The Mental Health Foundation

The Peer Research Journey: Supporting Researchers and Participants

Third Sector Research Forum, 17th February 2021

Supporting the Peer Research Journey – Workshop 1

Enabling the peer researcher journey

What does participatory research mean to you?	How does participatory research add value?	What are the most important considerations for you?
• That no one is left out • That research be inclusive, through multi discipline access • Where possible, co-production in design and delivery of research • It's a spectrum, participation can occur at all stages of the research process	• Unique perspective and insight • Gives a voice to lived experience • It gives a real time look at the issues • Ownership of participants in research findings • Opportunity to create change that matters to people	• That research be inclusive, through multi discipline access • Psychological safety for participants of the research • That involvement in research is meaningful • Keeping to aims but allowing space for other discussion • What are the training needs?

Achieving higher standards of participation

What does good public involvement look like to you?	What people / groups could you involve?	What resources would you need?
• Shared decision making • Active engagement and consultation • Shared ownership	• Any that are relevant to your project. All that will be influenced by the outcomes of the project. • All stakeholders with an interest in the outcomes	• Ensuring connectivity for all participants (especially whilst working online/remotely) • Develop training for peer research • Help develop Peer to Peer training as part of the involvement in Peer Research

Applying considerations in practice

What does meaningful participation look like in your setting?	How can you support or contribute to peer research?	What barriers exist to using PRM?
• That inputs give a meaningful direction • That the ways in which groups are involved is meaningful to them • Authenticity • That the process is not a 'tick box' exercise. It must have teeth! • Allowing peers to decide, what next • Peers have governance over the process, their participation, how the research is to be used, the implementation of the findings	• Breakdown barriers to involvement, be inclusive, go to where participants are and not them having to come to you	• Involvement costs can make bids too expensive • Funders want co-production but won't support it financially • Good participatory research can take longer • Power and decision making imbalances. Who controls decisions?

Any other thoughts or considerations?

- How do we measure impacts/change beyond the life or scope of a project eg. peer researchers go onto employment/ education. Organisation changes practice
- Need to put pressure on fund holders and decision makers to build in costs of involvement

Recommended Resources

- Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities
  https://www.sgsah.ac.uk/news/headline_771012_en.html

- Join the newsletter for training and events and presentations
  https://www.dur.ac.uk/socialjustice/

Supporting the Peer Research Journey - Part 2

Enabling the peer researcher journey

What does participatory research mean to you?	How does participatory research add value?	What are the most important considerations for you?
- Including anyone that the research will impact in the process meaningfully - Service user led / involvement - Learning and researching together, through the full research cycle - Valuing lived experience	- View of the subject from the perspective of those most affected - Subjects relate to peers and provide more information - Puts the perspective of those with lived experience at the heart of the research, which if you are trying to influence and change policy gives a voice to those often not heard or consulted - Peer researchers can form questions in a way that is relatable and more accessible - Makes sure the research (and engagement) is mutually beneficial - It has the potential to change communities, not just an academic exercise - By valuing people with lived experience as experts in their situation you can work as partners and obtain much richer data and insights - Benefits to the researchers - pay, training, new skills, sense of worth and ability to contribute	- Safeguarding - Reciprocal benefit - Ensuring equity, and challenging the expected balance of power - Working out the questions is the most important process. Involving a wide range of people is critical in working them out - Support, training and time for all peer researchers - Research that has a focus on action

Achieving higher standards of participation

What does good public involvement look like to you?	What people / groups could you involve?	What resources would you need?
- Diversity in cohort - Relevant to the public and not driven by policy makers - Involvement from the very start - a clear process and purpose with expectations on both sides agreed in advance	- Anyone! It depends on the focus of your research - People most likely to be affected by the research and its outcomes. It might not always be appropriate to open it to everyone - Language! Needs to be accessible to everyone who's involved. Jargon, and	- Anything that supports inclusion and meets the needs of people who would wish to be involved - Important to resource 'real' things - do people need help with broadband costs? Childcare? Food? Interpreters? Can we reimburse our peer researchers?

	acronyms can be a real barrier	• Need for good guidance but also working examples of how to consider payments, employment, benefits vouchers • Enough funds to cover all bases • Time...lots of time

Applying considerations in practice

What does meaningful participation look like in your setting?	How can you support or contribute to peer research?	What barriers exist to using a peer research approach?
• Focus on asking about outcomes for them and community - too often participation is driven by services and in an ideal world most people would not want to need services other than universal • A peer research project usually takes longer than a "traditional academic" model. Need to ensure this is built into plans from the start	• Make sure that peer researchers are involved in the planning of the project. And that they co-own (and create) the evaluation, outputs and outcomes • Attending a physical meeting for a couple of hours might involve a whole day or half day in terms of travel	• Time is a big barrier • Stigma - people in inequality groups can feel "not good enough", "this is not for people like me''. Or may fear being identified and labelled • Many decisions are taken before people are involved. Funders make decisions, research grant applicants make decisions, planning groups make decisions - and then we recruit people and call them 'co'

Any other thoughts or considerations?

- Does anyone offer accreditation to peer researchers? If so, how do you do this?
- You could use youth achievement or adult achievement awards (SCQF rated) and project based to accredit peer researcher experience

Recommended Resources

- Scottish Community Development Centre was involved in creating national standards for community engagement in Scotland https://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards

- TSRF's last conference was about collaboration between the third sector and academic - lots of good stuff here https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/tsrf/academics-why-collaborate/