

Psychological approaches to understanding and promoting recovery in psychosis and bipolar disorder: a mixed-methods approach

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Psychosis (including disorders such as schizophrenia, which are characterised by hearing voices or paranoid beliefs) and bipolar disorder (BD) (characterised by mood swings) are common forms of serious mental health problems. Clinical services typically define recovery in terms of absence of symptoms. In contrast, service users conceptualise recovery as a unique process rather an end point, with key themes including hope, rebuilding self and rebuilding life. Our research aimed to understand and promote recovery in psychosis and BD, in a manner that is acceptable to and empowering of service users. Six linked projects were conducted using a variety of methods to develop new ways of measuring recovery; to understand what recovery means to service users and what factors promote recovery; to understand how recovery, symptoms and psychological well-being are related; to examine what sort of factors predict recovery; and to test three new interventions. All projects were conducted in collaboration with service users and the research team included two service user researchers. Our research has made significant additions to our understanding and promotion of recovery, including the development of two new measures which were shown to be valid and acceptable to service users. We have shown that we can measure recovery, that factors such as reduced negative emotions, increased self-esteem and hope are predictive of recovery judgements and that the new interventions tested showed promising benefits to people with psychosis and suicidal thinking and people with BD. These findings have important implications for future research and for clinical practice.

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