

## National Adolescent Bipolar Disorder Service: Post-Diagnostic Group Development Workshops

### The Team:

The National Adolescent Bipolar Service (ABS) is a specialist tertiary provision accepting referrals from across the United Kingdom. The multidisciplinary team works in collaboration with local services, providing second opinions for children and young people up to the age of 18 years, where there is uncertainty around a mood disorder because of complex presentations.

### The Engagement Event:

ABS are keen to involve families in service development and held an Engagement Day in May 2017 where 13 families attended alongside professional speakers, in collaboration with Bipolar UK. Parents and young people had the opportunity to share their views on their clinical experience of services, the direction of future research and how ABS can improve service delivery.

Families suggested a post-diagnostic group would be useful for parents and young people following a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder. Using participatory design, ABS subsequently held 3 workshops in October 2017, where families were invited to contribute to the development of the format and content of the group.

### The Workshops:

The workshops were based on a family the attendees created to give them an opportunity to share:

- How the family members may have felt following a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder
- What friends, family and services could do to support the family
- The format and the content the family might benefit from in a post-diagnostic group setting

Families created "Destiny", her mam, brother Eric and hamster Milo.

Destiny was a 14 year old young girl in year 9 of an academy school. Young people designed her as an "Emo" character who wore a shirt, loose fitted red tie, pleated skirt, fish-net tights and red Doc Marten boots. She was described as a "quirky" girl who predominantly experienced "highs".

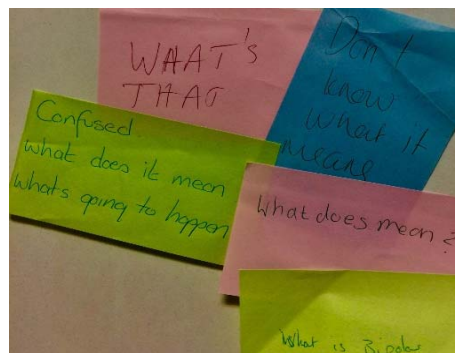
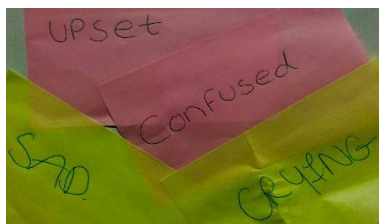
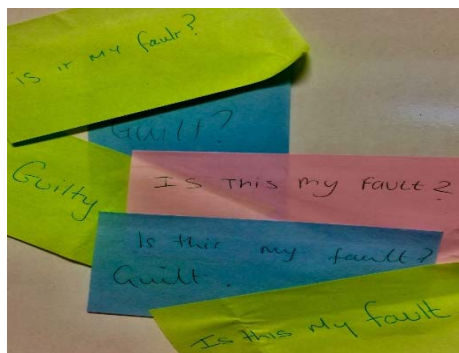
Destiny was drawn by one of the young people who attended the workshops. This process allowed the families to externalise their own experiences in relation to a fictional family.



### The Discussion:

The families engaged and felt following a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder

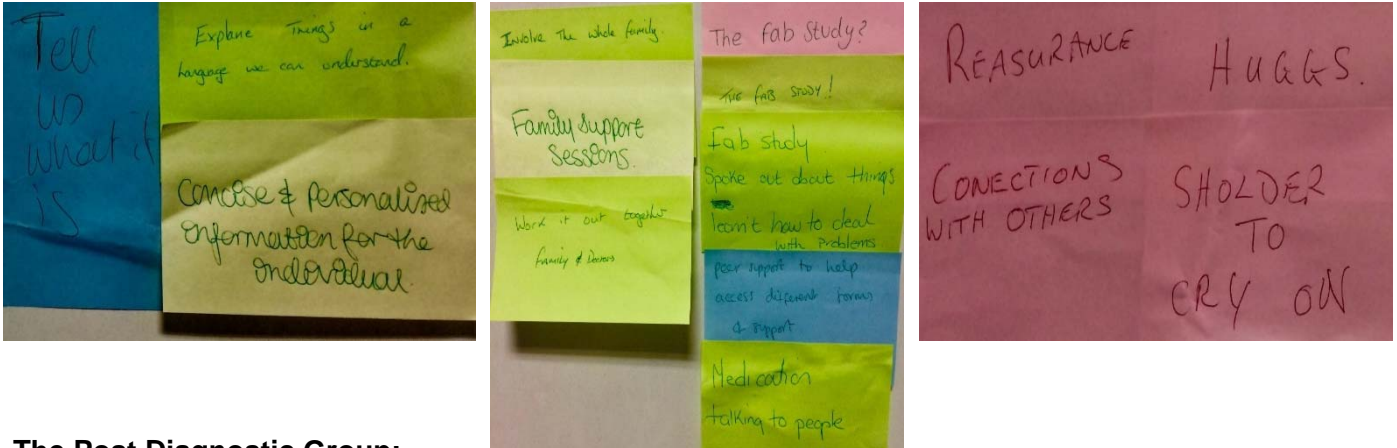
- **Destiny** may have felt upset and confused, worried about what this means for her and left wondering "why me?"
- **Mam** may have been feeling panicked and guilty, wondering where help would come from and if it was all her fault



- **Eric**, Destiny's younger brother, may have been confused and worried about his sister but also left wondering "will I get it too?"

The families shared others could support with the diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder by:

- Family and friends giving reassurance, hugs, and offering a shoulder to cry on
- Services providing person-centred psychoeducation; not just leaflets
- Services could offer psychosocial family intervention sessions, as well as 1:1 sessions for parents and young people including a peer support worker



### **The Post Diagnostic Group:**

- **Location?**  
Walkergate Park Hospital on an evening or Saturday morning.
- **How Often?**  
To be confirmed! Some families requested fortnightly groups, others requested monthly and so every three weeks was suggested as a compromise.
- **Who facilitates?**  
Initially to be led by ABS professionals but as the group develops its own "identity", this could be opened up to young people and parents leading, with ABS professionals as background support.
- **Content?**  
A father shared that the parent group would be a space to talk about emotions and day to day life for a family. Other parents agreed it would be good to have a space to consider how other people manage.

A young person shared she didn't meet another young person with bipolar disorder for 5 years following her diagnosis and she felt like "a freak" until then. Young people felt it would be good to learn from others experience of situations such as transitions, as well as telling friends about their diagnosis and negotiating prom!

### **The Next Steps:**

**The ABS team will hold a further workshop in January 2018:**

- *To give feedback to the families about the post-diagnostic group*

**The ABS team will hold a further ABS Engagement Event on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2018:**

- *Families & ABS professionals to jointly present group development to attendees*

**Watch this space ... further information to follow!**