



# **Research & Evaluation Annual Report: 2022-23**

## Introduction

The group's five year business plan for 2020-2025 makes a strong commitment to research, stating: 'We will ensure all our services are informed by research and evaluation, and will measure the impact of our work' - this being in recognition of the need to ensure that services are evidence-based, or in cases where the evidence-base has yet to be established, we will pro-actively seek to invest and engage in building practice-based evidence; thereby ensuring that our reputation for innovation is both maintained and enhanced. Furthermore, the Big Life Way is about 'being open to treading new ground, whilst also learning from feedback; innovating and being responsive to new challenges. Our work in the field of research and evaluation is in line with this directive – bringing latest ideas and learning into the group from across the world, for the benefit of our staff and those who we work with. Indeed, very much at the heart of the organisation, is the desire to be one that continually learns, never stays still and is ready to embrace opportunities and to tackle inequality and challenges.

This year, the group can be proud of its extensive involvement and leadership in research and evaluation activities, being at the forefront of third sector involvement in this area, receiving external recognition, whilst also making substantial progress regarding our internal research agenda; thereby promoting and embedding a culture conducive to continuous learning, evaluation, and impact measurement.

Highlights this year have included two papers on our services being published in academic journals, the appointment of a Research Officer to lead on our operational research and evaluation activities and a 50% increase year-on-year, in the number of Research, Learning and Development (RLD) webinars delivered for staff.

This report focuses on the key work streams and activities undertaken in the field of research and evaluation for the period 1st April 2022- 31st March 2023.

## Research Strategy Group

The Research Strategy Group, which oversees the group's research and evaluation activities at a strategic level, has continued to meet on quarterly basis with cross-group membership. It has the following Terms of Reference:

- To promote practice-based evidence and evidence-based practice within our services; ensuring they are informed by research
- To demonstrate the impact of our services and of working in the Big Life way; to help reshape public services
- To promote and embed a research and evaluation culture within the Big Life group

Key research workstreams and activities undertaken this year have included:

### **Continuing to link into relevant research networks, regionally, nationally, and globally**

This year we became a member of the European Connected Health Alliance (ECHA) whose name is somewhat of a misnomer in that the Alliance facilitates a global health connector partnership with members from across the globe. Being part of this community has already enabled the highlighting of our research initiatives, see <https://echalliance.com/peer-support-for-anxiety-and-depression-the-delivery-of-peer-support-services-in-the-community/> whilst also providing helpful connections and insight into relevant areas of interest.

### **Audit of all historic research and evaluation activities**

This substantial piece of work has seen the electronic cataloguing of all previous research and evaluation activities undertaken in the group – our Big Life 'research library.' Furthermore, documents identified as relevant for a public-facing audience will soon be uploaded to the 'research' area of the group's website.

### **Audit of research expertise in the group**

A comprehensive list of all major research methodologies and skills has been constructed in advance of being sent to staff to facilitate an audit of their research expertise. Going forward, the findings will be used to assist with internal research projects by building on existing research expertise and interest in the group, thereby bolstering our internal research resource.

## Research, Learning and Development (RLD) webinars

In recognition that many of our webinars not only focus on research and evaluation, but also serve as an educational and training opportunity for attendees, the title of the webinars was changed to reflect their ‘learning’ component.

This year saw an increase of 50% in the number of RLD webinars delivered in comparison with the previous year – with 12 webinars in total taking place. Chaired and hosted by the Director of Mental Health in partnership with the group’s Communications Lead, (and more recently with assistance from the Research Officer), a range of topics have been covered with strong staff engagement.

The schedule delivered over the period concerned, is as follows:

Date	Title, presenter(s) of webinar and designation	Presenter type	No. attended live	Total no. of views
20th April 2022	Dr Aaron Poppleton, GP and Clinical Research Fellow. <b>Facilitators and barriers to primary care in the Central Eastern European community.</b> <i>Keele University</i>	External	37	6
10th May 2022	Kathryn Ragan. <b>Hoarding beliefs questionnaire.</b> <i>University of Newcastle.</i>	External	45	17
21st June 2022	<b>Genetic links to Anxiety &amp; Depression – the GLAD study.</b> <i>National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)</i>	External	13	4
15th July 2022	Emma Eaton & Dr Kim Heyes. <b>The Multi-Modality Practitioner Approach An overview.</b> <i>Big Life group and Manchester Metropolitan University</i>	Internal & External	37	20
5th Aug 2022	Dr Esmira Ropaj. <b>Results of research into recovery from suicidal ideation.</b> <i>University of Manchester</i>	External	29	6
29th Sept 2022	Mia Bennion. <b>Between-session CBT low intensity homework.</b> <i>University of Manchester</i>	External	16	6
18th Oct 2022	Thea Cameron. <b>Language development in 3.5-5-year-olds.</b> <i>University of Manchester</i>	External	24	1
2nd Nov 2022	<b>The SQW ‘Achieve’ evaluation.</b> <i>The Big Life group</i>	Internal	17	3
15th Nov 2022	<b>Accessibility of perinatal health services for women from ethnic minority groups: views from third sector organisations.</b> <i>The Big Life group.</i>	Internal	28	2
26th Jan 2023	David Gilbert. <b>FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder), suggestibility and justice system.</b> <i>University of Salford</i>	External	27	2
8th Feb 2023	Zoe Wagland. <b>The International Trauma Interview (ITI) questionnaire.</b> <i>Edinburgh Napier University</i>	External	49	11
15th Mar 2023	Gilda Spaducci. <b>Intersectionality re racism, mental health, and alcohol services and those experiencing abuse.</b> <i>Kings College, London</i>	External	15	5
			Total attended = 337	Total no. of views = 83

Whilst the webinars are clearly valued by staff, this year we have developed a process to ensure that learning and recommendations arising from the webinars are taken forward and embedded in our work, so the events are very much about service, staff and organisational development as well as learning. For example, the findings of Esmira Ropaj's research into recovery from suicide attempts have been directly incorporated into our 'Managing Distressing Thoughts' course for those experiencing suicidal ideation in the community.

### **Flow-chart outlining process of handling incoming, external research requests**

Following consideration by members of the Research Strategy Group and a subsequent Board discussion, a flow-chart has been produced to outline the process for the handling of external research requests which may fall outside of the standard incoming research approaches received. For example, those emanating from pharmaceutical and other corporate bodies, or requests which focus on genetic research, where there may be further ethical and reputational considerations.

### **Identifying research needs in the group**

A semi-structured interview schedule has been developed to use as a tool in interviews with service managers across the group to identify research knowledge and activities to date, alongside areas for future research focus. Over the course of the coming year, these interviews will be undertaken across the group to complement the research skills audit activity, enabling an internal research work programme to be established, based on the group's priorities and business objectives.

# Research Tracker

The Research Tracker facilitates a quick overview of all recently completed research activities (both internal and external), as well as those currently underway.

At the time of authoring this report, there were 16 ongoing research collaborations and activities, (depicted below) and 12 completed projects:

1. Multi-Modality Practitioner approach – continuing to prove the concept and establish the evidence base for its effectiveness and acceptability for the people we work with, and staff trained as MMPs (Multi-Modality Practitioners). Big Life group & Manchester Metropolitan University.
2. Developing the evidence base for the effectiveness and acceptability of the community-based Managing Distressing Thoughts course (for those experiencing suicidal ideation). Big Life group and University of Manchester.
3. Comparison of clinician-supported vs non-clinician-supported eTherapy. Big Life group
4. Exploring negative and unpleasant childhood experiences in people from South Asian communities. University of Manchester.
5. Understanding the association between mental health and alcohol use in Black, Asian and Minority ethnic groups. Universities of Liverpool and Lancaster.
6. Exploring the effectiveness and acceptability of the Canopie perinatal mental health app. Canopie and the Big Life group.
7. Genetic links to anxiety and depression (the GLAD study) - improving understanding of anxiety and depression to develop more effective treatments. NIHR.
8. The Together study – delivery of the Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC) approach. University College London.
9. Exploring engagement for between-session work in low-intensity, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). University of Manchester.
10. The adaptation and evaluation of community-based CBT workshops for sub-threshold depression. University of Manchester and the Big Life group.
11. 2022 Big Issue in the North, vendor audit. The Big Life group.
12. EQUITY trial – enhancing the quality of psychological interventions delivered by telephone. University of Manchester.
13. Mental Health Implementation Network (MHIN) - implementation of a high-level alcohol assertive outreach team (AAOT) as part of the MHIN. NIHR
14. Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery). Merseyside Police.
15. Placed-based working and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). The Big Life group.
16. Home learning – parents' voice. The Big Life group.

## Research highlights

As detailed, this year, much progress has been made in furthering the group's research agenda, however the following stand out as notable highlights:

### Papers

This year, we have had two papers published in academic journals as follows:

Paper in Journal of Mental Health and Social Inclusion on our former Big Lottery funded community-based peer support service:

**Lidbetter, N., Seccombe, N., Rogers, E. G., & Lee, T. (2022). A reflection on the development and delivery of a community peer support service for clients experiencing anxiety and depression. Mental Health and Social Inclusion.**

And more recently, a paper on our pioneering, Multi-Modality Practitioner (MMP) approach:

**Lidbetter, N., Eaton, E., Cookson, P., & Bell, M. (2023). The Multi-Modality Practitioner (MMP) approach: a technically eclectic, multimodal workforce innovation in the provision of support for individuals and families with multiple needs. Mental Health and Social Inclusion.**

### Appointment of Research Officer

A Research Officer commenced post in December 2022, enabling focus on operational research activities and progression of key work streams.

### Research award

The Director of Mental Health, nominated by colleagues from the National Institute for Health and Care Research, won an award for commitment to participation in research in the North West Coast NHS (National Health Service) research awards.

### Library of Research activities

The comprehensive cataloguing of all research and evaluation documents undertaken by the group throughout its history is nearing completion.

## Future:

Whilst our research agenda has progressed at pace, we have ambitious plans including:

- Publishing on our eTherapy service comparing clinician-supported vs non-clinician-supported service outcomes
- Publishing on the effectiveness and acceptability of our Multi-Modality Practitioner (MMP) approach
- Publishing a case study on the Multi-Modality Practitioner (MMP) approach
- Developing internal research expertise and resources including research skills 'toolkit and library of resources'
- Further developing the group's research webpage to ensure all research studies and collaborations are easily located and the group's success in research is visibly depicted and celebrated
- Assess how research work has impacted staff
- Develop the RLD webinars into a programme of certified CPD (Continuing Professional Development) events
- Enter award schemes to further profile our activities in the research field

