

CO-PRODUCTION CASE STUDY:

Service review & development - IL Gofal Service

The project – what were people with lived experience in involved in?

People who had accessed an existing Independent Living (IL) service in Wales ('Gofal service') helped inform the development of a new service and provided evidence to secure funding for this.

The engagement was undertaken with people who had accessed the Gofal service, which worked with older people through an asset-based approach for up to 12 weeks via signposting, supported referral, practical and emotional support and confidence building to achieve goals helping them to maintain their independence and address loneliness and isolation. The funding for this service was coming to an end.

We engaged Gofal service users to help identify what aspects of the Gofal service model most increased their resilience, and how the service could be developed and improved.

The purpose of engaging with this group was to understand whether our support offer was still working and helping them to sustain their independence over time.

Why we involved people - expected benefits:

People who had accessed our Gofal service were best placed to review the strengths and weaknesses of this service model and help identify improvements for any new service developed.

We hoped this approach to reviewing and developing the service would have many benefits:

- Participants feeling empowered by reshaping a service operating in their community
- British Red Cross funding application strengthened – better chance of securing funding
- Service improved for elderly people accessing it in the future
- Delivery team hear the personal impact of their support – increased staff morale

How people were involved to influence the process – methods used:

- Telephone interviews with large numbers of people who had accessed Gofal service
- Focus groups
- Face to face interviews with a smaller number of service users whose support had ceased for 12 months or more

Participants explored the aspects of support that had been most and least useful, their experience of the length of support they received and of service assessment processes.

Key insights/ benefits of involving people

- The Gofal service was time limited and many people felt they would have benefited from slightly longer support, particularly where confidence was an issue or where goals were not fully achieved after 12 weeks. For some people, the cessation of support had felt quite abrupt to service users;

- Access to transport was considered vitally important to service users to help them achieve their goals;
- It can be frustrating to older people to be asked to provide the same information over and over again to different agencies, and to have numerous assessments and support plans undertaken with them;
- There was quite a lot of Gofal service paperwork to be completed, which meant the initial assessment visit often took a few hours, leading to 'assessment fatigue';
- Our model of signposting and helping to connect people into services and recreational activities enabled people to remain safely in their own home setting, sustain their independence improve their quality of life. Their descriptions of the positive impact on their lives were very powerful.

How these insights influenced the new 'Positive Steps' service model:

Hearing that people wanted slightly longer support meant a radical change to the service model. We knew we could not provide this within the continuing Gofal service because of funder requirements. We therefore found a partner organisation with similar values and aims to BRC able to provide slightly longer but still time limited support. We worked with RVS (a Welsh volunteer organisation) to develop a new model with the same aims and objectives to Gofal. It involved BRC providing acute intensive support for up to 8 weeks and, where service users were identified as needing slightly longer support, they seamlessly transitioned to a 'step down' service provided by RVS for up to 12 months. RVS also provided in Wales the country cars service which it was recognised would in a small way help address the importance of transport.

'Assessment fatigue' was addressed within the Positive Steps service model by the BRC assessment and support plan travelling with a person if their support transitioned to the step down support provided by RVS.

We used the new service model to successfully secure funding for a Positive Steps service now operating in 19 of the 22 Welsh unitary authorities, supporting over 3,700 people. This service model was borne out of the ideas and experiences of people who had accessed the Gofal service.

Challenges

This engagement with people who had accessed the Gofal service to help reshape this service did involve additional work. Some staff felt uncomfortable returning to previous service users to engage them in this project, out of concern it might distress them to remember a time when they were vulnerable. However, workshops and discussions were conducted sensitively.

However, the time invested was valuable because the team found out what was most important to the older people we were supporting, and we were able to use their ideas to secure funding to deliver a service that catered more to their needs across Wales.