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NEWS RELEASE

Lankelly Chase commissions new national centre of excellence on ethnic inequalities, severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage

Lankelly Chase Foundation has commissioned Queen Mary University of London, the University of Manchester and Words of Colour Productions to establish an independent centre of excellence on ethnic inequalities, severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage.

With a strategic award of £1,245,000, the Synergi Collaborative Centre will deliver a five-year national programme, focused on working towards the transformation of health services for ethnic minority people with severe mental illness.

Over the five years the centre will:

- Collate, interpret and communicate data and knowledge on ethnic inequalities in mental health and related systems, and how this relates to severe and multiple disadvantage.
- Bring together the full range of stakeholders through models of co-production, and co-curation of knowledge, to develop and implement solutions.
- Place lived experience narratives centre stage.
- Use creative, digital and evidence-based platforms to share these narratives.
- Become a focal point for action, leading to systems change regarding ethnic inequalities in mental health services.
- Identify opportunities to reduce and prevent ethnic inequalities to improve the health of individuals and populations.

The centre will take a collaborative approach, using the principles of co-production of knowledge and a creative mix of robust research methods.

Cathy Stancer, Director, Equalities and Rights, Lankelly Chase, said: "Lankelly Chase's area of concern is why people dealing with the most severe problems get the least effective support, often resulting in catastrophic outcomes. Through the many projects we have supported, we know that ethnic inequality in mental health remains an intractable issue needing new energy, creativity and collaboration. The creation of the Synergi Collaborative Centre follows several years of engagement with ethnic minority-led organisations who agreed that the way evidence, practice and communities connect is a crucial step towards changing systems."

Kamaldeep Bhui CBE, Professor of Cultural Psychiatry & Epidemiology, Queen Mary University of London, and Consultant Psychiatrist, East London Foundation NHS Trust, said:

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◦ ETHNIC INEQUALITIES ◦ SEVERE MENTAL ILLNESS ◦ MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE ◦

“The Synergi Collaborative Centre will assemble all sections of society to offer a fresh perspective on ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness, while taking account of the multiple disadvantages which act as drivers of inequalities. This area has secured little effective action due to disagreements about the evidence, sensitivities around accusations of racism and minimising the lived experience of ethnic inequalities. By capturing experiences of multiple disadvantage throughout the life course, the centre will inform the production of co-created narratives, which will be widely shared to drive systems’ reform.”

James Nazroo, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), the University of Manchester, said: “The centre will work with a full range of partners to identify ways of working towards and implementing solutions. A co-production approach will allow us to recognise and address the significant challenges in this area and develop shared, meaningful and creative solutions. This is crucial as there are marked and conflicting understandings of ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness: the nature of them, what is driving these inequalities and, consequently, how we might tackle them.”

Marcia Willis Stewart QC (Hon), the newly appointed Chair of the centre’s Advisory Board, added: “It is an honour and a privilege to assist the Synergi Collaborative Centre with its relevant goals regarding ethnic inequalities, severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage. The timing of this project is particularly important as there is longstanding concern over key issues such as access to relevant services, social exclusion and social cohesion nationally. The work that the centre plans to undertake is also necessary amid the groundswell of public and political interest, and an acknowledgement of the complex cluster of historical issues surrounding severe mental illness and ethnic inequalities, which is why the funding by Lankelly Chase is welcomed.”

The Synergi Collaborative Centre will be overseen by a multi-disciplinary Advisory Board of experienced practitioners and people with lived experience of mental illness and ethnic inequalities.

Ends

Media contact

For more information about the Synergi Collaborative Centre, contact Joy Francis, Words of Colour Productions. Email: joy@wordsofcolour.co.uk Tel: 0203 176 5646 / 0771 382 7372

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For more information about Lankelly Chase Foundation, please contact Cathy Stancer, Director, Equalities and Rights. Email: cathy@lankellychase.org.uk Tel: 02037479930

Notes to editors

Project background:

Queen Mary University of London (Project Lead), the University of Manchester and Words of Colour Productions were successful in tendering for an award of £1,245,000 over five years from Lankelly Chase. They will establish a centre of excellence on ethnic inequalities, severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage. Lankelly Chase wants to foster a deeper collective understanding of the nature and extent of the relationship between ethnicity and severe and multiple disadvantage as ethnic minority people experience disproportionate levels of poverty and structural disadvantage, and discrimination within systems.

Lankelly Chase (lankellychase.org.uk) is an independent foundation working in partnership with people across the UK to change the systems that perpetuate severe and multiple disadvantage. Originally formed in 1962, Lankelly Chase's work is now focused on creating an environment where people have the skills, motivation and freedom to help create a system that effectively responds to the interlocking nature of severe disadvantages, such as homelessness, drug misuse, violence and abuse, extreme poverty and mental ill health. Lankelly Chase is driven by a belief that people are resourceful and have strengths, and that collectively we can find solutions to creating a fairer society where we are all able to thrive.

The Synergi Collaborative Centre (synergicollaborativecentre.co.uk) will be a national initiative, to reframe, rethink and transform the realities of ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness and multiple disadvantage. Taking a collaborative approach, the centre aims to use the principles of co-production of knowledge and a creative mix of robust research methods. The centre will work closely with commissioners, policymakers and politicians, as well as public service providers, citizens and those experiencing mental distress, to create and deliver a vision to help eradicate ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness and their fundamental causes. The Synergi Collaborative Centre will be officially launched in November 2017.

Synergi Collaborative Centre project partners

Project Lead

Professor Kamaldeep Bhui, Professor of Cultural Psychiatry & Epidemiology, Queen Mary University of London, and Consultant Psychiatrist, East London Foundation NHS Trust

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Professor Bhui has led research and learning programmes on ethnic inequalities in mental illnesses, suicide, self-harm, chronic fatigue, violence and traumatic experiences, homelessness, refugee experiences, drug use and Mental Health Act detentions in hospitals and in the criminal justice system, including prisons. He has been an adviser to the Department of Health and Public Health England, and formerly chaired the Royal College of Psychiatrists' committees on public health and transcultural psychiatry. Bhui is editor of the British Journal of Psychiatry and International Journal of Culture and Mental Health. He has supported three projects for the National Clinical Director on Mental Health (Consultation and Advice for NHS England, Public Health England, and providing a national public health online resource called Mental Health 4 Life).

James Nazroo, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity (CoDE), the University of Manchester

Professor Nazroo has conducted research on inequalities in health for almost 30 years, with a focus on the patterning and drivers of inequalities in later life, and on the inequalities faced by ethnic minority people. This work describes the patterning of differences in health across and within broad ethnic groupings, and assesses the contribution that social and economic disadvantage makes to these differences. Central to this approach has been developing an understanding of the links between ethnicity, racism and inequality, and how this evolves across the life course and over time. His research also covers the role of access to, and quality of health services, including a critical examination of mental health services. Nazroo led the only national population-based surveys assessing ethnic differences in the prevalence of mental illness, and has written extensively on ethnic inequalities in severe mental illness.

Joy Francis, Executive Director, Words of Colour Productions

Joy Francis is an expert in strategic communications, social policy and media relations across all disciplines and platforms. She has worked on national and regional ethnic minority mental health campaigns and policy initiatives for over 20 years. Francis co-authored the UK's first survey on ethnic minority service users for Mind and has worked with government departments, police forces, NGOs, universities, charities and mental health trusts on national policy initiatives, such as the David 'Rocky' Bennett Inquiry and Delivering Race Equality. Words of Colour was appointed by Time to Change, England's anti stigma mental health campaign, to develop regional media engagement campaigns targeting African and Caribbean communities. Most recently, Francis was the Media Liaison Lead for the Hillsborough Inquests, appointed by Birnberg Peirce law firm, which represented 77 of the 96 families of the deceased, and is the Media Liaison Lead for the Camber Sands Inquests.

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