



‘Walking the Talk’ Workshops Series Briefing

Delivering a Co-productive Approach to Participatory Learning and Evaluation

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Background

The aim of this briefing is to disseminate some of the learning from a two-part series of workshops delivered in October and November 2015 by the HEAR Network. These sessions were part of HEAR’s contribution to the London for All project funded by London Councils to support London’s voluntary and community sector.

For these sessions HEAR, in collaboration with the facilitator Hament Patel and evaluator Delia Muir, set out to use an approach to delivering training and shared learning that we had not previously tried. It is an extension of HEAR’s ideas of imparting knowledge not only through the content of the training or other event, but through its actual delivery mechanisms.

For example practically demonstrating disability inclusion at events where disabled people with various impairments are supported to actively participate is an effective way of reinforcing training on how to include disabled people. Additionally when HEAR delivered its Deaf Awareness training the session was delivered through the medium of BSL by our partners at Community ID, so not only did delegates learn from the content of the session, they also experienced first hand working through this medium, interacting appropriately with the trainer and interpreters etc. In ‘Walking the Talk’ we continued this idea by using a co-production approach to training and learning on effective service user involvement.

This briefing explains the process, and is not intended to cover the actual content of the workshops.

Overview

In this briefing we open by outlining why a participatory learning and evaluation approach was piloted in this workshop series. The workshops were about developing and implementing user voice led practices within the context of services, projects, organizations, and beyond. The briefing then explains the process we used underlying our co-productive approach, and includes some of the benefits emerging from the approach.

Why Participatory Learning and Evaluation?

As outlined above, HEAR believes in demonstrating good practice through its own delivery as well as through the content of its training and events. This piece of work can be seen as part of our own continuum of learning on how to do this. We saw piloting participatory learning and evaluation in the delivery of service user involvement training as a way of effectively facilitating workshop participants to:

- Work with us in ways that would stimulate interest to both openly share theirs and others experiences as well as
- Contribute to evaluation that moves beyond tick box consultation feedback through active involvement and participation in the co-productive approach to learning and evaluation used, which would also stimulate their interest and sense of ownership.
- Experience involvement through session design and delivery as well as through session content in order to
- Strengthen the ideas of user involvement and its approaches by demonstrating it in practice, through sharing and discussing practical examples.

What was this Co-productive Participatory Learning and Evaluation approach?

The co-productive approach used for this workshop series establishes a process where it is hoped participants feel they can effectively engage in meaningfully informing and shaping the design, delivery and development of workshops, including their evaluation.

There were two workshops, one in early October and one in mid November. The first was planned as a training workshop and the second to build on learning, network, share learning and experiences and hear from people already using participative approaches.

What we did:

1. HEAR members were invited by email to sign up for the sessions, with strong encouragement to commit to both sessions. Once signed up participants were invited to get in touch with the workshop series facilitator (by phone or email) to help with formulating a programme for workshop 1 (including content and structure) as well as provide baseline information about participant's background and expectations.
2. As a result of this invitation the workshop facilitator then made phone contact with 8 of the 13 registered workshop participants who had agreed to share their phone contact details.
3. The facilitator then used the information to put together a programme for workshop 1 and also inform the independent workshop evaluator of what was vital to participants, which she reflected in the open ended evaluation tool produced to capture qualitative feedback following workshop 1. This included giving space to participants to offer other comments and feedback, beyond what was being asked.
4. Following workshop 1 this was emailed out to all participants, who were also offered the opportunity by the evaluator to complete their feedback form by telephone if they wished. (Note that this evaluation was conducted in addition to completion by participants of the standard London for All evaluation form required by the funder London Councils, which was completed at the event as per the usual process)
5. A short evaluation report was produced from those responding to the independent evaluation.
6. This information was then used by the workshop series facilitator to produce a draft programme for the second workshop, and email out to both participants who attended the first workshop and also new participants who registered to attend the second workshop, for their comments and feedback on the draft. (A few people asked to attend the second workshop only as they were unable to attend both, and some participants were specifically invited to the second workshop to share their specific relevant experience.)
7. A final programme was produced based on the comments and feedback received by the workshops series facilitator.
8. In the course of the second workshop opportunities were given to participants attending workshop 1 to feed back, and also present in small groups and whole group feedback what they learnt and did in terms of actions between the two workshops. In addition two new participants, who attended the second workshop only, agreed to be more formal presenters of engagement work being undertaken by them.

9. The second workshop also gave an opportunity to 14 participants in total attending on the day to undertake a reflective exercise, to both look back on either the workshop series or on the second workshop only, with a view to also thinking about “what next?”. Some participants expressed interest in attending further events and being kept in touch with other by email.
10. The independent evaluator then compiled a report bringing together all the feedback, evaluation and learning from the participants.

What were some of the benefits of this approach?

- Before undertaking this process there was a view that prospective participants would not be interested in responding to email requests to help develop workshop content prior to the training. This was not the case, and 8 participants of 12 responded as wanting to have a say in the design of the workshop programs. Also 7 participants of 12 were happy to take the time to complete the participant-shaped feedback forms sent out following workshop 1.
- Both invaluable baseline and direction of travel data has been collected and rich information produced as part of the participants learning journeys, and difference made by attending the workshops, thus capturing a range of information in ‘real time’.
- Ideas have been produced around ways of developing this field of work to best meet the needs of participants, their organizations, and those they work with.

As a participant who attended the event also adds:

“Great to have space to discuss and develop thinking but also to share own knowledge and expertise”

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