

# Who Cares?

Report on the Who Cares? conference on Faith and Mental Health: October 2014

**The Who Cares? Conference took place on Thursday 16th October 2014 at St James's Church Centre in Finchampstead, Berkshire.**

The conference was a joint initiative between South East England Faith Forum (SEEFF), the Oxford Diocesan Committee for Interfaith Concerns (ODCIC), Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Art Beyond Belief. *Who Cares?* was open to all those concerned with the relationship between faith, culture, religion and mental health - mental health practitioners from different faiths and none, faith leaders, representatives of third sector organisations, and mental health service users.

The idea for the conference came about because it was recognised that understanding the relationships and interactions between faith and mental health are pivotal and vital both for those with mental health issues and professionals. Talking to people in these areas of work, we discovered that mental health professionals would like the



opportunity to learn more about a variety of cultural approaches to mental illness, just as many faith and cultural communities would like to learn more about how mental health conditions are understood and treated in hospital and community. To quote Dr Rabia Malik, service co-leader of The Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust: *"The community is becoming more and more harassed so there's lack of trust and a reluctance to engage with main-stream services."*

Although many agree that it is accepted that secular practice should not exclude the place of religion and spirituality in people's lives, to quote one of the conference speakers, Prof Rob Poole: *"Sometimes the spiritual and religious are caught up with psychopathology"* ... and many believe that spirituality and religion do not belong in the consulting room or the operating theatre unless the patient brings it there. Sometimes the issues are

*Above: Prof Catherine Robinson addresses the conference. Below: Robert Packer shares his experiences as someone with a strong faith who is also a user of mental health services.*

clear-cut but increasingly we seem to be dealing with fuzzy boundaries. There is also the question: Where should the care come from? - self-care, care from family, or from other networks like culture, faith or religion? Alternatively, should the engagement come from the people who are already engaged with faith and spirituality, or is it a duty of everyone who interacts with those who have mental health issues? Equally, do faith leaders and communities have a duty to care and what are the responsibilities of faith leaders? Baroness Jolly said at Faith in Action's Friendly Places Pledge: *"We shouldn't underestimate the often profound and significant role that faith groups can play in supporting people with mental health conditions within congregations and in the wider community."*



*Opening the Conference (below)*  
*Chris T K Khoo FRCS FRCSEd ad hom,*  
*High Sheriff of The Royal County of*  
*Berkshire*



**Chairs:**

Dr Hugh Boulter is Honorary Secretary of the Oxford Diocesan Committee for Inter-faith Concerns, a member of the National Diocesan Inter-faith Advisers Group, and a member of the Christian/ Muslim Contact Group at Lambeth Palace. He is a member of South East England Faith Forum's Thames Valley Group. With a background in teaching and educational administration, he is author of several publications on interfaith concerns.

Bede Gerrard is a Reader in the Greek Orthodox Christian Church and chair of the Oxford Council of Faiths. He was appointed an Ecumenical Canon of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford and is among the first to be so honoured in the Thames Valley. He is active in interfaith matters and until 2013 was the Ecumenical Officer for Oxfordshire.

**Speakers:**

Dr Chetna Kang MBBS MRCPsych - Co Chair of the National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum, a Public Education Editorial Board Member, Consultant Psychiatrist, BBC Radio Broadcaster, Executive Committee Member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Spiritual Interests Group and Hindu Pastor at Bhaktivedanta Manor in Hertfordshire. Her areas of interest include depression and anxiety, psychosis and schizophrenia, personality disorders, Mental Health in the South Asian Community, and spirituality and mental health.

Dr Khadija Masood - Locum Consultant Psychiatrist at Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. She studied psychiatry at the Col-

lege of Physicians and Surgeons in Karachi, Pakistan and is a practicing Muslim. She is fluent in a number of Asian languages. Her areas of special interest are culture, spirituality and mental health, PTSD and Complex Needs Services.

Prof. Rob Poole - Co-Director of the Centre for Mental Health and Society, and Professor of Social Psychiatry at the School of Social Sciences, Bangor University. A clinical psychiatrist, he is Chair of the Executive Committee of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Wales and is Director and Specialist Adviser to the Invited Review Service at the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Prof. Catherine Robinson - Professor of Social Policy Research and Co-director of the Centre for Mental Health and Society, is Head of School at the School of Social Sciences, Bangor University, and National Lead for the All Wales Academic Social Care Research Collaboration.

*Below: Dr Khadija Masood addresses the conference.*





The conference was chaired by Dr Hugh Boulter, and it was opened by Chris Khoo The High Sheriff of The Royal County of Berkshire. The morning session saw two keynote speakers: Dr Chetna Kang, talked on The Advantages and Problems of Having a Faith in relation to mental health. Dr Khadija Masood responded to the same topic, particularly from a Muslim perspective. Attendees then split up into four groups to discuss the topic, expand what are the particular problems faced by those in the group, and address what can be done to efficiently manage these problems. Suzanna

Rose, who was due to chair the afternoon session was unfortunately unable to attend, so the chair was taken by Bede Gerard, Chair of South East England Faiths Forum Thames Valley Region. The afternoon speakers, Prof Rob Poole & Prof Catherine Robinson spoke about Professional Boundaries between the practitioner and the patient. Revd Rachel Wadey - Mental Health Chaplain at the Department of Spiritual Care of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - responded, exploring the issue: What makes a complete person? As in the morning, the audience split into four groups to

unpack the topics further in light of their own experiences. During the day, two mental health service users, Robert Packer and Richard Candy, shared their experiences of their mental health journeys. Following the discussions there were plenary sessions at which the facilitators gave feedback from the groups.

*above: Prof Rob Poole answers questions with (from left), Chair Bede Gerard, Dr Khadija Masood, Prof Catherine Robinson, Revd Rachel Wadey and Richard Candy. Below: Dr Chetna Kang (centre on sofa) in one of the breakout discussion groups.*





72 people signed up to attend the conference - 58 turned up on the day with 13 sending their apologies. Of those attending, 20 were faith leaders and community members, 16 were mental health professionals, 11 were from social and community organisations and seven were from elsewhere. Eight participants identified that they had personal experience of mental health issues.

The venue was excellent, although some people had difficulty finding it despite full directions being supplied. Some people mentioned that the venue would be difficult or impossible to access by public transport, although everyone had managed to find lifts to get there. An excellent lunch was provided.

### **What did people find most useful about the day?**

- being introduced to Mental Health First Aid - something not everyone was aware of
- meeting people from other agencies to find out about workshops and services, particularly those available for young people
- the mix of people at the event made the day rich in content and in spirit

- meeting and talking to the members of the Chaplaincy Team
- networking time between sessions and during refreshments.
- broad points of view
- excellent speakers, interesting and valuable, all excellent in different and diverse ways
- Dr Kang was thought inspirational; she and Rachel Wadey were most appreciated for their talks and input
- what makes a whole person was a fascinating topic
- the advantages and problems of a faith within a mental health context were well addressed
- group discussions were respectful and everyone had the opportunity to comment

### **What could have been improved?**

- a 10-15 minute Q&A session after each speaker would have been appreciated. More Q&A and discussion was requested
- some of the delivery was rushed (especially the afternoon) and some felt the introductions were not strictly necessary
- It was felt that the views put forward on behalf of atheists were somewhat sweeping - atheists hav-

*above: participants split into four groups for discussion after both the morning and the afternoon sessions. ing as many different opinions and nuanced views as do people with a faith!*

Some people felt that the speakers talked for too long, although some suggested that fewer speakers would have served better, as they would have been able to go into more depth.

Most people felt they were able to raise the majority of the issues they wanted to, no-one felt that this was not possible at all, although approx 10% felt they would have liked to address more issues. Some wanted to hear more from service users, although an equal number would have preferred a more strategic approach. The plenary session was appreciated, but opinion was that it would have been better with more time, more bringing together of learning from the day. There were a number of suggestions for other events around mental health, and those attending would all be keen to hear about future plans for similar conferences events we organise.

# Who Cares?

## A Conference on Faith, Culture and Mental Health

*The conference is open to all those concerned with the relationship between faith, culture, religion and mental health. Participants will include mental health practitioners from different faiths and none as well as faith leaders from different communities*

Who Cares? is a joint initiative between the Oxford Diocesan Committee for Inter-faith Concerns, the South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF) and the Berkshire Health NHS Foundation Trust

On 16th October 2014, 9:30-16:30  
at St James's Church Centre  
Church Lane, Finchampstead  
Berkshire, RG40 4LU

Register at Eventbrite on <http://bit.ly/115rG4D>

*The Conference will be opened by  
The High Sheriff of the  
Royal County of Berkshire  
C T K Khoo esq*

Admission to the conference is £15.00, including lunch  
(vegetarian option available)  
Free places are available for service users  
Concessions are available through Art Beyond Belief  
For further information contact:  
Contact: Emel Soylu on [emel@art-beyond-belief.com](mailto:emel@art-beyond-belief.com)



### **What would people like to see covered at future mental health events?**

- issues around dementia and mental health, dealing with the elderly
- community cohesion
- older populations and spiritual wellbeing in old age
- mental health and crime, youth offending, prisoners
- youth, engaging the younger generation in spirituality to help self-esteem and confidence
- child & teenage mental health
- guilt, forgiveness and healing
- medical training options
- educating faith leaders about mental health and recovery
- issues around mental health of university students, fitness to study, counselling, working with chaplaincy teams

- application of integration
- wider perspectives, such as education, social work, employment, - still focussing on mental health, faith and spirituality
- governmental plans and attitudes for spiritual support and mental health
- alternative therapies - creative art therapy, meditation etc.
- general health and spirituality
- educating the public on issues around mental health
- availability and best use of community resources

### **And aside from purely mental health issues?**

- business ethics
- working against extremism
- young and extremism
- alcohol and drugs
- education

*"... a fantastic event and very informative. Please keep me posted of any future events" Parvinder Matharu, Senior Client Services Manager*

*"Thanks all for all the hard work that went into making it a good day" Rachel Wadey*

*"Thank you very much for your organisation of the event. I found it to be very insightful and interesting to hear the mix of perspectives." Jillian Hayes, staff nurse at Royal Berkshire Hospital.*

*"Much appreciated and enjoyed yesterday, so many thanks." Bill Moore, Independent consultant (education)*

*"A very well organised, informative and stimulating day, with lots of food for thought." Rachel Morgan, Art Beyond Belief Trustee*

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