



BRIGHTON & HOVE
COMMON
AMBITION

Reflections, Key Learning and Top Tips

**From a 3-year
homeless healthcare
co-production project**

*'Working with Common
Ambition and what it stands
for means we're making a
worthwhile difference and
I feel proud of all our work'*

Steering group member



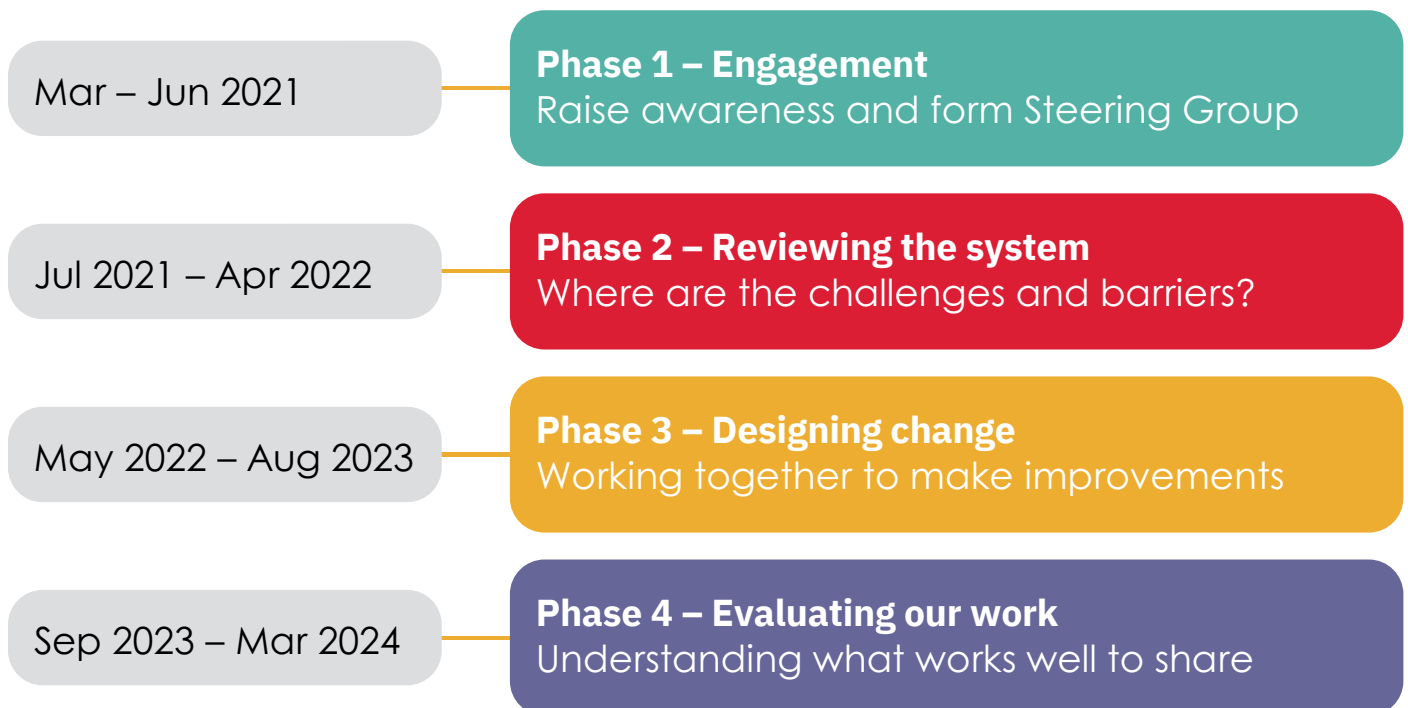
Scan for our website

Introduction

Brighton and Hove Common Ambition (BHCA) started in March 2021, funded by a three-year grant from The Health Foundation. It has brought together people with experience of homelessness, frontline providers, researchers and commissioners to co-produce service and system improvement. The aim of the project was to improve health services and outcomes for people experiencing homelessness.

Central to the design and delivery was the BHCA Steering Group. This was made up of people experiencing homelessness, the Project Manager (Arch Health CIC), the Participation Lead(s) (Justlife) and two academics, including the project evaluator (University of Brighton). The group has co-developed methodologies and processes as well as designing interventions.

Making joint decisions is an integral part of the way the group has worked from the outset. For example, in the process of co-producing this report the group decided that it should be written from their perspective, therefore references to 'we' means the steering group.



Project Highlights

The steering group

The key highlight we identified was the success of the group itself, with an emphasis on building new ways of working together in a safe environment where people are able to engage meaningfully. We have a collaborative approach to everything we do.

We are very proud of the impact of our co-production on making change, changing people's views for the better and challenging the status quo.

Engagement

Delivering successful events and training enabled us to engage a range of people in the project and inspire them to make change. It also allowed us to develop and hone our presentation and facilitation skills.

Skills

We went on a learning journey together, developing skills and confidence along the way. This includes training in group work, co-production, service design and presenting. From this we were able to present and facilitate events and meetings more confidently, develop our co-production practices and carry out service design sprints without external support.

Ways of working

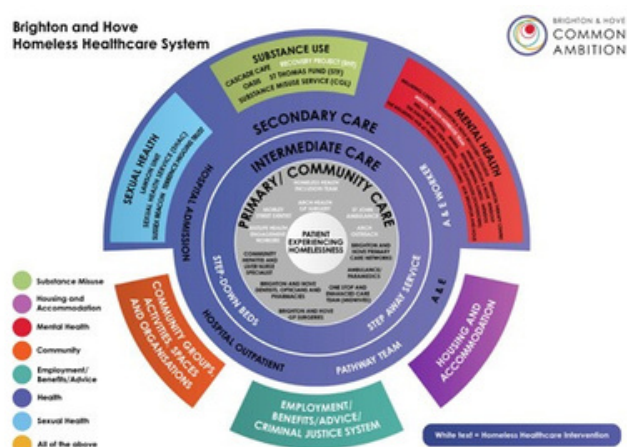
We have co-developed our own approach to trauma informed co-production. This means we have created a safe space for people who may have experienced trauma to participate meaningfully in co-producing improvements to the system and services they have used. We have provided our top tips later in this report.



Our substantial and diverse body of work

Our Maps

We co-produced system and service maps to help us identify the barriers within the system. These maps are used across the system from commissioning to onboarding new staff.



Guidance documents

As part of our work to co-define our ways of working and processes, we have co-created guidance documents, including:

- [Co-production meeting guidance](#)
- [Case study guidance](#)
- [Event wellbeing guidance](#)
- [Welcoming visitors guidance](#)

We are happy that we can share these with other organisations to support them on their co-production journey.

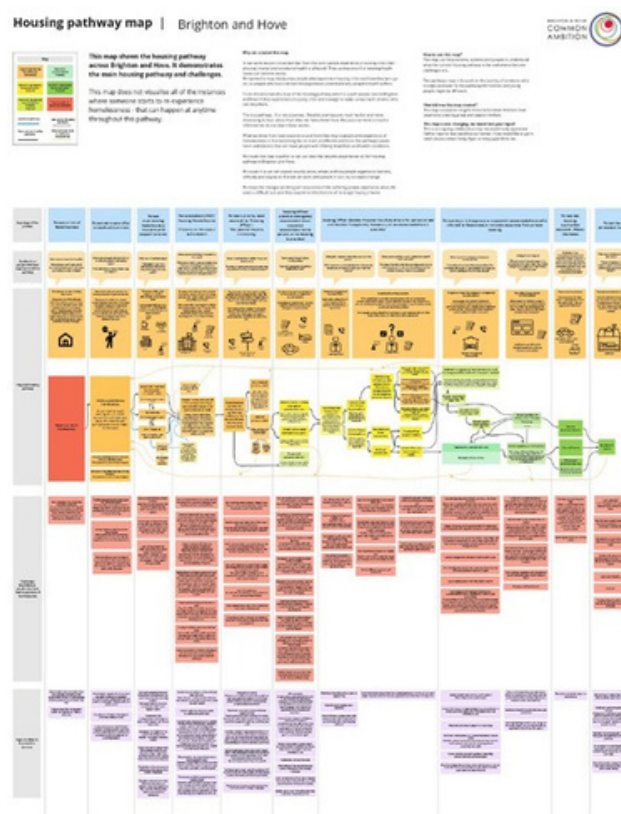
15 design sprints:

1. Route to Roof

In April 2022, we co-designed a physical and digital directory of services for people experiencing homelessness.

2. Housing Pathway

In September 2022, we co-designed a housing pathway map for Brighton for a single adult with recourse to public funds.



3. World Homeless Day social media campaigns in 2022 and 2023

We co-produced awareness raising campaigns for World Homeless Day, 10th October 2022 and 2023.

4. Co-production research

With our academic team from the University of Brighton, over the three years, we co-designed research methodologies and collected and analysed data on the subject of co-production and the housing pathway. This was to share our learnings and best practice whilst influencing systems change.

5. Medical student training

In Autumn 2022 in collaboration with Dr Kate Pitt, we co-created a Homelessness and Health module that is taught at Brighton and Hove Medical School every term.

6. BHCA website

In Jan-Feb 2023 we co-designed the BHCA website.

7. Arch Move On and Outreach consultation

In March 2023 we consulted on two Arch Healthcare services: their GP move-on service and their new outreach service. We looked at areas of improvement and ways to raise awareness of these services in the wider community.

8. Manifesto for local political parties

In March 2023 we co-produced manifesto recommendations for the local political parties.

9. Co-production training

In May 2023 we co-produced and delivered co-production training. This has been delivered twice so far, to a staff team at a local charity and at a sector wide health conference.

10. Multiple Compound Needs Transformation Programme consultation

In the summer of 2023 we worked with the Multiple Compound Needs Transformation Programme to help refine its aims and objectives.

11. Co-producing a comic

In the summer of 2023 we worked with PhD student Thomas Roberts to co-produce a comic book raising awareness of stigma and judgement faced by people experiencing homelessness, barriers to accessing care, the importance of a hub space and co-production.



12. Street Sheet consultation

In September 2023 we consulted with Anti Freeze to support their Street Sheet work.

13. Homeless Hub Service Specification

In November 2023 we co-designed a specification for a homeless healthcare hub for Brighton and Hove.

14. Ending Well

In winter 2023-spring 2024 we co-produced what a good project/service ending looks like.

15. Housing commissioning consultation

In January 2024 we worked with the supported housing commissioning team and Brighton and Hove city council to develop guidance for how to collect and use case studies in the commissioning of their services.

Challenges

We came up against many challenges during the project, we have laid out what we feel were the biggest challenges. In every situation we found that being transparent, having time to reflect and co-producing solutions meant we could overcome issues we faced.

Staying safe & time

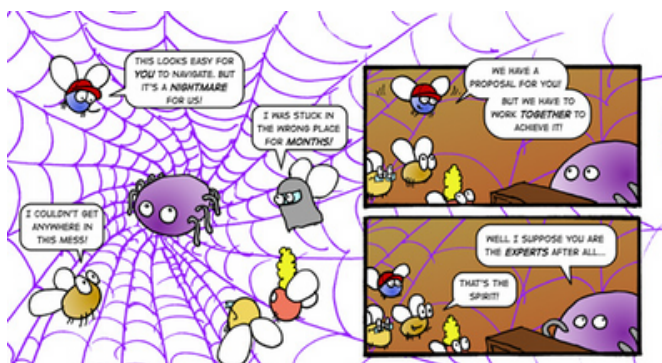
One of the key challenges of the project was ensuring the safety of the group where the content of the work was often triggering and upsetting. This became particularly apparent when we worked with external professionals who did not have experience of a co-production space.

To mitigate this, the group worked together to co-produce [ways of working](#) and [guidance](#) in order to ensure the space was safe. It took time to build and co-define the processes, but they have become the backbone to our work. In addition the project's Participation Lead ensured that we were supported throughout the project.

The system and working with different people

Initially, it was hard to understand the system and the process of mapping it was challenging. It was difficult to 'infiltrate' the system and work with a range of agencies who took different approaches. Challenging fixed mindsets and being heard and respected was difficult.

We encouraged those managing and working in the system to come to our meetings, to tell us about their area of the system or service. This made mapping the system easier and once we had our maps we had a clearer idea of the system. Our co-defined processes and guidances were helpful in challenging mindsets and finding a safe space to be heard.



Sustainability and funding

We all felt that the issue of sustainability and finding funding to continue was one of the most challenging. We feel there is more work to be done, but making the case to continue has been hard.

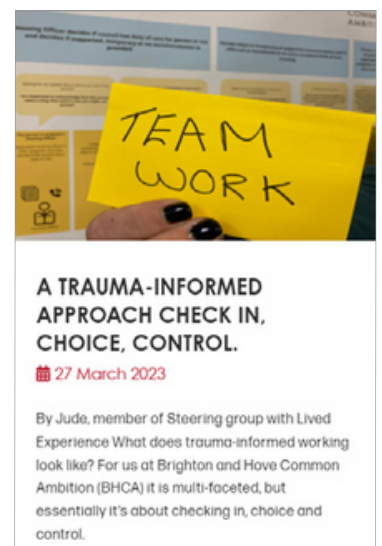
Our final lived experience led event in November 2023 was a big turning point for this. We filled the room with our co-produced resources and through this we felt people were able to experience our diverse and substantial body of work, be involved in our processes and witness the passion we had to continue this project. We asked people to think about how they could support us to continue and this led to us securing some of our continuation funding.

Personal challenges

We have all experienced personal challenges such as the anxiety of joining a group and committing to a long project. Both mental and physical health issues could at times be a barrier to engaging in the project in the way that we wanted to.

Our three c's check-in (with how you're feeling), choice (over how you participate) and control (over the work and agenda) were vital in supporting ourselves and each other at these times. We were always able to check-in with how we were feeling and get support if we needed it. If we felt too anxious we did not have to feel pressure to come to meetings, or participate in all parts of a meeting, we had a choice. We had control over the direction of the project, we were able to say if we didn't want to do something. In addition, the 1:1 support provided by the Participation Lead and minutes sent out after every meeting meant if we did miss a meeting, we were always able to catch up on the work.

You can read our Check-in, Choice and Control blog [here](#).



A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH CHECK IN, CHOICE, CONTROL.

27 March 2023

By Jude, member of Steering group with Lived Experience What does trauma-informed working look like? For us at Brighton and Hove Common Ambition (BHCA) it is multi-faceted, but essentially it's about checking in, choice and control.

Learning

The work that we have done over the last three years sits across six focus areas. The learning in these areas has been co-defined in our group sessions. We then prioritised our key learning and turned these into our top tips for those who may be carrying out similar work.

1. 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 of the group is practised, prior to new recruits joining a main group meeting
- Finally all new members join a steering group meeting and we begin working together

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

2. 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 ways of working agreement)
- Ensure equal voice, respect different opinions and come to a consensus together
- Be flexible enough to change direction during a meeting
- Have space (in the room 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

3. 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

Top tips:

- You need time and investment to ensure co-production is not tokenistic
- Co-develop 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

In addition to our work to co-define our top tips we have also co-produced a set of lessons in co-production with a member of our academic team. They are:

1. Build knowledge

Finding out all we can about a system gives us a fuller picture

2. Seek feedback

We ask stakeholders and frontline workers for their views and use these in our reflections

3. Have freedom of direction

Being unconstrained by outside priorities and goals means we orient to what is most important

4. Form relationships & create allies

The more people who know about the work we do and who are in our corner, the better

5. Keep it fresh

Having variety in what we do and working on lots of different strands keeps us interested and enthusiastic

6. Creativity is essential

Creativity for us is thinking outside the box. We all have the ability to be creative and using it in our work helps make it fun and accessible

7. Find different ways to amplify voice

Presenting our work in creative ways helps people connect with it more

4. 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.

8. Develop best practice

Creating and updating 'best practice' documents agreement gives us a firm grounding to carry out our work

9. It's about perspective, not the story

Rather than trying to get our individual stories, focus on the problem and respect our insight into it

10. Trust the process and don't rush

We accept that co-production takes time and resources

11. Mistakes are OK, as long as you learn from them

Some of our biggest learnings have come from when things have gone wrong

12. Develop a safe and respectful space

As a group, we aim for a professional space that is welcoming and accessible

13. Be open to different opinions

Every voice matters and we listen respectfully knowing that we don't always have to agree

14. Keep people updated

Regular minutes and reminders help us keep track of what we've done and what's coming up

15. Include one-to-one time

Regular time to reflect on how we feel things are going in the group

16. Establish safeguarding procedures

Knowing there are processes in place to deal with difficult situations gives us confidence and stability

17. Peer-support

As well as support from professionals, we also look out for each other

5. 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 services 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

6. Ending well



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

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

Impact

Impact on group members

We are proud to have been involved in a project so unique.

We have had the opportunity to try new things .

We have in-depth knowledge of the system and how it works.

We have challenged both our own prejudices and those of the system whilst building awareness of the issues facing people experiencing homelessness.

We have developed expertise in group work, co-production, trauma-informed working, service design, presenting and facilitation.

We have increased confidence and this has helped us to communicate new ideas and move onto work, learning and volunteering opportunities.

We have built a safe space where we have all been able to grow and be our own authentic self.

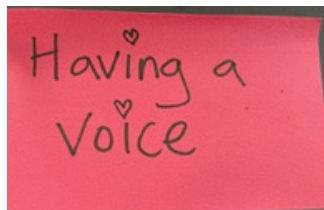
We now have faith in our abilities and know we can work with different people.



'I've learned to see the positive from a very negative time in my life'

'I feel listened to and not always thinking I'm a joker, that I can be serious'

'I'm more interested in life and being part of positive projects'



We couldn't have done it without our post its!

Impact on the system and services

We feel that it took us a long time to build our group, processes, interventions and relationships with the system. After three years we feel that the system is now starting to see the value in the work we do and is adopting our methods. But we feel that we're only just getting started. This kind of work takes time and resources; system change is not quick. However, we know we have made a really good start!

We have:

- Created a voice for people experiencing homelessness in Brighton and Hove
- Co-developed a unique trauma-informed approach to co-production that can be replicated in other projects and services
- Mapped and identified barriers and challenges within the system and pathways
- Co-produced processes, guidance and communications
- Carried out 15 co-production design sprints including training, research and consultations
- Delivered lived experience led events and presented. at conferences and meetings where those working in, managing and designing the system have been present.



Testimonials

Every time I meet with the Common Ambition steering group I learn something new. Their wisdom and insights are changing the way we work, but more importantly they are transforming the way we think about healthcare for people who are experiencing homelessness.

Gary Bishop - CEO, Arch Health CIC

I worked with BHCA to develop a student select component for medical students on homeless healthcare. This experience transformed my attitudes towards how to develop clinical teaching. I realised how narrow my focus was as a clinician, and how valuable it was to incorporate the perspective of lived experience. I also realised the problems with asking patients to assume a 'passive' role in teaching or just recount their stories.

The content and approach of my teaching was materially changed as a result. The students valued the input of people with lived experience and their feedback was excellent. Research evidence demonstrates the importance of experiential learning in the preparedness of healthcare professionals to work with underserved groups.

The work has been presented as an example of great practice at a local and national inclusion health event. On a personal level, it was a joy feeling that I was working with other people as an equal.

Dr Kate Pitt - GP, Arch Health CIC and Lecturer in medical education at Brighton and Sussex Medical School

I've been working with the Steering Group at Brighton & Hove Common Ambition for a couple of years now and each and every member has had an impact on me and my work. They are all so passionate about systems change, which is something I'm passionate about too. We've been looking at the Housing Pathway together with regards to the customer journey and experience and how this could be improved.

It's been an absolute pleasure working with the group and I wish them all well for their next adventure!

Tara McClure - Trailblazer Coordinator, Housing Needs, Brighton & Hove City Council

As one of the partners that presented our vision to the Health Foundation back in 2021, I have found it inspiring to witness the great strides Brighton & Hove Common Ambition has taken to deliver its mission to improve homeless healthcare by collaboratively lifting the voice of people with lived experience. Common Ambition has collaboratively developed innovative and trauma informed ways of working that have enabled local people with experience to be at the heart of coproducing solutions. It is enormously encouraging to witness the impact that their powerful insights have had on the work of local commissioners and services and it is clear their influence is continuing to have a real impact in improving the lives of people experiencing homelessness and promoting health equity in Brighton & Hove.

Alistair Hill - Director of Public Health, Brighton & Hove City Council

I spent almost 3 years working with Common Ambition lived experience members. Beforehand, I was unsure what kind of work we would do together and how my experience of teaching and research could help. But each week the bar would get set higher and higher. Brilliant project management and participation support gave this group the opportunity to show everyone what co-production with people experiencing homelessness can achieve. Lived experience members have made an exceptional contribution to our city, creating resources for understanding the homeless healthcare system that simply didn't exist before. If we want to end the pain caused by homelessness we need to keep listening and keep supporting lived experience-led groups such as Brighton and Hove Common Ambition. They will show us the way.

Dr Mary Darking - Principal Lecturer in Social Policy and Innovation, University of Brighton

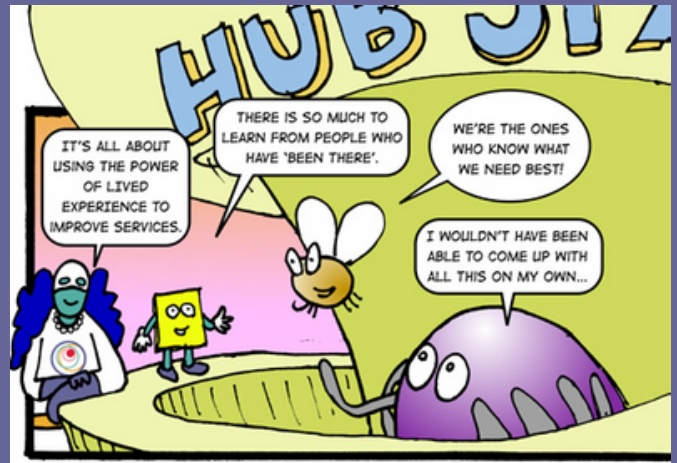
As someone who leads teams of support workers and runs teaching about homelessness, I have found Common Ambition's exploration of the use of case studies to be extremely useful to my work. It has taught me how to explain complex cases and difficult front line work in a way that is both honest and respectful. It has taught me to reflect on my use of language and the importance of protecting people's life stories and traumatic experiences.

Sara Emerson - Health Engagement Team Leader, Justlife

Next Steps

We hope to continue this work we are so proud of. We are passionate about continuing to advocate for lived experience voice and co-production to be embedded throughout the system; from decision making to service design. We want to continue to collaborate with our stakeholders to improve outcomes for people experiencing homelessness in Brighton and Hove. We want to share our learning and raise awareness of our work and encourage adoption and spread in other sectors and locations.

We have secured funding to continue for another year from several stakeholders. Our work over this time will include working with system partners to develop a lived experience programme in another part of the system, consult on strategies, service evaluation and co-producing communications. We will continue to support our host organisations with patient/client involvement to develop and improve services. Finally, we are very grateful to the Health Foundation for continuing to fund the health work that we care so much about, including our training and homeless healthcare hub work.



Thank you!



We would like to say a huge thank you to The Health Foundation for supporting us on this journey, we have loved working with you.

A special thank you to all of our partner organisations, Arch Health CIC, Justlife, University of Brighton, NHS Sussex and Brighton and Hove City Council's Public Health Dependent. We couldn't have done it without you.



Justlife



University of Brighton

Thank you to the services and commissioners in Brighton and Hove for coming to our events, using our resources and supporting our mission.

For anyone out there who is considering taking part in co-production work in inclusion health... do it! Co-producing improvements, system change and research in inclusion health can break down barriers and misconceptions and will provide valuable insights and improvements. It will build your skills and confidence, you'll get to meet great people and have fun while you're at it!