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INPATIENT FAMILIES RESEARCH

Community of Interest

NEWSLETTER

September 2026

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Hello to all our Inpatient Families Community of Interest members. We are very pleased to share our latest research newsletter with you all - we hope you enjoy reading our news and updates.

Inpatient Families Research Updates

There are two different but related research projects being run by the Inpatient Families team, and it is exciting to be able to share an update.

Provision for Parents on Psychiatric Units (POPI)

is focused on the experience of family visits to inpatient units. We have now interviewed 27 parents, adults who supported a child while their parent was in hospital, children and young people and healthcare workers. The accounts of family visits we have heard make us even more committed to trying to improve this part of healthcare provision.

More than 50 parents, healthcare professionals and adults who have supported a child, have completed our questionnaire in which we find out more about what are the most important aspects to try and change.

A **second project**, in which we will evaluate family focused practice in inpatient units across the country will start in January 2027. We have developed a set of evaluation measures based on prior research and with experts by experience. We will use these as part of a realist evaluation in which we seek to understand variation in family focused practice including what helps and what gets in the way.

Can You Help Us With Recruitment?

We are still keen to speak with adults who have looked after a child whilst their parent was in hospital.

The questionnaire is also still open to people with this experience as well as parents who have been in hospital. If you know of anyone please do pass this along.

We will soon be starting work to co-produce materials to improve family visits – including a template family room and information for families.



If you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch!



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New Inpatient Families Logo



You might have noticed that we have a new Inpatient Families logo! This logo was produced with input from our Inpatient Families Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP). Our LEAP members offered feedback on both design and colour, as well as how representative and inclusive the image was in terms of different family structures. This logo will be used on future study information and forms to easily identify our research.

Research Publications

We are also very pleased to share two recent publications from members of the Inpatient Families research team:

- [Exploring Engagement with the Online 'Parenting with Anxiety' Intervention Within a Community Setting](#)
- [Mixed methods investigation into provision of family rooms and support for parents admitted to psychiatric inpatient units and their children: Study protocol](#)

Design In Mental Health Conference - June 2026

In June, Abby and Chloë from the Inpatient Families Research Team attended the [Design in Mental Health \(DIMH\) Conference](#) in Coventry. This annual conference brings together people from a range of sectors and backgrounds who share an interest in improving mental health settings to support better patient outcomes.

The conference featured keynote speakers and presentations alongside a wide range of industry exhibitors showcasing products and services.

Attendees are encouraged to ask questions about design features, provide feedback, and connect with experts from across different sectors.

Abby and Chloë had the opportunity to explore furniture designed specifically for mental health settings that was both comfortable and less clinical in appearance, while still meeting the requirements of a hospital environment. They also viewed technology designed to support family connection when a parent is receiving treatment in hospital.





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Lived Experience Involvement in Inpatient Families Research

We are very lucky to have two Lived Experience Advisory Panels (LEAPs) that support the Inpatient Families research. Both LEAPs are made up of dedicated parents and carers with lived experience of family visits when a parent is receiving inpatient treatment in mental health hospital.

Below, one of our Inpatient Families LEAP members has shared her thoughts on her involvement so far:

“Being admitted to a mental health unit as a parent isn’t the type of thing that comes up in conversations about school runs and homework. It’s an isolating experience that can feel very shameful and like you’ve failed as a parent. As a parent you try to put these things behind you for your children’s benefit, but that doesn’t erase your experience, or fear of it happening again.

To come across a research project that surfaces, talks about and is trying to improve the experiences of parents in mental health inpatient units was both unexpected and welcome.

It felt like someone, somewhere had finally noticed the parents inhabiting this space.

Although we are at the very beginning of the project I have already experienced the solidarity of being with parents with shared experiences; in a space where it’s safe to talk about our experiences at all, as well as the challenges, tensions and trauma that come with it. Thinking carefully about how to gather useful information and use language that isn’t off putting gives me hope we can encourage other parents to contribute to research that isn’t just about information, but concrete change directed by the people most affected.”

Naomi Salisbury

Don’t forget you can also connect with us and stay up to date with our research in the following ways:

- Email: parentprojects@sussex.ac.uk
- Website: [Inpatient Families](#)
- Instagram: [inpatient_families](#)

