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Citation for final published version:

Chilvers, Clair and Owen, Michael J. 2023. Mental Health Research, shared goals. *Journal of Mental Health* 32 , 1017. 10.1080/09638237.2021.1898562

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2021.1898562>

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## **Mental Health Research: Shared Goals**

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Mental Health Research UK (MHRUK) welcomes the publication of the Mental Health Research Goals<sup>1</sup> and the paper from Wykes et al<sup>2</sup>, co-authored by two of our own Trustees – Jones and Pinfold, describing their development and proposing how they can be monitored in the short to medium term. These goals are broad and inclusive but focus researchers and funders on the need for research that is aimed at patient benefit. They align closely with our own goals. We agree that, unless there are arrangements put in place for monitoring, they will be unlikely to make their full impact. Mental health has long been the poor relation in health services and in research. Increased publicity and public discussion of mental illness had been growing year on year before the pandemic began. It has increased even more as a result of the effects of isolation on all age groups and closure of schools and universities on younger age groups. Job losses, increases in domestic violence and varied impacts of covid-19 across different racial groups have also taken their toll on mental wellbeing.

As a small contributor to mental health research, MHRUK has a part to play. We started the charity in 2008 and, from small beginnings, have now invested over £2m in scholarships for early career researchers to do PhDs. Our vision has always been to invest in promising scholars from diverse backgrounds who want to be mental health researchers; without the researchers, we cannot make the progress required to bring mental health benefits to individuals, families, community and society as a whole. By awarding scholarships, MHRUK also contributes to the work of the very best UK university departments, supporting in particular less experienced supervisors to develop their programmes of research.

We were part of the process of determining the Mental Health Research Priorities. Our commitment to change progressed alongside the process for deciding these goals. Research into the mental health of children and young people has been a focus of ours, and over the past 3 years we have invested in five PhDs in this area. In addition, we are firmly committed to the importance of the lived experience perspective and contributed to the funding of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Research priority-setting process led by the McPin Foundation with the James Lind Alliance<sup>3</sup>. This resulted in research priorities set collectively by young people, parents/guardians, clinicians and others involved with young people such as teachers and youth workers. Our focus next year for PhD scholarships will be the psychological impacts of covid-19 and Black mental health.

The pressing challenge for MHRUK, alongside other charities, is how to increase public support for mental health research so we can fund vital science contributing to the implementation of these published goals. In order to do this, we must work together as a community of funders, researchers, people affected by mental health problems and those working in health and social care.

## **References**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://acmedsci.ac.uk/file-download/63608018>

<sup>2</sup>Wykes T. \*, Bell A., Carr S., Coldham T., Gilbody S., Hotopf M., Johnson S., Kabir T, Pinfold V., Sweeney A., Jones PB\* and Cresswell C.\* Shared goals for mental health research: what, why and when for the 2020s. *Journal of Mental Health* 2021 (in press)

<sup>3</sup> McPin Foundation (2018). *Children and Young People's Research Priorities.*: <https://mcpinorg/cyp-research-priorities/>