**15 March 2021**

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED TO MIDDAY MONDAY 15 MARCH 2021**

**Somerset’s Open Mental Health alliance**

**shortlisted for prestigious national award**



**An alliance of Somerset voluntary organisations, the NHS and social care has been shortlisted for a national award in recognition of the way we are working together to give people the support they need at the right time.**

The alliance – called Open Mental Health – has made the final of the widely acclaimed Health Service Journal (HSJ) Value awards in the category of ‘public and preventative health service redesign initiative’.

Open Mental Health is a multi-agency initiative using the collective strengths of partner organisations to transform lives and support the mental health of communities in Somerset. They do this by breaking down long existing barriers to support and enabling prevention, early intervention and holistic support. Open Mental Health provides support to help people live a full life by enabling access to specialist mental health services, housing support, debt and employment advice, volunteering opportunities, community activities and exercise. People with lived experience of using services have been at the heart of the design, development and delivery of Open Mental Health from the very beginning.

The HSJ Value awards judging panel is made up of a diverse range of highly regarded figures across the NHS and wider healthcare sector.

To be shortlisted as a finalist for these awards, despite tough competition from hundreds of brilliant applicants, is a mark of real achievement for all the organisations involved in Open Mental Health.

Jane Yeandle, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust’s service director for mental health and learning disabilities, said she was delighted that the Open Mental Health partnership had been nominated for this prestigious award.

*“This really is a massive achievement,” she said. “We are very proud of the incredible work that our mental health colleagues have done alongside the voluntary sector and our recovery partners and experts by experience – those with lived experience of mental health services and of living with a mental health condition.*

*“Some examples of the success of Open Mental Health are the implementation of a 24/7 support line; development of community crisis alternatives; and the launch of a small grants fund which has enabled many community and grass roots projects to develop and thrive. The support line alone is taking about 3,000 calls every month.*

*“This is the third national award our mental health services have been shortlisted for this year, after we reached the final of the Health Service Journal awards for ‘Mental Health Trust of the Year’ and ‘Innovation of the Year’ for the Somerset Emotional Wellbeing Podcast. This was also very much thanks to the outstanding work of Open Mental Health and our system wide partnership working, and we will find out whether we have won on Wednesday 17 March.*

*“Our message to adults and young people in Somerset in need of mental health support is that Mindline Somerset is here to help. Just call 01823 276892, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or email* [*support@openmentalhealth.org.uk*](mailto:support@openmentalhealth.org.uk)*.”*

Beccy Wardle, Rethink’s Head of NHS Collaboration, said she was thrilled that Open Mental Health has received this important recognition.

*“Open Mental Health really has been a whole system effort, focused on real transformative change of mental health services and support in Somerset. All of the Open Mental Health partners, voluntary sector and statutory sector alike, have worked incredibly hard so to have this recognised by being shortlisted feels fantastic.*

*“Collectively, we would not have been able to achieve this sort of service shift without listening closely to and working with people who have experience of using mental health services. Holding on to this principle has been integral to what has been achieved so far.*

Katherine Nolan, Chair of Open Mental Health and CEO of Spark Somerset said that it is an honour to see this work receiving national attention.

*"We're so proud to have been nominated for this national award - it is an honour to have this fantastic work recognised in this way.*

*“Our colleagues across health and the voluntary sector have been working tirelessly over the past year to develop this new approach to mental health support and this award is a testament to all their hard work and commitment.*

*"Open Mental Health enables people to access a whole range of support to aid their recovery, from clinical services to housing advice, support groups to debt advice - and much more.   By taking this more collaborative approach, it's now much quicker and easier for people in Somerset to get the right support at the right time, which is what it's all about.*

*"Congratulations to all involved. It's a privilege to be working with such a fantastic team and I'm excited to see Open Mental Health continue to develop and grow."*

Bo Bowman-Shaw, Expert by Experience Leader, has first-hand experience of accessing mental health support in Somerset.

*"There was a commitment to coproduction from the very beginning of this groundbreaking transformation. This meant that our expert by experience opinions moulded and shaped the transformation and they still do due to our ongoing involvement in many different working groups and locality strategic meetings. There is a marked change, a real feeling of validation and respect for those with mental health needs; that we are being listened to."*

Andrew Keefe, Deputy Director of Commissioning (Mental Health, Autism, & Learning Disabilities),

Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group said: “*I am really pleased that Open Mental Health has received this national recognition from the HSJ, it is entirely deserved. Open Mental Health has transformed how people can get help with their mental health and emotional wellbeing needs in the most difficult of years.. This has been achieved by all partners working together for the people of Somerset and has set the standard for many other areas to follow.”*

HSJ editor Alastair McLellan said: *“We would like to congratulate Open Mental Health on being shortlisted in the ‘public and preventative health service redesign initiative’ category for the HSJ Value Awards 2021.*

*“This year’s finalists have not only contributed to the continued fight against the COVID-19 pandemic within the NHS but have also been exceptionally dedicated to enhancing healthcare across the UK.*

*We are honoured to be recognising and celebrating their outstanding work after what is, no doubt, the most challenging year in the history of the NHS. We are looking forward to welcoming them to the ceremony in June.”*

The winners will be selected following a rigorous, second stage of judging ahead of the HSJ Value Awards 2021 awards ceremony. Held at Manchester Central at the end of June, the evening will provide a great opportunity for influential figures to unite and celebrate the achievements of their industry peers. The awards evening is expected to be attended by leaders and professionals from within the NHS.

**Ends**