

CO-PRODUCTION

Unlimited Potential working with Oldham Council

Producing solutions with citizens – the Elephants project

For effective services, a better relationship is needed between people who deliver and use services. Organisations are looking towards citizens having an active role in design and delivery (co-production).

There are ‘pockets’ of examples of lived experience/decision maker relationships across Greater Manchester. However, talk of better relationships has not yet ‘tipped over’ into widespread action, with potential barriers in the way.

The voices of people with lived experience are vital to achieving the best possible outcomes, so need equal weighting to decision-makers’. Progress is possible only if discussion moves from problems to solutions.

The ‘Elephants project’ brought together people with lived experience of severe and multiple disadvantage with decision-makers from across Greater Manchester to answer the question: *How can people with lived experience and decision-makers work together to eradicate severe and multiple disadvantage in Greater Manchester within a generation?*

Coordinated by project team of people from local VCSE organisations (Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Community Led Initiatives, Inspiring Change Manchester, JustLife, Petrus Community, Unlimited Potential) and people with lived experience, and with active personal involvement by Councillor Jean Stretton (Leader of Oldham Council), the Elephants project ran during 2016-2017:

1. Recruitment of 30 people with lived experience and decision-makers (from all sectors) across Greater Manchester.
2. Confidential conversations with each individual about perceptions (including ‘elephants in the room’) and challenges to co-production.
3. A ‘meet and greet’ session to bring people together.
4. A first event to explore issues, identify focuses, and form groups.



5. Project groups working on separate issues (such as commissioning in criminal justice, homelessness, and spice) facilitated by someone with lived experience and someone from a VCSE organisation.
6. An interim and a final learning event.

Each project identified practical issues and solutions, but perhaps as importantly helped to create relationships between people as human beings, so allowing very different kinds of conversations and developments than would normally occur. Decision-makers got insight into the realities of severe and multiple disadvantage, while people with lived experience got greater understanding of the challenges of working within 'the system'.

The learning from the Elephants project has been summarised in a draft guide to co-production, *Working Together to Tackle Disadvantage*, which was itself co-produced. This outlines: why work together; key principles; getting started; making progress; practicalities; and ensuring change.

Drawing on the learning to date, the project team is now working on the development of the Elephants approach across Greater Manchester.

For further information contact:

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