

Psychoeducation Programmes for Bipolar Disorder

Background:

Bipolar disorder is thought to directly affect **approximately 5%** of the population, the equivalent to 3.4 million people in the UK. It can be a **serious** and **enduring** mental health condition with **high morbidity and mortality**,

Presentations include symptoms consistent with **depressed** or **elevated mood** but can vary hugely between people, although there can also be many similarities.

The burden of bipolar disorder can be significant, impacting on **personal, family, social** and **employment activities** with a UK economic cost estimated at £6.4 billion annually through lost productivity, informal care and health and social care (*Costs of bipolar disorder in the UK*, Simon et al, 2021).

Psychoeducation is recognised by **NICE** and **SIGN** guidelines as being beneficial for bipolar disorder through **reduction of symptoms, reduced number of relapses, increased periods of remission** and **improved wellbeing**. However, implementation appears to be low and geographically variable.

Impact:

- **86%** of eBEPC respondents (n=42) stated they had learned new information and better ways to manage bipolar disorder
- **95%** stated they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the programme
- **100%** would recommend the programme to others with bipolar disorder

"I have learned much more about bipolar disorder and how to continue living a fulfilling life."

"Sharing with others in a supportive environment"

"Knowing I wasn't alone – I had never spoken to anyone else with bipolar before!"



Aims/Objectives:

We wanted to **build** on our **success** of the Bipolar Education Programme Cymru (BEPC) and develop **similar** psychoeducation interventions **virtually** as well as establishing **training programmes** for clinical staff further afield to provide our psychoeducation programmes.

Outcomes:

- Booster sessions attended by **76 participants**
- Five "Bitesize" BEPC webinars attended by **350 people** and subsequently viewed **3,300** times online
- 11 eBEPC courses delivered with **53 participants**
- **Two 45 minute** training programmes for clinicians to deliver the BEPC and eBEPC programmes completed in conjunction with Virtual College. These are now due to be uploaded on the **NHS ESR platform**.

Approaches:

As a result of the Covid pandemic we **re-tooled** our existing psychoeducation interventions, offering **virtual** programmes, including:

- **"Booster" sessions** to previous BEPC course graduates
- **"Bitesize BEPC"** webinars developed and provided with Bipolar UK, the leading UK charity for supporting those affected by bipolar disorder
- **eBEPC courses**, similar to the face-to-face groups but in a virtual setting.
- Developed and produced **training programmes** in conjunction with Virtual College for clinicians to provide the face to face BEPC.

Next Steps:

Consult with:

- **NHS mental health services** in Wales (e.g. Senior managers and those providing front line care)
- associated **training establishments**
- those involved in the **planning procurement** and **provision of services** (Senedd members and Government departments)

to ensure such interventions are **known** about and **disseminated** throughout the adult mental health care system.

Key Conclusions:

Group psychoeducation interventions for bipolar disorder have been **clinically proven** to be **effective** in **reducing relapse, increasing periods of remission** and **improving wellbeing**. Despite this, there appears to be **no widespread** use of such interventions and they **should** be firmly **embedded** in routine mental health care.