

Tamar Jaynes

BIGSPD Candidate Statement

It is a very welcoming feeling to know that a Lived Experience Practitioner (LXP) will be voted onto the BIGSPD executive committee in the first ever elections of the membership. I am honoured to be tied with Melanie Ball, who is a strong candidate and cherished colleague.

Below I outline what I will offer to the Board & Membership as a committee member:

About me:

I am one of a handful of Lived Experience Practitioners who have completed the KUF MSc qualification in understanding & working with 'Personality Disorder'. I currently work with Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust, running the Service User Network for people with a diagnosis of personality disorder and the Strategic development of the Personality Disorder Pathways here. I also work through Pink Sky Thinking as a Consultant & Researcher. I run the Mad Studies Birmingham Group which considers academic work by people writing from an experiential lens. I am also working with the University of Birmingham and am on research projects with the Mental Health Policy Research Unit and BIGSPD. I have established connections with our membership, members of the executive committee, academics and Lived Experience Practitioners who work on a national level, which I am confident will ensure I can hit the ground running as a new committee member.

What I can offer you:

Speaking up

A key responsibility of being your committee member is bringing your concerns and views to the meetings. I am someone who is very skilled at getting things noticed and has practice at conveying views that may be uncomfortable to hear, even when they differ from my personal opinions. I have recent experience of linking with Lived Experience Practitioners to successfully question strategy at NHS Trust Board level and to lobby Sir Norman Lamb at Parliament offices regarding national strategy and funding for LXPs. I am confident that I will do this effectively for BIGSPD members too.

Inclusion

Part of this responsibility is including the missing voices. We know trauma impacts on people from all cultures and backgrounds. In order to better understand and meet the range of needs, we need to include people from these backgrounds within our decision making, staffing, research and services. Having a mixed cultural heritage has given me a first hand view of what inclusion & exclusion across racial lines looks like within my own family. A mixture of this first hand knowledge and prior work in audience development has helped me develop inclusive networks. The Service User Network and 'Mad Studies' groups I have developed and run within the Midlands area have attracted a diverse membership, in terms of people from a range of ethnicity, culture, age, religious, LGBT, educational, working discipline and disability background. I look forward to be part of developing a space that feels welcoming to faces we see less of at the moment, in particular our BME members.

Developing Links to High Quality SU Research:

A core element of BIGSPD is high quality, relevant research. I actively challenge the assumptions of low quality Service User Research that are common in some areas of academia. There is a wealth of high level academic research, from Professors, Post-Doc and PhD Researchers working within our field. I have been privileged to link with several of these academics through running the Birmingham

'Mad Studies' Group. I am currently working on research projects as a SU Researcher with BIGSPD and the Mental Health Policy Research Unit based at Kings College. My research background includes 14 years of working within the commercial and third sector in a more 'traditional' research capacity. I use this range of experience as an asset in understanding and illuminating the gaps that exist between academic literature and working practice. I would love to use this to encourage future multidisciplinary research collaborations within the BIGSPD community.

Strengthening Geographical Links

Although BIGSPD is UK wide, we have a strong presence in particular areas North and South, with gaps in other regions, such as the Midlands. As a committee member I will prioritise developing links with areas we have less connection with - starting with the Midlands, but also inviting members to use me as a resource to develop links with other underrepresented areas.

Increasing our LXP membership

BIGSPD has worked hard to be one of the most LXP inclusive conferences over the years. I have good active connections with a range of people within the Survivor movement who work nationally - LXPs, activists and service users, to navigate how we can continue to do this and work towards welcoming a variety of voices to enhance our understanding of the range of impacts this diagnosis has on people, and how needs can be better addressed. Initial conversations have included considering ways to enable LXPs who often work in an isolated capacity to identify each other, network and develop supportive connections. Being voted onto the committee would ensure I could move this beyond a conversation with LXPs to being considered for future conferences.

Social Media

At this year's conference Beam consultancy highlighted that previous Twitter conversation - particularly amongst the survivor movement - regarding SU Involvement at BIGSPD conference was negative. It didn't reflect some of the positives, such as a co-presidency, 10% funded SU places, co-developed research projects, the wealth of LXP speakers. I would like to be part of bridging the gap between the perception and what I have experienced as the reality of the conference, and working in conjunction with others who have a strong online presence to do so.

I would like to thank everyone who has voted for me already, those who vote for me in the next round, and EVERYONE who this year has voted for any of the LXP candidates, ensuring we will definitely have increased representation on the committee. It truly means a lot to us, and increases goodwill and inclusion knowing you have democratically invited us in.