



Michelle Ayres, left, and Carol Vivyan have been jointly named Mental Health Nurse of the Year for developing The Decider, a behavioural system used extensively in mental health services. (Picture by Steve Sarre, 7797765)

National award for mental health duo

A BEHAVIOURAL system developed locally that is used extensively in mental health services has received national recognition after its creators came out on top at the British Journal of Nursing Awards.

Cognitive behavioural nurse psychotherapists Michelle Ayres and Carol Vivyan were jointly named Mental Health Nurse of the Year 2015 at the event at Underglobe in London.

'I feel really pleased for us, for Guernsey, for mental health, but particularly for The Decider, because it really does work,' Ms Ayres said.

Their project, The Decider, was originally developed to support people with referrals for impulsive behaviour conditions in response to an identified service need in Guernsey's adult mental health services.

The Decider reference card, accompanied by a skills manual, uses pictures to summarise 32 informed skills based in cognitive behavioural therapy and dialectical behavioural therapy.

by Nicola Gibbons

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Skills are taught in a group setting and once learned, the client would then be able to choose which skills to use when they feel impulsive.

Mrs Vivyan explained impulsive behaviours such as self-harming, binge eating and substance misuse were spontaneous emotion, driven by behaviours often associated with anxiety, depression, anger, addictions, eating disorders and personality disorders. 'They can have devastating consequences for the individual,' she said.

The Decider is being used extensively in adult mental health services in Guernsey and has also been adapted for use by other service settings.

Ms Ayres said the system had considerable benefits for clients and was a cost-effective approach.

'The clinical outcome measures are positive and results indicate a promising long-term effectiveness

of The Decider skills group.'

There is regular training for mental health staff. Twelve-session client groups are run twice a year and clients are also able to attend a monthly graduate group after completion.

The pair have also developed The Decider Life Skills – a set of 12 key life skills that can be used in schools and youth groups as a proactive, protective approach to mental health.

'Mental health cases are increasing. We teach our children about how to deal with dangers outside of themselves, such as fire and road safety, but what we don't formally teach them is about the dangers inside themselves,' Ms Ayres said.

They have both started to develop this further and will soon be carrying out a trial in a local school where they will be able to measure changes within students.

Mrs Vivyan said in the long term they would like to roll out the system across mental health services nationally and internationally.