

An online supported self-management toolkit for relatives of people with psychosis or bipolar experiences: the IMPART multiple case study

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†In memoriam

Declared competing interests of authors: Fiona Lobban and Vanessa Pinfold were the originators of the Relatives' Education And Coping Toolkit (REACT) and, therefore, are not independent researchers. Jo Rycroft-Malone is Programme Director of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Services and Delivery Research (HSDR) programme, which funded this research, and is chairperson of the funding committee, and, at the time that the project was funded, was the deputy chairperson of the commissioned workstream of the NIHR HSDR programme.

Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

Published September 2020

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr08370

Plain English summary

The IMPART multiple case study

Health Services and Delivery Research 2020; Vol. 8: No. 37

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Plain English summary

This study looked at what helps and what hinders the introduction of online support services in NHS care.

To do this, we examined the introduction of an online toolkit for relatives of people with psychosis or bipolar disorder into routine practice in six mental health trusts. The Relatives' Education And Coping Toolkit (REACT) had previously been shown to be a promising way to support relatives, although how well it works in reducing relatives' distress is still being tested in a parallel study (REACT trial).

This study asked what do organisations need to put in place so that people can successfully use this support package? What gets in the way of this and what helps? Our research team included carers.

Our approach was to build case studies of each trust to describe what happened. REACT was introduced in two trusts first, the lessons from these being transferred to the next two trusts and then again to the last two trusts. We collected data on how many people used REACT and how often; we also talked to people about their experiences. Finally, a 2-day event was held to draw the findings into a framework.

It was hard to get REACT to relatives. Over 18 months, about half of the relatives invited to use REACT did so. Staff and relatives valued REACT, but staff found it difficult to prioritise support for relatives because of workload and were frustrated by technical issues. Some staff viewed REACT as a useful addition to face-to-face support, but felt that personal relationships remained more important. There was significant resistance to a stand-alone online package, and some concern about managing risk in online forums. The use of REACT might increase engagement with relatives, so there are cost implications.

The findings show that significant changes are needed to both the way in which online interventions are developed, tested and delivered, and to the NHS services hosting them.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

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This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 14/04/16. The contractual start date was in March 2016. The final report began editorial review in December 2018 and was accepted for publication in June 2019. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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