# History of mental health explored in new heritage project

23/02/2012

The grant has been awarded to mental health charity Shared Voices for the project which will be jointly managed with My Time Community Interest Company.

The charity is recruiting service users who will be trained in oral history techniques and archiving skills so they can research and record the history of mental health and the treatment of patients in Birmingham. The project will cover the Victorian asylums to the present day. The participants will also explore the link between immigration to the city and associated mental health problems, as well as researching their own personal stories and family heritage.

A second strand of the project will explore the history of All Saints Church and All Saints House, Small Heath, the latter being the home of Shared Voices. The participants will research how the buildings have been used in the past, and how these uses have changed over the years.

The project findings will be used to create an archive of stories, written materials and oral histories that will be stored at Birmingham Archives, for use by others as a learning resource. A book will also be produced alongside a film and exhibition which will be used to share this heritage with wider audiences.

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: “This project will provide an opportunity for users of the charity’s services to share their stories and for volunteers to gain new skills. Also, by raising public awareness of this heritage, the stigma and prejudices sometimes faced by those who suffer from mental health illness can be better understood and challenged.”

For My Time Michael Crump said: “This project aims through service users telling the story of the heritage of mental ill health treatment in Birmingham to tackle these misconceptions and to identify the shared humanity between sufferers and non-sufferers. As such it is a project of significant importance and also supports the work of a mental health charity in doing so."

**Further information**

Please contact Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937 / vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173.

Or contact Michael Crump, Service User Director, My Time, on 0121 766 6699.