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Brighton and Hove Common Ambition's top tips for safely co-producing service improvements and system change

Posters included:

- Recruitment
- Group work
- Trauma-informed working
- Co-production
- Service design
- Ending well



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Recruitment

We undertook four recruitment rounds with reflection after each one to improve and co-define our recruitment process.

Our process is:

- Group facilitators build relationships with organisations and raise awareness of the project
- People are referred/self referred into the project
- Facilitators carry out initial 1:1 meetings with prospective members
- They also carry out work induction sessions in a 1:1
- Then there are two group induction sessions, where the work we do is practised before going into a main group meeting

Top tips:

- Always consider diversity
- Build relationships with other services, organisations and peer groups to generate awareness of your project and referrals
- Ensure people have experience using the systems and services you are working on
- Carry out induction sessions to 'practice' ways of working and new processes
- You may need several recruitment rounds, decide together when they should be
- If you are recruiting to an existing group, always consider your current group dynamics
- Reflect on each recruitment round to co-develop the optimum recruitment process



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Group work

The project is guided by us, the steering group, where all decisions are made. We have worked really hard to ensure we work together with respect, understanding and drive.

Top tips:

- Co-create a safe space, that is accessible and has snacks
- Co-produce ways of working (especially a group agreement)
- Ensure equal voice, respect different opinions and come to a consensus together
- Be flexible enough to change direction during a meeting
- Have space (physical and in the agenda) for breaks
- Create space for socials, fun and getting to know one another
- Have 1:1 space outside of the group to reflect and feedback
- Have more than one facilitator at all times



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Trauma-informed working

When co-producing homeless healthcare improvements, research or training we can't always avoid the difficult topics. It is important to co-create a safe space for people with experience of homelessness and trauma to work in.

Top tips:

- Understand what trauma-informed working is and work out what it means to you
- Co-create the ways of working; be person centred
- The three c's: Check-in (with how you're feeling), choice (over how you participate) and control (over the work and agenda)
- Ensure people know that there is no expectation to tell your story in a co-production space, you are there to use your experiences to generate ideas for change
- Ensure mentally, emotionally and physically accessible spaces
- Have a dedicated Participation Lead, who has experience in support work, to provide 1:1 support
- Try and make the work you do fun, it makes it easier to discuss difficult subjects



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Co-production

For us, co-production means bringing people with lived experience and professionals together, with a shared purpose, on equal terms to generate and develop ideas for change in a safe space. We balance out power, make joint decisions, build knowledge and skills and ensure reciprocity.

Top tips:

- You need time and investment to ensure co-production is not tokenistic
- Co-define your approach to co-production and your approach to balancing power dynamics
- Ensure shared responsibility for your space and ownership of the work
- Understand people's different skills, experience and limitations
- Make joint decisions and always decide on the direction of work together, it is the facilitator's job to bring the opportunities to the group.
- Bring people in (involve others working in or using the system)
- Value people's time and invest in building knowledge and skill
- Be transparent
- Be inclusive
- Don't be afraid to challenge existing ways of working



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Service design

Initially we had external training in service design, then over two years we have co-developed our own approach to it. We have undertaken 15 design sprints over the course of the project, including system consulting, service improvement, campaigning and developing training.

Top tips:

- Source the right opportunities, follow your group's interests, skills and knowledge and respond to the needs of service and systems.
- Ensure you know what the scope of the project is and be aware of any additional funding you might need and any other limitations
- Bring in additional skills you may need e.g. a designer
- Prioritisation is really important, make sure you have a shared approach to this
- Do your market research and don't duplicate what already exists
- It takes time, don't rush the stages (refining the brief, ideation, prototyping, testing, implementation), always build in extra time; you'll need it!
- Events and comms are very useful to share your ideas and get feedback
- It's important to reflect and get feedback on the process and the content



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Ending well

We know that people experience bad endings often, this was highlighted in our work to identify challenges within the system. We needed to ensure if/when we end that this is a therapeutic ending. We spent the last six months of the project co-designing our good ending.

Top tips:

- Co-produce the ending that you want and keep it a live process/document
- Celebrate your successes
- Don't shy away from sadness and disappointment
- Consider what it means to each person and what they need
- Be transparent and honest
- Just as it takes time to start a project, it takes time to end a project, 3-6 months
- Identify pathways and next steps for everyone
- Find ways for your work to live on
- Have 1:1 space to reflect privately on ending
- Have time to tie up loose ends, revisit your old work and find ways to complete it, hand it over or encourage others to adopt it