

## The Service User Involvement Project, Thematic Summary: Issue 1 | December 2017

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### Coproduction in Community Justice: Exploring the Issues

#### Introduction

This thematic summary is about sharing what we have heard and learnt from the people who took part in the interviews that we conducted in 2016 and that informed the development of the three community justice coproduction councils or groups: People's Involvement Networking Group (PING, South Ayrshire), Making A Difference (M.A.D, North Ayrshire) and Community Voices Network (CVN, East Ayrshire). In this summary report, the findings are preliminary and indicative; we have not included all of our findings but they will be available in coming months (see Next Steps). The purpose of this report is to inform ongoing discussions across the three groups. We hope that it will be helpful to the range of partners, peers and people who access community justice services, who are involved (or who are thinking about getting involved) in the groups. We also hope that it might be a useful starting point for people in other areas who are thinking about what 'service user involvement' or 'co-production' might mean or look like in community justice.

#### The Project

This project was commissioned by the three Ayrshire Community Planning Partnerships to inform and support the design, development, implementation and review of a multi-layered user engagement strategy across Ayrshire Community Justice services.

This project has so far involved three core phases including a) a systematic review of the literature b) 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 c) a pan-Ayrshire User Involvement launch event in January 2017 d) the implementation and establishment of three coproduction councils or groups in each of the three Ayrshires.

This report presents an overview of the data from the interviews and focus groups to inform our ongoing learning and development.

## Findings

In this thematic summary we present our analysis of the interviews and focus groups under three key headings

1. **About Service User Involvement**
2. **Engagement and Effects**
3. **Common Challenges and Solutions**

### 1. **About Service User Involvement**

#### 1.1 What is Service User Involvement?

This section explores participants' understandings of what service user involvement means.

- Some people suggested that it means engaging people who access services in all aspects of their support, which some people aligned with person centred approaches.

'Service User engagement and involvement really means consulting those we work with to make sure they have a chance to input into any work that we do with them'

- Other people identified what might be construed as a 'deeper' level of involvement or participation, in the development, design and delivery of services.

'Involving people who have used or are using services in their development but also potentially the running of those services'

'User Involvement is about the active participation of those who are using service in the development and delivery of services'

- Others suggested that service user involvement could be understood as a **continuum** along which different degrees and levels of participation can be identified, from involvement in support planning to shaping and delivering services, for example.
- Reflecting specific service contexts, for some, service user involvement implied engaging with former service users and communities.

'A key part of our role is community engagement. So you could argue they are our service users maybe in a broader term'.

*Service User Involvement* is often associated with information sharing, with consultation and with choice between two or more service selected options.

***‘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’<sup>i</sup>.***

While there is no agreed definition of co-production, we take this to mean ***‘professionals and citizens making better use of each other’s assets, resources and contributions to achieve better outcomes and/or improved efficiency’<sup>ii</sup>.***

Although this is somewhat operationally vague, 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 **agencies, people who use services** and for **communities**.

On this continuum of coproduction, there are **typologies** of co-production which distinguish between individualistic forms of co-production and group and collective forms<sup>iii</sup>.

- **Individual** co-production produces outcomes that benefit the individual participants and this is presently the dominant co-productive strategy<sup>iv</sup>. 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 users together to shape or provide services. Mutual aid groups are a good example of this.
- **Collective** forms are those strategies that ‘benefit the whole community rather than just groups of users’<sup>v</sup>. This includes opportunities for people to co-design and deliver services and activities.

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

## **1.2 Why ‘do’ Service User Involvement?**

We asked people why they think service user involvement, or coproduction, matters<sup>vi</sup>. Often, rationales for service user involvement were expressed in terms of the impacts and effects that a coproductive approach to service design, delivery and development can support. We discuss ‘the difference it makes’ in more depth below. The key (and often overlapping) purposes behind service user involvement identified by those we spoke to are:

- To improve the **quality** of services by shaping service provision to ensure the meaningfulness and relevancy of services to those they serve;
- To support **individual change** by ensuring that services and supports meet individual’s needs;
- To improve **communication** between service users and providers, **working together** to achieve change;

- To support processes of *recovery* and *desistance* by creating opportunities for **skill development, social integration** and the exercise of *citizenship*.

Coproduction can be understood in terms of **process** (i.e. how it's done and what that implies), **outcomes** (i.e. the difference it makes), and **values** (i.e. because it is right).

### 1.3 How Do Agencies Involve Service Users?

Different community justice agencies are at different stages in the process of involving those who use services and their communities in what they do, how they do it and who with. At the point of interviewing, some services, for example, had an exit questionnaire; others provided a suite of opportunities for participation. The extent to which people get involved, or are enabled to, and who gets involved is, or has been, heavily influenced by service context i.e. traditional professional cultures, who the service users are, the nature of their involvement with that service, and services' various responsibilities and functions. Below we offer an indicative overview of current practices in community justice in Scotland:

#### Individual:

- Exit questionnaires; informal conversations about 'what works'; person centred support; outcomes focused progress reviews; suggestion boxes; complaints procedures; online satisfaction surveys.

#### Group:

- Activities such as walking or jogging groups, football tournaments, creative arts based activities and a breakfast club (such activities lend themselves to *informal* peer support); mutual aid or SMART<sup>1</sup> group and other *formal* peer-to-peer support groups and mechanisms (i.e. listeners and health champions in prison); group meetings either between people who use services or between service users and workers.

#### Collective:

- Involvement in the recruitment and training of staff; formalised peer and mutual support and community engagement i.e. mentoring, recovery cafes; national service user forum, art exhibition, strategic consultation; involvement in tendering and commissioning of services; peer research; participation in strategic professional groups; a recovery walk/awareness raising; service user forums; employment of people with lived experiences in services.

We think that that the Whole System Approach advocated by Clinks is a helpful way to think about how we can support coproduction in community justice in Scotland, going forward:

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<sup>1</sup> Self Management for Addiction Recovery

“Ideally, your organisation should take a ‘whole systems’ approach to achieving service user involvement. To realise this you will need to think of your organisation as a jigsaw consisting of four pieces. These are:

- **Culture:** the ethos of an organisation, shared by all staff and service users, which demonstrates a commitment to participation.
- **Practice:** the activities, skills and knowledge, which enable service users to become involved.
- **Structure:** the planning, development and resourcing of participation evident in an organisation’s infrastructure.
- **Review:** the monitoring and evaluation systems which enable an organisation to evidence change effected by participation<sup>viii</sup>”.

## 2. Engagement and Effects

This section looks at what our participants think motivates people to get involved; what they think enables or constrains their involvement; and their sense of the impacts or effects that involvement can bring about.

### 2.1 Why do Service Users Get Involved?

- **Personal development:** feeling good about oneself, access to new opportunities and experiences, personal progression and skill development, new social networks.
- **Purpose / Structure:** feeling productive, getting a sense of routine and purpose, accessing opportunities for new experiences.
- **Belonging:** feeling normal, feeling part of something, sharing experiences, affiliation and social connectedness, building and experiencing community.
- **Citizenship:** giving something back and paying forward, making a genuine difference, having an impact, feeling a sense of responsibility towards other service users, and or communities, enhanced participation in community life.

### 2.2 How Can We Support Service User Involvement?

- **Enablers:**
  - **Practicalities and approaches:** the accessibility of the location of events or activities; travel costs; preparing, supporting or training people for different participatory opportunities; flexibility and informality - going at the pace of service users; persistency – if it doesn’t work, try it again or do it differently; make it fun and enjoyable; providing food can signal appreciation and value; don’t over commit people when they aren’t ready for it; meet regularly to

maintain momentum; create opportunities for informal and formal peer support; the importance of feedback can't be overstated.

- **Relationships:** 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. Listen carefully to what people want, make sure they feel comfortable having their say.
- **Having an Influence:** the meaningfulness 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; 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.
- **Having a Choice:** having a variety of opportunities for participation or involvement in its various forms; a choice of what to get involved in and when, reflecting different stages, capabilities, motivations, interests and so on.
- **Constraints:**
  - **Individual:** lack of confidence and self-esteem; being unaccustomed to being asked their views, resulting in suspicion and distrust; chaotic, unstable and complex personal circumstances and lifestyles; a disinclination towards participation; health issues; relationship to service, and poor past experience of services or relationships with practitioners.
  - **Structural:** for some, forums, focus groups and consultations, for example are less engaging than activities and events and so the focus, nature and variety of opportunities for participation is key. Service-led approaches that don't reflect the values and interests of service users are unlikely to encourage engagement. Cultural and relational dynamics can shape experiences of participation. 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 of service providers can discourage involvement.

## 2.3 What Difference Does It Make?

'It's the camaraderie between guys...a lot of guys get out of the nick and they've got all these pals inside...then they come out here and they've got nothing...[now] they've got other guys like-minded to themselves...it's about supporting each other'.

- **Services users:** shifts in personal and social identity; shifts in self-worth, esteem, enhanced self-confidence and a sense of self-respect; shifting personal identities; feeling part of a team encourages mutual support and a sense of ownership, of community, of making a difference; it generates a sense of belonging, enhanced engagement and compliance; it encourages and supports processes of recovery and desistance, and creates opportunities for social participation and community engagement;
- **Practitioners:** can feel part of a positive movement for change; experience a shift in perceptions of service users and an enhanced understanding of the realities of their lives and their experiences of services;
- **Services:** improved services; shifts in the governance of services; making interventions more meaningful and effective; improves communication and breaks down barriers between professionals and service users;
- **Communities:** changing attitudes, raising awareness that people can and do change.

### 3. Common Challenges and Solutions

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

#### 3.1 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, but also in terms of the statutory context. However, even within this context, we can maximise people's opportunities for voluntarism by maximising the choices and opportunities available to people, and listening to what matters to them and what they value;
- Those who are 'stable' and who are in processes of 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.

### 3.2 Professional Cultures

- Some professionals can find a potential shift in power sharing and changes to their roles to represent a challenge in terms of 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, for training and for the development of a culture of learning at all levels;
- Traditionally, professional cultures in justice services tend to be risk averse; people 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’.

### 3.3 Resources

- **Leadership:** (from the ‘top’ and the ‘bottom’) is key to embedding a culture of involvement. Service user involvement is not, or should not be, an ‘add on’. There is a need for strategic leadership and commitment at policy and senior management levels to ensure that this becomes a core part of people’s roles and this means creating space in people’s workload allocation to support innovation. For some, this also means employing a dedicated worker and/or peer ‘champions’.
- **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.
- **Partnerships and Funding:** Funding for third sector organisations is often precarious and short-term; a ‘silo approach’ or strict criteria based-funding and budgetary cuts can impede the kinds of partnership or holistic responses that service users require, not least in a community justice context.

'The rhetoric is about service user involvement and making sure that services are there when people need them, but actually financial arrangements inhibit that'

## 4. Next Steps

We have been funded to support the development of PING, M.A.D and CVN until June 2018. In this time, we will continue to work with all three groups and we will produce a **Final Project Report**, which brings all the findings from every phase of the research together, a **Thematic Review of Research**, which provides a thematic analysis of existing research, a **User Guide**, which sets out principles, evidence, current knowledge, concrete examples and different approaches to service user involvement, and an **Evaluation Framework**, to support continued reflection, learning and action. However, if you have any questions or want to find out more, feel free to contact us.

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<sup>i</sup> Nesta (2012) *People Powered Health Coproduction Catalogue*

[https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/co-production\\_catalogue.pdf](https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/co-production_catalogue.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Bovaird, T and Loeffler, E (2013: 4), *The Role of Co-production for Better Health and Wellbeing* in Loeffler, E., Power, G., Bovaird, T and Hine-Hughes, F., (2013) *Co-production of Health and Wellbeing in Scotland*. Governance International.

<sup>iii</sup> Brudney. J.L. and R.E. England (1983) 'Towards a Definition of the Coproduction Concept' *Public Administration Review*, 43 (1): 59-65

<sup>iv</sup> Bovaird, T. and Loeffler, E. (2008) 'User and community co-production of public services: Fad or fact, nuisance or necessity', Briefing Paper 12, Third Sector Research Centre

<sup>v</sup> Needham, C. (2008). Realising the Potential of Co-production: Negotiating Improvements in Public Services. *Social Policy and Society*, 7(02), 221-231

<sup>vi</sup> For further reading on this, see Weaver, B and Lightowler C (2012) *Shaping the Criminal Justice System: The Role of Those Supported by Criminal Justice Services* <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/shaping-criminal-justice-system-role-those-supported-criminal-justice-services>

<sup>vii</sup> Clinks (2016:11) *A Guide to Service User Involvement and Co-production*

[https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/basic/files-downloads/clinks\\_sui-guide\\_final-web\\_2016.04.26.pdf](https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/basic/files-downloads/clinks_sui-guide_final-web_2016.04.26.pdf)