

Project context:

The Mental Health in Bristol Project was delivered by the Bristol Cable between March and May 2017. The aim of the project was to work with ordinary Bristolians in order to explore their experiences of having a mental health condition in the city, as well as being able to tell stories of patient experience and exploring the sector as a whole. The project was designed to work outside the normal communication channels of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and to create content that would be read by a wide audience.

The number of people in Bristol experiencing issues with their mental health is increasing. There is already evidence of an unmet need for mental health services and with the introduction of large cuts to council budgets in the Council and Sustainable Transformation Plans within the NHS, the likelihood of increased funding and more comprehensive care is slim.

In order to improve the mental health of Bristol as a city, we need to increase people's awareness of mental health, direct them towards services that are available and highlight where they can be improved. As a community media organisation with a large number of readers, the Bristol Cable was well placed to deliver this project successfully.

Content produced:

In total the project published six pieces of content around the theme of lived mental health experience in Bristol. Below can be found links to each of the articles.

1. ["Are you sexually confused?": Prejudice in mental health services](#)
2. [Is the Bristol mental health sector healthy?](#)
3. [Suffering in silence: mental health in black communities](#)
4. [Perinatal mental health in Bristol](#)
5. [Shining a light on Bristol's lonely](#)
6. ["You are definitely not alone": Using art to tackle the teenage mental health taboo](#)

In addition to these pieces of content the project lead, Dean Ayotte, took part in a podcast organised by [Man Up Man Down](#) in order to discuss the project, and the wider issues of male mental health in Bristol. The podcast can be found at:

<https://soundcloud.com/manupmandown/podcast-episode-02-dean-ayotte>

Feedback for the project:

Part of the project involved delivering a series of workshops with teenagers from the Off the Record (OTR) Mentality Project so that they could express their experiences of having mental health conditions using visual and audio work. This section includes some brief feedback from workshop participants and from OTR staff. Since delivering the project Bristol Cable staff connected to the project have visited the Mentality Project to gain additional feedback from the volunteers and staff.

“Thank you for doing this. You have really listened to what we have said and taken our words and pictures and turned them into images we helped create.” **Mentality volunteer/workshop participant**

“Most people just come here and talk at us, listen to us for a few minutes then do what they were going to do anyway. We usually never see them again.” **Mentality volunteer/workshop participant**

“The Young People had a really great experience working on this project. They enjoyed the creative process of explaining their experiences and then seeing this portrayed as art - they could related to the illustrations and felt they captured their feelings well.

We were very happy to be involved and found it a valuable experience, both for the young volunteers who worked on the project and also hopefully for other young people who interact with the finished piece. We hope it will encourage others to think about and share how they are feeling, and how this tends to be represented in popular media.” **Grace Jeremy (Participation & Rights Worker | The Mentality Project Lead | Off The Record (Bristol))**

Reach, views and impact:

Three of the articles from the content series were featured in the eleventh print edition of the Bristol Cable when 30,000 copies were printed and distributed across Bristol between April and June 2017. These articles were:

1. Is the Bristol mental health sector healthy?
2. Perinatal mental health in Bristol
3. Shining a light on Bristol’s lonely

15,000 copies were distributed to venues across the whole city, while another 13,000 copies were distributed door-to-door in areas from Fishponds to Southville. Approximately 2,000 others were distributed hand-to-hand or posted directly to Cable co-operative members.

All six of the articles also appeared on the Bristol Cable website. The viewing figures for each piece can be seen below:

ARTICLE	NUMBER OF VIEWS
“Are you sexually confused?": Prejudice in mental health services	255
Is the Bristol mental health sector healthy?	738
Suffering in silence: mental health in black communities	429

Perinatal mental health in Bristol	183
Shining a light on Bristol's lonely	254
"You are definitely not alone": Using art to tackle the teenage mental health taboo	290
TOTAL VIEWS	2149

Future work:

The project demonstrates the value of proper consultation in creating unique and interesting content. The Cable believes in the value of creating Stakeholder Driven Content (SDC). The purpose of SDC is to involve individuals in journalism, and to allow their experiences to shape what is produced. We believe that this project has delivered on those aims, and that this aligns us with Healthwatch, who value feedback from patients and service users.

We also believe that creating the kind of content that we did in this project is more valuable than the standard format of reports and focus groups. We believe that using community media organisations to spread information is more effective and reaches a wider audience. Projects like this help to create information that may not be easy to explain using complex reports, and is more accessible for a wider audience. The Bristol Cable would like to deliver such projects again in the future, and with more funding could deliver further content series such as this project.