

Talk notes:

Linking up local campaigning with people with lived experiences – Alicia Bainbridge, senior campaigns officer, Mind

Overview:

Mind - We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. Over the last year the campaigns team at Mind have been developing ways to better engage people with lived experience of mental health to get more involved in our campaigns work.

- To find new ways to support our national campaigns aims and objectives by extending our local
- To enable and empower those we're campaigning for to speak out about their Mental Health and their lived experiences to use their voice to create real change.

The project: To support staff and service users in our local Mind network to have the skills to run their own local campaigns. Created campaign training and support offer so that we could empower more people to campaign on mental health.

What the project looked like: Manchester, workshops, the campaign.

Engage – we wanted to reach the people we're campaigning on behalf of, and find ways for them to have a voice in our project. This started with recruitment. We wanted to have a mix of staff, service users and volunteers involved in the project. We needed to ensure that the staff were involved but the focus was on service users because staff had a much more commercial viewpoint to the project and service users brought their lived experience of the issues we were campaigning for.

Recruiting staff was easy (although capacity for them was an issue). Recruiting service users and volunteers was a lot harder than we expected. This was a key learning as we found that the local Minds don't necessarily have the relationship which we'd expect. We worked with our lived experience manager (internal post holder) to help us with our recruitment process to help us consider how to effectively reach out to service users across the local Minds we were working at.

Here we created an opportunity description which we were able to promote:

- Briefed support workers
- Reception staff
- Posters & opportunity descriptions
- Worked with the local Minds to send out emails to their lists
- Promote on the local Minds website.

Key learnings:

- Opportunity description – really useful!
- Manage expectations – agenda, timelines as much clarity as possible
- Need a longer lead in time. To really help reach as many people as possible,
- Formal application process – helps with brand risk
- Work with lived experience manager and diversity team – reach out to local churches, groups and contacts.
- We were concerned about the mix of staff & volunteers and getting the balance right. Just staff or just volunteers.

Support – working with people with lived experience we were keen to ensure that the workshops and activities were inclusive, accessible and supportive.

The training was delivered through workshops which were held across four half day sessions so that there was an opportunity for the group to engage with the content, have time to digest it and take actions outside of the workshops. Importantly it also made it easier for people with MH problems as allowed us to provide more breaks and space to engage with the content.

Campaigning skills covered and support to develop own work.

Support: During the workshops it was key for us to provide support to the participants. We did this through: Self-assessment, Check-in and out, Group rules, Buddies, quiet room.

The Campaign Topic: We spent a lot of time deciding the campaign topic, this secured buy-in and support from the group. We wanted to ensure that everyone had a voice and felt like they were part of the process. This was challenging as we had different learning styles, different levels of experience and we especially wanted the people with lived experience to feel empowered to take part.

Campaign Tactics: Campaigning activity also engaged people with lived experience and that what we were doing was accessible and engaging for people with MH problems. We worked again with our lived experience coach to think about how our tactics can be accessible. We ensured we had long lead in time so people had plenty of time to respond. We used different channels – in case people don't like using the computer or don't like face-to-face.

Learnings for future

- Work with participant and influence coach as early as possible
- Create a supportive environment – check-in with participants individually
- Share resources for thinking prior and post sessions.
- Clear agenda and structure – giving participants an idea of what was happening prior to the session
- We got great feedback from participants that they felt really supported throughout the process. Check-ins (corporate), safe space – group felt like a family.

Empower – really important throughout all parts of the project. Key things I'd like to highlight are:

Tools and training, Face of campaign, Stories shaped the work, Equal to staff, Facilitated

Key successes (relates to both the campaign they ran and the skills they got to carry on next time).

- Creating better links between people
- Local connections and local influence
- Better understanding of campaigning and how can fit in with organisation
- Increased confidence and engagement
- More support and understanding of our national work

Key issues

- Brand risk
- Capacity and expectations

What's next: It offered a clear way for us to support our local Minds to campaign and empower service users to use their experiences to campaign for better mental health services and supports. Using our learnings we're now looking at how to roll it out across our network as an offer to local Minds to engage even more of their service users to campaign for better mental health support, services and understanding.