

# NEW REPORT SHEDS POSITIVE LIGHT ON BIPOLAR

Division of  
Clinical Psychology



**A GROUND-BREAKING NEW** report into bipolar *Understanding Bipolar Disorder*, published by the British Psychological Society's Division of Clinical Psychology, stresses the benefits that come from having bipolar as well as the downsides.

The report was conducted by a team of leading university academics and clinical psychologists led by Professor Steven Jones of the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research at Lancaster University

It argues that biases in previous

research have led to an exaggerated emphasis on the difficulties at the expense of the potential positive aspects, such as increased creativity. The report suggests that some people's experiences are more extreme forms of the mood variation we all experience, can result from life experiences rather than always only brain chemistry, and it is not always helpful to think of them as an 'illness'.

The report also suggests that a psychological perspective is lacking in many people's experience of mental health care for bipolar disorder with the default therapy model being biological and based on medication. What is lacking is a shared psychological understanding of individual experiences.

A comprehensive review of the report's findings is published in the research section on page 15.

## LIFE SO FAR IN VIEW



Photos: Catherine Pope

### ARTIST JOSEPHINE KING

is shown here at the private view of a new exhibition of her work *Life So Far* at the Rifleman Gallery in London's West End, shown between 13 September and 30 October.

Josephine has created a series of self-portraits that examine the trauma caused by the artist's own extreme bipolar disorder.

In an exclusive interview with *Pendulum*, Josephine talked to MDF Bipolar's membership services officer Daisy Jellicoe of the structures she has in place to remain as well as possible. These include the need to live a balanced life and maintain routines: getting proper sleep and eating well in addition to taking her medication.

The interview is published on pages 24-26.



## REFUGE ALBUM LAUNCHED

**THE NEW ALBUM** *Allowed a Voice* by the acoustic band Refuge, highlighted in the Autumn edition of *Pendulum*, was launched on 10 October in line with World Mental Health Day.

The album, supported by MDF Bipolar, showcases lyrics and poetry written by people with mental health problems in an attempt to challenge the stigma attached to conditions like bipolar, schizophrenia and clinical depression.

The lead singer of the band, Peter Hirst, himself suffers from bipolar. Here he is shown with other Refuge members marking the launch with a concert at the Musician Club, Leicester, on 14th October.



# Psychologists promote understanding of bipolar

A new study of bipolar stresses the benefits as well as the disadvantages of the disorder.

**Debbie Mayes**, a member of the research team, highlights the main findings.



Steve Jones (centre) and his research team: 'offering a genuine choice of recovery options'

**A**TENDANCY TO extreme moods can have significant benefits as well as sometimes leading to problems, says a report published by the British Psychological Society's Division of Clinical Psychology.

The report *Understanding Bipolar Disorder* is the result of an in-depth review of recent research undertaken by a team of leading university academics and clinical psychologists, led by Professor Steven Jones of the Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research at Lancaster University.

The leading conclusions are:

- Between one and two percent of the population have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. This diagnosis is made when someone experiences periods of extreme mood (highs and lows).
- Biases in previous research have led to an exaggerated emphasis on the difficulties at the expense

of the potential positive aspects, such as increased creativity. The report suggests that some people's experiences are more extreme forms of the mood variation we all experience, can result from life experiences rather than always only brain chemistry, and it is not always helpful to think of them as an 'illness'.

- In addition to this, much of the research in bipolar is on people in mental health services and so is very biased since it does not take into account those people who have positive outcomes.
- A psychological perspective is lacking in many people's experience of mental health care for bipolar disorder with the default therapy model being biological and based on medication. What is lacking is a shared psychological understanding of individual experiences.

Professor Richard Bentall, Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Bangor, says:

'This is a timely and clearly written report, which very neatly summarises our current understanding of bipolar disorder in a way that is authoritative, but very accessible to service users, carers and the general public.

'It will do much to promote a better understanding of a condition that can cause a great deal of distress and disability to sufferers and their families.'

This report provides an overview of the current state of psychological knowledge about why some people tend to experience periods of extreme mood and what can help.

By publishing this report it is hoped that it will increase access to psychological treatments, challenge the idea that service users must always accept one particular (usually biological) view of their problem, provide a resource for front-line workers and service users and influence the thinking of commissioners, managers and opinion formers.

'I hope that this report will prove to be a useful resource for people with experience of bipolar disorder, clinicians, academics and service managers. It aims to provide accessible information on the range and variety of bipolar experiences and on the importance of developing services which offer a genuine choice of recovery focussed interventions for people who have such experiences' says Steve Jones.

***Understanding Bipolar Disorder* can be downloaded from [www.understandingbipolar.co.uk](http://www.understandingbipolar.co.uk)**