

About the project

Expert Link has received funding from Trust For London to work with Day Centres to develop their ways of working so that people accessing the services are treated as equal partners in strategic decisions within them.

As part of the project, those accessing services will also be empowered to collectively influence key Government policies affecting rough sleepers in London.

Activities

This project will work with five homelessness Day Centres in London for two years. Each Day Centre will receive training tailored to the specific needs of the organisation and the individuals within it, and have access to guidance, information and resources to support their work. Collectively, people experiencing homelessness and relevant staff will also become part of a peer-support network of people who have been a part of Day Centres across Greater London, with bi-monthly online meetings, an online platform and a programme of work to support national Government influencing.

Tailored training

Each Day Centre who takes part will receive a 4-part online training programme for staff to support them begin the process of meaningfully engaging people accessing the service, covering topics such as:

- Incentivising colleagues and beneficiaries.
- Connecting as equals.
- Understanding roles and responsibilities.
- Keeping groups motivated.

Each Day Centre will then receive 3 days of in-house training for staff and people experiencing homelessness to build the confidence, trust and cohesion needed for effective collective work. Groups will develop strong shared values and purpose and build their capacity to use a strengths-based approach in everything they do.

Over the two years, each Day Centre will also have access to 3 bespoke training days exploring topics such as:

- Facilitation techniques
- Telling personal stories to influence local and national change
- Gathering evidence to influence policy

Expert Link will carry out regular check-in calls or meetings, up to a maximum of two full day site visits, with each day centre to monitor their progress and needs.

Peer support network

Each Day Centre will have access to a peer-support network of people involved with Day Centres across London.

This will include:

Expert Link – Co-production in Day Centres (London)

- **Bi-monthly conversations:** every two months, Expert Link will gather people involved in the project and facilitate online conversations to address key challenges and best practices
- **Peer-support platform:** people involved in the project will also be able to reach out to each other independently for advice and potential collaboration.

Information and guidance

People involved in the project will have access to guidance, blogs and vlogs which build on the experiences from our large network of key actors involved in this sector. Through gathering and summarising all learning from check-ins, training and monthly conversations all project participants will have a role in co-producing 'Day Centres Co-production Guidance.'

Influencing support

We will work with people who have accessed day centres to influence national policy-makers through:

- Developing an influencing strategy with each Day Centre and the network, identifying points of influence and priorities
- Attending quarterly meetings within each Day Centre to discuss and gather evidence relating to key policy opportunities
- Keeping people informed of policy context through the on-line platform
- Responding to consultations on national government inquiries as a network and encouraging and supporting individual submissions
- Submitting evidence to key national decision makers
- Supporting national charities with lobbying where priorities align

Next Steps

If you would like to be involved in this work, please contact us on info@expertlink.org.uk and we can discuss the project in more detail.

Indicative Timescales

The following is an indicative timescale of the support Expert Link will provide to organisations taking part in the project. Please note that in addition to this organisations will receive 3 days of bespoke training and up to 2 days of check-in calls/meetings.

Month	Expert Link support
1	4-part on-line training for all staff
2	3 days of in-house training to develop 'co-production' group
3	EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
4	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
5	
6	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
7	
8	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
9	EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
10	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
11	
12	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
13	
14	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
15	EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
16	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
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18	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
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20	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
21	EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities
22	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants
23	
24	Bi-monthly on-line conversation with all project participants EL attend quarterly meeting to discuss influencing opportunities

About Expert Link

Expert Link is a peer-led organisation that works to improve the quality and availability of policies and services to support people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages in England.

We champion the voices of people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages (including homelessness, mental health issues, substance misuse, offending and domestic violence and abuse) to allow better policies and services to support them.

We aspire to a world where people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages are treated as equal partners in decisions made about their lives. To reach this vision, we influence national policies and equip local policy-makers, service providers and individuals with lived experience, to work together to design policies and services that are driven by the voices of people with lived experience – a process known as co-production.

We encourage genuine collaboration between policy-makers, service providers and people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages. We believe that co-production process should be guided by principles of collective power, equitable decision-making and by a strengths-based approach.

Our values

We believe in humanity and the potential of all people. When we come from a place of honesty, we can create the change that we want to see and bring hope into our world.

Our vision

Our vision is of a world where people with lived experience of multiple disadvantages are treated as equal partners in decisions made about their lives

In this world, best practices around co-production are well understood and co-production is prioritised by policy makers and those with power. This translates into investment and support for co-production at both the national and sub-national level across the UK.

People with lived experience of multiple disadvantages get all the support they need to be well, whatever it means for them. They are no longer experiencing stigma, are confident and aware of their own skills, can access opportunities to reach their personal goals and further develop their skills. As a result, they can live fulfilling lives, support peers and can voice their perspective to influence decisions made about their lives.

Our purpose

Our purpose is to inspire, support and champion co-production, with the voices of people with lived experience at our heart

Inspiring

Expert Link aims to inspire by walking the talk: we are a peer-led organisation that places the voices of people with lived experiences at the centre of our governance and decision-making processes. We also aim to inspire others by supporting them in their journey through coproduction, helping them in overcoming barriers to engage with one another whilst recognising that organisations should determine themselves how they want to lead coproduction activities.

Supporting

Expert Link – Co-production in Day Centres (London)

Through a comprehensive package of support Expert Link helps individuals and groups in overcoming barriers to effective local co-production. We supports individuals' capacity, and gathers groups of people, inspiring and empowering them to lead positive social change together. We provide:

- Opportunities for individuals with lived experience to overcome stigma and negative labels and recognise their own strengths
- Opportunities for service providers, local authorities and other actors to get rid of stigma and negative labels and recognise strengths in people with lived experience
- Opportunities to build relationships with one another and define shared values
- Access to general principles on what makes good co-production
- Access to practical tools and guidance to support co-production activities

Championing

Expert Link believes the voices of people with lived experience should influence national policy. Building on a movement of individuals and groups with lived experience and/or involved in co-production, Expert Link champions co-production by influencing national policy-makers to invest in this process and encourage their peers at the local level to do the same.

Some recent achievements

Support

We have increased the number of organisations involved in co-production, providing face-to-face support in over 25 areas and many more on-line.

Influencing

Lobbying from our network has been instrumental in bringing co-production into the tender documents of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), with the Next Steps Accommodation Programme now requiring applicants to show that they have co-produced their bids.

We are currently facilitating meetings between the MHCLG and people with lived experience of rough sleeping in the last 18 months to influence the departments policy work. Our National Advisory Panel has recently hosted MHCLG leads and heads of departments, and Dame Carol Black and her team in their work for the Independent Review of Drugs, with evidence recently submitted to Government to influence decisions around drug treatment services.