Seeking mental health support for anxiety for the first time in later life: A narrative study

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you very much for your interest in this research study. Please take your time to consider the information carefully and to discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or to ask the researcher questions.

Who is conducting this research project and what is it about?

My name is Vicky Williams and I am a trainee clinical psychologist from the University of Exeter. I am completing this research project as part of my Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, supervised by Dr Cordet Smart and Dr Rachel Handley.

I am conducting a study to understand older adults’ experiences of anxiety, how that led them to seek mental health support for the first time, and what that support-seeking journey was like. Experiencing anxiety in older age is common. If not treated, anxiety can last for years, if not decades. However, despite therapies for anxiety being effective for older adults, referrals for older adults to mental health support are still much lower than expected. This low referral level suggests that older people are facing challenges to access support. There is very little research that explores older adults’ experiences of seeking support for the first time. I hope this project leads to recommendations about how support services can make it easier for older adults to get support for anxiety.

Who can take part?

I am looking for adults aged 65 years or older who have sought mental health support for anxiety for the first time in the last three years. Participants should have had at least one conversation with a primary care professional (e.g. GP, Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner) and/or a trained mental health professional (e.g. counsellor).

What would taking part involve?

You are invited to take part in a one-to-one interview over the telephone, via video call or in person (depending on whether we can travel). During the interview, I will
ask you to tell me about your journey to seeking mental health support for anxiety for the first time. An interview time and date will be arranged with you which is convenient for you, including evenings or weekends. The entire interview will take about one hour, depending on how much detail you choose to provide. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Before the interview, I will ask you to complete a consent form. You will also be asked to complete a short demographics questionnaire to help me gain a sense of who is taking part in the research. I will discuss what is going to happen in the interview and you will be given an opportunity to ask any questions that you might have before we start. You will be given another opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is entirely up to you whether you take part or not. Your decision will not affect your relationship or participation in the National Health Service, University of Exeter, or any other services or research centres you are involved with.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

You will receive a £10 shopping voucher as a thank you for taking part. Your answers will also help understanding about how support services might be made more accessible. Participants will be given the opportunity to receive a summary of the findings at the end of the study.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

I do not anticipate any particular risks to you participating in this research; however, there is always the potential for research participation to raise uncomfortable or distressing issues. For this reason, I have provided information about some of the different resources which are available to you in the signposting information.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from taking part in the interview at any time before it takes place, without giving a reason. If you decide you want to withdraw from the research, please contact me via email vw277@exeter.ac.uk or over the phone 07919 112 813. Please note that there are certain points beyond which it will be impossible to withdraw from the research, for instance, when I have submitted my thesis. Therefore, I ask that you contact me within four weeks of participation if you wish to withdraw your data. Participation in this service evaluation is entirely voluntary and all reports will be anonymised or use pseudonyms (i.e., fake names).
How will my information be kept confidential?

Your interview data will be psuedonymised (i.e., any information that can identify you or others will be removed from the transcript). Only I, my supervisors, and potentially external examiners (only on request), will have access to the data collected in this study. All research data will be stored securely in University of Exeter OneDrive and personal data (e.g., your name) will be stored separately to the research data.

I may have to break confidentiality if I believe there is an imminent and significant risk of harm to a participant or someone else. In this event, if possible, I will tell you I have to do this and who I will be speaking to; for example, my supervisor or a trained clinician (e.g., your GP). Before the interview begins, I will ask about your location in order to tailor signposting to support services if this is needed.

Extracts from the interview data, including quotes from participants, will be used in the research study report. After the report is written and/or published, and my degree award is complete, the interview data and any other personally identifiable data will be deleted. The personal information collected in this research study will be processed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Your personal information will only be used or processed as described in this participant information sheet.

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University’s processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University’s Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The data from the interviews will be analysed using narrative analysis to understand the journeys that older adults take to seek support for anxiety for the first time. The findings will then be written up as a thesis as part of my coursework for the award of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Exeter. The report may also be published in an academic journal, presented at an academic conference, or disseminated appropriately to improve support service understanding of service user experiences.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter.
For further information:

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