

## Scottish Mental Health Service User Research Network

### ABSTRACT FORM

The Scottish Mental Health Service User Research Network was launched in 2011 with the aim of promoting mental health service user research in Scotland through helping to develop partnerships with other organisations, build capacity amongst service user researchers and showcase examples of good practice in relation to mental health service user research.

Organisations or researchers are invited to submit an abstract of their research to the Network. Where submissions satisfy the criteria agreed by the Network for service user research, these will be published on the Voices Of eXperience (VoX) website at <http://www.voxscotland.org.uk>.

If you wish to submit a research abstract or have any questions please email Chris White at [c.white.mentalhealth@gmail.com](mailto:c.white.mentalhealth@gmail.com)

<b>Research Title:</b>	The views of people on the autistic spectrum on their mental health needs and mental health services
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<b>Author(s):</b>	Autism Rights Group Highland and Highland User Group
<b>Date:</b>	2011

<b>Details of User Involvement (50 words max):</b> <i>(This should include brief details of the level of participation by services users in the following stages of the research: research design; implementation and data collection; data analysis; dissemination)</i>
The report arose from discussions between ARGH and HUG, and has therefore been run and designed by service users. It is based on questionnaires and facilitated group discussion between service users (who have autism but no learning disability).

<b>Research Rationale (50 words max):</b> <i>(This should include brief details of the purpose of the research).</i>
Service users are frustrated by a lack of understanding of autism, both from service workers and the public. This can include treating of autism as a learning disorder or mental illness, and often results in stigma.

<b>Method (75 words max):</b> <i>(Brief explanation of research methods, participation, data collection, analysis etc.)</i>
A questionnaire circulated among members of ARGH, leading to facilitated group discussions. Data collected qualitatively from these discussions. The small sample size of both the questionnaire and the group discussions (n=5) is noted.

<b>Findings and Recommendations (150 words max):</b> <i>(Please provide a brief overview of the main findings and recommendations)</i>
People with autism can become very uncomfortable around excessive sensory stimuli, or when routines are broken. They are often single-minded and pay great attention to detail.

These traits can be assets but can also lead to bullying and isolation, and a greater tendency to anxiety and depression. Service users feel a need for friendships, and to be valued. But people aren't always accepting. Life can be easier after diagnosis, as they know why they are different.

Mental Health services don't always understand autism, and it can feel like they are trying to 'cure' them when they attempt to treat them in inappropriate ways. But when service users talk to specialists, they are happy with the outcome. They appreciate good practice which takes into account their needs – e.g. punctuality. There are mixed views on whether more specialist services are needed, or whether existing services need better training to work with autism.

**Dissemination Details (50 words max):** *(This should include details of any events, journals etc. and how to obtain copies of the research)*

Publicised by Scottish Disability Equality Forum and Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, but not published. Distributed locally.

**Keywords:** *(keywords aimed at identifying the research report in information systems and search engines)*

'argh' 'hug' 'highland' 'autism' 'service user'

**Link to full research paper:**

[http://www.hug.uk.net/reports\\_pdf/1103%20Autism%20Report%20Final.pdf](http://www.hug.uk.net/reports_pdf/1103%20Autism%20Report%20Final.pdf)

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Are you happy for this email address to be published?

Yes

No

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Are you happy for this number to be publicised?

Yes

No

**Completed forms should be returned to:** Chris White at [c.white.mentalhealth@gmail.com](mailto:c.white.mentalhealth@gmail.com)

**Thank You**