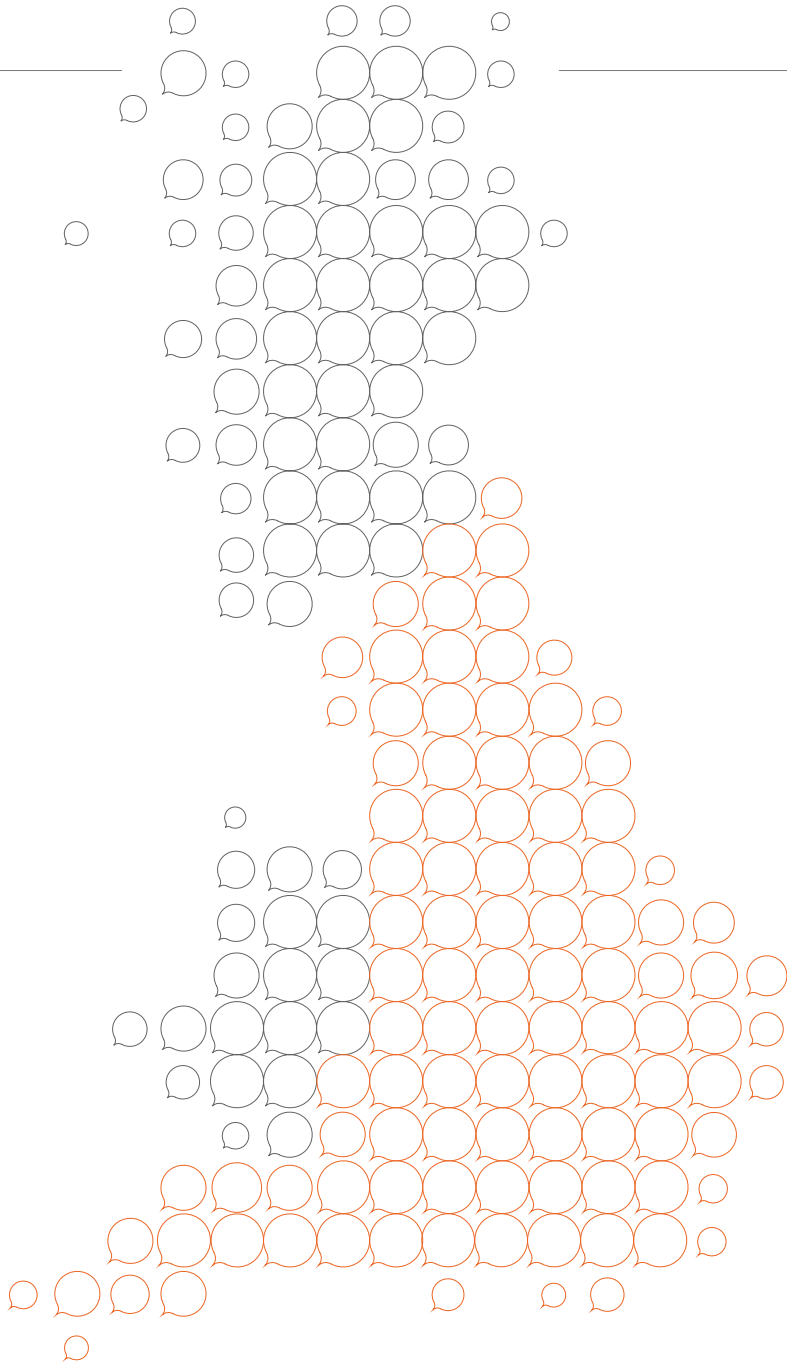
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srn **Survivor Researcher Network**

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Together we are stronger

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