

National Expert Citizens' Group



NECG: Positive Changes 2017

An overview and review of the conference

Sarah Robinson and members of the NECG

October 2017

About Fulfilling Lives (Multiple Needs)

Big Lottery Fund are investing up to £112million over eight years to better support people with multiple needs. These are defined as people experiencing two or more of: homelessness, reoffending, substance misuse and mental ill-health. Voluntary sector-led partnerships in 12 areas of England are working to provide more person-centred and co-ordinated services. Partnerships were awarded funding in February 2014 and began working with beneficiaries between May and December 2014. The programme runs until 2022.

CFE Research facilitates the National Expert Citizen's Group (NECG) on behalf of Big Lottery Fund.

About the National Expert Citizens' Group (NECG)

The National Expert Citizens' Group is the national panel made up of Expert Citizens from the 12 Fulfilling Lives projects. The purpose of the group is to raise awareness of the local and national issues that affect people with multiple and complex needs.

The aim is to improve the lives of service users with multiple complex needs and to influence systems change with services across homelessness, substance misuse, mental health and offending behavior. This should be achieved through effective co-production with the service user at its heart.

The NECG operates in 12 locations across England: Birmingham; Blackpool; Bristol; Camden & Islington; Lambeth, Southwark & Lewisham; Liverpool; Manchester; Newcastle & Gateshead; Nottingham; South East Partnership (Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings); Stoke-on-Trent and West Yorkshire.



About this report

This report outlines the vision, purpose and content of the first national conference for the NECG. It also provides a review of the day from presenters and delegates.

The purpose is to provide an overview of the day for those unable to attend and to signpost to further resources.

This report is one of a series of outputs from the NECG. You can find all the publications and further information about the NECG at www.NECGUK.org.uk.

Who should read the report

The report will be of interest to conference attendees who were unable to visit every workshop/presentation and anyone wanting to learn about co-production and service user involvement from the beneficiary's point of view.

Background

In 2016 the Fulfilling Lives national evaluation team held their first conference. At the end of the conference it was suggested that the expert citizens (people with lived experience of multiple needs) might want to consider running their own conference. This idea was put into action in the June NECG meeting hosted by Fulfilling Lives Camden & Islington (FLIC). The group was given the time and space to design and develop their ideas. Support was provided by the group facilitators (Sarah Robinson, CFE Research and Wayne Nicholls, Expert Link) and by expert Storyteller and ex-journalist, Jude Habib from [Sounddelivery](#).

A small number of group members volunteered to be involved in the planning team for the conference. The group designed the conference title and invitations, scoped the

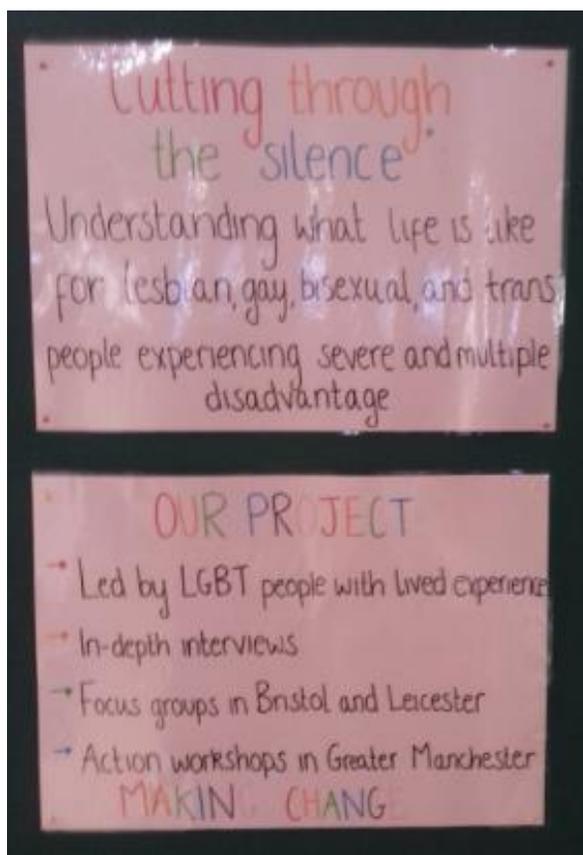
venue, put together equipment lists, collated the content for the programme and considered the agenda for the day. Four months work resulted in a conference that was designed to showcase:

- Activities that the expert citizens have been involved in, and of which they are most proud
- The challenges for service user involvement and co-production that still remain
- How to kick-start social action within your organisation, and
- How to have fun doing it!

Format of the day

The format of the day was designed so that those leading workshops did not have to present to large audiences given how new some were to both the group and the experience of presenting. It was organised so that delegates could attend all workshops and workshops would have consistent numbers of participants. Each workshop had between 10-20 attendees in each session and was repeated up to five times. Breaks and presentations in the main hall were used to break up the day so that no workshops were presented back-to-back.

Exhibition Hall



There were two displays in the Exhibition Hall. The first was *Researching LGBT Individuals* by the LGBT Foundation and Inspiring Change Manchester. The LGBT core group came together to research LGBT people with multiple and complex needs. They wanted to find out:

- If the experience of LGBT individuals differs in experiencing multiple barriers to a fulfilling life; and
- Why a significant number of LGBT individuals are disengaged from services.

The information gathered was used to improve understanding of multiple and complex needs from an LGBT perspective. The experiences of the peer researchers and the results of their research were displayed.

The second display was from Fulfilling Lives Newcastle & Gateshead and was entitled 'See the Story'. In their own words:

Too often we hear the phrase 'tell me your story' – where we ask people with multiple complex needs to share their stories and see how we can help them. But how many times do we really get the story? We hear it but do we listen to it? And if we do, what do we visualize or judgements do we make?

The display was a chance to see what Experts-by-Experience in Newcastle and Gateshead have experienced or are still experiencing in their daily lives. Seven of the experts took photographs that show what they feel represents positives and negatives within their lives and services. As they explained in the conference programme:

The display is powerful, raw and emotional but importantly it is the lives of those experiencing multiple complex needs through their own eyes. So please have a look at our exhibition and finally SEE THE STORY.

Conference Hall

The 'non-role' role play

The conference began with the 'non-role' role play delivered by NECG members from FLIC and Newcastle & Gateshead Fulfilling Lives. The play was designed to challenge the perceptions and misconception of identity and invite the audience to re-imagine: what they know, what they think they know and what they might not know yet. The NECG members often discuss at what point they no longer become 'the person with lived experience' but are considered a 'professional'.

The play invited three people who each have different roles in the programme to answer a number of questions exploring support for individuals with complex needs:

- A 'professional' frontline worker
- A volunteer with lived experience
- A service user

To avoid pre-judgement the individuals were seated behind a curtain. Three scenarios were presented and they were asked how they would respond. At the end the audience was asked to identify the staff member by voting with coloured cards. The identity of the staff member was not revealed so that the audience was left to consider the strengths of all the responses.

Our experience by Lisa Corless and Glenda

Lisa talked about her personal journey up to joining Liverpool Waves of Hope as a volunteer and the creation and development of the local Hub. The Hub is a drop-in service that offers individuals with multiple needs a space to socialize, find out about services and access peer support. Below are some of the key slides from the presentation.

Your story could
be the key that unlocks
someone else's prison.
Don't be afraid
to share it.



AIMS OF THE HUB

- Provide a safe and comfortable space where you can develop your skills and build your confidence
- Create a culture of mutual care and support, within a comfortable and safe environment
- Equip and empower you to get involved in the design and delivery of your services by:
- Providing opportunities and choices on ways to build your confidence and develop your skills
- Allow you to choose activities, developmental and learning opportunities to suit you and your personal goals

WHAT THE HUB CAN OFFER

- A social space offering enjoyable and meaningful activities that *YOU* have chosen.
- A place to share your ideas and support to make them happen
- Ways to get involved in the design and delivery of services
- Make your voice heard and have your experience valued
- Somewhere to develop your skills and interests. Discover ones you did not know you had!
- In-house and external learning: you choose what you learn

The Hub has been a concept that has been designed and delivered in a co-produced manner by staff and experts by experience. The experts have been involved co-producing job descriptions for the post of Head of Involvement and the Hub Manager, as well as being part of the short listing and interview panels for these posts. On the day Lisa brought a new member of the Hub who heard she was presenting and wanted to help. As Lisa explained:

Our focus is to give people the opportunity to try things they want to do and see their value. This is not only my first conference to present at but the first event Glenda has attended too.

Lisa Corless

Workshops

Prisoners Inspiring Prisoners

This workshop was presented by Alannah Craig and Darren Pedley from the West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WYFI) project. Darren Pedley spoke briefly about his experiences of being in prison and the support he received. He then introduced the *Prisoners Inspiring Prisoners* pilot that he and his colleagues at WYFI have been co-producing.

The purpose of the pilot is to pair-up a rehabilitated ex-offender with someone who is due to be released from prison. The ex-offender works as a peer mentor, meets with the prison leaver and talks through any issues that they are facing or expect to face. The peer mentor's role is to provide advice, guidance, and support during the course of the prison leaver's release and integration back into society.

Alannah spoke about the research that they did with ex-offenders to learn from their experiences of going in-and-out of prison, and the lack of adequate support services to stop this cycle. The public costs that result from people falling into this cycle were outlined.

- *In Leeds Prison, there are 1,212 inmates at any one time. The cost per prisoner is £36,500 per annum, meaning that the overall cost per year could be as much as £44 million.*
- *46 per cent of women prisoners have reported attempting suicide at some point in their lives. This is more than twice the proportion of male prisoners (21 per cent).*
- *63 per cent of prisoners nationally experience mental health issues.*
- *26,643 prisoners nationally in March 2017 were subjected to violence in prison.*

Attendees were then invited to ask questions.

Where did the idea originate from?

The idea came from an ex-offender on the WYFI programme. Through co-production, they were able to test this idea and develop it into a pilot – always getting the input of relevant people along the way.

Any opportunities for partnership?

Yes. They are developing it in Leeds just now, but they are attracting interest from other prisons nearby. They are keen to explore these interests in the hope that it could help make the programme more sustainable.

How could it be funded in the future?

They need to explore this further, but it is likely to involve conversations with public services involved or affected by the issues – e.g. HMP Prisons, probation service, police, and other local public services. They are keen to demonstrate the cost-benefit impact of the service, so that it can demonstrate how it can save money in the long-term.

1001 Life Stories

This presentation was led by Jo Cutts and Jenni Rowe from the Expert Citizens of Stoke; Lee Dale and Dean Spruce assisted too. The 1001 Life Stories presentation explored the different ways that can help people to communicate their story. Jo and Jenni introduced a short film that had five different stories, told in different ways. These stories included a poem, two life-stories, a radio broadcast, and a before-and-after story. The film can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/hY2f_3XCi_I



The film was followed by a practical session in which attendees could choose from a number of ways in which they could tell their story. Attendees could write a poem, be interviewed on film about their story, write down their story, sculpt their story in Play-doh, or offer another means through which to communicate. One participant expressed her story through silent dance.

1001 Life Stories by Jo Cutts, Expert Citizens of Stoke

As a group we wanted to design a participatory workshop around 1001 life stories. Part of our commitment to the Big Lottery is to complete 1001 life stories from people with complex needs and people with lived experience of their experiences in services.

To prepare for this we went through some of the stories we had collected and picked out varied examples of the different ways you can tell your story e.g. video, audio, poetry and edited it into a 6 minute film.

We provided the participants with various art equipment, Playdoh, audio equipment and a video booth for them to tell their stories or journeys. In each session everyone got involved and the stories that were told were inspirational and an insight to each individual's journey.

Tackling Stigma

The Fulfilling Lives South East Partnership's presentation was based around a video highlighting the effects of internal and external stigma in relation to those with lived experiences of multiple complex needs and social disadvantages.

The origin of the video was an event held in Hastings at ESRA (East Sussex Recovery Alliance) towards the end of 2016 with a number of staff and managers from local mental-health, housing, substance-misuse and criminal-justice organisations services and projects attending.

The event was interactive with a number of creative ways employed to allow those attending to *'put themselves into the mind, emotions and shoes of those with multiple and complex needs'* who they not only work with but who are also within their community. Posters with quotes, video-logs and audio experiences alongside 'Living Libraries' which were at the heart of the experience. To create a 'Living Library' presenters provide attendees with 'book titles' which represent their personal story. Each 'book' is read aloud as individuals speak about their experiences. The focus of this Living Library was how stigma had affected them and how they were able (or not) to overcome and move on from stigmatic labels that they had either placed on themselves or had been placed on them by others including their family, friends, community and society in general (which was not included in the video shown).



At the NECG conference, a video of the ESRA event was shown and a number of project consultants and volunteers presented their Living Library:

- Glen Davis (Hastings)
- Chris Pannikou (Hastings)
- Donna Denyer (Brighton)
- Angela Girling (Brighton)
- Chris Gourlay (Hastings)
- Susan Parminter (Hastings)

Wayne Nicholls (formerly a project consultant with the South East Partnership but now with Expert Link) was involved with creating, planning and participating in the initial ESRA event (and also featured in the video), He spoke briefly about his part in the event as one of the Living Libraries.

The video will be used as a training tool at a Hastings-based housing association, potentially changing the way staff view and work with clients.

The stigma video can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/er-njn5nD-s>

Peer Up!

‘Peer Up!’ was an interactive workshop that explored the valuable role that peer mentoring can play when working with vulnerable adults. The session examined the benefits and challenges of having volunteer peer mentors participating in a project.

After introductions the session began with short table discussions on the pros and cons of this approach. The session was facilitated by Nicola Plumb from Blackpool Fulfilling Lives and Elena Trivelli from FLIC.

The key benefits of using peer mentors that emerged from the discussions were:

- The peer mentor is more likely to have a good understanding of the client’s needs
- The peer mentor can become a role model
- It is easier to establish trust with the client – due to lived experience
- The voluntary nature of the relationship also helps establish trust – the fact that they aren’t ‘doing it for the money’
- The peer mentor is more likely to have greater resilience than a project worker
- Additional resource for projects to use
- Offers pathways to positive outcomes for the peer mentor and can include the development of transferrable skills

The key challenges of using peer mentors that emerged from the discussions were:

- Practical considerations, for example ensuring Disclosing and Barring checks (DBS)
- Understanding when is the most appropriate time for mentors to engage with clients
- Perceived risk (by project staff) that a peer mentor may relapse into old habits
- Unreliability of volunteers
- Investment of time/resource in ensuring that peer mentors are appropriately trained
- A lack of understanding on what peer mentoring is
- Inappropriate matching of mentor and client

Following the table discussion and feedback, the Blackpool Fulfilling Lives team showed a video that had been edited by Gary Philips, an expert by experience. The video demonstrated the role of the peer mentor and the impact that it can have by offering testimony from mentors and clients from the FLIC project. The video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7g1eMMkCAG> . The session ended with short informal presentations by Sonny Gordon and Leo Shaul who are both peer mentors for the FLIC project. Both were able to talk about their own personal circumstances as well as how they had become peer mentors.

Peer Up! Experience by Leo Shaul, Fulfilling Lives Islington & Camden (FLIC)

My experience of the NECG events has been nothing but positive. The 1st one in Camden (back whenever it was) struck a chord with me as I wasn't aware that the Fulfilling Lives project was UK wide. I'd probably been told beforehand but I'd not stored the information. It was encouraging to see so many people coming together with one cause in mind.

It's fair to say I was a little nervous before the event as I knew I would be giving a speech (all be it a short one) but it all went smoothly and I felt a sense of achievement when the event came to an end.

It was an absolute pleasure working with Fulfilling Lives team from Blackpool. Really nice people, easy to get along with and all having similar goals to ours. I feel I gained confidence from being involved in the event and it was great to meet so many new people.

Peer Up! Experience by Gary Phillips, Blackpool Fulfilling Lives

I have enjoyed working on the "Peer Up" project alongside Camden & Islington. At the last meeting I volunteered to edit and prepare a film, I think mainly as I am very interested in media, photography and anything similar, however I had never in my life made a short film. I really enjoyed working on it and challenging myself to do something a bit different, I wanted to contribute to the project and felt this could be a good way. I was very anxious when we got to London and the film was played in front of an audience - the sudden realisation people were watching what I had made and the thought I may have let the group down with a rubbish film. But it has been a wonderful experience and a massive boost to my confidence that I received so much positive feedback, and I would like to say thank you to everyone who took the time to say they enjoyed it and it was a good film. It was very much appreciated.

It's been great working alongside Camden and Islington Fulfilling Lives and making a connection with them over the last few meetings. Seeing Elena, Leo and Sonny again in London was like meeting back up with friends. I have been to the last 4 NECG meetings now and the conference was my favourite. I think essentially as I felt really involved throughout the day. I didn't even feel nervous introducing myself to a room full of people (4 times over) 12 months ago that wouldn't have happened, not a chance. I think I came away from the day feeling that I can contribute to things.

Take the Pledge: Opportunity Nottingham

Robert Eagle and Deonne Peters (beneficiary ambassadors) and Lee, Paul and Teejay (beneficiaries) from Opportunity Nottingham talked about their experiences of multiple needs and how these have informed the development of *The Pledge*. *The Pledge* sets out simply and clearly what service users would like from services, how they would like to be treated and what they will do in return. It includes being realistic with service users, involving them when talking to other services, showing courtesy, compassion and respect and not rushing. As one workshop participant commented, *The Pledge* items are all such simple things but they can make a real difference to the experiences of service users. The experts from Nottingham spoke and recited poems about their negative experiences with services in the past – feeling like they were passed from pillar to post – but also about the difference that Opportunity Nottingham had made to them.

The Pledge was developed by experts by experience in partnership with services to ensure that it was something all parties could sign up to. It is a dynamic document, constantly under review and development. The hope is that *The Pledge* will help improve the experience of both beneficiaries and staff across Nottingham. Already it has been rolled out across the Opportunity Nottingham partner organisations and others such as the ambulance service have also adopted *The Pledge*. Organisations signing up to *The Pledge* can have their logo added and are encouraged to display it prominently.

Find out more about *The Pledge* here: <http://www.opportunitynottingham.co.uk/our-beneficiaries/take-the-pledge/>

Changing Perceptions and Lives: Birmingham Changing Futures Together

Bev Hardman, Paul Brown, Noel Reid and Kira Howell from Birmingham Changing Futures Together talked about the success of their *Inreach*, *Outreach* work stream. A small team of experts by experience are supported to share their experiences to help others towards recovery, challenge attitudes and influence change. Meeting someone with similar experiences who has recovered and rebuilt their life can provide important inspiration for people with multiple needs, showing that recovery is possible.

A particular success for *Inreach*, *Outreach* is their work with the West Midlands Police. The partnership began with experts by experience giving presentations as part of the police offender management training. The aim was to influence change by challenging attitudes to people with multiple needs and supporting the police to see the person and not the problem. The work stream has rapidly grown and the team are now working with seven police stations. They have provided mental health training for

the police and 999 response officers too. The experts provide powerful personal insights to help police understand the perspectives of those experiencing addiction, homelessness and mental ill health. As well as helping to change police perspectives, the work stream has also helped the experts to see police officers as people with their own stresses and struggles. Volunteer Paul spoke about how much he enjoys presenting to groups of up to 100 police officers and the a sense of achievement this has given him.

Find out more about ‘*Inreach, Outreach*’ here:

<http://changingfuturesbham.co.uk/about-us/workstreams/improved-outreach-inreach/>

The Dangers of assimilation



Mark Jepson and Darren Scholes from Inspiring Change Manchester (ICM) presented on ‘the Dangers of Assimilation’. Mark has lead the core group of experts by experience at ICM for a number of years. Over this time he has learnt what works and what doesn’t with co-production. Both Mark and Darren were keen to highlight the dangers of trying to cultivate a person with lived experience into the culture of the

service/organisation as opposed to allowing them to use their assets to deliver value to any true co-produced action. The presentation’s key message was for individuals with lived experience to remember who they are and not to lose themselves in the attempt of co-production. Trying to speak the same language and follow the same ideas as services can lead to assimilation and not co-production. Assimilation is in danger of occurring when a particular chain reaction occurs (see figure below).

Assimilation happens when:

We begin to believe that in order to have our voice heard we have to change



As soon as we believe we have to change we are in danger of assimilation



At this point we detach from our true selves and lose what we have to bring



We are no longer 'influencers' we have become influenced



The presenters argue that individuals with lived experience must remember where they came from and remember why they are there and that they must not lose sight of their core values and should stay true to their beliefs. In turn, organisations that practice co-production should start to:

- Use plain English
- Talk with us, not consult us
- If it smells like tokenism....it usually is

Women's Voices Manchester

Sara Peacock and Amanda Yates presented on women with multiple disadvantage. The session started with a short film depicting the personal story of a woman with multiple disadvantage. Following the film Amanda and Sara detailed how Women's Voices – the female expert by experience group had begun in Manchester. They explained why women disengage from services. They then discussed how they had innovatively

consulted potential beneficiaries by holding a ‘pamper party’. They had liaised with a local college to get beauty students to come and practice their skills on the women who would drop in. As they were having makeovers members of Women’s Voices would talk to them to ask about their needs and ideas for service improvements.

The result of innovative consultations such as these has seen small but radical improvements for the women with multiple needs in Manchester. For example, one hostel was receiving increasing anti-social behavior and it was from the consultations that it transpired that the women weren’t sleeping well because the doors were slamming throughout the night. By simply adjusting the ‘soft shut’ option on the hostel doors there has been a significant decrease in incidents and the women are sleeping better which has also led to improved mental health in some instances. The success of the group led to one individual, Amanda, being offered a new, full time role as a specialist women’s outreach worker.

Further information on the group’s work can be found on the NECG website:
<http://necguk.org.uk/women-multiple-complex-needs/>

The film shown can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/6mFEeIKoris>

Impact videos

Two videos were made about the impact of both the National Expert Citizens’ Group and the Fulfilling Lives programme as a whole. The first was created from interviews conducted with some of the conference presenters and was filmed during the August NECG quarterly meeting in Brighton. Individuals were asked core questions such as:

- How did you find out about Fulfilling Lives?
- What have you been doing as part of Fulfilling Lives?
- What are you most proud of?
- What impact has Fulfilling Lives had on you, your organisation or people with multiple needs?

The full video can be accessed via the NECG’s own YouTube channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61o7DwoQYFs&t=131s>

The second video was compiled on the day of the conference by videographer Dean Spruce and interviewer Lee Dale from the Expert Citizens of Stoke. The experts designed their own questions around co-production and the conference and edited the responses into a video which can be viewed via the following link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hY2f_3XCi_I

Delegate Feedback

In total, 110 people attended the conference (including presenters/workshop facilitators). Delegates were invited to provide feedback via two avenues. Those who had booked tickets were emailed to thank them for attending and to ask them to provide feedback that could be given to the NECG. This generated a response from approximate 10 delegates. An online feedback survey was also circulated; nine people responded to this survey. A large proportion of attendees were beneficiaries and volunteers from the Fulfilling Lives programme and service users from other organisations. We did not have access to the email addresses of all attendees – only those who had booked the original tickets to the event.

Those who emailed directly were generally positive about their experience of the event:

The workshops I saw were really excellent – particularly Manchester women (but I have told them that in person). I consider myself quite tough, but I was very moved by a few of the presentations. I think the team worked incredibly hard and this was evident in the quality of the day.

Operations Manager, Fulfilling Lives Funded project

Positives to the day included:

- Networking opportunities
- Picking up tips and things to avoid when undertaking service user involvement and co-production
- Being inspired and gaining insight into how effective asset based involvement can be:

For me the event provided wonderful insight into what can be achieved when those with complex needs come together to express their needs and use this to help shape services of the future and have a voice. I particularly enjoyed the format of the break-away workshops, which allowed for more in depth discussion about the great work being carried out by the various groups as well as a space for reflection. I certainly came away feeling inspired about taking ideas back to the charity I work for as to how we go about encouraging our beneficiaries to have more of a voice in how the charity's services are shaped.

Head of Relationships, Housing Charity

- The issue of stigma being brought to the fore and how it can be addressed explored:

After the conference I've been thinking about stigma and the different forms that stigma takes. The first thing that comes to most of our minds is name-calling and negative language; the South East Partnership's workshop on that was excellent. But a type of stigmatisation we talk less about is being ignored, silenced or having words put in your mouth. This type of stigmatisation says to people that their voices are less important than others. So a really powerful way to challenge stigma is to take over a building in London for the day and to fill that building with stories, ambitions, challenges, debates, jokes, tears, celebration, frustration, vision and voices... and to make that event led completely by people who have been stigmatised in the past and all completely on their own terms. So even though the conference as a whole wasn't called an anti-stigma event, it definitely improved my understanding of stigma. I learned so much more on top of that, but that was the main thought I wanted to feed back.

Development and engagement lead, Fulfilling Lives Funded Project

- Having a wider understanding of what each of the local projects are doing around co-production and service user involvement:

I really enjoyed the event on Friday and thought the sessions were all really interesting. I thought they were delivered in an innovative and interesting way, and there was a really nice atmosphere during the day. It was fantastic to meet so many members of the clearly talented NECG and to hear about all the work they are doing- which was incredibly varied.

Senior Policy Officer, CLINKS

As a number of the delegates were individuals with lived experience who came to see what other projects are doing, it was positive that some feedback reported how they had benefitted from the day:

One of the clients who came with us, [name], is sitting next to me today and said he found it "very eye-opening, awe-inspiring and it helped us to understand people's issues and to gain greater understanding of how to deal with issues that affect us in our everyday lives". I found it particularly useful because I am planning my own peer research project – I picked up lots of tips for things to avoid and do.

St.Mungo's

Areas for improvement tended to focus on the format of the day, including the length of the conference, the fact that presenters had to run their sessions multiple times and wanting further opportunities to network. One person felt that they were not clear on the focus of the day:

Although I enjoyed the day, I felt that the purpose of the event was unclear. If this was a general celebration of the work that has happened over the last 12 months, then I feel the event was a success. However, I feel we could use these opportunities to further the coproduction agenda; and challenge and inspire services and localities who are doing little/no coproduction; or to provide an opportunity for local expert groups to workshop ideas with one another and discuss how they could develop ideas and projects they are already working on.

Anonymous feedback survey respondent

Another echoed this feedback, feeling that the day should have been more of a learning opportunity:

[What would you change about the day?] Much more challenging workshops external speakers learning and developmental workshops.

Anonymous feedback survey respondent

Two people expressed concern over the content or delivery of some of the workshops:

I also felt like some people weren't 100% comfortable with the conference format of presentations, or that it made them feel like they had to tell their personal stories to justify what they had to say. That made it feel less like an equal exchange of views between people with lived and professional experience than might have been the case if it didn't feel like people had to 'present' to an audience.

Anonymous feedback survey respondent

Finally, as the majority of delegates were from projects, a few felt that the audience was 'preaching to the converted' and that funders, commissioners and services not using co-production should have been the primary audience.

I think there was a danger of preaching to the converted. What would have been good would be to have more diverse representation in the room - from funders, commissioners, policy makers etc., people who need to hear this and learn from it.

Overall the event feedback was very positive. A number of presenters felt they had grown in confidence in presenting and facilitating their workshops. Organisations outside of Fulfilling Lives working with the same client group attended and were inspired by the work and the NECG was able to showcase the work they are proudest of.

Everyone enjoyed the general vibe of the day, and enjoyed chatting to new people. The visual exhibitions were great too.

St.Mungo's

Feedback and learning from the event has been recorded, shared with the NECG members and will be considered when developing any similar events in future.

A final few words from Big Lottery Fund

I just wanted to thank you and all the Experts again for an absolutely fantastic conference last week. I am still buzzing – with ideas and inspiration – following the day. I am only sorry we weren't able to attend the final workshop session (for me it would have been the one on assimilation) which I had heard was very thought provoking. I know how much work and creativity went in to the day, and it really paid off!

Sarah Benioff, Deputy Director – Strategic Programmes, The Big Lottery Fund

What a fantastic day Friday was! The NECG did an absolutely top notch job pulling everything together, especially given how ambitious the event was. Each and every member of the group and those involved on the day should be extremely proud of what they achieved. I heard quite a few comments from people saying it was the best conference they had been to for a while!

Funding Contracts Manager, The Big Lottery Fund