

# MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT SUPPORT SERVICES DEVELOPMENT IN OLDHAM

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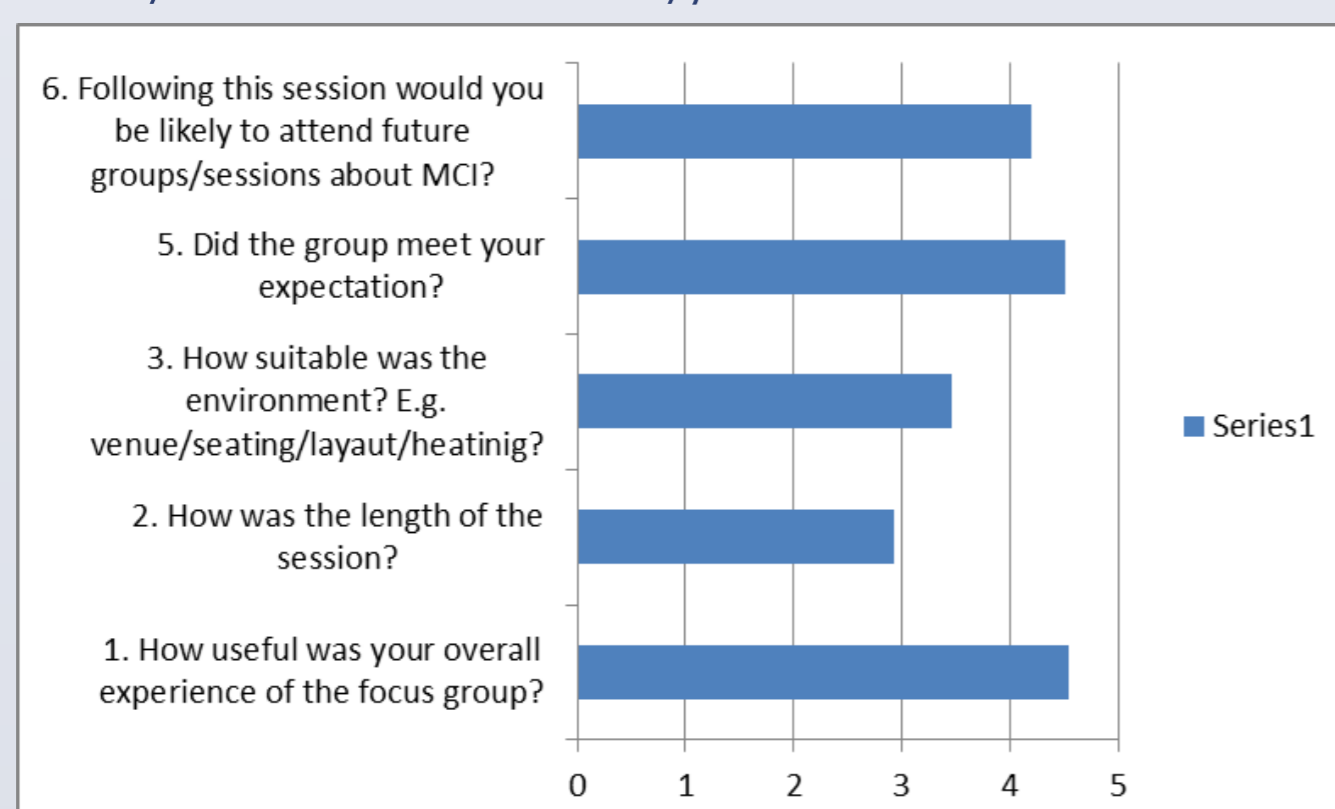
## Abstract

The Poster will present our project on Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and its developments. Oldham Memory Assessment and Treatment Service provides a good range of services for people with dementia and their carers, but nothing has been created for people with a diagnosis of MCI until now. Aware of this lack, we decided to run a focus group for MCI patients and their carers in order to explore which are their needs and to understand how we could help them. We had a couple of ideas in mind: a memory support group and drop-in sessions. We wanted to welcome new ideas too. The focus group has been successful, the attendees felt it was a very important occasion to meet and the need for support was underlined, especially in regard to the uncertainty of this diagnosis. We decided to run a "MCI Strategy and Support Group" which is a pilot group that started on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May and ended on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016. The group run for six weekly sessions, two hours per session, and it was open to both people with MCI and their carers. Every week a different topic was presented. The Poster will include the group evaluation data alongside the description of the all project.

## Project

**Focus Group:** There were 78 people diagnosed with MCI in Oldham and we invited them all to attend the focus group. 18 people were present at the event. The focus group was two hours and a half long and the programme included: information about MCI; sharing of experiences of living with MCI both in small groups and all together; an exploration of needs; proposing our ideas and welcoming other ones about starting new post-diagnostic services.

During the focus group emerged that: both carers and people with MCI need support and more information, in particular carers to learn how to cope and to be more patient and people with MCI to learn practical strategies. We received very good feedback from the evaluations, see table below (Scale: 1 = Definitely Not to 5 = Definitely).



Seven people (39%) reported that meeting other people with the same diagnosis is beneficial to them and a couple of persons specified the importance of having a separate space for carers.

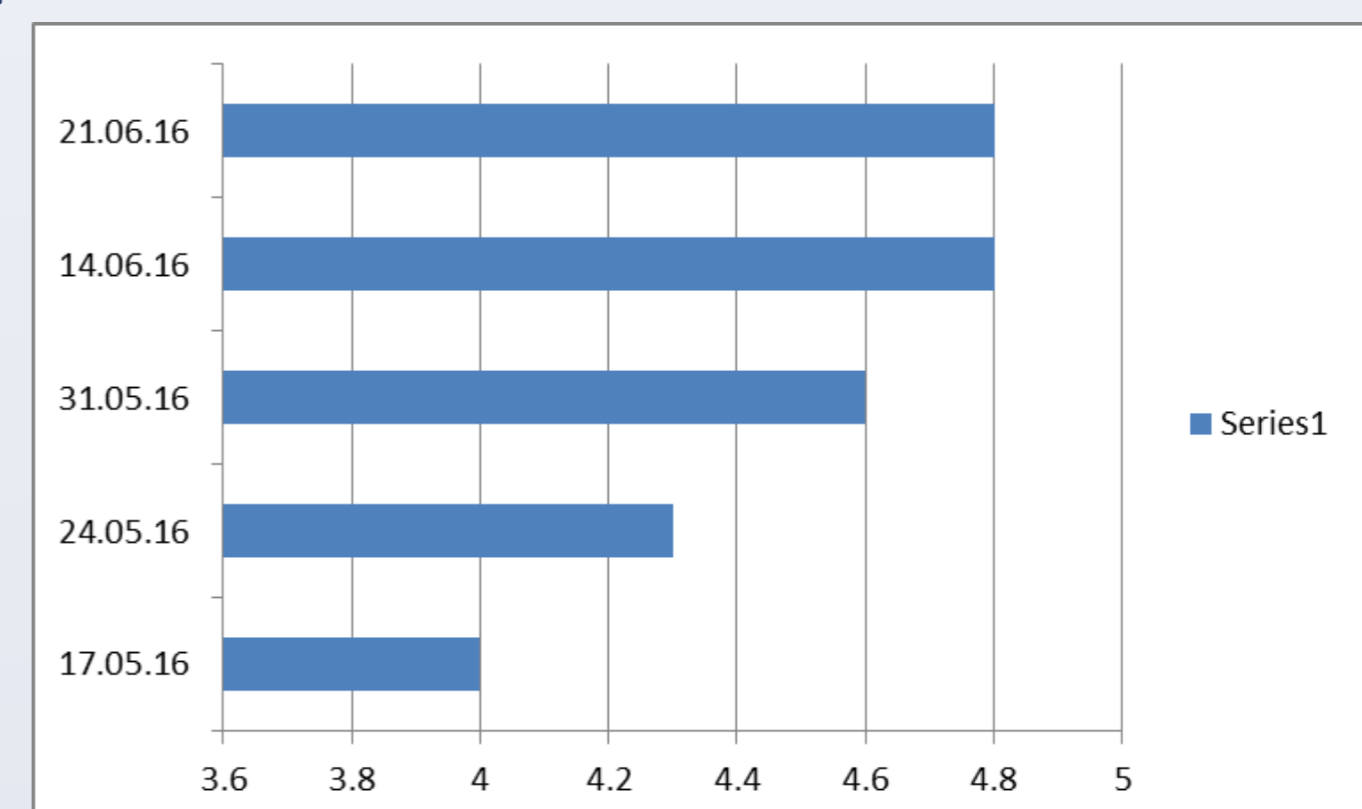
**Post-Diagnostic Support Group:** Following the focus group we wanted to start a pilot support group: "MCI Strategy and Support Group". We sent out invitation to everyone again (updating the list of people with a diagnosis of MCI the number of invitation increased to about 110). The group was attended by 14 people, 9 patients and 5 carers. Three people dropped out for health related reasons, so the final group was of 11 people, 7 patients and 4 carers. The programme was as follows:

- Week 1- Introduction and what is MCI?**
- Week 2- Memory and other thinking abilities**
- Week 3- Strategies day 1**
- Week 4- Stress and emotional wellbeing**
- Week 5- Strategies day 2**
- Week 6- Health and wellbeing**

The plan was developed following a literature review and other information and experiences that other NHS colleagues – from Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) and from CMHT (Older People) Bury - shared with us. We choose then the main important topics: to give information about MCI and modules of memory; to teach tips and simple memory techniques to use in daily life; to give information about how emotions and stress affect our brain functions and to teach relaxation techniques; and finally to promote a healthy life style. It was interesting to hear the range of experiences and challenges and because of this we tailored the group to meet individual needs. As in this group everyone was having memory difficulties and even some carers were concerned about their memory, during week 3 and 5 we focused on teaching memory aids and strategies.

The need of separation between carers and patients is a very important aspect that we observe also in dementia post-diagnostic support groups. Carers and their loved ones have different concerns and challenges that might bring conflict and for this reason they feel the need of a separate space. As we heard this need strongly from some people during the focus group, we wanted to plan Sessions 3 and 5 only for people with MCI, and a split of the group between carers and people with MCI during week 4. For several reasons it was not possible to respect this plan: carers wanted to attend the strategies sessions and because they were a very small number (not everyone was present) we welcomed them to stay; during week 4 we had a very small attendance due to several unpredictable reasons, so we stayed all together.

The group efficacy was assessed every session using evaluation forms and it was observed an increase in mean related to the item "How useful was your overall experience of the session?", see table below (Scale: 1 = Definitely Not to 5 = Definitely).



Due to a low number of people, evaluation data of the 07<sup>th</sup> of June are missing.

We received a very few critiques from the attendees related to the environment and none concerning the support group structure and programme. Some comments are:

**"Finding that MCI is more common than I thought, that people are very keen to talk about their own MCI";**

**"It is helping me to realise I am not stupid, but need a help in right direction";**

**"I feel a lot more confident than I did when I first started the course".**

From the final evaluation a couple of people underlined that it would be good to have some one-to-one space. This is an aspect that we already include in the dementia post-diagnostic support group and it results a precious alternative help. We need to include this option in future groups reminding the group that this is possible. From notes taken during the last session attendees reported that they are:

- Feeling much better
- Not feeling on my own
- Aware of what is wrong with me
- No more feeling so embarrassed
- Not worrying about things as much
- Much improved
- Relaxation has helped to stay calm

## Conclusion and Future Steps

Following the success of the pilot "Strategy and Support Group", we are going to continue organising more groups. Because of the complexity of MCI diagnosis, we want to keep a flexible format and we continuously look for other colleagues with which to share experiences and ideas.

In order to reach more people, we are going to run drop-in sessions in various Oldham's areas. As Alessandra is part of "FPOP MCI Workstream", our progresses will be easily shared with other colleagues nationally and we hope to contribute to developments in post-diagnostic interventions broadly.

## Contacts

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