

# Co-production - working together to improve homelessness services

## Case studies

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## Case Studies

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The Innovation and Good Practice Team

#### With thanks to

All of our contributors

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## Introduction to the case studies

This collection of case studies accompanies our Co-production toolkit. At present, sections of the toolkit that are on the website, include:

- Co-production – key principles and ideas
- Co-production and commissioning
- Co-production – mentoring lived experience to full participation

We will be adding to this over time. If you have particular area of interest or expertise that you would like to share, please get in touch.

This group of case studies are all examples of co-production or collaborative working that we have come across in the course of our work. There are plenty of other good examples across the sector. If you would like to share an example of co-production at your organisation, please contact us. This can relate to a particular event or task or your whole organisational approach.

To share expertise or case studies please email [vicky.album@homelesslink.org.uk](mailto:vicky.album@homelesslink.org.uk)

## Middlesbrough Homeless Needs Assessment Peer Research Placing lived experience at the heart of service design

### Contributed by David Ford, Expert Link and the Middlesbrough Expert Link Network Group

There are often strong feelings within communities that their voice isn't listened to and that nothing ever comes of it when they are heard. Communities often feel let down. We believe that through involvement and training, anybody who has felt let down in the past will have the opportunity and the confidence to positively contribute to change within Middlesbrough, hopefully overcoming any misgivings that they have.

Middlesbrough Council are in the process of doing a Homelessness Support Needs Assessment for Middlesbrough. The Council+ have commissioned [Homeless Link](#) along with [Expert Link](#) to do this. Our role is to complete the peer research and help develop co-production within the borough.

The Council is very clear that not only do they want to hear and listen to the voices of those who are or have suffered from homelessness, but that a culture of co-production develops so that all stake holders within the system can engage and be a part of any change, if they wish.

At Expert Link we work with our peers to ensure that their voices are heard and listened to and that they don't become lost or forgotten. This means that we work with our peers to develop the skills and confidence to enable them to engage with services, local authorities and systems and co-produce systems, policies and services. We also have a strong history of ensuring that the authentic voice of lived experience influences research by carrying out research amongst our own communities.

For the Peer research part of the Support Needs Assessment, Middlesbrough Council has asked us to look at 4 key areas, Former Homeless, Young People, Current Homeless, and BME Refugees. For us at Expert Link, as well as for the council, it is important that all of those with experience of homelessness have the opportunity to influence the research by sharing their experiences and contributing suggestions for best practice. To date we have facilitated 4 peer lead discussions as well as completing one to one interviews. We are now reaching out to existing groups to engage with their members and ensure that they have the same opportunities.

As part of a longer term plan around co-production and encouraging lived experience to stay connected to the Council and services we have delivered our first free 2 day training event. The event is called "[Being the Difference](#)" and over the 2 days covered The Gift of Feedback, The Incredible You, The Ask Toolkit and Facilitator Training. This was the first of up to four training events that we will deliver, along with some coaching support, in Middlesbrough specifically aimed at helping people to get involved in co-production.

### A view from the Middlesbrough Expert Link Network Group

The first time I went into a meeting with the Council I felt quite nervous. I was worried it would be above my head and had quite a bit of fear but working with David and Wayne from Expert Link helped me get more confident. The meeting was good though and I felt that they were interested in listening to us. It's good that we have an opportunity for our voice to be heard through the peer research. We've gone out and met a lot of different people. Being involved in the research is exciting – people can really get on board. The research will be fed back to the Council.

The Council have asked us to attend the homelessness forum next. The more we do it, the more we get used to it and start to know where we are going.

## North-East Athletic

### A co-produced football team with an impact on well-being, offending and employment

#### Contributed by Mal Maclean, North East Athletic

North East Athletic is a peer led club offering football sessions since 2011 to those who are homeless, have had issues with substances or are socially isolated in North East England.

We run a monthly social isolation league in partnership with Durham University, play in tournaments in England and Scotland, run weekly sessions in Gateshead, Hartlepool and County Durham and have an eleven-a-side team in the Tyneside Corinthians Saturday League.

We currently have over a hundred registered players. Every coach and co-ordinator has lived experience of substance misuse and homelessness. All decisions about discipline, direction of the club and fundraising for others is taken by those with lived experience.

The club works on the principle of attraction. We hope that younger members will be able to learn from members who have turned their life around and we have good working relationships with local football clubs and homeless provision.

Over the years North East Athletic has provided the England Streets FA manager, welfare officer and seven players at the Homeless World Cup. Most importantly, we have engaged over 600 players in tournaments and leagues.

If we can secure funding, we encourage players to complete activity leaders or coaching qualifications. Currently we are run solely by volunteers but are seeking funding to employ people with lived experience in the future and we have continued support from Sported who have embraced the concept of co-production.

#### How the club started

The club was founded by someone who was at the time in homeless accommodation who wished to replicate Calton Athletic's model for those in recovery. The project initially developed with the help of another person with similar lived experience and a former commissioner of drug services. We quickly moved away from just dealing with abstinent members to targeting those who were struggling with substance use.

We are all keen advocates of asset based community development and as such we were keen to harness the gifts and assets of members and our supporters – we did not have a set aim or end result but instead continued to see how far we could develop with the resources we could secure. We were helped greatly by the efforts of one particular professional footballer who supplied used kit from football clubs so hostel residents could participate.

Right from the start we identified that the key relationship we had to maintain was with hostels. Over the years, at least six of our players have moved on from service user to worker in homelessness and complex needs which has been an obvious advantage in recruiting new players.

#### Our impact

An important component of the club is “to put something back” and we have raised money for Sporting Memories, local foodbanks and carers' charities. We are active members of the national Fans Supporting Foodbanks networks.

An unexpected result of membership was a dramatic reduction in members' offending which we think may be attributed to members' sense of belonging and seeing the possibility of a better future and what Manura (2001)

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calls the **redemption** script – optimism about overcoming barriers, enthusiasm about contributing to causes greater than oneself, belief in good self.

We have had one evaluation of effectiveness by Sport England for a Sporta funded “Recovery and Homelessness Football” project – this was an 18 month programme with 198 participants in Gateshead, Hartlepool, Sunderland and Durham. Funding worked out at £57 per person. The results were:

65% retention

89% increased physical activity,

100% increase in those describing excellent health.

53 sporting qualifications gained by members

16 entered work, 29 started volunteering

There was no recorded offending from those retained

Since 2011 all past apprentices, coaches and people on work placement (all of whom have lived experience) have secured work with complex needs or sport.

We feel that we have helped to dispel some of the stigma about addiction and homelessness. Over the past seven years we have appeared on BBC, Sky Sports and Sky Sports News and have been highlighted as good practice by Sported and Public Health England as well as being involved in joint strategic work.

## Voices of Whitechapel

### The journey of a new service user group finding different ways to engage

Contributed by Mike Fry, Co-production Coordinator, Whitechapel Centre

The Whitechapel Centre is a homeless and housing charity in Liverpool. We run an Enablement Centre, street outreach, supported housing, tenancy support and a host of other services.

Voices of Whitechapel is a user group that meets monthly. We discuss services and how they could be improved. We also give our input on any planned developments to services and how we think policies should be shaped. I then attend the Managers meeting and feedback the discussion.

The group is open to anyone who wants to join and generally has 10-12 members with a small group of core members who are very active. Responsibility for actions is delegated to members and some of them have taken a strong lead with different areas. In theory the meeting has a revolving chair although in practice the group usually ask me to facilitate.



We have written agendas – in some ways the meeting is quite formal as that is what the group wanted. It is broken into bite size chunks with a break in the middle. We talk about each of the different projects that the Whitechapel runs in turn at each meeting.

#### How the group developed

Previous Service-User involvement groups had always seemed to lose their momentum and staff recognised this was partly because the work was in addition to core roles. It was agreed that Co-production was a priority and a small amount of funding was set aside to recruit a Co-Production Co-ordinator on a sessional basis. I successfully applied for the position and I set the group up in November 2016. Whilst it is open to all, it was important to get the right people on board to get the group going and make sure it represented as many of our services as possible. I invited a few people who I knew would be interested. I went to one of our housing projects and engaged some of the women who were living there. I then asked some clients living in an ex-offenders project to join – they were used to engaging with groups from their time in prison. Once I had a core group involved, I invited the next group of people to add to it.

We decided to brand the group so that it had an identity. The group chose the name Voices of Whitechapel which can be shortened to VOW because that shows our commitment to making our voices heard and to co-production. We recently designed a logo and are even getting baseball caps made!

If the numbers become too big, we will look at setting up sub-groups within each specific hostel or service.

#### Our impact

Some of our ideas have already been put into action and we have lots more in development.

We have started running 'Bingo' feedback sessions at the Enablement Centre. We asked attendees what they wanted most and they said bingo. So we now do a Bingo session every week and have a chat in the middle of

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the session with people about the service and other topics. This is run by the user group. In general it can be difficult to get people there engaged in activities but we regularly have 18-20 people at the Bingo.

We are involved in training volunteers. Members of the user group go and talk to new volunteers about their experiences and the importance of co-production.

We are planning to run Peer-led drop-in sessions at a few of our services. There are some groups of residents who are hard to engage and we are hoping that peer-led sessions may help with this. It is also helpful for people to meet others who have had the same experiences but moved on with their lives.

The group is successful because we have a core group of active members – this energy helps us to recruit more people and keep the group growing, inclusive and fluid. As the group grows in success we are showing how much can be achieved when you get people using services together to contribute and make plans for the service.



## The Basement Recovery Project

### A user group that grew into a peer-led recovery community

#### Contributed by Stuart Honor, The Basement Recover Project

We are a recovery community project which works in both Calderdale and Kirklees to provide peer led recovery services to around 500 individuals a year. Our flagship recovery hubs have been developed to provide centres of hope for those we serve alongside our housing offer which supports around 12 individuals living in our accommodation out in the community at any one time.

Since our inception in 2006 we now employ around 15 individuals who have come through our recovery programmes across numerous centres. Our work has been recognised as highly innovative both locally and nationally as the concept of a more recovery oriented approach, with peers at the centre of delivery, has firmly embedded itself across the systems in the places that we work.

The majority of individuals that we support have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. This includes paid workers, volunteers and recovery builders. These people provide 'living proof' for those they come into contact with them that recovery is possible. They continue to shine a light for others to follow by supporting others on their journey. An example of this is our breakfast clubs, which act as a drop in for the both the more vulnerable in our communities and those completing our more structured programmes.

The project was borne out of a model of service user involvement via Calderdale User Forum. This then grew to form a breakfast club at our local YMCA run by local users, which encouraged mutual reciprocity between individuals as we sought to use food as a tool of engagement for the most vulnerable. The idea of one addict helping another emerged from this simple act of kindness and created a common purpose amongst those that served.

From the breakfast club came the idea of a night shelter over Christmas which then led us to offer more support by installing showers and additional facilities over the coming months. Our numbers grew steadily (to the point that over 100 people regularly attended the twice weekly sessions). It was at this point we decided to examine how an individual could get well in the same community in which they got sick? We sought to create the conditions to allow people to get well locally based on the concept of 'treating the soil' to ensure the therapeutic landscape could take shape in a community.

By developing our recovery programme, providing living role models who help others hope and dream, providing safe accommodation in a community via our hubs and residential accommodation, we believe we have held true to our values and created the assets that have allowed the recovery community to grow and flourish. Rather than us as an organisation holding the power we believe the real strength in communities lies in networks. These create a safety net that means services are only utilised when community cannot meet their needs. The power of social relationships is undoubtedly key to our working methods.

Today we provide support to up to 500 individuals per annum across our sites. We have developed a thriving, visible, contagious recovery community that has grown to produce a viable health prevention asset in the communities that we support. Those still in active addiction are routinely exposed to those in active recovery and stigma around addiction is reduced at a local level.

In addition to this, the huge growth in mutual aid ensures that the community is sustainable with or without statutory funding. From two mutual aid groups meeting ten years ago this has now grown to around 15 groups meeting weekly providing those with lived experience an opportunity to meet others in the same position.

# Evolve Housing and Support

## Co-producing how we work with our customers.

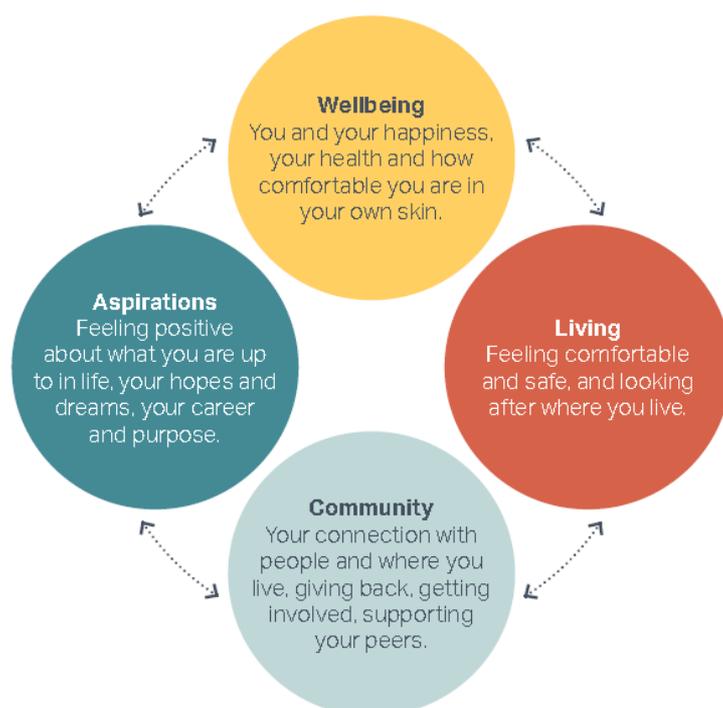
Contributed by Pia Hansen, Quality Manager

At Evolve Housing and Support, we have recently launched a new approach to how we support our customers. Last year we worked with staff and customers to review how the existing support planning approach was going. Customers were happy with the support they received and at the same time some areas for improvement were identified. Customers wanted a focus on what is strong and positive about them and on their relationship with the wider community, which led naturally into focusing on a more asset-based way of working.

A working group of staff and customers was set up in late October to jointly create this new approach to support. As a group, we co-designed the new approach and the paper work, made sure staff and customers could review and feedback at every stage and eventually agreed on what it would look like. The new approach, which focuses on a customer's wellbeing, their satisfaction with where they live, their community connections and their aspirations, is proving to have a positive effect after the initial pilot. One customer said about his experience of the new support plan: "I have really enjoyed being able to take the time to complete this and I feel like it is mine and something I can work towards. I have liked looking *at my strengths...*".

Customers and staff worked together to review the feedback from the pilot and to make any necessary changes. They also worked together to develop training for staff on how to work with the new approach which is in the process of being delivered. Over 60 people have been involved in this process with over half of these being our customers. The design, decisions and training work around the new approach have been done in partnership with our customers, and has resulted in a great new way of working for the organisation and a much simpler approach to how we deliver support.

One of our managers said,  
*"Co-producing this allowed us to test ideas and bring current lived experience to the planning process. This is essential for any new support approach and invaluable to the ethics of design. By focusing on co-production, we have been able to get all parties to take ownership in its design and delivery and develop it into something that works for all and not something that is just implanted on our clients."*



## Evolve Housing and Support

Scrutiny Express - Working with our customers to improve our services.

Contributed by Pia Hansen, Quality Manager

At Evolve Housing + Support we recognise the value of working in partnership with our customers and the opportunity that it provides to ensure we are continuing to improve our services. In the past we had a large central meeting but after some input from customers regarding the need to make it more accessible and more representative, we moved to a scrutiny express model with more direct customer contact.

Customer Scrutiny Panel 2017  
Antisocial behaviour



‘Scrutiny Express’ happens twice a year and is led by a panel of customers who live in Evolve’s services. At our bi-monthly customer meetings a topic is decided upon after which a scrutiny panel is set up to lead on exploring this issue in more depth. In 2017 our customers chose to focus on our communication around maintenance and repairs in services, and how we deal with antisocial behaviour in our services.

Once the panel is assembled, they explore the issue in depth, pulling out the main themes and creating topics for discussion with staff and customers in our services. The panel then visits each site, taking the time to speak to staff and customers and to start pulling together recommendations for how to make improvements in the area being focused on. They also review

performance data and any historical information available on the subject, and conduct interviews with senior managers where relevant.

Once the services have been visited and customers have had opportunities to feed in, the panel reconvenes and puts together a report, which is then presented to our central management team and Board of Trustees. The intention of this report is to provide an opportunity for customers to advise Evolve on any findings they have that may improve the organisation’s service. Once this is signed off, an action plan is created to ensure that relevant recommendations are put in place.

The panel hope to gain a better understanding of how the organisation works and how this affects customers. Evolve hope to utilise the expert views of customers to better shape their service. By working together, we find solutions and ultimately improve the quality of service we offer to the people in our services, as well as empowering those involved in the process.



## The Booth Centre, Manchester

### Co-producing our day centre

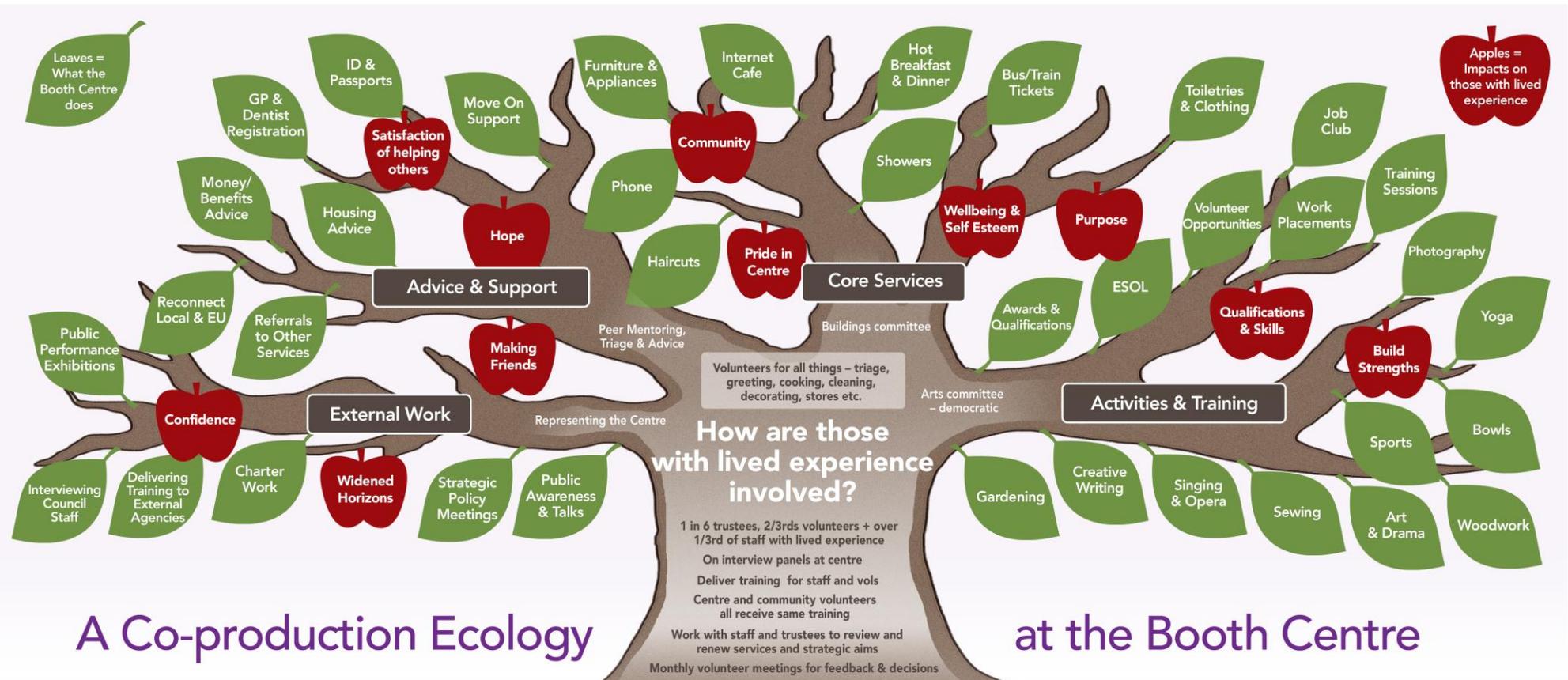
**Contributed by volunteers and staff at the Booth Centre with Jon Dorsett, Graphic Harvester and Vicky Album, Homeless Link**

The Booth Centre case study is a graphic image designed by Jon Dorsett. It can be seen on the next page. This image covers the different elements of the service and how co-production is central to everything we do.

We created this image in a workshop that was attended by staff and volunteers. We talked about what we did at the Booth Centre and then why and how we did things as we did. Jon then turned this into an image that we can use to explain to people what it is we do.

By showing this as an image, we want to show that not everything needs to be expressed in writing. There are different ways to present work. Using different methods can be more inclusive and can be easier to look at.

If you want to learn more about how volunteers at the Booth Centre feel about Co-Production, you can watch our video on the Co-Production Toolkit webpage.



# A Co-production Ecology

# at the Booth Centre





## What we do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless or live with multiple and complex support needs. We work to improve services and campaign for policy change that will help end homelessness.

## Let's end homelessness together

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