



**Service Priorities and Programmes**  
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**“We Are the Same” – A destigmatization and community integration program for young people recovering from psychosis**

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**Introduction**

The contemporary approach to mental health service does not exclusively focus on symptom resolution; it also integrates the important concept of recovery, which emphasizes helping people regain a meaningful life in community (NHS, 2010). All along, mental illness, especially severe mental illness, is highly stigmatized. Such negative social attitude has significant deleterious impact. Not only does it reduce a person's self-esteem; it also hinders social re-integration and thwarts the recovery process. Worse still, social stereotype can breed self-stigma in people who with mental illness which further weakens their belief in recovery and endeavor to change. Stigmatization is particularly harmful to young people with psychosis who are still in their formative years and embarking on their journey of self-discovery. It is crucial to empower them to reassert their rights to citizenship, equality and justice; it is equally important to eliminate stigma in society to facilitate their community reconnection. Unfortunately, scant attention has been paid to this recovery perspective in the existing mental health care practice. Thus, “We Are the Same” a recovery-oriented program to help young people with psychosis move forward and to promote anti-stigma message among university students and community is developed to fill the service gap.

**Objectives**

To combat internalized and social stigma against people with mental illness To facilitate personal recovery and social integration among young people with psychosis

**Methodology**

Research evidence shows that positive inter-group contact and disclosure can effectively reduce prejudice (Henderson & Thornicroft, 2013). Therefore, our program adopts a social contact approach to promote interaction between individuals with and without mental health problems. To encourage mass participation, our program is carried out in collaboration with two community partners, namely the Social Welfare Department and The School of Design, The Polytechnic University. The program

consists of different activities to promote social contact, including 1) a recovery program for young people with psychosis, 2) a workshop on social stigma for university students, 3) sharing meetings and pottery classes, 4) art work and design projects with the theme of de-stigmatization, and 5) a closing ceremony cum sharing session to recognize participants' efforts and to let them share their new learning to health professional, community organizations, carers and service users.

### **Result**

We have different goals for different groups of participants For young people with psychosis: - To enhance their awareness of their internalized stigma, learn to accept and appreciate themselves, and gain positive experiences of community re-integration For university students: - To reduce their biased attitude on mental illness and to appreciate the commonalities between people with psychosis and them For community organizations and other specific target groups (i.e. health professionals and carers): - To increase awareness of the impact of social contact on anti-stigmatization - To motivate to promote destigmatization

Both qualitative and quantitative data were obtained to evaluate the success of the program. Young people with psychosis and university students who joined the program were interviewed to understand their experience and new learning. Questionnaires were distributed in the closing ceremony to inquire the audiences' attitude towards people with mental illness and motivation to promote de-stigmatization.