

SURESEARCH ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Presented to Suresearch AGM on Thursday 6th March 2025

About Suresearch

[Suresearch](#) was formed, in 2000, by a partnership of academic staff and service users involved in teaching and research in the Department Social work at University of Birmingham (UoB).

From 2006 until 2011, Suresearch worked closely with the [Centre for Excellence in Interdisciplinary Mental Health](#), with funding for a part time paid coordinator. Since then, Suresearch has been administered on a voluntary basis by members, with continuing support from the UoB College of Social Science through provision of office accommodation and meeting rooms.

Suresearch aims to promote meaningful service user involvement in mental health education, training and research by:

- educating and influencing mental health educators, trainers and researchers,
- providing support for service users to use their expertise and experience in education and research.

The experts by experience in our network offer a rich resource of knowledge and skills through:

- contributing to the education and training of mental health practitioners at qualifying and post qualifying levels,
- undertaking research, independently and in collaboration,
- advising researchers and research students in the mental health field,
- membership of professional advisory groups and service user organisations,
- contributing to arts events and festivals to promote mental wellbeing and awareness.

Organisation, meetings and funding

The running of Suresearch is a team effort of members and officers.

Membership

We have 76 members on our email list, and an additional eight that are on a currently inoperative postal mailing list.

Organisation

Officers

Officers elected at our last AGM have served throughout.

Our team of officers consists of:

- Membership Secretary - Stephen Jeffreys
- Correspondence and Activities Secretary _ Jo Barber
- Minutes and Meetings Secretary - Barbara Norden
- Digital Media Secretary and IT Coordinator - Stephen Jeffreys
- Assistant Secretary _ Gary O'Brien
- Treasurer - Arshad Butt

Office Facilities

Suresearch has the use of an office opposite the Courtyard Room in Park House. The office houses our archives, a small number of reference books and computers which are used by authorised members for maintaining our membership database, website, and other Suresearch activities. Members can arrange to access the office to view books and archives by arrangement with the officers.

Mailings

Almost all members are on the e-mailing list and receive monthly mailing about our meetings plus circulations of events and opportunities of interest. We use Mailchimp for our newsletters and pay for a Google Workspace account for our email and data storage facilities. Prior to the covid lockdowns, when the University was closed, we sent a monthly postal mailing on request to those unable to use email.

Meetings

In 2024 we have continued in-person meetings at Park House and have continued to work on developing these as effective hybrid meetings via Zoom. We thank Jo Barber for persevering with persisting challenges with the equipment in the meeting rooms.

In 2023, we re-branded the Inpatient Care Forum as a Mental Health Care Forum (MHCF) to recognise that these meetings had a broader focus than inpatient services, but in autumn 2023, we decided to focus on having just one meeting per month until we have found new funding. Re-launching the MHCF is a current focus of funding bids.

Funding of Suresearch

A separate financial report for 2024-25 is presented to the Annual General Meeting.

We do not currently have any funding other than occasional donations. Travel expenses for in person meetings and website and other IT costs have been paid from Suresearch reserves which have benefited from a donation during the year. Travel expenses are currently payable to a maximum of £10 per person per meeting unless higher travel costs arising from disability are authorised by the treasurer.

An application to the National Lottery Awards for All fund was unsuccessful, but we are currently working on a revised application and exploring other options.

Suresearch Online

Suresearch has a website built by members in December 2017, together with a presence on Twitter and Facebook.

Members are encouraged to submit items for posting on the website, under the following categories:

- Reports on members activities, including involvement in research, training and other work, through Suresearch,
- Articles, and opinion pieces from members,
- Members' creative writing.

Suresearch Online Platforms

Website: www.suresearch.org.uk
Twitter: Suresearch [@SuresearchMH](https://twitter.com/SuresearchMH)
Facebook: Suresearch [@SuresearchMH](https://www.facebook.com/SuresearchMH)

The website is regularly maintained, but refreshing our online interaction is part of our funding bids.

Suresearch activities over 2024-2025 – report by Jo Barber

This year, our major aim has been to get ourselves known, both within the University and within the Mental Health Trust. We are keen to grow our membership and also to reach out to people who might want to use our expertise.

We have made some progress on both fronts.

Our active membership has grown significantly over the year, with some people returning to us and new people joining.

We have heard from 6 university researchers over the months, who wanted us to contribute to their research.

These are:

- Max Carlish with his Difficult to depression study
 - Stevie Creese (Suresearch member) with his Parity of Esteem study
 - Jemma White with her study about moral injury amongst staff doing mental health act assessments
 - Hayunisa Pelge about her Transitions that Matter study
 - Sophie Spitters about her study about stopping smoking in mental health patients
- Susan O'Shea is just embarking on a PhD and is going to update us on her research in May.

We also had Andy Bell and Christine Kirsch talk about their project involving patients in Health Care Education. We have all been given the opportunity to join this group. Unfortunately, the payment for such work is unacceptably low and the number of opportunities few. Given that in the past we have been heavily involved in nursing training we need to work harder at offering our services at the medical school.

We have had some other interesting talks over the year. Particularly memorable was John King about his aromatherapy research, and Kayshaun McKinley about his plans to set up a dance academy for people with mental health problems.

We are now looking forward to our plans for the future.

We are in touch with Matthew Broome, Jerry Tew, Kerry Rickerby, Katherine Allen, Linda Everard, all of which are interested in our work, wanting our involvement and keen to come and speak to us. I am hoping that most of these people will come and speak during 2025.

Kerry Rickerby has already approached me about us contributing to a university showcase open day on 21st June this year. They are celebrating their 125th anniversary and collecting stories from the past including the history of Suresearch. So please, if you have anything you might want to share, just get in touch with me!! It is a good opportunity.

Most importantly, we are hoping to start on our oral history project, which Suresearch member, Maureen Smojkis, has suggested to us. This is to look in our archives and interview people who have been involved in Suresearch in the past, in order to learn from previous successes and failures and plan our future more wisely.

We have plans for having an open day in which we would share our findings and promote the work of Suresearch to other mental health service users and staff alike.

This would hopefully help us to expand what we do.

All this requires funding, which has been an issue for some time. We were given some money by AfSUG when it closed down through lack of members. However, we were unsuccessful in our Awards for all funding bid. Much time has been spent trying to identify possible funding streams. We are also meeting up with various members of university staff to see if we can get any regular funding. We are in the process of revising our lottery application to apply again and also applying to the William Cadbury Charitable Trust.

For the oral history project and open day, we will need specific funding. Maureen is suggesting that we apply to the Heritage lottery fund. This is the next step to achieving our longer term goals.

Campaigns, consultations other activities

Members have continued to provide personal input to various consultations on service changes in their own areas and attend a variety of meetings bringing together service providers, commissioners, service users and carers throughout the Midlands.

Stephen Jeffreys, Jo Barber - March 2025

Appendix – Abbreviations

UoB – University of Birmingham

HSMC – Health Service Management Centre

NIHR – National Institute for Health Research

HSDR – Health services and Delivery Programme

BSMHFT – Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust