

Experts and service users from Sussex share experiences of hearing voices

Two research participants who hear voices have co-written a chapter in a new book focusing on the issue along with an expert from Sussex.

The *Practical Handbook Of Hearing Voices: Therapeutic And Creative Approaches* includes chapters written by Dr Mark Hayward, Director of Research and Development at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, who writes from a clinical perspective and Angie Culham and Sheila Evenden, participants in therapy for voice-hearing.

Sussex Partnership provides specialist mental health and learning disability services across the south east, and has a one of the most research-active mental health Trusts in England, focusing on dementia, young people, psychosis, brain and body, mood and anxiety, learning disability, personality, emergency and complex care, and approaches to involvement and recovery.

'Voice-hearing' generally means hearing someone or something talking when the source of the voice does not seem to be physically present. For some people this experience can be unwanted, intrusive and distracting, and the voices can be very negative and critical in what they say.

The book will be a useful resource for practitioners and trainee practitioners in this fields as well as for people who hear voices and their families and friends.

Angie Culham, who has benefited from relating therapy, said: "Relating therapy was very helpful for me. I struggled with it a bit at first because it's a bit intense but it's worth that bit of discomfort to get to the outcome. I don't get so bullied by my voices now that I've learned to be more assertive with them."

Sheila Evenden, who has also benefited from relating therapy, said: "It's made a huge impact on my life - I feel like I'm an active participant in my own therapy. I've also found the therapists are interested in me as an individual, which is in itself therapeutic."

The chapters written by the Sussex experts focus upon Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Relating Therapy, two of the therapeutic approaches utilized within the Sussex Voices Clinic.

Dr Mark Hayward, one of the co-writers of the chapter, said: "CBT and Relating Therapy encourages hearers to accept, rather than instinctively fight against the voices. From this position of acceptance, hearers are supported to be curious and ask questions about their voices and explore the accuracy of their comments: am I as worthless as the voices say I am; can the voices make bad things happen if I disobey them; what do I want to do?"

"In Relating Therapy, they learn to stand-up for this view by assertively responding to voices. Angie and Sheila share some of their experience of Relating Therapy and how it supported them to relate differently to their voices. Some of these insights are shared through poetry.

"It may not be possible to make the voices go away, but there are lots of ways to try and live well despite the continued presence of voices and this is the focus of the book."

The book is available from: www.pccs-books.co.uk

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