

Guest editorial

The Crisp Team

This important special issue highlights research and learning from the transatlantic “Citizenship, Recovery, Inclusive Society Partnership” (CRISP). CRISP has worked for four years to bring together academics, policy-makers and peers from across the USA and Europe in exchanges, conferences and research projects. Partners include Yale University, New York University, Illinois Institute of Technology, Ulm University, The Mental Health Foundation and Finland Association for Mental Health. Dozens of beneficiaries spent a month or more in another country learning from and with them.

Together we explored the social exclusion faced by people with mental health conditions, and the initiatives and policies that can promote greater equality and inclusion. We framed this in the context of stigma, recovery and citizenship. These are important areas of mental health research in their own right but our approach was to understand how these concepts related to one another and how they can inform policy solutions.

A number of themes emerged through CRISP. One was the value of peer support, leadership and peer research as an important way to ensure that we see the world through the eyes of those most affected, and also that we co-produce solutions. This is a feature of many of our articles in this special edition. Second, we highlight the importance of seeing the whole person and intersecting identities. So many of our articles include a focus upon those who experience additional disadvantage such as poverty, race and experience of the justice system. Third, we examine issues that are very sensitive within the mental health field, for example stigma and recovery associated with suicide. Fourth, we recognise the importance of arts and culture, as agents of change through activism, but also as a research methodology to bring the experiences of inequality to life. Finally, the impact of social determinants has been a common concern through the life of the project – at a time when we are facing considerable relevant challenges in Europe and the USA including increasing economic disparities, political turmoil and a programme of austerity which disproportionately affects our most marginalised citizens.

Issues of policy were a consistent focus of the collaboration. Within countries the challenges include how to mobilise resources for prevention; the balance between targeted and general policy measures, and the potential for international policy and practice transfer. We led several examples of this international development work such as applying Yale’s peer-development citizenship scale in the UK, Chicago’s disclosure programme in Europe, sharing recovery models and arts approaches. These have resulted in publications and practical outcomes but what has emerged strongly is that whilst adaptations may be needed in different socio-cultural contexts, the participatory learning process is what matters most. We would like to thank NHS Lothian, NHS Glasgow, Thrive NYC and NGO’s for participating in the policy workshops and discourse.

This special edition is linked to an international conference in July 2019 involving the World Health Organisation. It is our intention that the learning here – and in wider publications – shapes international policy and practice, and that our transatlantic community of learning and practice endures.

The CRISP team:

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The CRISP network includes University of Strathclyde, New York University, Mental Health Foundation, Mieli Mental Health Finland, ULM University, Yale University and Illinois Institute of Technology.

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant Agreement No. 690954. Any dissemination of results must indicate that it reflects only the author’s view and that the Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.