

## **Who Cares Conference Short Report**

The Who Cares? Conference on Faith, Culture and Mental Health relationship was held on 16 October 2014 at the Conference Centre at St James's Church in Finchampstead.

Around 70 people attended to this full-day conference. There was a balanced diversity of attendees, 16 mental health professionals, 6 mental health service users, 20 people from faith communities, 11 people from social services and other community organisations and 7 others.

It was felt that more diversity of attendance needed from faiths, particularly from Hindu, Jewish and Sikh faiths.

The conference was chaired by Dr Hugh Boulter, Hon Sec for the Oxford Diocesan Committee for Inter-faith Concerns (ODCIC) and it was opened by Chris Khoo esq, FRCS, The High Sheriff of The Royal County of Berkshire.

Morning session saw two keynote speakers: Dr Chetna Kang, an Executive Committee Member of Royal College of Psychiatrists Spiritual Interests Group, a Hindu Pastor and the Co-Chair National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum talked about "*The Advantages and Problems of Having a Faith in relation to mental health*", followed by Dr Khadija Masood, Locum Consultant Psychiatrist at General Adult Psychiatry, Reading CMHT (North Sector) at the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust who brought a Muslim perspective on the same topic.

Bede Gerard, Chair of South East England Faith Forum chaired the afternoon session. Afternoon key speakers Prof Rob Poole & Prof Catherine Robinson, Co-Directors of the Centre for Mental Health and Society at the School of Social Sciences, Bangor University spoke about the "*Professional Boundaries between the practitioner and the patient*". Revd Rachel Wadey from the Department of Spiritual Care of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust talked about "*What makes a complete person?*"

Following the speakers, the audience split up into four groups to discuss what were the problems in particular areas and what can be done to efficiently manage these problems. These groups were facilitated by two facilitators from both faith and mental health areas.

At the end of the day, there was a question and answer session.

### **Some feedback from the conference**

*The whole day has been fascinating - depth and integrity*

*Helpful to look at reasons for having spiritual assessment and to see how faith can get in the way of people aren't treated as individuals regardless of culture or faith.*

*I found all of it very interesting and useful, and felt there was the right balance between presentations and break out groups.*

*I really enjoyed the conference; it was the best one I have so far attended.*

*It was certainly interesting - the topics are so thorny and complicated, but I think that in such a difficult area when perhaps no one is completely sure what to do, the situation really does encourage 'free thinking'*

*It was very useful to meet representatives from other agencies who could support young people and provide workshops at our service*

*The mix between service users, professionals and open discussion in small groups made the day rich in content and spirit.*

*There was good amount of networking time between sessions over refreshments.*

*All the keynotes speakers were 5 star! Thank you very much - lots to think about.*

*I found Chetna Kang to be really inspirational and a breath of fresh air*

*Liked what makes a complete person and advantages and problems of having faith*

*Breakout groups was a very good idea.*

*I found the group discussions valuable and networking was great*

*Both sessions were facilitated brilliantly, giving everyone a chance to speak.*

### **Possible areas for the future conferences:**

*Guilt, Forgiveness, Healing, Medical training*

*Dementia, Community cohesion, Dealing with the elderly*

*Youth and Spiritualism*

*Child and Teenage Mental Health and Faith provision*

*Educating faith leaders about Mental Health and Recovery*