

Co-Production in Commissioning

The Mental Health Recovery and Community Inclusion service is a community-based mental health service with objectives to improve independence, resilience and recovery and places co-production principles at the heart of service delivery.

Through the commissioning process we engaged with Service Users, Carers and Stakeholders to ensure that the service reflected their needs as much as possible, whilst also enabling all the commissioning bodies to meet their aims.

The SUN Network is commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council to provide facilitation and engagement with mental health service users and carers and supported us in the co-production process.

What did we involve people in?

- Development of the service specification
- Developing 2 questions which formed part of the tender evaluation
- Evaluation of the 2 Service User questions – including attending a moderation meeting

How did we engage with people?

The SUN Network encouraged people to participate and advertised the opportunity via email, website, social media and word of mouth. SUN Network met with all potential participants to talk to them about what was involved, how the process would work and the benefit of being involved.

What obstacles were there?

To ensure that people were able to engage with the process we considered the following barriers:

- Time scales: Be clear about timescales and give people at least two weeks' notice.
- Location: Consider where people are located and ensure that people are able to get to the venue.
- Support: All participants were asked if they would like any support to be involved. This could be a lift to the venue, meeting them at the main entrance, or ensuring a warm friendly environment that is not overwhelming. Any support required for physical, mental or emotional reasons was considered.
- Confidentiality: Reassuring participants that their input would remain anonymous and confidential unless they requested otherwise.
- Conflict of Interest: Being very clear about what could be a potential conflict of interest and the importance of scoring objectively.

What is the benefit of co-production to Commissioning?

- Improve confidence that the commissioned service will meet needs
- Congruent with the principles that we are asking providers to demonstrate
- Service Users changed our thinking and brought a different perspective
- Ensuring our service user population is valued and engaged

What is the value of co-production to the Service Users involved?

Here are some of the comments from people who were involved in the commissioning of the Mental Health Recovery and Community Inclusion Service:

Why did you want to be involved?

- ✘ To help decide who should get funding and see what each charity would want to do with the money and how it would affect and benefit service users.
- ✘ I felt that the fact I had worked on tendering services in my previous job, as well as having first-hand experience of the service being tendered, I could assist the process.
- ✘ I have some experience of family and friends struggling with their mental health so always very aware of this area of work and keen to help where i can. Also have experience of trying to get people involved in this type of activity and know it can be hard!!

What did you get out of being involved?

- ✘ I gained more confidence through sharing my views and scores of each tender application, who I thought appeared to present the best proposal and I also got personal gratification for knowing I have helped in the decision making for who would get the funding for future.
- ✘ A great sense of satisfaction and self-worth. Having been discarded by my previous employer, and coming back from a very low place, this helped my confidence.
- ✘ Just that it was a really friendly, welcoming environment and I would encourage anyone else to take part in future involvement opportunities because everyone's opinion matters!