

Changing Futures – Learning Report – Personalised Engagement Approaches

September 2022

Our service proves ‘Hard to reach’ adults can be engaged	<p>In 2020 there was an estimated 363,000 adults in England experiencing multiple disadvantage (have more than three needs linked to homelessness, substance use, mental health, domestic abuse, or criminal justice). Complexity of need and chaotic lifestyles often lead to low levels of engagement with support services and this cohort often have support withdrawn and are labelled as ‘non engagers’ or ‘hard to reach’.</p> <p>In Sheffield we estimate there are around 3000 adults facing multiple disadvantage and that around 200 of them fall into the ‘hard to reach’ category. Changing Futures are supporting 80 of these ‘hard to reach’ individuals who are well known, often across decades, to multiple services in the city but have no meaningful support in place.</p> <p>Around three quarters of our cohort consented to joining the programme after their first contact with their support worker, this increased to 90% within 14 days and 100% within 45 days. Our sustained engagement rate is 88% to date.</p>
A diverse team is a key enabler of engagement	<p>We developed profiles of both our cohort and staff team which allowed us to make personalised caseload allocations. This process included utilising commonalities (such as gender, ethnicity, cultural background and age), staff members skills and experience, individual interests and their support preferences (e.g. if someone preferred a female worker or responded well to someone from a particular age bracket).</p> <p>The diversity of our teams protected characteristics and experience was critical in facilitating this process. One staff member commented that being matched with service users in his community gave him confidence to provide tailored support, and his caseload have responded positively to this, being quick to engage and maintain contact.</p>
Preparation work increases the success of first contacts	<p>Conscious of the challenge in engaging this group we dedicated a significant amount of time to pre-engagement preparation work. We sought out key individuals and services who knew our cohort and used these pre-existing relationships to facilitate introductions. We clearly outlined to other agencies and service users how Changing Futures would complement rather than duplicate any existing support which helped to establish good, bounded working relationships. It also meant that we met individuals in environments and often with people they trusted.</p>
Service users prioritise a trusting relationship over service responsiveness	<p>Persistent, assertive, and targeted outreach to the places we knew our cohort frequented meant that the majority of our ‘hard to reach’ cohort were easy to find.</p> <p>The dominant theme across our cohort and wider coproduction work commissioned by Changing Futures is that trust between the person receiving support and the individual providing it is paramount. If there was none or limited trust, then engagement was highly unlikely to continue. People using services have said that they preferred staff and services they could trust over those that were quick to offer assessments or packages of support.</p>
Can commissioners use ‘trust’ as a better indicator of successful service delivery?	<p>Given how critical trust is to those using services, we believe utilising feedback on trust could provide a more effective means of establishing whether a services delivery is meeting the needs of the people it sets out to support.</p> <p>We are coproducing a peer led audit offer that will provide delivery managers and commissioners with qualitatively informed, quantifiable scores on the parts of service delivery that matter most to those using support services, such as trust. These audits will target those who services have and have not engaged and produce personalised improvement recommendations for services to take forwards.</p>

