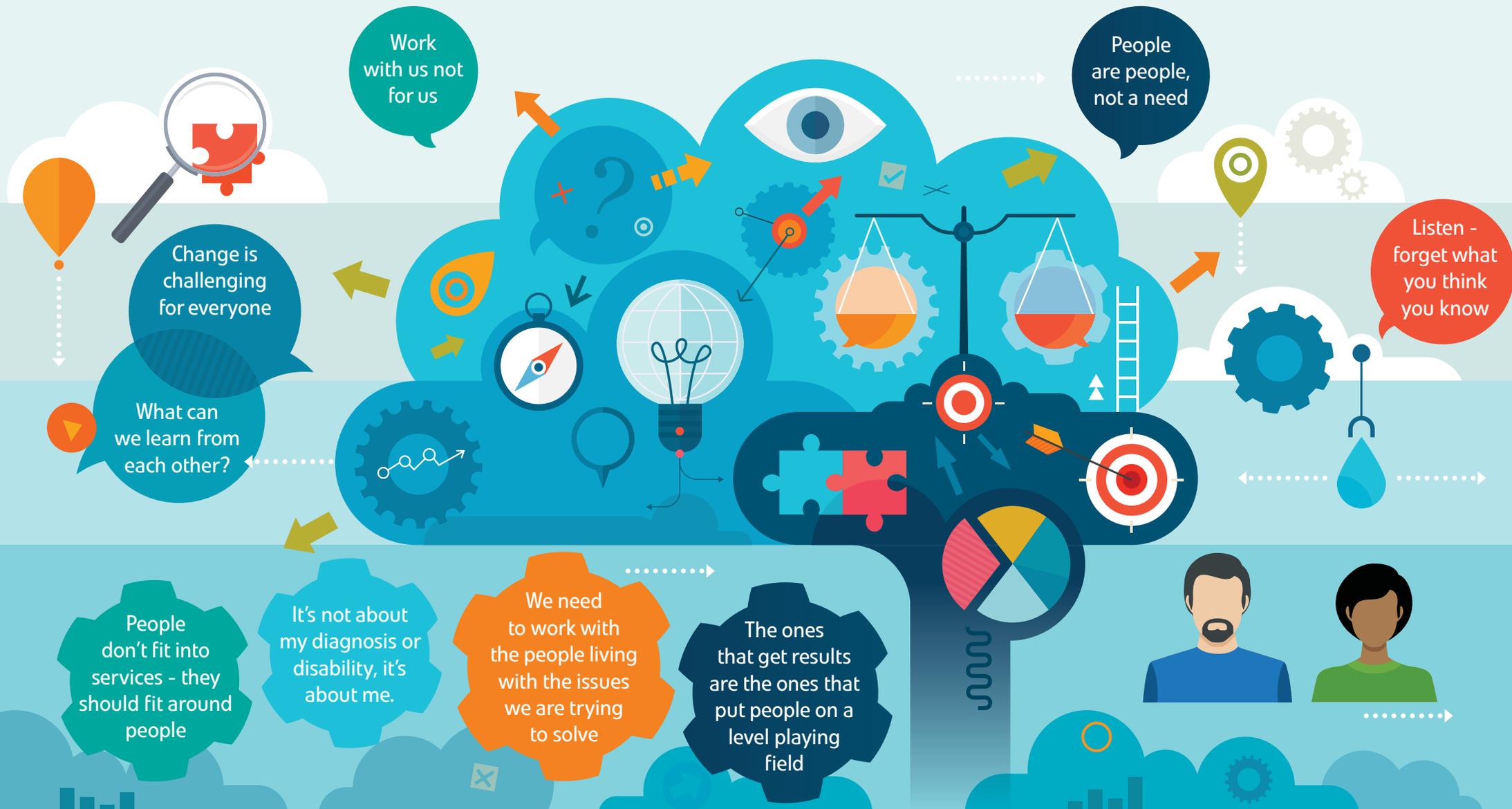


Working together:

A toolkit for health and social care professionals engaging with communities in Slough



This toolkit has been co-designed by local people with experience of using health and social care services and professionals. We have used the Ladder of Participation as a guide, and shaped this toolkit for people working in Slough.

www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Latest/Co-production-The-ladder-of-participation/



What can we learn from each other?



Work with us not for us

Why use this toolkit?

Professionals should use this toolkit when they are first thinking about engaging in some way with people who use services. Working towards co-production is not a tick box exercise, so before you start you should consider:

- Why do I want to engage with people who use services?
- What do I want to learn?
- What am I hoping to achieve?

The barriers

There are often obstacles that prevent professionals from working with people who use services in a meaningful way. These could be:

- Tunnel vision: only seeing something from one point of view
- Work load and time pressures
- Lack of understanding and awareness
- The void between what the professional knows and what people who use services experience
- The professionals own experiences of trying something before that hasn't worked
- Focus on finances instead of people
- Assume that they know the answers
- Towing the 'party' line
- Language
- Try to fit people who use services into boxes based on need



People are people, not a need

Information (is everything!)

Information is the key to successful engagement at every level. The people who use services need to access the same information as the professionals so they are able to contribute and engage in an informed way.

- Provide people with all the information they need to make an informed contribution
- Provide the information in enough time for it to be absorbed and understood, and offer support to people who may struggle to understand
- Make sure the information provided is appropriate:
 - Use plain English, no jargon or acronyms
 - Consider using EasyRead for people with learning disabilities
 - Think about the font size and layout
 - Consider if the information should be provided in a different language
 - Consider if the information should be provided in a different format (e.g. verbally, summary versions)

Things to consider...

For any type of engagement there are important things to bear in mind.

- Who to involve: have you considered carers, volunteers and other professionals?
- Times and days of meetings: do these suit the residents involved?

Tip: Consider if the venue, time and day is culturally appropriate for those involved, for example, don't regularly arrange meetings at the same time as Friday prayers.

- Venue: is this appropriate for the people involved?

Tip: Aim to use 'neutral' locations that everyone will feel comfortable in. Consider access requirements and parking too.

- Refreshments: does anyone attending have special dietary requirements?

- Transport and parking: how easy is it for people to get to the meeting?
- Communication: are there any language barriers?

Tip: Make sure you know if anyone attending needs an interpreter or translator.

Tip: Make sure you know how everyone wants to be communicated with between meetings - email, text, phone calls, letter etc.

- Contact details: can the people involved get in touch with you easily if they need to?
- Consider how you are presenting yourself: do you really need to wear a suit?

Tip: Sometimes professionals unintentionally create barriers by the way they present themselves; a suit or ID badge can be intimidating.



People don't fit into services - they should fit around people

Consultation

Consultation is the bare minimum engagement professionals should be aiming for. It is important that consultations are **not** tokenistic and **do affect change**. Consultation shouldn't just rely on surveys; you can learn a lot from a conversation.

Do:

- Know who you're talking to
- Provide all the information needed
- Design a survey with some of the people it is aimed at
- Use different formats; face to face, online, paper
- **Listen** to the answers you are given
- Tailor the consultation to what will work best for individuals
- Make it engaging and worthwhile
- Think about the language you are using (eg. jargon, tone)
- Feedback the outcome and next steps
- Explain the constraints of the project, (eg. time, budget)
- Have an open mind

Don't:

- Focus on negatives or needs
- Assume you know the answer
- Rely on surveys on their own

Engagement

Engagement involves people who use services to a greater extent than consultation. It gives people more opportunities to express their views at different stages. This could be through attending meetings, workshops and forums.

Do:

- Provide all the information needed
- Be transparent about the role of the people involved
- Be honest about how decisions will be made
- Explain the constraints of the project, (eg. time, budget)
- **Listen** to the answers you are given
- Feedback the outcome and next steps

Don't:

- Make assumptions
- Rely on the same people - the 'usual suspects'

What is listening?

"When you are listening it is natural to have your own thoughts. Try to turn this off and focus on what I am saying."

"When you really listen to people's stories, who knows what you could learn!"

"You can check that you've understood what I've said by asking me, that's okay."



It's not about my diagnosis or disability, it's about me.

Co-design

Co-design involves people who use services by designing services or projects based on their experiences and ideas. They have an equal role to play in part of the process, but not for the whole project.

Do:

- Provide all the information needed
- Respect and value what the people involved can offer
- Understand that people are experts in their own experiences
- Think outside the box
- Focus on people, not services
- Work at a pace that works for everyone involved
- Agree from the beginning how decisions will be made
- Feedback the outcome and next steps
- Review and evaluate the co-design

Don't:

- Make assumptions about the people involved
- Be afraid to ask questions



Listen - forget what you think you know

Co-production

Co-production is what professionals should be aiming for. Professionals and people who use services work together in equal partnership to design, deliver and review services.

Do:

- Involve people who use services from the very beginning
- Be transparent about the limits of the project eg. time, budget
- Share responsibility
- Agree how you will make decisions together
- Agree what everyone's role will be
- Agree how you will solve problems
- Respect each other as equals, regardless of profession, experience or support needs
- Provide training if necessary
- Allow enough time to become a team
- Make sure co-production is part of the reviewing process too
- Work at a pace that suits everyone

Don't:

- Say its co-production when its not.



The ones that get results are the ones that put people on a level playing field



He always lets you know what he wants with very little language

Involving people who find it hard to speak for themselves

There are many reasons why it may be more challenging to involve some people. Complex physical disabilities, Dementia, mental health conditions and communication difficulties can make it hard for some people to communicate verbally, or to understand more complex issues.

Do:

- Spend some time experiencing what life is like for the individual: shadow them for a day or two
- Work with those who know the individual best: both paid and unpaid support networks
- Use technology and other communication aids
- Think about what you are asking. Open ended questions can be more challenging so provide options

Don't:

- Make assumptions
- Miss the opportunity to involve people who communicate differently

Evaluation and feedback

It is important to always review and feedback about the outcome of your project. You should also evaluate how successfully you involved people who use services. By evaluating your approach you will be able to learn and improve for next time.

It is important to tailor your evaluation for the people who were involved, using the same tips and ideas from this toolkit.

Example

East of England Adult Social Care worked with local people to co-produce a toolkit to measure how well they involve people. This can be found at www.adasseast.org.uk/storage/resources/documents/201703_PRINT_ADASS_East_Evaluation.pdf.



We need to work with the people living with the issues we are trying to solve

Case study: co-designing this toolkit

"We feel it's nice that our thoughts are valued. It was nice to meet the other people involved who are in the same boat as you, as well as the professionals who understand our situations and meet us on the same level. We could be open and honest, and didn't feel embarrassed talking about our difficulties in the room. In the past we haven't had the chance to have an input, but now we've had the opportunity to be heard.

It has been informal, relaxed and sociable, and not time limited completely so conversations and ideas could flow naturally. There were enough people involved but not an overwhelming number, so we felt ok to speak up and like our ideas wouldn't get lost.

Meetings were held at different times and different places, and repeated so everyone got a chance to have their say. There wasn't a hierarchy. There was usually tea and coffee to make it more sociable and relaxed. We were always told what was happening and what to expect."



*Change is challenging
for everyone*

Bernadette and Shahnaz