

Inclusive Justice

CO-PRODUCING CHANGE

A Practical Guide to Service User
Involvement in Community Justice



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INCLUSIVE JUSTICE - CO-PRODUCING CHANGE



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Introduction

European governments are increasingly emphasising the importance of service user involvement in the design, development and delivery of public services ¹.

The benefits of service user involvement are well documented and, in justice contexts, participation can enhance the credibility, meaning and legitimacy of services, improve the quality and impact of interventions, and support desistance, recovery and social integration ².

While Clinks (2016) note some significant progress in recent years in the development of service user involvement projects in prison and community justice contexts in the UK, this has not occurred in a systematic or strategic way, and remains largely under-resourced ³. Moreover, the extent to which service users are able to have an influence in shaping services is a moot point. It is more common to find service user involvement practices occurring at an individual level, in forms that resonate with person centred practices, rather than group or collective forms of involvement that bring service users together to share experiences,

provide mutual support, advocate for similarly situated others and contribute to service delivery ⁴. We think that there is still considerable progress to be made.

While policy and practice documents on how to go about enlisting and engaging service users are now relatively commonplace, there are few documents that can be drawn on to inform the development, implementation and maintenance of a coordinated strategy for service user involvement in criminal and community justice (a notable exception being Clinks ⁵).

Research into organisations that have attempted to implement service user involvement, even to a small degree, is even more limited – more so in the community justice arena where such practices remain comparatively scarce. It is here that our project report ⁶ and this practice guide, informed by our research, addresses this gap.

BASIS OF THIS GUIDE

The authors of this report were commissioned by Community Justice Ayrshire to support the establishment of three service user involvement groups and to document the process of implementation and the resulting activities, outputs and outcomes. Our research has informed the development of this practice guide and included the following methods:

Phase 1:

Review of literature: In this phase, we undertook a review of existing models of user involvement in justice and other policy areas, covering all levels e.g. service design, delivery, governance including evidence of what really works to involve service users in the process.

Phase 2:

Information gathering: data collection and analysis: We conducted interviews and focus groups with thirty professionals and service users from a range of community justice agencies, with a spectrum of experience in service user involvement to map existing approaches to practice. The analysis of this data from phases 1 and 2 ultimately led to the production of a thematic summary of findings to inform the development of the groups.

Phase 3:

Consultation and stakeholder engagement: A pan-Ayrshire, multi-stakeholder service user involvement launch event was held in January, 2017. The purpose of this event, which was participatory in approach, was to bring people together to encourage participation in the project and to inform the approach taken. Thereafter, the research team engaged with stakeholders to identify lead agencies to work collaboratively to form a group in each local authority area, to feed into the plan for initiation, implementation and development, and to share responsibility for driving it forward.

Phase 4:

Implementation and Support: This phase involved the implementation and establishment of three service user involvement groups. The research team provided tailored mentoring, support and guidance for the three groups, meeting with each on a monthly basis; two further pan-Ayrshire knowledge sharing events (in December 2017 and November, 2018) to celebrate practice, to share learning across the groups and to provide mutual support.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is a practical resource which aims to support professionals and service users to work together to shape the design, development and delivery of services. In this guide, we offer our learning from our research, based on documenting the process and progress of three service user involvement groups from their inception. People told us that one of the major barriers to pursuing service user involvement was quite simply that they didn't know where to start. We appreciate that each group will work differently, shaped by the contexts in which they are embedded, the relational dynamics that form them, and the individuals that constitute them. It is our hope, however, that this guide will provide professionals and service users with the tools to take that first step, and from there, to work collectively and collaboratively to coproduce change and to work in the direction of a more inclusive approach to justice.

Chapter 2

What is Service User Involvement?

In the literature, the term Service User Involvement can be used to refer to very different activities and expectations, underpinned by different philosophies and ideologies.

*‘Service user involvement is a complex and ambiguous idea. It is one of those aspirations, like partnership and empowerment, which can easily be degraded, diluted and devalued. But it is also important to remember that there is no one meaning attached to it’*⁷.

Indeed, a range of definitions can be found in research, policy and practice documents. While Needham and Carr (2009) differentiate between service user involvement and coproduction, which relates primarily to degrees of power sharing, influence and change⁸, the definition of service user involvement advanced by Clinks (2011) closely relates to definitions of co-production.

*‘The process by which the people using a service become involved in the planning, development and delivery of that service to make improvements’*⁹.

We use the term ‘user involvement’ as the guiding approach here rather than ‘coproduction’. Few of the people we spoke to in our research, underpinning the production of this guide, recognised or used the term ‘co-production’. However, as the quote above implies, there are many different ways of involving services

users, and at different levels, that when taken together comprise a co-productive approach.

*‘There has been some confusion between coproduction and service-user design, user ‘voice’ initiatives and consultation exercises. Although co-production encompasses all of these things, it cannot be reduced to any one of these approaches. To fall back on a well-worn cliché, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts’*¹⁰.

While there is no agreed definition of co-production, we find the following definition from Tony Bovaird and Elke Loeffler helpful:

*‘professionals and citizens making better use of each other’s assets, resources and contributions to achieve better outcomes and/or improved efficiency’*¹¹.

Although this is somewhat operationally vague, as the authors point out, it retains an emphasis on reciprocity; it incorporates recognition of the relationships that exist between the various co-producers or stakeholders; it focuses on outcomes and not just services or service provision; and it encompasses an active role for professionals, and people who use services.

There are different levels of service user involvement. Service user involvement, and coproduction more broadly, can take individualistic and group and collective forms¹².

Individual co-production produces outcomes that benefit the individual participants and this is presently the dominant co-productive strategy¹³. This could be aligned with notions of person centred support, which means people having a choice in and control over the type of support they receive.

Group forms of co-production typically bring service users together to shape or provide services. Mutual aid or peer support groups are a good example of this.

Collective forms are those strategies that 'benefit the whole community rather than just groups of service users'¹⁴. This includes opportunities for people to co-design and deliver services and activities. Service user involvement forums or councils are an example of this.

However you label what you do, why you do it, what you actually do, how you do it, and who with is arguably more important.



Slay and Stephen identified six general principles which we found helpful and which can inform the development of co-productive policies and practices in different contexts and with different populations.¹⁵

1

Taking an assets-based approach: transforming the perception of people, so that people are recognised as equal partners in designing and delivering services rather than passive recipients of services and burdens on the system.

2

Building on people's existing capabilities: altering the delivery model of public services from a deficit approach to one that provides opportunities to recognise and grow people's capabilities and actively support them to put these to use at an individual and community level.

3

Reciprocity and mutuality: offering people a range of incentives and opportunities to work in reciprocal relationships with professionals and with each other, where there are mutual responsibilities and expectations.

4

Peer support networks: engaging peer and personal networks alongside professionals as the best way of transferring knowledge, and supporting change.

5

Blurring distinctions: removing the distinction between professionals and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way services are developed and delivered and relationships are built and negotiated.

6

Facilitating rather than delivering: enabling public service agencies to become catalysts and facilitators rather than being the main providers themselves.

Service user involvement and coproduction can be understood in terms of **process** (i.e. how it's done), **outcomes** (i.e. the difference it makes), and **values** (i.e. because it is right)¹⁶.

Why 'do' service user involvement?

Rationales for service user involvement tend to refer to the impacts and effects that a coproductive approach to service design, delivery and development can support. Aside from the benefits that participation can produce for individuals, the key (and often overlapping) reasons for 'doing' service user involvement are that:

- it can support recovery, desistance and social integration;
- it promotes citizenship and social justice;
- it enhances the effectiveness, compliance, credibility and legitimacy of services ¹⁷.

Supports Desistance from Offending

Research evidence suggests that involvement in activities that contribute to the well-being of others (e.g. mentoring, peer support and volunteering initiatives) can alter the way people see themselves, and their own potential, as well as how others see them. Such changes in people's

personal and social identities are often associated with processes of desistance ¹⁸. Evidence also suggests that being involved in such activities can support the development of new social networks ¹⁹ and the development of more caring and other-centred attitudes ²⁰.

Providing opportunities for people who have offended to shape change, then, can be an important component of supporting desistance. Beyond desistance, service user involvement and peer support initiatives can promote civic reintegration ²¹; responsibility taking and being invested with responsibility is a means of social recognition, and an indicator of trust and respect. In turn, social recognition and the acknowledgment of citizenship contributes to a sense of social inclusion and community ²².

Promotes Citizenship and Social Justice

The concept of a citizen is that of a person who can hold [their] head high and participate fully and with dignity in the life of [their] society ²³.

Citizenship is a measure of the strength of people's connection to the rights, responsibilities, roles, and resources that society offers to people through public and social institutions and to relationships involving close ties, supportive social networks, and associational life in one's community ²⁴. User involvement in justice services has potential to support the exercise of citizenship in both of these ways. For those involved in justice services this requires, at the very least, the building of and interaction of collaborative networks between those who use services and those who deliver them and the mobilization of their diverse resources, experiences, knowledge and skills in the development, delivery and innovation of practice.



*To live well and flourish,
one must live in a
community of justice
that recognizes the value
of each of its members*²⁵

Rowe and Pellatier argue that to live well and flourish, one must live in a community of justice that recognises the value and worth of each of its members. Community justice is not just, then, about justice in the community but about building communities of justice. As members of the community, Anthony Duff argues, that those who have offended must not be excluded from the rights and benefits of citizenship²⁶. The importance of citizenship, therefore, could imply the need to ensure there are opportunities for those who have offended to achieve 'active citizenship'²⁷, which can be central to processes of change but under which service user involvement and civic participation more broadly might also usefully be positioned.

Increases Effectiveness, Compliance, Credibility and Legitimacy

Evidence suggests that using the experience and expertise of those who have offended to inform the development of criminal justice interventions can enhance the credibility, meaning or legitimacy of those interventions to service users. If services are co-designed or co-produced by service users, they may well be more credible, fit for purpose and thus effective²⁸.

In England and Wales, a Clinks survey of probation staff identified their belief that service user involvement improved the way services were designed and delivered²⁹. Staff suggested that service user involvement improves operational outcomes in terms of the way services are designed and delivered, and contributes to more substantive outcomes such as supporting compliance and reducing re-offending. Moreover, staff recognised that there were affective outcomes for those involved, including improved self-esteem, self-respect and confidence. People with experience of services can provide useful and relevant insights into the challenges and issues faced by those currently involved in criminal justice services, thus improving the effectiveness of services. They can also act as credible role-models or peer supporters. People are more receptive to influence where the change-agent is someone they can identify with³⁰. This can communicate a sense of hope that the same benefits or outcomes can be achieved by them and they may be more likely to internalise the benefits of responding to this influence³¹. This is important because evidence tells us that efforts to support change and secure compliance rely on significant engagement from service users³². Change is, after all, not about what the worker does, or what is done to them, but what is done with and by service users, in collaboration.





Methods and approaches to service user involvement

There are many different methods and approaches to service user involvement. Service user involvement should be an essential and fundamental part of service design, development and delivery of justice services, for all the reasons we explained in the previous section.

When we began our research, the various community justice agencies that we engaged with had different levels of experience of service user involvement. Some services, for example, solely had a feedback questionnaire asking people for their views on the service they received, once they had completed their order or post-release licence. Others had a suite of opportunities for participation. In the following section, we will take you through the steps we followed in supporting the agencies we worked alongside to develop mechanisms of service user involvement in their own organisations.

The table opposite provides an overview of some of the different activities that service users can get involved in, and the kinds of approaches such activities can include. Each activity provides different opportunities for people to have their say and to different ends. As we go on to make clear, people have different interests, skills and strengths and as such, it is important to provide a continuum of opportunities for participation.

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ACTIVITY	APPROACH
Consultation and feedback: on personal support/ service design / delivery	Questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, workshops, individual interactions, suggestion boxes, complaints procedures.
Research & evaluation: on a range of topics. Can enhance access/ response rate, relevancy and quality of data.	Peer research, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, participatory methods.
Collectives / Councils: for service users (and practitioners) to discuss concerns, advance ideas and make decisions on issues that matter to service users; can positively influence relationships between professional and services users; and between similarly situated peers.	Councils / Committee / Forum membership
Representation and engagement: creates space for the expression of service users interests and views, in their own words, to diverse audiences.	Speaking to commissioning bodies or service review panels; campaign, activist and advocacy work; participation in conferences and various media.
Delivering training / personal development courses: can encourage service user involvement; offer insights into service users' experiences; conveys a culture of participation.	Co/leading workshops, training staff and service users
Selection and recruitment of staff: can convey a culture of inclusion and participation to candidates; communicates importance of SUI to organisation.	Participation in all stages of the selection and recruitment process.
Governance and administration: ensures service user involvement at a strategic level.	Serving as a committee or board member; involvement in tendering and commissioning of services; paid employment.
Service design and delivery: harnesses service users' expertise and experience in the development and delivery of services.	Sharing views through consultation activities / project team membership; peer mentoring; mutual aid groups; co/delivery of activities/interventions/training

Source: Adapted from A Guide to Service User Involvement and Coproduction, *Clinks* (2016)

We think that that the Whole System Approach to service user involvement advocated by SCIE³³ is a helpful way to think about how we can embed service user involvement in Justice services:

- Culture:** Ensure that the ethos of an organisation demonstrates a commitment to service user involvement, and is informed by a shared understanding, a set of principles for putting the approach into action, and the intended benefits and outcomes that will be achieved with the approach.
- Practice:** Ensure the policies, procedures, resources, support, activities, opportunities, skills and knowledge, are in place to enable service users to become involved.
- Structure:** Ensure that the strategic planning, development and resourcing of service user involvement is embedded in the organisation's infrastructure.
- Review:** Co-produce and review monitoring and evaluation systems which enable an organisation to evidence impact of service user involvement, and develop and improve practice, in accordance with agreed principles.

Source: Adapted from Co-production in social care: What it is and how to do it (*SCIE*, 2013)

Chapter 4

Supporting Service User Involvement: A step by Step guide.



'Do not be disheartened if the majority of your service users do not participate in your project: quality is more important than quantity. Those who do come forward out of frustration with poor services may have difficulty articulating solutions straight away or may at first be negative. This will change as they begin to believe that their participation can make a difference' ³⁴

In this section, we offer a step by step guide to service user involvement, drawing on our research and practice over a period of two years. Our approach included not only service users, but also managers and practitioners, in some cases from different community justice agencies. The decision to include practitioners is not only consistent with the aims of coproduction, but is a critical consideration in itself, given

practitioners' role in enacting policies and influencing service users' experiences that are 'shaped almost entirely by their interaction with the frontline provider'³⁵. Elsewhere, in undertaking related research, we discovered a significant relationship between staff empowerment, and how staff view service user involvement; disempowered staff who feel that their voices are not heard or listened to can resent and resist opportunities for service users' voices to be heard ³⁶.

Together, we adopted a range of activities and approaches, decided by those involved. You can learn more about our research and experiences in pursuing service user involvement in our project report. Here we outline the steps we took and our learning along the way.

Preparation and Planning

Ideally, service users should be involved in the preparation and planning of a service user involvement strategy or plan. This is not always possible if you and/or your agency have not previously pursued service user involvement projects. If this is the case, any initial strategy can be revised following the recruitment of service users, at the earliest opportunity; indeed, it is good practice to regularly review your approach.

Read: It is useful to spend a bit of time learning about existing models of and approaches to service user involvement

at all levels e.g. service design, delivery, governance, including evidence of what really works to involve service users in the process, and what works less well.

Research: We recommend researching what is currently happening to support service user involvement both in your own organisations, or within and across other agencies. Speaking to people who have had experience in this area is an invaluable source of advice and guidance, and they may even offer to get involved and help you get started.

Resource: Service user involvement should not be an add on but needs to be properly resourced and this should be factored into your preparation and planning process. What kinds of training do practitioners and service users need? Who might be able to provide it? If you are holding events and meetings, you might need to factor in costs for the venue, refreshments and travel for example.

Recruit: Effective service user involvement requires leadership, support and the commitment of resources. The approach we took was to bring managers, practitioners

and service users together in the form of a participatory workshop to share our learning from our reading and research, to encourage participation in the project and to inform the approach taken. Thereafter, we engaged with these stakeholders to identify key agencies and 'champions' to work collaboratively to form a group to feed into the plan for initiation, implementation and development, and to share responsibility for driving it forward.

Establishing aims and vision

Having a clear focus and identified aims and objectives is important; rather than generic participatory activities, a clear rationale for coproduction or service user involvement is fundamental to encouraging and sustaining co-productive practices. This may include, for example, agreeing purposes, remit, roles, and membership.

Here are some of the questions you might want to think about together:

What are you aiming to achieve through service user involvement?

Is it to initiate improvements or innovations in your service? Is it to create a space for service users to voice concerns, advance ideas and make decisions on issues that matter to them?

What is the purpose/s of bringing people together?

Is it to establish or develop service user involvement? Is it about sharing best practice in supporting service user involvement, peer support and other consultative practices? Is it to enhance partnership working and the integration of services?

Who should get involved?

Do you want to involve former service users as well as current service users? Do you want to involve a specific group of service users, for example, young people or women? Do you want to include practitioners and managers? Do you want to include representatives from different agencies? Who do you need to involve to help you achieve your aims and realise your purposes?

Where will you meet, when and how often?

Thinking about where you will meet is important. Ideally, it should be a comfortable, neutral, and welcoming space that is easily accessible. Will you meet weekly? Fortnightly? Monthly? What days and times are likely to encourage involvement? How long should your meetings last? Do people need help or support to attend? Considerations

include people's availability, and existing commitments, alongside the need to maintain a sense of consistency and convey reliability and commitment, as well as being sufficiently frequent to encourage a continual sense of accountability and progression.

How would you like to involve these people? In what ways and to what ends?

As we note in section 3, there are many ways for people to get involved and for different ends. Which of these connect most closely to your aims and objectives? What kind of structure do you want to establish? One of our groups brought service users and practitioners together, for example, to meet to discuss approaches to service user involvement, which they collectively pursued through activities, which encouraged participation from a broader base of service users. Another group include practitioners from various agencies, including peer workers, and established peer support / satellite service user groups to run in parallel. In this case, peer workers acted as conduit between the two groups.

How will you know whether you have achieved your aims and realised your vision?

We explore approaches to evaluation in chapter 6. Questions to think about might include: what kinds of information will you collect to monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of your approach? Who will be responsible for this? How will you collect and store this information?



Understanding Difference, Embracing Diversity

Whoever you involve, (service users, practitioners and/or managers) people come with a range of backgrounds, capabilities, resources, expertise and experience; different people may also have different values, aims and objectives. We found it helpful to spend a bit of time early on building equitable and constructive relationships by sharing

information, experiences and expectations to encourage mutual understanding, challenge assumptions, and dismantle any reservations and concerns that people might have. This helped us to create a culture of openness, transparency, accountability and importantly, a sense of co-ownership and community.

Methods of recruitment

[Involving] people with lived experience can be difficult if they face barriers to inclusion. By identifying these barriers before you begin recruiting, you will have more chance of overcoming them ³⁷.

Engaging and sustaining the engagement of service users can be challenging and is an ongoing project. As the quote above suggests, people can face barriers to participation that you need to attend to before you begin recruiting. In this section, we start by outlining motivations and deterrents before exploring methods of recruitment. In following sections, we explore some of the more practical considerations you should take into account



Motivations

Our participants suggested that motivations for participation were as much about how it made them feel as what they got out of it. For many it was about feeling worth something; about being and feeling normal, but doing things differently and doing different things; and having somewhere to go and something to do. Some people want to get involved because they feel that they have a contribution to make, they want to share their expertise and experiences, use existing skills and develop new ones, and they want to make a genuine difference and feel productive. This resonates strongly with the relationships between service user involvement and perceptions of citizenship, discussed in section 2. There is also a distinction between getting involved and staying involved. For many, reasons to keep coming along also included the relational aspects of involvement: feeling comfortable, gaining a sense of belonging, mutual respect, building new relationships and experiencing community.

We found that the people who tend to get involved are those who are further along in their recovery or desistance journeys, whose lives have reached a level of stability and equilibrium. People might need different levels and types of support to engage, which underlines the importance of developing enabling relationships and offering proactive and practical support, and the need to provide a continuum of opportunities for participation to reflect different capabilities and capacities.

Deterrents

It is worth remembering that not everyone wants to get involved. Moreover, the extent to which people get involved, and who gets involved, can be affected by people's personal circumstances but also the nature of their involvement with and relationship to a service. Some service users may lack the confidence to get involved; for others, poor or negative perceptions or experiences of services can discourage them. A lack of trust and distrust were commonly mentioned deterrents; being unaccustomed to being asked about their views was met with suspicion and distrust by some service users.

Disengagement can equally be due to a change in personal circumstances or involvement with the service. It can also occur when people lose interest, particularly if activities and opportunities for involvement are uninspiring, or if people feel that their views are not listened to, valued or taken on board, and if they are not having an impact or influence – or if things take too long to happen. There are also practical challenges around accessibility, transport and personal commitments that can impede participation.

How to Recruit

People are unlikely to get involved if they don't know what they are signing up to. Methods of recruitment should exploit all opportunities to explain the aims and purposes of your group or project, what is expected of them, as well as what they can expect. You might find it helpful to develop a recruitment plan that includes some of the following methods:

- Design and distribute a promotional flyer and/or poster.
- Put flyers/posters in interview rooms, waiting areas and distribute to relevant agencies and groups, send out via email and post on social media.
- Host awareness raising and recruitment event(s) such events might be more or less formal, large or small scale and take the form of, for example, a participatory workshop or a drop in, open event, perhaps offering food and activities, or outreach activities e.g. at unpaid work or community payback, recovery cafes, or structured programme groups.
- Publicise on social media and/or your agency website
- Encouragement by practitioners or peer workers with whom service users have a trusting relationship is very effective, particularly if that practitioner supports them to engage.
- Word of mouth and encouragement from other service users who have been involved is also very effective.



Practicalities and Approaches

Practicalities: planning meetings, events and activities

- At a minimum, ensure travel costs are covered and reimbursed.
- Reflect on the accessibility of the location of events or activities.
- Ensure you take time to prepare and support people for different participatory opportunities, providing or negotiating access to training where applicable.
- Provide food and refreshments – this conveys appreciation and recognition. Eating together is both an equaliser and ice-breaker, and creates the space for informal interactions.
- Names only – leave roles and titles at the door. This can convey equality, inclusion and respect.
- Meetings should be informal, warm and welcoming in approach, while ensuring they are focused on the purposes at hand.
- If your members include representatives from other agencies, ensure that those representatives are consistent so that service users have the opportunity to form the kinds of relationships with them that can encourage participation and dialogue.
- Send out an agenda (and previous minutes) in advance to allow service users (and practitioners, where applicable) a chance to prepare.
- Take a minute or record of the meeting. Communication is a critical part of the process in general but taking and distributing minutes helps to communicate a sense of progression, sustain momentum, ensure transparency and encourage accountability, and can demonstrate that people’s views are both heard and acted on. The importance of feedback can’t be overstated.
- Stay in touch with service users in between meetings, events and activities through whatever means they are most comfortable with.
- Create opportunities for informal and formal peer support and for participation in different activities or forums in between scheduled meetings or events to sustain momentum, to encourage participation from a broader base of participants, and to support recruitment.
- Work at the pace of service users; don’t over commit people if they aren’t ready for it.
- Be persistent – if something doesn’t work, try it again (it might work next time!) or do it differently; remember it takes time so make the experience fun and enjoyable.
- Identifying a point of contact for service users to get in touch with can be helpful. Ultimately, as our groups developed, we recognised the need to appoint a development worker to lead on service user involvement in each area.



Approaches: relationships, inclusivity and variety

- Listen carefully to what people want, make sure they feel comfortable having their say.
- Relationships and mutual trust are key, and this can be enabled or constrained by the manner of relating, attitudes, and nature of relationships between practitioners and service users.
- Service cultures play an influential role – service user involvement requires the active encouragement of staff, staff engagement, buy-in, and commitment and leadership at all levels.
- Cultural and relational dynamics can shape experiences of participation: risk averse cultures and reluctant staff can negatively affect service user experiences and affect the enthusiasm of other staff.
- Forums, meetings, focus groups and consultations, are less engaging for some people than activities and events and so the focus, nature and variety of opportunities for participation, reflecting different stages, capabilities, motivations, and interests, is key.
- Service-led approaches that don't reflect the values and interests of service users are unlikely to encourage engagement. At a minimum, approaches to service user involvement should be developed in close collaboration with service users.
- Efforts that are experienced as tokenistic or engender concerns that people are not being heard, listened to and their views acted on, characterised by a lack of feedback or unrealistic expectations can discourage involvement.
- The meaning or value of what people are being asked to participate in matters; being heard and feeling listened to; having an impact and being informed of the outcomes and effects of engagement and seeing evidence of change is important. This might include tangible benefits at the level of the individual i.e. building CVs, skills and training, or at the level of the service, i.e. changing how things work, norms of interactions; recognition of contributions.





Common concerns and challenges

Changing cultures, attitudes and finding new ways of being and doing can be challenging. Here we provide a brief overview of some of the common concerns and challenges identified by the people we spoke to and worked alongside.

Diverse Service Contexts and Service User Populations

The involuntary nature of people's relationship to services can be a challenge in encouraging involvement in community justice services, not least in terms of issues of power and powerlessness. However, even within this context, we can increase opportunities for voluntarism by maximising the choices and opportunities available to people, and listening to what matters to them and what they value.

Those whose lives are 'stable' and who are in recovery or who are desisting are more likely to engage than those whose lives are more chaotic, unstable or challenging. There are also hidden or seldom-heard voices and voices that are harder to hear that we need to reach. This implies the need to develop a continuum or range of opportunities for people to get involved

that reflects people's motivations, interests and values but also their individual concerns and the realities of their lives. We also know that engaging people with lived experience can be powerful influencers for those earlier on in their journeys.

Services, such as large public authorities have a lot of red tape / bureaucratic processes and procedures (for example, around data protection, health and safety and criminal records) that can constrain innovation; this reinforces the need for a 'whole system approach' to supporting service user involvement. In our experience, working collaboratively and in partnership with third sector agencies can help statutory services circumnavigate some of these constraints.



Professional Cultures

Some professionals can find a potential shift in power sharing and changes to their roles to represent a challenge or threat to their professional identity or culture; for others, a lack of confidence or 'know how' is an issue. Staff need to feel supported and this implies the need for leadership, training and the development of a culture of learning at all levels. Constructively engaging with these tensions can create the space for staff members to express concerns, and to explore their own role in supporting service user involvement, be it in individual supervision and/or as a group, in team meetings. It can also help you to identify where further support may be needed. Communicate clearly why service user involvement matters, what you are doing and hoping to achieve. Have ongoing and open discussions about what service user involvement can offer; be clear and open about the limits of service user involvement, about what is up for discussion and change, and what is not.

Professional cultures in justice services can be risk averse; people may have a fear of taking risks, or taking a chance, and this is often attributed to 'cultures of blame' when things go wrong. Practitioners need to be reassured that it's OK not to get it right every time, that we learn from our mistakes, but we can't change if we aren't open to learning.

'Well, do you know what I do? I say, you know what, we've not done this before, we're finding our way, we need you to help us with it, what do you think? It's doing it together and ... [recognising] that it's gonna be a long scary process'. (Practitioner)³⁸

Resources

Leadership: (from the 'top' and the 'bottom') is key to embedding a whole systems approach to service user involvement. There is a need for strategic leadership and commitment at policy and senior management levels to ensure that service user involvement becomes a core part of people's roles and this means creating space in people's workload allocation to support innovation. It may also require developing a statement, policy or strategy for service user involvement and the provision of bespoke training for service users and professionals with different roles and responsibilities.

Human and Financial: Developing meaningful, multi-layered and sustainable approaches to service user involvement requires funding both in terms of supporting activities, for example (i.e. venue hire, food, travel costs), and the human resources implied, in terms of time – both from staff and volunteers. Cultural and service change takes time, as does the development of the kinds of relationships that can support service user involvement. In our experience, employing a dedicated development worker and/or peer 'champions' to lead on the development of service user involvement initiatives is required, as you progress, if you are to achieve a whole systems approach.

Practice Principles

Here we summarise some of the principles for practice informed by our research and practice.

1 Listen to what your service users want to get involved in and how they want to get involved. Active listening is a core skill but it is fundamental to user engagement. What is critical about this seemingly obvious theme of listening to what people want is that when people think about how to support service user participation, engagement or involvement, they often bring to the table a range of ideas, plans, and anticipated outcomes and so on. We learned from speaking to other practitioners and service users, that any approach to service user participation needs to be directly informed and shaped by what service users want to participate in or have a say on; how they wish to be engaged and when; and what support they need for that to be meaningful.

2 Leadership, buy in and resources (human and financial) are also key to success. User Engagement can't be an 'add on' – engaging with service users takes time and it needs to be resourced. Otherwise, it can all too quickly get lost or fall through the cracks in the face of the many competing challenges that workers and service users face. When that happens, people lose trust in the process - and it is easier to lose trust than to gain it or regain it. What emerged from our research is that those services that have managed to embed user participation and involvement in the culture and fabric of the organisation have a dedicated resource, human and

financial. Having a dedicated resource enables the organisation to develop and maintain the different opportunities for participation that user involvement requires; a nominated person, for example, can also work with staff to support them to engage with service users in a way that is consistent with the principles of user participation. Leadership from peers with lived experience is key in terms of reducing social distance through identification-based trust, which encourages participation and engagement.

3 User Involvement is best enabled where organisations or services provide a continuum of opportunities for participation. Not everyone is equally interested in or has the ability to make an intensive commitment or contribution to service delivery, design and development. Those who are 'stable' are more likely to participate in longer-term, structured approaches. There is the challenge of developing approaches to support the participation of these harder to reach, rarely heard from groups. As such, service user involvement strategies work well when services support a continuum of opportunities for participation reflecting different opportunities to participate to different degrees and in different ways. Strategies must be tailored to the group of people participating and therefore subject to change over time. You cannot impose service user involvement, (see point 1), it has to be developed with and by service users. This is because what works with one group might not work with another group so it has to be individualised and context specific and tailored to those involved. It is also not an end state - it is a dynamic and changeable process that evolves over time. People, their interests, their motivations

and their priorities change and so what we have learnt is that you need to develop a flexible, and opportunity led approach to service user involvement as part of a more structured framework or whole systems approach.

4 Start small, be patient and persistent – it takes time to do it properly and to get it right. Do not try to be too ambitious too soon. Be prepared to not get it right first – or even second! - time. Try everything and try more than once – it might work next time. It will not happen overnight; these things take time so it is very much about working with people at their pace and being patient with the process and being persistent.

5 Opportunities for involvement need to be meaningful, interesting (fun even?) and voluntary: people need to feel welcomed and engaged. We cannot expect people to give up their time and share their knowledge, expertise and personal resources unless it is meaningful for them. This is why it is so important to engage people in the ways in which they want to be engaged and in what they would like to engage in. The most effective approaches tend to fun, where people enjoyed the experience, where people felt welcomed, valued and engaged, and where they felt there was a clear purpose.

6 Environment and approach is key – food helps! Both the environment and the approach used must communicate to service users a sense of their value and worth. The environment (both the physical space and the relational dynamics) can shape opportunities for everyday participation (or conversely constrain them). In terms of physical space, it means finding or acquiring a place where groups of workers, professionals, volunteers and service users can come together - because it is in the every day opportunities for participation and through informal interaction, alongside more structured opportunities, that relationships between service users, between service users and staff develop. Food helps, not least because it is an expression of worth, but because it is a recognised way to build community between people who do not know each other; it breaks down barriers that can otherwise exist by creating an informal atmosphere.

7 Effective and regular communication We also learned the importance of having regular and effective communication strategies – this could be as simple as sending texts to thank people for participating to the development of regular feedback channels to communicate the outcomes of any consultation, for example, or proposals made, and in a variety of formats and to a range of groups. The point here is that staying in touch, communicating regularly, and ensuring people feel and are involved lies at the heart of service user involvement. It sounds obvious but, like the first point, it is also too easily overlooked.

8 Barriers relating to practitioner capacity, concerns about riskiness, lack of confidence, time and heavy workloads are real and need to be recognised.

We have already noted the importance of resourcing any approach to user engagement and this means the human and financial resources your organisation, staff and service users need to participate. Capacity frustrations and concerns also need to be taken into account. Some practitioners were concerned about what could realistically be achieved within the constraints of existing workloads for example; others expressed a lack of confidence - while they were keen to support user engagement, they didn't know where to start; others needed to be assured that support to realise user engagement would come from the top and would be enduring. People also wanted to be reassured that if it did not work the first time, for example, that support would be in place to try out new ways of thinking and doing. In this regard, people were wary of the culture of blame that all too often manifests when things do not go according to plan and this underpinned fears of trying out new ways of working or venturing into the unknown. All this needs to be understood and alleviated. It is hard work and mistakes will be made. That's ok though – just own it and work together to think how it might be done differently next time. This is a new approach for some agencies, often for staff, and usually for service users so being clear about boundaries, parameters and limitations is important – about what IS up for negotiation and what is not.

9 Context can be a constraint but mutual trust, interactions and cultures are key Physical contexts can exert a constraint or barrier to the development of interactions that communicate and engender mutual trust between services users and between service users and practitioners. Indeed, many statutory services are designed to keep people apart. We have learnt that creating opportunities for interaction and the culture of an agency is key to the success of service user engagement. Trust is a critical element here. At the heart of effective user engagement approaches is the development of trusting and open relationships, which take time to develop, and practical, responsive support to enable participation. Beyond trust in relationships - trust in the process of participation takes time. For many people involved in the criminal justice system, participatory or co-productive practices represent a departure from their experiences of services, indeed from the culture of services that has developed, and so trust in the process (and its outcomes) needs to be established.

10 Is service user involvement a core task? Is co-facilitating a walking group proper work? Is facilitating a group of women learning how to cook justified as part of an unpaid work order? How is this seen by service users, staff and colleagues and the public? These are some of the questions that people felt colleagues and people from other agencies or in the public might raise. These are important considerations but as we said, user involvement can't be seen as an add on and in this context, we don't mean in terms of resources, but in terms of being a core and fundamental approach to the way we work with people. Yes it is work, it is justified and it is right.

Chapter 6

Appendix: An Introductory guide to evaluation

Undertaking an evaluation of your work can tell you whether your service user involvement project or programme is achieving its aims and objectives. There are different approaches to evaluation for different purposes. A process evaluation determines whether and how project activities have been implemented as intended, focussing on its operation, implementation and delivery; it assesses how your project has been undertaken. An outcome evaluation measures project effects in the target population by assessing progress towards the outcomes that the project is seeking to achieve; it assesses the impacts and effects of your project. Both forms of evaluation are relevant to an evaluation of your service user involvement project or programme but they imply different questions.

PROCESS QUESTIONS	OUTCOMES QUESTIONS
Why did people get involved?	What did participation in X change for them?
Did people feel they could have their say?	What difference did the activity make, how and to whom?
Did the activity/ group meet their expectations?	Did it achieve what it set out to achieve?
What worked well? What worked less well – and why?	What impact did it have on agencies/service users/practitioners?
What are the areas for improvement?	How did these impacts improve support/ services / experiences of recovery and desistance?

Examples of Process and Outcomes Questions

Evaluation allows us to develop an evidence base around how service user involvement works or does not work, what difference it makes, who for, when and why. It can tell you about what type of involvement, under what circumstances, generates what results or outcomes. This facilitates development and continuous learning, and it ensures that the work you are doing is useful, worthwhile and beneficial.

This section is designed to support you to conduct an internal evaluation. Internal evaluations are those evaluations conducted by people involved in a project, or programme of work and will include, for example, practitioners, service users and other relevant stakeholders. External evaluations tend to be conducted or facilitated by researchers. There are a range of more detailed guides and resources which may be helpful to support different elements of your evaluation, from information about how to set outcomes and identify what to measure, to resources about different evaluation methods³⁹.

Stages of Evaluation

There are numerous methods of evaluation. How you evaluate your project depends on what it is you want to find out, how you will use the findings, for what purpose, and what you are investigating. Given the ethos of service user involvement, we recommend an inclusive approach to evaluation, which involves key stakeholders (e.g. service users, practitioners and managers). At the very least, this means bringing people together to form an evaluation team to inform the process of evaluation.

Most evaluations take the following form:

1. Planning

This stage involves bringing together an evaluation team, designing your evaluation framework, your research instruments and data collection tools, and selecting your method of analysis. You should also take into account ethical considerations and data management requirements. It is also helpful to plan how you will report on and disseminate your findings.

2. Data Collection

This is the stage where you collect the data, or information, that you have decided you need to collect in order to answer the questions you agreed in your planning stage.

3. Analysing the Data

Data analysis involves making sense of the information, or data, that you have collected. There are various methods or techniques that can help you interpret your findings.

4. Reporting on and Disseminating Findings

This stage involves writing up or presenting and sharing your findings to different audiences, in different forms. The approach and format you choose will depend on who you want to share your findings with and for what purpose.

In what follows, we offer some guidance that will help you plan your evaluation, taking each step in turn.

PLANNING

Research Design

It is good practice to plan for evaluation from the start of your project or programme of work. This will enable you to start collecting the kinds of information or data that you need from the outset, depending on what you want to measure or assess.

Some general questions for you to consider in this stage include:

- What do you want to find out?
- Who will conduct the evaluation?
- What time frame will you do it in?
- What are the aims and objectives of your evaluation?
- What kind of data do you want to collect or generate?
- What approach will you use to collect this data?

What you want to find out will influence what kind of data you need to collect. In turn, what data you decide that you need to collect will influence your approach to data collection, your methods of research. Research methods can be broadly separated into quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods (we discuss each of these below). Your evaluation can include one or all of these methods.

Methods of Evaluation

Deciding which method(s) you will select will depend on a) the purpose of the evaluation, and b) the time and resources you have. Once you have decided on a method, you will need to develop the relevant research instruments.

Quantitative methods produce data that can be statistically analysed. Surveys and questionnaires are a common example. They are used to gather responses to a range of closed questions, multiple choice, scaling questions and sometimes open questions (open questions are harder and more time-consuming to code into numbers than closed questions). Surveys and questionnaires can be conducted face to face, by phone, post, email or online.

You might for example want to conduct a survey with different stakeholders to find out, for example, what those people think of a particular group or activity or service and how it can be improved. Thinking about who you want to survey is an important step. You need to gather responses from a suitably diverse group of affected or involved people and from a large enough population for the views to be considered representative or generalizable. The benefits of a survey is that everyone is asked the same question which allows for quantitative analysis; surveys can be conducted quickly and in people's own time. However, the depth of data is limited and surveys can often yield a low response rate. Unless you are in a position to conduct surveys face to face, they might exclude people with literacy difficulties or language differences from participating. Finally, while a small-scale survey might be useful in exploring appetite for a given activity, and preferences about where and when that activity should run, for example, a survey on its own is unlikely to give you the kinds of experiential data you need to develop an in-depth analysis of a wider service user involvement project or programme. For this, you might also, or alternatively, adopt a qualitative approach.

Qualitative Methods often produce data in the form of words, and they are designed to collect data on what people think and feel. Common methods include interviews and focus groups. Interviews are usually conducted with individuals whereas focus groups are usually conducted with six or seven people, at the same time. It is

common to record interview and focus groups on an audio device to ensure you accurately capture what people have said. Both methods can help you discover what people think or feel about any aspect of your project or programme, and they can help you generate ideas for new activities, approaches or services. They can generate a much broader and diverse range of views than quantitative methods and reveal something of the diversity of experience across your stakeholder groups. Focus groups in particular can help with generating diverse views as people react to what others have said, generating themes or areas of interest / inquiry that you may not have thought of, and that may not come out in individual interviews. However, it is best to have groups where power dynamics are minimised as power differences can inhibit participation. Moreover, not everyone feels comfortable sharing their views and experiences in a group context.

Participatory Methods can produce a range of data, depending on the method chosen, including, for example visual data. There are a range of methods including world café; digital story-telling; mobile diaries; photo-voice; and cooperative inquiry. These methods also generate qualitative data but in ways that enable participants to express their views more freely and creatively.

Ethical Considerations

Risk of Harm: You need to ensure that your participants (direct or indirect) are protected from harm, including physical and psychological. Consider, are participants likely to be harmed or experienced distress as a consequence of participating in your evaluation? Do you need to make arrangements for supports to be available in the event of someone experiencing distress?

Informed Consent: You need to provide all and any information that might influence a person's decision to take part. Researchers tend to provide an information sheet and consent form. The kind of information you should share, and to which participants

should be asked to consent, will include: the purpose of the evaluation; what is expected of them; why you are inviting them to participate; what kind of information you are collecting; who will have access to it; how it will be stored and for how long. You need to make sure that the person fully understands what they are agreeing to do; and that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw their data at any time, until you have finished the evaluation.

Confidentiality:

No participant should be identifiable from your writing up of your research. You need to think carefully about anything that you will write up and make publicly viewable: could the person be identified from the details you present? Confidentiality is critical however, there may be situations where you might need to break confidentiality – if someone discloses that they, or someone else is at risk of harm.

For further information about research ethics see the Social Research Association ethical guidelines ⁴⁰.

Data Management

You also need to think about how the data will be managed throughout the project and what will happen to it after the project completes. It is important that any data you collect is stored securely to protect participants' confidentiality. All data should be pseudo-anonymised as soon as possible after collection and destroyed securely on completion of the project.

DATA COLLECTION

In this stage, you put your plan into action. You will have decided what type of survey or interview (or other method) you want to use, you will have developed your questionnaire or interview schedule, decided who and how many people you want to sample, made initial contact, provided information, and obtained consent. You also need to consider where and how you will collect your data. You

should hold any face to face interactions in a safe space, and one in which your participants are likely to feel comfortable and at ease. If service users are travelling to see you, it is normal to reimburse travel costs. You might also find it useful to spend time reading around the kind of research skills that your chosen method requires. For example, in both interviewing and focus groups, communication skills are key.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this stage, you need to make sense of the data you have collected. There are many different methods of analysis. The selection of the method will be influenced by the kinds of data you have collected.

If you are conducting an online survey, there are free online tools that you can use to help you, which will also do basic analysis of data for you. Examples include Survey Monkey and TypeForm. Tools such as this are sufficient for small scale, internal evaluations.

Thematic analysis is a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research. In 2006, Braun and Clarke ⁴¹ published an article that described to novice researchers how to use thematic analysis in a step-by-step manner.

The six steps are as follows:

1. Familiarising yourself with your data:

First of all you need to transcribe what people have said, read the transcripts and listening to the recordings, jotting down your initial impressions. This step helps you to become familiar with all the data, and is a good foundation for further analysis.

2. Generating initial codes: Next, you should start identifying initial codes, which relate to the parts of the data that appear interesting and meaningful, keeping in mind your research questions, and noting any patterns or relationships occurring. In practice, you highlight sections of text and attach labels to categorise or code them as they relate to a theme or issue in the data.

- 3. Searching for themes:** The next steps involves interpretive analysis. Once you have made a list of all your codes and extracts, you need to sort the relevant data extracts according to overarching themes.
- 4. Reviewing themes:** This step involves refining and reviewing themes. During this phase, you need to review the coded data extracts for each theme to analyse whether they form a pattern. Then select the themes to be refined into themes that are specific enough to be standalone themes but broad enough to capture the different ideas that you have analysed across various extracts. In this way you can reduce the data into a more manageable set of significant themes. This step should help you identify a set of different themes, see how they fit together, and what, together, they have to say about the data as a whole.
- 5. Defining and naming themes:** This step involves ‘refining and defining’ the themes and identifying possible subthemes within the data. Here you give your themes a name that capture the essence of each theme. For each individual theme, you need to write a detailed analysis, explaining what the theme has to say about the data, in relation to your focus of inquiry, in relation to your questions. At this stage, a cohesive analytic description of the data needs to emerge from the themes.
- 6. Producing the report:** Now you are ready to write up your analysis. Here you can use quotes from your data extracts as evidence to support the analytical argument you are making, in response to your research questions.

REPORTING ON AND DISSEMINATING FINDINGS

You should document how you undertook your evolution as well as what you found. You need to think about what results need to be communicated and this will be influenced by the aims and objectives and/or research questions that you agreed in the planning stage. You will also need to think about how you want to communicate your results and in what format.

Disseminating your findings is important so that you can ensure that what you have learnt contributes to change; to ensure that what you have learnt informs and improves practice. You may choose to write up a report and share findings with key stakeholders at an event or review workshop for example. A review workshop could be developed as a participatory or interactive event in which key stakeholders, those most affected, have say on how your findings should inform practice, collective negotiating and agreeing an action plan for moving forward.



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INCLUSIVE JUSTICE - CO-PRODUCING CHANGE

A Practical Guide to Service User Involvement in Community Justice