



The impact of our Experts by Experience Group (ExE) at the University of Derby on student mental health nurse education

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The impact of the Experts by Experience Group (ExE) at the University of Derby on student mental health nurse practice

- Service user and carer involvement and participation in partnership working is an approach which requires a patient centred culture to be authentically embedded within health and social care programmes to be successful.
- There is clear evidence that recently graduated students are supportive of patient and public involvement (O'Donnell 2012), particularly in mental health nursing where it is a field learning outcome (Terry 2011).



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- Within the University of Derby's College of Health and Social Care, this is demonstrated strategically through the development of our Expert by Experience Group and individually through the application of patient centred care focusing on recovery, which is respectful, compassionate and responsive to individual patient need, values and preference throughout the suite of programmes offered.
- The group work alongside academics in a range of roles as advisors, presenters and consultants in our admissions process, teaching and learning, programme and curriculum development, staff interviews and in a consultancy role in external meetings and events.



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- As part of an HEI Challenge, a focus group was held with 3rd year Mental Health student nurses to enable them to reflect on how the working alongside our ExEs at the University of Derby had impacted on the quality of their student experience and if it had enhanced their clinical practice



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- *“Listening to XXXX made me realise how unsafe he feels when unwell and in hospital and how we make it worse by moving his bed to another area when he is in a group because we have an admission. He comes back to the ward and wants to rest and all his things have been moved without us even mentioning it to him. It adds to his feelings of being powerless”*
- *“I understand better the need to support service users users regain their unique story and collaborate with them in their personal journey to recovery”*
- *“I’ll never be able to walk in her shoes or live her life, but I will always recall her words and how it made me feel. The effort and courage it took for her to stand in a room full of strangers and talk about herself and her illness and her family was selfless”*



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- *“I remember being particularly moved listening to the story of a girl who lived with an eating disorder talking about her parents, it was probably the bravest thing I had ever heard. I was haunted afterwards by images of her parents at home struggling to cope. I suppose on reflection it taught me that we are all interconnected and mental distress happens within systems of people not merely individuals. In practice I look outwards now and always dedicate time to spend with families and carers”*
- *“Learning from academic resources is really important. However, narratives provided by expert by experience service users provides a unique insight into a persons world: an emotional connection with the persons story is formed; which supports the growth of empathy and compassion in values based nursing practice”*



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- *“Working and hearing from the Experts by Experience was very touching and inspiring for me as a nurse. It is evident that we, as nurses, should focus our care on supporting recovery and building the resilience of people with mental health problems, Experts by Experience teams are also an effective tool to fight stigma associated with mental health”*
- *“The involvement of service users/ experts by experience has been hugely influential in my development throughout my nurse training, it has allowed me to develop my understanding of what it means to live with a mental illness and enabled me to challenge stereotypes and assumptions surrounding mental illness”*
- *“It’s the “small stuff” that matters – talking, being kind, listening and valuing individuality”*



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- Overall students suggested that working alongside the ExE made them less likely to use jargon in those sessions but also in their clinical practice.
- Students identified that using “real people” rather than paper based case studies enhanced their understanding and increased empathy for individuals.
- They also reported that they were more likely to take an individual, person centred approach in practice as the examples discussed by ExE were “real” practice scenarios.



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Evaluating exactly how nursing students learn within the service user/carer involvement partnership is complex, however, all students reported specific examples of how they had gained new knowledge and values and adapted this into their clinical practice.

This concurs with Rush's (2008) study regarding transformative learning which has most benefits when students are emotionally engaged with the ExE in order for attitudes and values to be challenged which result in positive changes to clinical practice.

Transformative learning theory suggests that the process of “perspective information” has three dimensions: psychological changes (changes understanding of self), convictional (revision of belief systems) and behavioural (changes in lifestyle).

This is central to our commitment to service user involvement and a goal of nursing education, particularly in relation to autonomous thinking and decision making.



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- Student publication of the positive impact of ExE in her training (in press)
- Positive impact on the “small things” which builds and influences the culture of practice in clinical areas
- The students joined up with our practice partners and ExE in an event to reduce stigma and increase awareness of dignity and respect for World Mental Health Day.



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- McLaughlin (2009) suggests that there is positive impact on the quality of provision and the student experience and furthermore; there can be a range of practical and ethical benefits for the service users and carers themselves, when collaboration with service users and carers is fully collaborative and embedded into the programme in an informed manner.
- As a University and College who are committed to continually strengthening and improving service user and carer input, we would concur that this valued relationship is central to our future success in developing high quality programmes in health and social care.



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