**North London Service User Research Forum**

**Supported by UCL Biomedical Centre Mental Health Theme and North London Partnership NHS Trust**

**Hosted by UCL Division of Psychiatry**

**Overview**

The North London Service User Research Forum (SURF) was founded in 2005 to provide a consultation service for UCL researchers working in the field of mental health to discuss their research with experts by experience. SURF members have lived experience of mental health problems and mental health service use. The SURF is hosted by the UCL Division of Psychiatry and meets at least four times per year. It is co-Chaired by Katherine Barrett (service user) and Professor Helen Killaspy (UCL) and funded through the mental health theme of UCLH’s Biomedical Centre.

**SURF’s Remit**

* SURF members are all current or previous users of mental health services in north London (Camden, Islington, Barnet, Enfield or Haringey)
* The SURF consults with researchers about their research projects at any stage of a project, from design through to dissemination
* Many researchers consult with SURF during the design phase of a study and include the SURF feedback in the Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) section of their application for research funding
* SURF consultations can also form part of the ongoing PPI activities of a funded research project. Appropriate costs for these meetings should be included in the project budget
* SURF meetings provide the opportunity for members to hear about research projects but SURF does not identify individuals for PPI roles on specific research projects. Researchers who wish to recruit individuals for PPI roles on their project need to do so independently of the SURF and include appropriate costs for their time in their research funding application
* The SURF is based in north London and generally consults with researchers based at or affiliated with UCL. It is also able to provide consultation to researchers from outside UCL whose projects involve the mental health services of the North London NHS Partnership which covers Camden, Islington, Barnet, Enfield and Haringey

**SURF Meetings**

* SURF meetings are held 4-5 times per year on-line via a secure videoconferencing platform (Zoom or Microsoft Teams)
* Each meeting lasts 90 minutes and provides the opportunity for up to 3 research presentations (30 minutes each)
* Prior to each meeting, the SURF administrator will email a brief summary of the project/s to be presented
* Researchers are asked to focus their consultation time on the areas of their project where they need specific lived experience feedback (e.g. the aim/s of the project, approach to recruitment, choice of outcomes, content of topic guides, dissemination) and to minimise PowerPoint presentation time to optimise the time for discussion
* It is the researcher’s responsibility to make notes of the SURF discussion and feedback. No formal feedback is provided by SURF after the meeting

**SURF Membership**

* Applications for new SURF members are considered by the SURF co-Chairs and the Director of the UCLH BRC Mental Health Theme (Professor Rob Howard)
* SURF members are appointed for a maximum of 3 years, renewable for one further 3 year term
* The SURF has a maximum membership of 20 people including the two co-Chairs
* As SURF meetings are held on-line via a videoconferencing platform, SURF members must have access to their own PC, laptop, tablet or handheld device to access the meeting. Shared use of devices is not allowed as it impairs the quality of communication. If this is problematic, we can facilitate access to a PC at the UCL Division of Psychiatry
* SURF members should join meetings from a quiet, private location where they will not be interrupted and where background noise is minimised. If this is problematic we can facilitate access to a room at UCL or at a local mental health centre
* SURF members should keep their camera on during meetings and use the ‘raise hand’ function before being invited to speak by the Chair. The co-Chairs will ensure that members who raise their hands are given time to make their point/s
* For privacy, SURF members should use their first name only when adding their name to the ‘name/title’ box on videoconferencing
* The SURF administrator will hold all SURF members’ personal details and email addresses securely at UCL and these details will not be shared with other SURF members
* All communication about SURF meetings with SURF members will be via the SURF administrator
* All SURF members are paid for their time in attending meetings (£30 per meeting). It is the responsibility of all SURF members to acknowledge this income to DWP or HMRC or any other formal body as appropriate
* The SURF administrator arranges for these expenses to be processed after each SURF meeting
* If a member misses three consecutive meetings the co-Chairs will contact them to ask if they wish to continue their SURF membership

**SURF Membership Application Process**

* People wishing to apply to join the SURF should email their completed application form to Maria Thomas ([m.a.thomas@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.a.thomas@ucl.ac.uk)) **by 5pm on Friday 1st March 2024**.
* The completed application form **must include:**
  + your full name
  + your preferred contact email address
  + the relevant borough within the North London Partnership catchment area where you live and/or receive or have received mental health services (Camden, Islington, Barnet, Enfield or Haringey)
  + the reason/s you wish to join SURF (max 250 words)
  + previous experience in research and/or service user involvement roles (max 250 words)
* You don’t have to use the full word count to describe your reasons for wishing to apply and your previous experience but applications that exceed these word counts or that are incomplete will not be accepted.
* All applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application **by 28th March 2024**.