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Stories

Confidence in coproduction

Updates
Tuesday, 06 October 2020

Sam Julius, Community Project Coordinator for our Age of Experience coproduction cohort shares her thoughts. *Sam works at Groundwork West Midlands, a partner organisation to BVSC who helps deliver the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme.*



Like all good things coproduction takes time, hard work and dedication. The role of a dedicated individual to provide the link between citizens and professional staff can add real value which I've seen in my role as the Age of Experience coordinator for Ageing Better in Birmingham. I spend time getting to know the members of the group both as a group and individually.

This starts from the initial referral meeting and is followed up with regular communication and annual reviews, similar to staff appraisals. Members like to feel they are 'doing a job or providing a service' and appreciate time taken to discuss the progress of the programme and their individual input.

People may want more or less involvement in the programme at different stages, so keeping in touch is important.



This personal approach means I can easily identify members best suited to programme opportunities based on their personalities and lived experiences. I've developed a more personal relationship with the members which builds trust and so they feel able to come to me with any concerns or misunderstandings.

Valuable coproduction needs to be continuously nurtured to ensure the aims of the programme alongside the individuals motivations and experiences remain front and centre at all times.

Lived experience is very personal and asking people to share that can be daunting for some. During the last six years, the Age of Experience group has been involved in all aspect of the the programme and taken on different roles and it's really great seeing members grow in confidence and making new connections. Members have done things they would not have had the confidence to do without the support and encouragement of the programme. Things like public speaking, hosting workshops, sitting on funding panels or raising their voices in public meetings.

Being involved in the Age of Experience group has given members the confidence to not only *use* their voices and shape the programme, but empower and motivate their peers to do so. To support them, members have taken part in various training workshops, increasing their confidence and developing their skills. It has resulted in them feeling able and confident to join strategy boards and be involved in policy-making in the city.

It is important that citizens involved in coproduction understand why they are being asked to be involved and that they always feel valued and listened too.

Some people may not wish to share their experiences in person, face to face, but are happy to share their experiences in words or pictures. A 'one size fits all approach' does not work. Staff need to be flexible to the individual and consider what motivates citizens to get involve. Showing passion and enthusiasm for the project you wish to involve citizens in will go a long way too.



The demographic of the Age of Experience group means some members require a much more 'hands on' approach and being patient and trying to put yourself 'in their shoes' is important for successful coproduction.

The greatest measure of success for me is the friendship and connections that have been established, people have formed relationships with people that they would not have had the opportunity to meet. I hope these friendships and connections will remain long after the programme ends and I cannot think of a better legacy for the group.



WEBINAR: COPRODUCTION FROM A GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVE: Integrating diversity and inclusion

At the end of September, Sam and several members from the Age of Experience group took part in a webinar organised by Disability Rights UK and led by Vicky Donoghue from South Yorkshire Housing Association.

Watch it and learn how the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme help shape inclusivity among a diverse range of older people groups that represent Birmingham's

BAME, Disability and LGBTQ communities.

Blog Search

Twitter

Ageing Better in Birmingham @ageingbetterBHM

We commissioned @SustransWMids to deliver Age-friendly Tyburn, a project looking at the built environment as a factor of #socialisolation.

They're issuing 10 recommendations on how to create an #AgeFriendly environment 🏠🚶🌳

TOMORROW 12-1pm
eventbrite.co.uk/e/age-friendly...
 @BVSC

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