



PRESS RELEASE

STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL: 13.00 on Monday 7th February 2022

Award-winning Synergi Collaborative Centre will today announce a new vision and leadership, prioritising racial justice in mental health and coalition building

A new phase of Synergi, focusing on racial justice in mental health, collaboration and coalition building, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and George Floyd, is to be announced today (**Monday 7th February 2022**).

The award-winning five-year national initiative, which built an evidence base informed by the impact of racism and ethnic inequalities on the lived experience of severe mental distress, will be hosted over the next three years by the National Survivor User Network (NSUN) in partnership with Catalyst 4 Change.

Synergi Phase 2 will centre lived experience, anti-racism and community action, under **five work strands**:

- **Remembrance as Resistance:** A multimedia and digital exhibition and festival programme on how community activism has tackled mental health and racial injustices over the last 40 years in the UK.
- **Building as Abolition:** A means to influence funders to better understand community action work in the mental health space so that it is resourced and elevated.
- **Creative Spaces:** Building on the existing place-based creative and collaborative system change work, which was developed by the Synergi Collaborative Centre.
- **Democratising Policy:** By managing an annual small grants programme for grassroots campaigning groups working on the intersection of racial justice and mental health.
- **Transformational Governance:** To embed and champion ethical and collaborative ways of working within Synergi - and beyond it.

Akiko Hart, CEO of NSUN and the new Co-Lead of Synergi Phase, 2 said: ‘Historically, the knowledge and activities generated by people with lived experience have been marginalised in this space. We want to see the new generation of activists and organisers connect with each other, and the history of the movement, to reshape and re-imagine this work for the future. How can people doing the work feel nourished and supported, so they are less likely to burn out? How can grassroots projects be resourced and elevated? We want to shift the centre of gravity so that this lived experienced knowledge is amplified and resourced.’

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Sandra Griffiths, Director, Catalyst 4 Change and Synergi Phase 2 Co-Lead, said: ‘We cannot tackle racial mental health inequalities in isolation. Our collaboration with NSUN for Synergi Phase 2 is an important part of our commitment to sharing and learning how we can support grassroots activists, communities and people to ensure racial mental health justice. The act of addressing racial injustice to inform change in mental health services has felt like the work of the ‘privileged’ few. Meanwhile, people with lived experience of mental illness, their families, and community groups, have been kept on the margins of system change.’

Funded by the Lankelly Chase Foundation, with £1.5 million over three years, Synergi Phase 2 is also seen as an opportunity to rethink how mental health initiatives, focusing on racialised communities, are funded, and for them to be viewed as long term generational work.

Julian Corner, CEO, Lankelly Chase Foundation, said: ‘Synergi has opened up a space for new possibilities. It is vital that this space stays open, and that the energy and direction is maintained. New leadership from within the Synergi ecosystem has picked up the baton with a renewed emphasis on shifting power, organising for change, recognising and addressing distress and trauma, honouring unacknowledged leadership and sacrifice and creating space for dreaming and building alternatives. Five years isn’t a long time in this work, and so we are delighted that there will be continuity and renewal.’

Award-winning civil rights lawyer Marcia Willis Stewart QC (Hons) at Birnberg Peirce, and Synergi’s Chair, said: ‘Synergi Phase 2 can create a platform to take forward the evidence from its predecessor that amplifies what has always been understood by those with lived experience – that the system also harms them. I hope that people working within mental health, and people with lived experience, will be empowered by the work of Synergi and Synergi Phase 2 in its quest for racial and civil justice.’

Kamaldeep Bhui, Synergi’s Director and Professor of Psychiatry, University of Oxford, said: ‘Synergi began a new experience-based journey of reforming the system and improving knowledge and motivations to act for equality as part of the long arc of justice, a term coined by Martin Luther King, Jr. This means having a new leadership team to continue to foster the remarkable coalitions grounded in lived experience, collaboration, kindness and community as change in health and social systems can only arise through communities of practice and experience-led organisations working together.’

The official announcement on Synergi Phase 2 takes place virtually today from 1pm-2.15pm with a special presentation on the refreshed vision by the new project leads Sandra Griffiths and Akiko Hart. Guest speakers include Julian Corner, CEO, Lankelly Chase, and Synergi’s Co-Director Professor James Nazroo. The event will be hosted by Joy Francis, Synergi’s Co-Director and Lead for Creative Spaces and the Synergi National Pledge Alliance.

Ends

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The official announcement on Synergi Phase 2 **is under strict embargo until 13.00, Monday 7th February 2022.**

Download the press pack: bit.ly/Synergi2PressFolder

Official hashtag: #SynergiPhase2

To attend the Synergi Phase 2 launch announcement, email joy@wordsofcolour.co.uk.

Notes to the Editor

About Synergi Phase 2

Synergi Phase 2 will receive £1.5 million in funding from the Lankelly Chase Foundation, over three years, and will officially launch in September 2022 after completing a seven month transition period from the Synergi Collaborative Centre.

About the Synergi Collaborative Centre | synergicollaborativecentre.co.uk

The Synergi Collaborative Centre is an award-winning national initiative focused on eradicating ethnic inequalities in severe mental distress through championing systems change, new science, creative inclusion, collaborative leadership and co-production/co-creation, while forging solutions with people with lived experience, alongside carers, commissioners, policymakers and politicians. Launched in 2017, Synergi was funded by Lankelly Chase and was a partnership between the University of Manchester, University of Oxford and Words of Colour Productions. Synergi received a NESTA/Observer New Radicals Award 2018 and won the Queen Mary University of London Community Engagement 2018 Award for its public engagement photovoice project.

About NSUN | nsun.org.uk

The National Survivor User Network (NSUN) is a charity and an England-wide network of community groups and people who have experience of mental distress, ill-health, or trauma. Members come together to create, challenge, and campaign. As an infrastructure organisation and a sector voice for grassroots groups in mental health, NSUN amplifies the voices of lived experience, resources, supports and strengthens user-led projects and initiatives, and influences mental health policy and practice.

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About Catalyst 4 Change | catalyst4change.org.uk/

Catalyst 4 Change Catalyst is committed to addressing the deep-rooted, poor mental health outcomes prevalent in African and Caribbean communities. It has a powerful social mission to strengthen the capacity and networks of voluntary, social enterprise, grassroots, service user led, statutory organisations and businesses to ensure that they provide the right care, at the right time, and in the right place, to African and Caribbean people with mental health support needs, and their carers, living in the West Midlands. It is a Black Thrive Global partner.

About the Lankelly Chase Foundation | lankellychase.org.uk

Lankelly Chase is an independent charitable foundation and network that collaborates with partners to change systems of injustice and oppression that result in the mental distress, violence and destitution of people subject to marginalisation in the UK. The Foundation works with others to shift patterns of perspectives, power, and participation, and strives for a world healed by justice, equity and inclusion, where all people can live with dignity and opportunity in supportive communities. Its mission is to challenge injustice and create the conditions for much healthier systems to emerge.

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