



## Invitation to Share Your Story: Participate in the Living Histories Oral History Project

We would like to invite you to share your story as part of *Living Histories*, an oral history project which aims to capture and preserve the life stories of those with experiences who have used or worked in NHS mental health services in Sussex.

Led by Heads On, the official charity for Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and NHS Charities Together, the project will explore the whole life stories of people since the closure of the asylums in the late 1980's, up to and including the Covid-19 pandemic.

### About the Project

Living Histories seeks to document the personal narratives of both service users and staff, exploring the role mental health services play in people's whole life stories. The project will explore the shift from institutional care to community-based services, culminating in the challenges and transformations brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

By participating, you will contribute to a lasting archive that will inform future generations and foster a deeper understanding of the role that mental health services play in our lives.

### We are seeking participants who:

- Have personal experience with NHS mental health services in Sussex or beyond, whether as a service user, carer, or member of staff (clinical and non-clinical).
- Are current or former service users, carers or staff members of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.
- Have used or worked in NHS mental health services in Sussex since the closure of the old asylums up to and including Covid. Your story is valuable whether your experiences are recent or date back several decades. We aim to include a wide range of perspectives to ensure a rich and diverse oral history archive.

### What Participation Involves

- Oral History Interview: You will be invited to participate in a recorded 60–120-minute oral history interview conducted by one of our trained volunteers.
- Sharing Your Experience: You will have the opportunity to share your experiences, insights, and Your story of the role NHS mental health services have played in your whole life. This can be anonymised if requested.
- Consent: You will sign consent forms which you will receive copies of, setting out how and where your oral history could be used if permission is given i.e. a podcast, part of an exhibition, or on the Heads On website for example.
- Preserving Your Story: The recorded interviews will be preserved as part of a permanent archive at The Keep, part of the Mass Observation Archive, and also other documents at West Sussex Record Office as educational material for the future.



- These interviews will be scheduled at a time and location convenient for you in the Sussex area, between October 2024 and May 2025.
- Recording venues across Sussex.

### Why Your Participation Matters

Placing your mental health journey in the context of your whole life will help us collect, understand and learn about the role mental health NHS services play in Sussex.

By sharing your individual story, you will help illuminate the challenges, successes, and transformations within the NHS mental health services, ensuring that these experiences are remembered, understood and learned from by future generations.

**\*\* Travel expenses can be reimbursed for current SPFT service users within Sussex.\*\***

### How to Get Involved

If you are interested in participating, please express your interest by contacting us at [LivingHistories@spft.nhs.uk](mailto:LivingHistories@spft.nhs.uk) with the following details:

- Your name
- Brief outline of experiences
- Availability between October 2024 and May 2025
- Capacity to attend an oral history recording in Sussex.

We will aim to consider all expressions of interest and to let you know within a 30-day period about whether this will be selected for recording as part of the project's archival process.

We will then reach out to schedule your interview at a time that suits you. Please note that participation is not guaranteed. We want to achieve a breadth of stories and experiences so we will review expressions of interest to ensure this.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this opportunity further, please do not hesitate to get in touch. We are happy to provide more information and answer any concerns you may have.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to share your story. Your contribution will be a crucial part of preserving the history and heritage of mental health care in Sussex.

Best wishes

Nicola Benge Project Manager, *Living Histories*  
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