



## **UCE BIRMINGHAM PRESENTS FINDINGS OF PROJECT INTO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR LOCAL BLACK COMMUNITIES**

The findings of a three-year study into the provision of Birmingham mental health services for members of the Black African and Black African-Caribbean communities will be presented at a conference being held in the City next week.

The Centre for Community Mental Health based at UCE Birmingham's Faculty of Health led on the project, assisted by AFCAR, an African and African Caribbean voluntary sector provider. The project was funded by the Department of Health and the conference has been sponsored by the Adult & Communities Directorate at Birmingham City Council and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust.

Previous studies have indicated that black service users who have mental health problems are more likely than white service users to be diagnosed as schizophrenic, to be prescribed psychotropic medication, to be sectioned under the Mental Health Act or regarded as violent and in need of detention in secure accommodation. They are less likely than white service users to be offered social and psychological interventions.

In addition, deaths among black detainees mean that black people have come to distrust and even fear mental health services that fail to meet their needs. This study set out to address these issues and make recommendations for improving services. It examined voluntary statutory mental health service provision for African and African Caribbean communities, conducted interviews and focus groups with service users, carers and a range of professionals from statutory providers, commissioners and independent sector providers.

Professor Fatemeh Rabiee-Khan, the Project Leader from UCE Birmingham's Faculty of Health, said: "Mental illness as a social problem has been highlighted by a number of participants in this research. Prevention and management of mental illness therefore require activities and commitments which go beyond mental health services and include schools, community, workplace and family settings. A lot of work needs to be carried out to de stigmatise mental health issues and problem. For the mental health services, however, there is a need for adapting a social model of mental health. The balance of service provision needs to shift from being medically based and relying only on medication to including alternatives to medication such as counselling & Psychological services and practical support for African and African Caribbean service users."

The conference will be attended by representatives from the Department of Health, UCE Birmingham, AFCAR, Birmingham City Council, Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Trust as well as local service users, carers, voluntary and statutory organisations and will be held at The Drum on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February.