

# City game helps with forensic mental health rehabilitation

August 19 2015, by George Wigmore

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An innovative serious game has been developed by academics and a student at City University London in collaboration with service users and providers at East London NHS Foundation Trust.

The game applied a computer game engine which is used to develop [serious games](#) for professional learning into a tool that enables forensic [mental health](#) service users to explore challenging situations and practice skills in a virtual environment prior to discharge from secure settings. Forensic mental health service users are people with mental health problems who have committed serious offences.

The serious game provides a novel approach for forensic [mental health services](#) to experience decision making and respond to scenarios in the community such as being offered drugs and alcohol.

Dr Lisa Reynolds, the principal investigator for the study said: "The idea behind the game was to provide a platform to support service user preparation for discharge by practicing the challenging scenarios they face in their everyday lives. The prototype game was developed with, trialled and evaluated by service users and providers and we found that there was confidence that a serious game would be a useful tool."

In this small scale feasibility study the team tested the usability of the game with six men in an inner city low secure forensic mental health service which offers a rehabilitation service. These secure units are an alternative to prison for people who have a [mental health problem](#) and

offer specialist treatment and care.

Paul Hodge, a professional serious games designer and a student on the Master in Human-Centred Systems at City University London ([www.city.ac.uk/courses/postgra ... uman-centred-systems](http://www.city.ac.uk/courses/postgra...uman-centred-systems)), developed the prototype game partnership with service users. The latter contributed realistic dialogue and scenarios and ensured that the environment and language used was all realistic for each given situation.

"The lingo, like the action, was correct, the slang terms, everything was correct...that's how they are going to approach you," said one service user, with another praising the project and saying that he would "like to do it in a session; a psychology session".

Speaking about the future of the game, Dr Reynolds said: "As a team we hope to obtain further funding so that we can continue to improve the [game](#). Additional work is needed to develop greater complexity and promote usability. We hope that in the future serious games can be used to help people prepare to live more independently."

Provided by City University London

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