EXAMPLE: Wellbeing Our Way

National Voices’ *Wellbeing Our Way programme* is about enabling people to manage their health in ways which matter to them. The programme works through community and voluntary organisations and is supported by The Health Foundation.

Wellbeing Our Way aims to empower people to be active in:
- managing their health and working towards their personal goals
- making decisions about the care, support and treatment they receive, in relation to what’s important for their lives
- engaging with and shaping health and care support.

National Voices is the coalition of health and social care charities in England. We work for a strong patient and citizen voice and services built around people. We stand up for voluntary organisations and their vital work for people’s health and care.

Wellbeing Our Way has adopted the 4PI standards for involvement. The ways we work with people with lived experience is summarised in this case study. The term ‘people with lived experience’ has been agreed by those involved and refers to anyone with experience of ongoing physical or mental health needs or caring responsibilities.

**Principles and Purpose**

“Opportunity to hear and listen to lived experience – and this was prioritised”

“Excellent opportunity to meet and work with lots of wonderful people – and to be reminded of other people’s experiences/lives/views”

Wellbeing Our Way is using the principles of coproduction as a basis for how people with lived experience and those from organisations work together throughout the programme. In other words, we value the range of personal and professional experience people bring and are committed to bringing these diverse groups together throughout our work. Our Shared Expectations summarise this approach.

Through Wellbeing Our Way we aim to support charities and community groups to better enable people to develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation to live well with their long term health needs. We believe that the involvement of people with lived experience at all levels of the programme is essential to ensure that the ‘more than medicine’ approaches that charities and community groups truly reflect the experiences and aspirations of people who are living with ongoing health needs.
Presence and Process
“I enjoyed working with a range of people on a shared task and felt welcome and comfortable”

People with lived experience are involved at all levels within Wellbeing Our Way, including:

- strategic decision-making, through membership of the steering group
- co-facilitating our series of POW WOWs (shared learning workshops)
- through the programme’s communities of practice, which bring together small, diverse groups of voluntary and community organisations to make real headway in developing some of the ‘more than medicine’ approaches we know can enable people to manage their health needs and live well, and
- sharing personal experience with a wider audience through WOW Now (the programme’s e-newsletter)

Our diversity monitoring helps ensure that people with a range of experience and backgrounds are involved in the programme. We work to involve ‘less heard’ groups through National Voices members who often work with diverse communities, and by inviting people with a range of backgrounds, identities and experiences. We have a reward and recognition policy which ensures that the contributions of people with lived experience are recognised and valued.

“Cleverly structured to achieve the outcomes”

We carefully consider the process of involving people - for instance, by using a range of facilitation techniques which offer different opportunities to contribute. We’ve found that people value time to get to know others in the room so we always include time for people to share aspects of their work, aspirations and challenges.

Impact
“Very interesting, purposeful and engaging. Excited to be involved and felt valued and respected.”

We are committed to ensuring that people’s time and expertise effects real change. We know this is already happening:

- By contributing to the programme’s model of impact, people with lived experience have provided valuable strategic-level direction to Wellbeing Our Way. The programme’s vision and purpose is grounded in the aspirations of people with lived experience, alongside those working within charities, community groups and wider stakeholders. Examples of how the contributions of people with lived experience shaped the model include:
  - the model includes ‘mental and physical health needs’ (rather than ‘health needs’) in response to people with lived experience strongly advocating the benefits of explicitly valuing emotional wellbeing alongside physical health
  - we use language which focuses on people’s strengths, not their needs – for instance, we focus on ‘enabling’, not supporting, and our vision is that people enjoy independence, optimism and control (rather than simply managing their conditions).
- Our case study *Wellbeing Our Way – Influencing Change* shows how the sharing of personal experience is helping one participant develop a young people’s peer support camp within his organisation. He reflects that hearing from young people themselves “*has given me the tools and language to overcome the challenges faced by my organisation*” – this reflects the uniquely persuasive way in which experience-based sharing can impact service development.

- People with lived experience are making valuable contributions to the ways in which the programme uses its communications channels to engage a wider audience. By blogging and writing for WOW Now, people with lived experience are rooting the programme in their experiences and aspirations – a valuable basis on which to build.

As the 4PI model emphasises, involvement is a cyclical process and we have continued to develop Wellbeing Our Way’s approach to involvement throughout the programme. All quotes above are from people with lived experience, and demonstrate some of the ways in which involvement in the programme has been a positive experience.

We have also learnt some valuable lessons along the way...

- Take the time to get to know people’s skills and interests. By truly listening, asking great questions and offering genuine opportunities to participate, people will be able to create their own ways of contributing to a more diverse programme.
- Coproduction doesn’t necessarily mean consensus. Debate and disagreement usually show that people are passionate – effective coproduction means using these differing views to develop something more creative and inclusive.
- Agree a shared vision and goals. This ensures shared ownership from the outset and that the goals reflect the aspirations of a range of stakeholders. Be flexible about how you reach your goals – it’s been our experience that great ideas evolve and that a programme becomes stronger by adapting to the ideas of those driving it.

For further information about Wellbeing Our Way, please contact: Natalie Koussa, programme lead natalie.koussa@nationalvoices.org.uk

For further information about the 4PI standards, please contact: info@nsun.org.uk

August 2015