

# Psychosis on Screen

## INTRODUCTION

Psychosis on Screen was a season of three contemporary films depicting various experiences of psychosis. Watershed and Bristol Health Partners put together this season to increase awareness of psychosis and to launch the Psychosis Health Integration Team, which works to improve the support, treatment, services and lives of people with psychosis in the Bristol area.

The season was designed to uncover the creativity often inherent in psychosis and to develop a shared, more human understanding of these sometimes frightening experiences.

The format of the season was as follows:

### Monday 13 June – ‘Keane’ (2004)

- Welcome by Mark Cosgrove (Cinema Curator), Simon Downer (Psychosis HIT Co-Director) and Conor McCormack (film maker)
- Introductory talk by Nathan Filer (local author & mental health nurse)
- Discussion session facilitated by Nathan Filer and Conor McCormack

### Monday 20 June - ‘Every Little Thing’ (1997)

- Introductory talk by Simon Downer and Conor McCormack
- Informal discussion in Watershed café/bar

### Monday 27 June – ‘In the Real’

- Introductory talk by Dr Angela Woods (Co-Director, Hearing the Voice, Durham University)
- Q&A Panel facilitated by Dr Angela Woods involving film maker and film participants
- Psychosis HIT Launch Event

This report summarises the feedback from the season, and highlights considerations for future awareness raising activities.

#### The season in numbers

328 filmgoers over three screenings  
170 at the screening of ‘In the Real’  
45 attendees at Psychosis HIT Launch Event  
44 free tickets used by service users & carers

## FILMGOER COMMENTS

Filmgoers were asked to fill out a survey with two questions at each screening:

1. What have you learned this evening about living with psychosis?
2. We're planning future events to raise awareness of psychosis – what do you think we should focus on?

We received 65 responses across the three screenings. A summary of comments is provided below:

### Learning about Psychosis

Responses indicated a wide variety of learning taken from the season. For example, this ranged from comments about the perceived harmfulness of medication, the power of the creative arts and reflections about understanding more about the challenges and sometimes comforts that experiences of psychosis can bring for people.

*“How isolating it can be for some people with mental health difficulties and how difficult it can be to access help and support” - Filmgoer, ‘Keane’*

*“Compassion, art and activities, respect all helps. More natural environment, more equality, patience” – Filmgoer, ‘Every Little Thing’*

*“That the experience of hearing voices can be enriching and can be a big part of individuals' identity and reflect their spiritual and world view. I have been very focused on helping people in their recovery from a medical perspective and less so in listening to and respecting their viewpoint” – Filmgoer, ‘In the Real’*

Many respondents reflected that the experience of psychosis can be very different for different people:

*“Everyone's reality is different. Listen to the individual experience” – Filmgoer, ‘In the Real’*

*“It could be different for every individual. A person is not their behaviour” – Filmgoer, ‘Keane’*

*“I learnt a lot about people's experiences of psychosis, but even more about the people themselves as the whole person” – Filmgoer, ‘In the Real’*

*“That people with psychosis have a range of needs and capacities - we're not all the same!” – Filmgoer, ‘Every Little Thing’*

For a number of respondents, the events reinforced their knowledge or perceptions about psychosis:

*“I am reminded of the need for broad range of services for individuals living with psychosis” – Filmgoer, ‘Every Little Thing’*

*“It has reinforced how important the multidisciplinary approach is” – Filmgoer, ‘In the Real’*

*“Not [learned] much - but reinforced demonstrating that obvious need for time and space and activity which has been largely lost in local provision - and in society (time and space anyway)” – Filmgoer, ‘Every Little Thing’*

One respondent suggested they hadn't learned much from the event they attended (above). One other suggested that they weren't sure what they had learnt, but that it had been a "jumping off point for finding out more".

### Comments about the films

The majority of comments that referred to the films themselves were positive. This was particularly the case for 'In the Real':

*"The film was really nice for me because it shows you the other side, that person's personal experience and would definitely make me re-think the next time I passed a man or woman mumbling to themselves on the street." – Filmgoer, Keane*

*"Great film" – Filmgoer, 'Every Little Thing'*

*"The film 'in the real' was exceptionally good, was very real and I thank those service users who took the risk of exposing their suffering and being vulnerable so that the film could be made effectively" – Filmgoer, 'In the Real'*

*"A very moving film about the hearing voices experience and how people's experience differ on hearing voices" – Filmgoer, 'In the Real'*

*"Very inspiring film which highlighted the importance of providing individuals the space to explore their own understanding of their experience. It was a privilege to hear the stories of everyone involved in the film." – Filmgoer, 'In the Real'*

There were three comments which suggested a film selected wasn't appropriate or engaging. These were all made in relation to 'Every Little Thing'.

*"The film was interesting but I don't think it gave much indication of the reality of the majority living with psychosis. For anyone not knowing much about it already, I don't see how it would inform them much/present a true picture." Filmgoer, 'Every Little Thing'*

*"I was bored by the film" Filmgoer, 'Every Little Thing'*

### Priorities for future awareness raising activities

The following suggestions were made of the types of activity the HIT should pursue:

- More films
- Use other art forms to start discussion (Visual art, Novels, Poetry, Theatre)
- Discussion sessions with some preparatory or follow-up reading
- Presentations from people who have experienced psychosis and their supporters

Often, reference was made to specific films, books or case studies.

Several filmgoers gave suggestions for how the HIT should approach awareness raising:

- Challenging stigma/myth busting (including positive images of people with psychosis)
- Carry on inviting people with concessionary tickets
- Bear in mind people without personal or professional experience

- Focus on specific dimensions of psychosis (e.g. drug induced psychosis, medication, talking therapies, helpful comments for talking to people who experience psychosis)

Many respondents called for the HIT to continue to make sure that people who experience psychosis and those close to them are at the centre of activity:

*“First hand experiences from people who live with psychosis - in their own words and expressed however they feel is best. Also, I think it's be interesting to hear experiences from people who live & work alongside these people.” – Filmgoer, ‘Every Little Thing’*

*“Carry on focusing on the people who have the real experiences. Involve them first hand and those who are close to them. It feels like that is the key.” – Filmgoer, ‘In the Real’*

*“Getting views of wide range of people who've had psychosis and carers, focus groups. Continue and more” – Filmgoer, ‘Every Little Thing’*

## LAUNCH EVENT FEEDBACK

At the Psychosis HIT Launch on 27 June, attendees were invited to complete an evaluation form which asked both about the event and the film season more generally. Eight paper responses were received.

### Launch overall

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall structure of the launch (including film screenings)	3	4	0	0
Booking process	3	4	0	0
Information provided about the HIT	1	2	3	0
The launch as a learning opportunity for you	2	2	2	

Comments included wanting more information about the HIT, wanting structured discussion after the second film and praising the use of an arts/cultural venue for the launch.

### Knowledge gained

Comments described the importance of service users' perspectives and a broader understanding of psychosis. One respondent suggested they may be more “out” about their own experiences of psychosis as a result of the knowledge gained. Another noted they would bring the knowledge to their supervision of mental health staff. Two others said they would continue as they were, or needed more information.

### Most relevant aspects

Four people suggested the films and discussion was the most useful part of the season for them. Two highlighted 'networking' as the most useful or relevant aspect. One respondent noted "it was great to be in a public place with lots of other people who have experienced psychosis".

### Elements that could have been improved

One respondent suggested the launch was the least useful/relevant aspect. Another said they were unsure what the launch would consist of so found it hard to "sell" to other people. One respondent found the first two films "hard work". Another suggested that the films had been too focused on men's experiences.

### About people attending

Six respondents described their backgrounds as follows (more than one option could be selected):

Member of the HIT	2
Member of the public	3
Service user	2
Carer	2
Voluntary sector	1
NHS provider Trust	0
Local Authority provider	0
Public Health	0
Researcher/academic	0
NHS Commissioner	0
NHS manager	0
CLAHRC/WEAHSN	0
Other	1

## MEDIA COVERAGE

The season generated significant media interest in the Psychosis Health Integration Team. Activity is summarised below:

- 13 June: Simon Downer and Conor McCormack interviewed on [BBC Radio Bristol by Emma Britton \(54:40\)](#)
- 20 June: Bristol 24/7 feature the [screening of 'In the Real' in their top 10 things to do this week](#)
- 23 June: Conor McCormack and Don Swift from the Bristol Hearing Voices Network interviewed on [BBC Radio Bristol by John Darvall \(2:10:50\)](#)
- 2 July: Sarah Sullivan and Simon Downer interviewed on [BBC Radio Bristol by Dr Phil Hammond \(9:50\)](#)

## WHAT NEXT?

The Psychosis Health Integration Team will build on the significant enthusiasm and creativity this film season has produced.

We will:

- Consider all of the suggestions made for future awareness raising activity and agree a plan for new events
- Host our Peer Director led User and Carer forum to understand and respond to the priorities of people who experience psychosis

To find out more about the Psychosis HIT, please visit our website:

[www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/psychosis](http://www.bristolhealthpartners.org.uk/psychosis)

If you'd like to get involved, please email [oliver.watson@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:oliver.watson@bristol.ac.uk)