The right of each deaf young person and adult to tell his/her life story: A new intervention to enrich deaf wellbeing

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An ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) project

Introduction / background

Being able to tell your life story is essential for understanding your humanity and identity, and coping with life transitions. This fundamental aspect of being human is often not evident and accessible for deaf adults and young deaf people using a signed language.

This project extends the EU-funded study Deaf life narratives in times of transition, which explored an evidence-based life story telling method for enhancing deaf wellbeing and resilience. It explores the acceptability and feasibility of implementing a life story telling app by taking the findings from the first study to a wider group of stakeholders for consultation and co-development.

Methodology

• Produce the manual through exchange and cooperation with experts in life story work training
• Use feedback and engagement of partners and stakeholders to support fine-tuning of the prototype
• Produce a sensitisation video in which service users share their experiences with life story work
• Explore deaf life story work and future initiatives for training, research and practice through a first-ever national workshop and stakeholder platform

Aims and objectives

• To operationalise the findings of the EU project by producing a manual to support service providers’ intervention work with deaf young people and adults
• To generate a prototype life story telling app suitable for sign language users
• To raise awareness of the potential of deaf life story work
• To work towards the long-term establishment of specialised intervention

Expected outputs

• An intervention manual to support service providers working with young deaf people and deaf adults
• A prototype of a deaf life story telling app, which enables deaf signers from the UK and beyond to tell their life stories
• A video to sensitise a broad audience of service users and providers

Benefits to University of Manchester and external partners

The major stakeholder is the deaf community, which is represented by the partner organisations Manchester Deaf Centre and deafPLUS (London). These partners provide bridges between the deaf community (service users) and the professional sector (service providers).

The Therapeutic Life Story Work training course at IATE (London, Course Director Richard Rose), is a key partner in the development of training and intervention.

The project offers an opportunity to contribute to this emerging field through cross-disciplinary collaboration and knowledge transfer.

Expected impact

• The strengthening of deaf people’s resilience and improvement of their sense of identity and well-being which enables them to develop their potentiality in education, employment, and society

• The first-ever evidence-based foundation for a training course in deaf life story work and further research.

• Greater expertise and awareness amongst professionals and deaf stakeholders on life story work and the benefits for deaf wellbeing

• Formal and sustainable engagement between deaf stakeholders, services, service users, professional therapists and trainers, and researchers, leading to higher take-up and efficacy of interventions