

Birmingham Changing Futures Together Evaluation

Every Step of the Way research findings

Revolving Doors Agency, July 2021







Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Engagement with Every Step of the Way	5
3.	Understanding of Every Step of the Way	10
4.	Outcomes and impact: for organisations	13
5.	Outcomes and impact: for individuals involved	15
6.	Delivery challenges	17
7.	Wider service user involvement activity in Birmingham	20
8.	Conclusion and suggested improvements	22
Anı	nex 1: Topic guide, stakeholder interviews	25
Anı	nex 2: Topic guide, ESOW members focus group	28
Anı	nex 3. Draft menu of options for individuals making the transition from ESOW	29

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from research completed between December 2020 and March 2021 that aimed to:

- explore the implementation and impact of Every Step of the Way (ESOW);
- learn lessons about what works well in lived experience involvement; and
- identify the longer-term impacts of ESOW in how services are designed and delivered in Birmingham.

In March 2019, Revolving Doors published a report with the findings from the *Evaluation* of *Every Step of the Way Experts by Experience and Systems Impact*. This piece of research builds on those findings to consider whether the good practice highlighted has continued, whether the challenges raised have been overcome and the extent to which recommendations have been implemented.

As the research took place during a lockdown because of Covid-19, we also explored the impact of the pandemic on delivery and how the service has been adapted as a result.

About Birmingham Changing Futures Together

Birmingham Changing Futures Together (BCFT) is one of twelve Fulfilling Lives: Supporting People with Multiple Needs sites funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. The BCFT programme aims to improve the lives of people experiencing multiple disadvantage, across Birmingham. BCFT defines multiple disadvantage as people experiencing two or more of the following: homelessness, problematic substance use, risk of offending and mental ill health. Importantly, the programme focuses on service and system change, aiming to ensure that models and approaches pioneered during the project become mainstream.

Revolving Doors Agency has led the local evaluation of the Birmingham Changing Futures Together programme since 2018.

About Every Step of the Way

Every Step of the Way is the lived experience engagement element of the Birmingham Changing Futures Together programme. ESOW aims to guide and empower people with lived experience to use their voice to challenge and change systems in Birmingham, whilst supporting their individual development.

To enter the ESOW programme as an expert, the individual must have experienced at least two of the needs listed above in the last five years. Each expert is offered opportunities to work with services through the programme with the aim of bringing their experience of multiple disadvantage and accessing support to services, projects and policies to develop them so that they work better individually and across the system.

Some experts have progressed to be an Involvement Champion across the BCFT programme, in recognition of their experience. For simplicity, throughout the report we mainly refer to experts by experience when labelling quotes and discussing views and experiences. Within this we are also referring to Involvement Champion's input.

http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/file/2401/download?token=QIFjx4hx

Methodology

This was a small-scale qualitative research project involving:

- A focus group with four experts by experience and interviews with two experts to gain their views and experiences of being part of ESOW and the impact of ESOW in Birmingham.
- An interview with a staff member at Birmingham Mind, who coordinates the ESOW programme.
- 12 interviews with staff at organisations in Birmingham to learn more about why they had/had not engaged with ESOW, the impact of any engagement and suggestions for improvement. This included Core Group members and No Wrong Door organisations² that have and have not engaged with ESOW, as well as external organisations that have worked with ESOW.

-

² The Core Group has responsibility and accountability for overseeing and delivering BCFT's systems change priorities. It is made up of 14 organisations from the voluntary and statutory sectors providing services covering at least one of the main areas of need. No Wrong Door is a whole system approach to supporting people with complex needs. Member organisations are committed to working together to create a connected network of support through a single referral form.

2. Engagement with Every Step of the Way

Through this research we have learned more about how organisations have engaged and worked with Every Step of the Way (ESOW), seeking to better understand what has gone well and where there have been challenges. As part of this, we explored why some organisations have not engaged with ESOW and whether anything would make this more likely in the future to inform ongoing delivery.

Good practice in engagement

Experts, Involvement Champions and ESOW staff speaking at local forums and network meetings was found to be effective in letting services know about ESOW and its offer, and this was often how external opportunities had developed. For example, one external partner had found out about ESOW at a Department for Work and Pensions partnership meeting, and they found the expert who presented to be inspiring.

"They were there to give a perspective from clients with complex needs point of view – they shared their story in the context of Universal Credit, they talked about some of the ways they had found to manage the complexities of the UC system...and she was absolutely fantastic, really inspirational." (External partner)

Another method that had worked well to increase engagement with ESOW was when organisations were informed about it by individuals with whom they had a good working relationship with and trusted. For example, one No Wrong Door organisation that worked with ESOW had learnt about it from an ex-colleague who was working at BVSC. Another individual had previously worked with a BVSC staff member to include lived experience voice in a project, which led to them getting in touch.

Engagement challenges

The main issue that became apparent was confusion about how organisations could work with ESOW and what their offer was. Some interviewees explained that they had attended meetings where experts or Involvement Champions provided an update on recent activities but did not say anything about potential opportunities and how they could contribute. Respondents suggested that there should be explicit information about how ESOW can support organisations going forward to improve awareness of the offer and encourage greater partnership working with ESOW.

"Maybe even do a half an hour briefing session or something like that reminding us what they're here for and what they're doing at the moment." (Core Group member)

Another barrier identified was that the types of meetings where ESOW is discussed are often attended by senior leaders and middle management, so the necessary information might not reach frontline staff, such as involvement coordinators, who would be well placed to engage with ESOW.

"I think it's a real challenge because where these groups are usually talked about and discussed are probably more sort of middle, senior management circles and it's about making sure that there is a route within individual organisations to trickle that down and

making sure connections are being made directly with the ESOW work." (Core Group member)

Experts and Involvement Champions also discussed the low awareness amongst organisations involved in Birmingham Changing Futures Together and wanted to increase understanding and connection with both Core Group members and No Wrong Door organisations. Covid-19 made this more challenging as organisations had been focusing on addressing the impact of the pandemic.

"We need to advertise ESOW better to No Wrong Door organisations." (Expert by Experience)

Some experts and Involvement Champions suggested the need for ESOW to be more proactive in identifying where they could support local organisations and in building relationships with potential partners.

"There is a lack of wider little conversations and getting to know people and organisations." (Expert by Experience)

"We're not very good at identifying the gaps, and when we know about it, we don't act." (Expert by Experience)

Despite low awareness, many organisations that had not partnered with ESOW recognised the potential benefits of doing so and were interested in how that could happen in practice.

"I don't think it's useful for any organisation to work in silo – so I think where those functions cut across a range of services, there are real opportunities to work together – it's finding a way to do that." (Core Group Member)

How organisations have worked with Every Step of the Way

Experts and Involvement Champions have continued to be involved in a range of different opportunities with several organisations in Birmingham, and nationally through their involvement in the National Experts Citizens Group (NECG).³

"Stuff has been so varied; we've been involved in some brilliant opportunities." (Expert by Experience)

National opportunities

Throughout 2020 the NECG have collaborated with Public Health England and been partners in shaping the Dame Carol Black Review. Dame Carol Black attended the September national NECG meeting to hear members' views on drug policy in the UK and what changes in policy were needed to improve the system. An Involvement Champion involved in the NECG also sat on a House of Lords panel as the voice of lived experience on this issue.

"I felt privileged to sit there as an expert and give my feedback." (Expert by Experience)

³ The National Experts Citizens Group is the lived experience representative group for people using services in the Fulfilling Lives programme.

Furthermore, experts and Involvement Champions who are part of the NECG contributed to a research report about how Covid-19 had improved services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage;⁴ have worked with the Ministry of Justice to improve understanding of the support people need when making the transition back to the community after prison; supported a public campaign to increase awareness around support needs for people leaving prison; and helped to raise awareness of issues such as the need for services to be more accommodating for women facing multiple disadvantage and problematic drinking.

Lastly, the NECG are currently helping to shape the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government-led Changing Futures Programme through inputting into the evaluation feasibility study and commissioning decisions.⁵

Local opportunities

Experts and Involvement Champions have recently begun working with Ernst & Young (EY) to support the development of their Early Prevention Programme. This seven-week programme aims to take a creative approach to introduce marginalised groups to entrepreneurialism and the world of work, largely through working with young people in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and schools in special measures in the West Midlands. Experts and involvement champions have supported with the development of the syllabus being covered on the programme whilst also raising awareness of the issues young people experiencing multiple disadvantage face and helping organisations to think about prevention.

As part of this, experts and Involvement Champions have worked with EY to create videos and share their stories on social media platforms. It is hoped that members will be able to go and speak to young people in schools/PRUs in June 2021.

Another activity that experts and Involvement Champions were involved in was supporting a No Wrong Door organisation, Big Issue, with their awareness raising and marketing activity. This involved reviewing their marketing materials and information being provided to prospective vendors and providing their feedback on how it could be made more suitable and accessible for the audience.

"I told them what we did, showed them a couple of our street marketing materials so the kind of thing I would give to someone on the street and gave them the spiel I would give...and get their feedback, what do you think about it? That was quite enlightening, and we actually used some of the feedback from that initial meeting." (No Wrong Door organisation)

Since then, experts and Involvement Champions have supported the Big Issue to develop a member's forum using a coffee morning format, to get all the vendors together; and they

⁴ Flipped, turned upside down: How Covid-19 improved services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. See http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/file/2515/download?token=94D5ZWfm.

⁵ Funded for an initial two years through the government's Shared Outcomes Fund, Changing Futures is a £46 million cross-government programme to help adults across England facing multiple disadvantage.

worked with ESOW to get the experts' perspectives on how Big Issue operates to improve the experience for vendors and staff through a mystery shopping exercise.

As previously mentioned, many peer mentors had been involved in ESOW previously. This was felt to work well because it provided a progression pathway, supported recruitment processes and created a good link between the two programmes.

"We employed a peer mentor and then through Every Step of the Way we put some support in place in partnership with that programme and did some training." (Core Group member)

"Trying to support some of clients to get involved with Every Step of the Way and look at that as a route to support them on their recovery." (Core Group member)

Experts were also involved in the development of a Charter of Rights to make individuals in supported accommodation aware of their housing rights and the support available, led by Spring Housing Association and Birmingham City Council. As part of this, experts and Involvement Champions working with BCFT (both through ESOW and the Inreach Outreach programme⁶) participated in workshops to develop the document and corresponding guidance, and experts and Involvement Champions joined a focus group with residents about experiences of exempt housing.

"It was a critical friend role really, reminding us that this is about the residents...they were absolutely fantastic..." (External partner)

Lastly, experts have been invited to sit on recruitment panels with several organisations including St Basil's, Shelter, BVSC and Birmingham Mind to provide their opinion and support with identifying staff that they feel could work well with individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Case study – Citizens Advice Birmingham

Every Step of the Way have been working with Citizens Advice Birmingham over the past year, to support them to work effectively with clients experiencing multiple disadvantage who are claiming Universal Credit. This issue was something that the organisation was already working to address; finding out about ESOW provided an additional resource to deliver what they wanted.

"It was a real opportunity for us as an organisation to understand what it's like to be on the receiving end of the sorts of services that we offer and if you're struggling and you've got multiple complex issues going on in your life, what sort of challenges might you face that could make accessing services difficult. It was awareness raising for us."

The partnership began before Covid-19 and the resulting restrictions, so experts were able to go into the Citizens Advice Birmingham office and speak about their experiences and the need to better understand the challenges faced by people with complex needs when

⁶ Through Inreach Outreach, staff with lived experience are trained to go out to "crisis point" organisations to reach out to clients experiencing multiple disadvantage that might otherwise fall through the gaps in the system and refer them into No Wrong Door.

claiming Universal Credit. This worked well to create organisational buy-in and raise awareness of the issues at hand.

"We had a few [experts] come into the office to share their experience with team members, and it was really from there that everybody thought – you know what – this would be a good partnership... just listening to their stories made a massive impact, not only on myself but other advisors and managers – seeing it from their perspective and what challenges they faced in terms of trying to get help, from anyone"

The aim was for experts to become peer mentors at Citizens Advice Birmingham to provide additional support to clients experiencing complex needs, especially when they are waiting for their first Universal Credit payment to come through.

"Clients will have someone to talk to who gets it, and who knows what works..."

Unfortunately, the pandemic stalled progress between March and June. Three experts received training and inductions over the summer, before another lockdown was introduced. However, Citizens Advice Birmingham and ESOW tried to remain engaged with experts and identified ways that they could work together remotely in the interim. This has included projects such as work to map out local mental health services, so there could be more effective information and signposting, and a research project with local banks to find out about requirements and the documents needed to open a bank account if someone is homeless. They also kept in touch through video calls and shared internal communications such as newsletters, which helped to maintain engagement.

The individuals who have received the training have now progressed to employment – a positive outcome for the individuals concerned, but a challenge with the programme in terms of continuity and resourcing. However, Citizens Advice Birmingham hope to continue working with ESOW when the restrictions ease. Staff discussed the potential of the partnership. They hope to support people with lived experience to become peer mentors to support clients with issues such as opening bank accounts and attending tribunals – activities that staff rarely have the time to do.

Overall, ESOW have continued to seek out a range of one-off and longer-term opportunities for experts and Involvement Champions. However, it is not clear whether there are quality control processes in place to ensure that activities present genuine opportunities for co-production and strategic influence.⁷

⁷ Since the report was written ESOW have introduced a process to assess whether an opportunity is viable in the amount of time remaining, the system change that would take place and/or whether it has a personal development area for the experts.

3. Understanding of Every Step of the Way

This section explores understanding of the aims of Every Step of the Way (ESOW) and how ESOW works amongst services in Birmingham.

Organisational understanding

Our previous research identified that the ESOW brand was not clearly defined and that this lack of brand awareness risked limiting opportunities for those involved. For example, many stakeholders previously interviewed did not remember that ESOW had supplied the Experts by Experience for their opportunity.

Recent discussions have highlighted that understanding remains limited and that brand awareness is still low amongst many organisations in Birmingham, including Core Group members and No Wrong Door organisations. Many organisations that had not worked with ESOW had little or no understanding of the service, what it did and how their organisation could work with experts.

"I've heard of it at a meeting, but I'm not clear what it is." (Core Group member)

Furthermore, organisations that had previously worked with ESOW admitted that they had forgotten about this.

"It's almost sort of slipped of my radar to be honest – I've forgotten it's there..." (Core Group member)

It is worth noting that this research was conducted during a time of significant disruption to service delivery as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which evidently changed organisational focus and impacted the progress of wider initiatives such as ESOW.

One thing that became apparent was the confusion between ESOW and the Lead Worker Peer Mentor (LWPM) programme that ran between 2015 and 2019 to support people with at least three of the four complex needs to navigate services. Several interviewees referenced peer mentors when they were asked about their understanding of ESOW.

"I'm very aware of the Lead Worker Peer Mentor work, but I wasn't aware of Every Step of the Way. I don't think there is good awareness of it at [organisation]." (Core Group member)

There are likely to be different reasons for this. Firstly, there have been several communication activities around the Lead Worker Peer Mentor programme and its continuation strategy in recent months, including a webinar series, the launch of an animated film and a podcast series. Therefore, it is unsurprising that this programme had good awareness amongst research participants: BCFT has focused on raising awareness of LWPM and its impact. Furthermore, there was crossover between ESOW and the Lead Worker Peer Mentor programme. Engagement and development workers from Birmingham Mind who worked with experts also supported peer mentors with their professional development and some experts progressed to become peer mentors.

"When LWPM ended – we connected, rightly or wrongly, LWPM with ESOW – so it became unclear to me what the role was of Every Step of the Way, what was is that they would continue to be doing." (Core Group member)

A respondent also reflected that the phrase Every Step of the Way does not explicitly say what the programme does, and they wondered whether a clearer title would have helped to reduce such confusion.

Where organisations had worked with ESOW, they saw it as an opportunity to include the lived experience voice in service design and/or delivery and ensure that their offer was suitable for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

"It's about getting the message out there to other organisations about what it means to have complex needs." (External partner)

Staff turnover was also felt to have impacted understanding of ESOW. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, because individuals attending the Core Group had changed over time and secondly because staff working on the ESOW programme at Birmingham Mind had changed quite noticeably in 2020/21, impacting programme momentum. For example, a new manager and two new Engagement and Development workers joined whilst Covid-19 restrictions were in place.

Expert by Experience understanding

Understanding was also low amongst some of the experts and Involvement Champions. Some expressed confusion about the purpose of ESOW and explained that they sometimes were unclear on how they could contribute to meetings that they were invited to. Training around co-production and a framework for how ESOW approach this was suggested to help with this.

"It took me a long time to figure out what experts did." (Expert by Experience)

"It's hard to speak sometimes – I didn't know what to say, I didn't know what was of interest..." (Expert by Experience)

Experts and Involvement Champions emphasised three main things, which are interlinked, when discussing their purpose. The first was the objective of passing on their own views and experiences to services to inform decision making. As part of this, they wanted to increase understanding of the barriers people experiencing multiple disadvantage face when trying to access and remain engaged with services.

"It's an opportunity to gain experience and work with other organisations." (Expert by Experience)

"Experts by experience have a specific focus on complex needs [that are] interconnected." (Expert by Experience)

Finally, experts and Involvement Champions were passionate about improving services and systems for people experiencing multiple disadvantage in Birmingham and more widely.

"Using lived experience and co-production to make sustainable systems change for people with complex needs." (Expert by Experience)

4. Outcomes and impact: for organisations

Organisations that participated in the research and had worked with Every Step of the Way (ESOW) acknowledged several benefits of the partnership, but there was limited evidence of whether and how ESOW had achieved long-term systematic change.

Improving organisational understanding of people facing multiple disadvantage

Firstly, they highlighted the benefits of having an opportunity to get the perspective of individuals with lived experience and learn about the issues that people experiencing multiple disadvantage are facing when trying to access support.

"It was really interesting feedback. It's something that when you're in the thick of it, you don't, you can't see that [perspective]." (BCFT partner)

Experts have also supported organisations and individuals to better understand the support needs of people experiencing a combination of issues including homelessness, substance use and mental-ill health through speaking at events and meetings. This included:

- at a Housing First conference, where an expert spoke about the help that people experiencing homelessness are looking for;
- in a presentation to work coaches at Jobcentre Plus about how to effectively work with people experiencing multiple disadvantage; and
- at Justice Network meetings, where experts provided feedback on topics such as money and housing to key decision makers.

In addition, ESOW members discussing their work and learning at Core Group meetings was considered to be important in reminding partners of the importance of lived experience involvement in services working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

"Bringing people back down to earth. Reminding systems leaders of the principles and importance of lived experience involvement." (BCFT partner)

Making services more accessible to people with multiple needs

As well as raising awareness of the experiences of people with multiple disadvantage, working with ESOW also helped organisations to adjust their delivery so that it can be suitable and purposeful.

"They have a level of cultural competency in regard to youth culture.... [and] have helped to add colour to our objectives and make the programme more realistic and impactful." (External partner)

For example, when Big Issue were getting feedback about their marketing materials, an expert explained that they did not know that people who were not homeless could sell the Big Issue. Experts and Involvement Champions therefore suggested making this clearer on future leaflets being distributed. As a result, the phrase 'Everyone Welcome' was added, and is still being used on new outputs.

As a result of involving people with lived experience in the development of the Charter of Rights, the language used in the outputs was felt to be more accessible. Furthermore, there was an initial idea to include a QR code on the charter that people could scan their phone over to obtain additional information. However, experts highlighted that many people in supported accommodation are unlikely to have access to a smart phone, which led to this being removed.

Some ESOW members were also involved in the governance structures at Birmingham Mind, such as through the strategic service user group, which involved reviewing key organisational policies and developing products such as leaflets and surveys.

Providing a pool of lived experience volunteers/employees

A benefit of experts involved in ESOW becoming peer mentors on the Lead Worker Peer Mentor programme was that the programme had a pool of suitable people that they could recruit from. A respondent commented that the programme benefited from these individual' knowledge of the wider objectives of Birmingham Changing Futures Together and their ability to work in professional settings.

"Every Step of the Way instilled the systems change ideology in peer mentors. They were prepared and they were more willing to share their views in a professional context." (BCFT partner)

19 per cent of experts (35 individuals) have entered employment, and some started roles with partner organisations. Hence, experts have been able to bring their experience and knowledge to services supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Going forward, Birmingham Mind will be supporting experts to make the transition away from ESOW, considering their interests, training needs and available employment and/or volunteering opportunities. Annex 3 has more detail on how experts are going to be supported.

5. Outcomes and impact: for individuals involved

Experts and Involvement Champions discussed many different benefits of being involved in ESOW, both emotionally and practically. As previous research about ESOW has found, overall experts involved in the programme were positive about their experiences and the difference this has made.

In total, 35 experts entered paid employment when they were part of ESOW. This represents nearly a fifth of all experts (19 per cent).

Professional development

One key benefit for individuals involved in ESOW was the opportunity to meet professionals and learn about other services in Birmingham. Many experts spoke about having a 'voice' and feeling 'worthwhile'; the opportunities that they had participated in had helped to give them new skills and make them more employable. Consequently, some experts said that they now felt able to look for work.

"I've learnt so much about what other organisations do – meeting all these incredible people – movers and shakers...I never thought I'd get the chance to speak to the House of Lords." (Expert by Experience)

"It has been an opportunity to walk into room as an equal" (Expert by Experience)

It was also apparent that experts and Involvement Champions had felt empowered to make suggestions to organisations about how they could work together and support delivery because of their confidence and knowledge of the local delivery landscape.

Structure and routine

Another benefit discussed was the structure and routine that ESOW had given experts. This was felt to be particularly important in helping experts to avoid negative behaviours and thoughts. They were grateful to have an 'active and full' diary and to have different opportunities to keep them busy.

"Really nice to be busy...to be up and out." (Expert by Experience)

"Structure to my day...coming from addiction background...if I'm sitting round all day my mind wonders." (Expert by Experience)

Personal benefits

Many personal benefits were also highlighted, including experts reframing their previous experiences as a positive that has enabled them to help others, rather than viewing their past as a problem. They felt that they were able use their experiences to support others going through similar situations at present.

"It's being valued – I used to see past as a massive hinderance – it wasn't until ESOW, I realised it could turn round." (Expert by Experience)

"By talking about our own experiences we're trying to help others going through it – we're giving back." (Expert by Experience)

As a result of the opportunities provided and things that they had learnt, experts spoke about now feeling more confident and having increased self-worth. Some also felt that they were now more mature and better able to speak about themselves.

"It's given me confidence and self-worth." (Expert by Experience)

"I've grown up a bit...it's made me more into an adult." (Expert by Experience)

The opportunity to meet peers and develop positive relationships was also valued. Experts were grateful for the support they had received from one another, both personally and professionally. For example, an expert explained that they had learnt from other experts and how they approached situations. Another described the group as a 'bit of a family'.

"Friends that are not all drug addicts – a network of loads of different people, with similar backgrounds." (Expert by Experience)

6. Delivery challenges

Research respondents also spoke about the challenges they had faced and/or barriers that remained which were felt to prevent Every Step of the Way (ESOW) from being more successful and having greater impact.

Staff turnover

As previously mentioned, staff turnover, both internally at Birmingham Mind and amongst current and potential partner organisations, was recognised as a factor that had delayed progress. Many experts spoke about their frustrations with the staff at Birmingham Mind regularly changing, and staff leaving after they had developed good relationships.

"There's been lots of staff change..." (Expert by Experience)

"You build up trust and a relationship and then they leave." (Expert by Experience)

The programme ending in the near future was seen as a reason for this, and a few experts felt that staff were focused on finding a new job, which took their attention away from developing ESOW.

"Staff are distracted – they're thinking about their futures as the programme is winding down – so there's been lots of turnover." (Expert by Experience)

Staff changes at Birmingham Mind were also referenced by some partners working with ESOW. It made it harder to keep in touch with the programme and progress developing partnerships had stalled. An example was given of a staff member working with an external organisation to address data sharing issues but having to start again when this individual left.

Staff turnover across different organisations was also felt to prevent some opportunities from being realised, as individuals leading on an activity or service would change posts.

"Opportunities start with good intentions but don't finish." (Expert by Experience)

Covid-19

The restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic changed how ESOW could work with organisations. It also meant that services had to focus on addressing the immediate needs resulting from pandemic, sometimes taking attention away from lived experience involvement and systems change. For example, NHS and criminal justice system partners involved in Core Group had been unable to attend recent meetings because of organisational pressures and commitments amid the pandemic.

The main change was that due to social distancing restrictions, experts could only meet online and activity with other organisations had to take place remotely. Experts were grateful that some activity was able to continue online but commented on the struggles of participating in meetings at home and missing the social interaction that came with inperson activities.

"Zoom have been brilliant in a way but I thrive on interaction. It's not the same as getting up, getting in the shower, going out, getting to a meeting, interacting and getting to know people and reflecting." (Expert by Experience)

Some participants desired more support with technology and IT skills, and one expert described the number of emails they were receiving as 'overwhelming.' This is an issue that Birmingham Mind have since tried to address.

The pandemic and restrictions also delayed some of the work that organisations were doing with ESOW, such as experts going into organisations to volunteer.

"It [Covid-19] truncated our relationship with experts too – it was just coming to a point where we were starting to have ideas, we were meeting up, we scheduled one of the guys to come in as a volunteer." (No Wrong Door organisation)

"After lockdown it was very, very hard to keep that thread and make sure we could continue to keep people aware of what was happening," (External partner)

Feedback loop

Linked to the above quote about the difficulty of keeping experts aware of what was happening, a frustration amongst experts was not always being updated about what happened next on a project that they contributed to, or the longer-term impact of their involvement. This led to some experts feeling as if their involvement was a 'tick-box' exercise and led to guestions about whether anything was being achieved.

"You don't hear about it ever again...we don't know if there have been significant changes at organisations." (Expert by Experience)

"Feedback doesn't always filter down to Experts by Experience." (Expert by Experience)

This issue was identified in the 2019 Revolving Doors research about ESOW where experts struggled to discuss the impact of their work on the wider system. It appears that the suggestion for a feedback loop as a tool to revisit opportunities and track impact remains relevant and necessary.

Co-production

Co-production is an extension of service user involvement, or an organisation involving service users in the planning, management, delivery or evaluation of its services.⁸ It describes delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours.⁹

An issue that emerged was in relation to the extent to which experts felt that they had been able to take part in activities in a properly co-produced way. Some experts suggested that staff supporting them needed to know more about co-production and buy in to its need in service design and delivery in order for the experts to be able to take this approach forward with wider organisations. This topic is now included in ESOW staff inductions.

"Need to understand theory of co-production and then know how this can be successfully put into practice, and you need staff with receptiveness to learn about this." (Expert by Experience)

⁸ Clinks (2016), Service User Involvement and Co-production

⁹ New Economics Foundation (2010), Right Here, Right Now

"There has been a lack of support with co-production, due to limited knowledge of engagement workers, rather than deep and rich understanding." (Expert by Experience)

Experts referenced meetings that had 'no co-production anywhere' and thought that having a co-production model or framework that they could take to organisations would help to address this and challenge misconceptions about how to do co-production well. They also desired support so that they could 'call out' bad practice.

An external partner highlighted that doing co-production well and remaining engaged with experts was resource intensive so questioned whether organisations who are currently over-stretched and under-resourced would be able to do this effectively.

"Co-production takes a lot of commitment...I had the time to be able to work in this way...I wonder if cash-, time-, resource-strapped organisations can [do this]." (External partner)

Legacy

With around 12 months remaining of ESOW, experts were concerned about the legacy of the programme and what would happen next. They did not want all the learning and good practice to get lost and desired more support to think about what next.

"I don't want to be a fad...I don't want the last eight years of work to be flushed down the toilet." (Expert by Experience)

"What is going to happen when the money runs out? ESOW doesn't feel part of legacy conversations." (Expert by Experience)

An exit plan has been put in place to support the transition of experts away from ESOW into employment and volunteering opportunities in Birmingham as the programme reaches its conclusion (see Annex 3 for more detail).

Additional challenges

Experts felt that the work they did was more focused towards organisations based in Birmingham and expressed frustration with the perceived geographical limitations of where they could work. They referenced a couple of opportunities that they thought had stalled or been slow to progress because they were outside of Birmingham.

Birmingham Mind also acknowledged that it could be challenging to keep experts engaged in the programme as it winded down because they may start thinking about different opportunities.

Finally, there were challenges around processes that needed to be in place to support effective partnerships. One was around data sharing issues and organisations having a secure way to share information with experts who were supporting service delivery and clients; the second was around experts being able to access technology to continue partnership working during Covid-19. There were delays with getting these things sorted which limited how much experts were able to engage.

7. Wider service user involvement activity in Birmingham

The research aimed to better understand how organisations are working to involve people accessing services in Birmingham, and whether ESOW was seen as unique compared to existing activity.

Existing activity

Service user forums

Several organisations that took part in the research had service user forums where they brought together people who were accessing their services to get their feedback and ideas for how activities could be improved, as well as to learn more about the challenges they were experiencing.

"You need a range of perspectives and to learn from past experiences..." (Core Group member)

As with ESOW, organisations had faced difficulties with engagement as a result of Covid-19. Some activity had been able to continue remotely but not everyone involved had the means to take part in this way.

Qualitative research activity

Another way that organisations have obtained feedback from people accessing their services has been through more formal research activity to learn more about views and experiences. For example, a supported accommodation provider recently conducted research with residents to inform the development of their organisational strategy. Similarly, a national charity involved individuals in Birmingham in polling activity that aimed to get feedback on accessing support to inform service improvement.

Volunteering and progression opportunities

Many organisations supporting individuals experiencing multiple disadvantage in Birmingham offer volunteer roles to people who have previously accessed their services, as well as more formal roles such as peer mentors, recovery motivators and navigators. Benefits identified included supporting people to upskill and develop their confidence and self-esteem, alongside clients being able to receive support from and interact with people who understood their situation.

"[Peer support] brings a mutually beneficial relationship...a role model." (Core Group member)

Awareness raising activity

Lastly, some organisations involve people accessing their services in awareness raising and campaigning activity, either through ad-hoc opportunities or more formal ambassador roles. This helps to include the lived experience voice in activity and provides real examples of the issues that people experiencing multiple disadvantage face.

How ESOW can add value to existing activities

Some research respondents emphasised that ESOW needs to be able to show how their offer is different to what is being done already, or how they can add value to existing activity. Some respondents felt that their organisation is already able to gather the perspective of people with experience of multiple disadvantage. They explained that despite their organisation being focused on a specific issue, such as homelessness or substance use, individuals accessing their service rarely face an issue in isolation and, therefore, are often experiencing a combination of interrelated needs.

Statutory services in the criminal justice system were felt to be risk averse when it came to lived experience involvement, and a respondent explained that they are more likely to work with individuals with whom they had an established relationship, rather than external partners. However, there is appetite amongst the experts for working with statutory providers. Experts wanted to do more work with organisations such as NHS England, adult social services and the magistrates courts.

It is apparent that ESOW can make a distinction between how experts work with organisations who have a good understanding of multiple disadvantage and different means of engaging with this group, and organisations who might not. For example, for external organisations and Core Group members that are statutory organisations, ESOW can play an important role in improving understanding of how to engage and support people experiencing multiple disadvantage appropriately through co-production activities. Whereas, for No Wrong Door organisations and other Core Group members ESOW can play a more strategic role through sharing learning and encouraging organisations to take a more joined up approach to supporting people with multiple disadvantage and service user involvement activities. ESOW are uniquely placed to help organisations to think about their role in the Birmingham Changing Future Programme and wider systems in Birmingham and identify opportunities for positive change.

8. Conclusion and suggested improvements

This report has summarised the findings from research that aimed to learn more about how lived experience involvement is challenging and changing systems in Birmingham and improving services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage, through Every Step of Way. As part of this we have sought to understand how the service is understood and what has enabled or prevented engagement, as well as the impact that ESOW has had, both on the experts involved and the organisations working with the experts.

Where organisations have partnered with ESOW they have had largely positive experiences and tangible outcomes have been identified. Experts have also had the chance to influence national policy and programmes through the National Experts Citizens Group and could identify a range of personal and professional benefits stemming from their involvement in the service. 19 per cent of experts went on to find paid employment.

Despite many organisations in Birmingham recognising the value of working with individuals with lived experience, engagement with the ESOW service remains low, including amongst No Wrong Door organisations and Core Group members. Staff turnover and Covid-19 were the most significant factors hindering delivery, but it was positive to see how organisations have tried to continue working with experts remotely.

To address the challenges identified and ensure that the final year of delivery is as successful as possible we recommend the following:

Awareness raising

1. Establish clear service offer that can be used when raising awareness of ESOW.

To remove confusion about ESOW and make it easier to promote the service, experts and staff should work together to establish a clear description of what they do, how they can support other organisations in Birmingham and the impact that this can have. As part of this, descriptions of ESOW in marketing materials and other outputs needs to be consistent. At present ESOW is described differently on the BVSC and Birmingham Mind websites.

Some research respondents suggested that a simple offer and marketing ESOW as 'one thing' would help to avoid uncertainty and prevent key messages from getting lost. Experts felt that they would benefit from a framework to help to guide how they can work with other organisations. As discussed in the report, ESOW can play two distinct roles: one with external organisations and statutory services that are part of BCFT to raise awareness of experiences of people experiencing multiple disadvantage and improve support offers; and the other with BCFT organisations that are more familiar with this client group, to think about partnership approaches and sustainable systems change.

2. Seek out partnership opportunities with existing service user involvement activity and target awareness raising activity at delivery staff, including involvement leads.

A limitation identified through the research was that information about ESOW is not always reaching the right people in organisations. ESOW needs to target service user involvement leads and other staff who are passionate about service user involvement and who could link up their existing internal work with ESOW. One option could be experts

and Involvement Champions hosting an ongoing conversation with involvement leads in Birmingham to share good practice and learning, and identify opportunities where they could add value.

3. Identify (online and in person) forums and network meetings that ESOW and the offer can be discussed and include experts and Involvement Champions in such activity.

Speaking about ESOW at different networks and forums has worked well to raise awareness of ESOW and develop partnerships with external organisations. Staff and experts should continue to seek out such opportunities to discuss their work and offer with a range of different relevant organisations. Furthermore, experts should be involved in such opportunities as they will be able to share their experiences whilst also demonstrating their capabilities and enthusiasm.

4. Use case studies to demonstrate how ESOW has worked with organisations.

Many interviewees felt that case studies worked well to show potential partners how ESOW has worked with organisations and the benefits and impact of this. It was also felt that case studies are helpful to demonstrate how challenges are overcome. Different types of case studies that show how ESOW has worked with third sector organisations, private sector companies and statutory services was also suggested to reach a broader audience.

Successful partnership working

5. Establish clear processes that can be quickly implemented when new opportunities arise (e.g., data sharing).

There were examples of partnership opportunities being delayed because systems and processes were not in place to enable experts to work with organisations remotely. Experts would benefit from devices being available for them to be able to participate in online meetings. There needs to be consideration of how organisations share sensitive information with experts securely to enable them to support delivery. This will be particularly important if working with statutory services who are likely to have specific requirements on areas such as data sharing when working with external partners.

Creating and tracking impact

6. Ensure that there is a feedback loop that captures the impact of Every Step of the Way.

As previously highlighted in research in 2018/19, understanding the impact of Every Step of the Way on organisations and the wider system is important for the service and experts, but also the wider BCFT programme and its systems change objectives. The feedback loop should be a tool that revisits individual opportunities on a regular basis to capture how (or if) individual opportunities have changed services, policies and/or the system. This will also help with learning about what works well to generate change and what is preventing this.

7. Seek out high-quality opportunities for experts and Involvement Champions to strategically influence organisations and the wider system to support Birmingham Changing Futures Together achieve its systems change priorities.

ESOW should be ambitious about the role that they can play in the last year of the programme to increase the likelihood of achieving long-term sustainable change in the design and delivery of services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

As previously recommended quality controlling potential opportunities to consider the ability of ESOW to impact on the system would be beneficial to support this. Experts also desired opportunities to work with statutory services who have regular contact with people experiencing multiple disadvantage, including NHS England, social care services and the courts.

Annex 1: Topic guide, stakeholder interviews

Introduction to the research

- Thanks for agreeing to talk to us today. Revolving Doors are currently completing an
 evaluation of Birmingham Changing Futures Together. As part of this we are finding out
 more about how Every Step of the Way has been implemented as experienced by others; to
 learn lessons about what works well in lived experience involvement, and to identify the
 longer-term impacts of this in how services and design and delivered in Birmingham.
- Our role in this evaluation is to gather the honest and genuine views of those involved.
 There are no right or wrong answers, we are just interested in your views and experiences.
- It will probably take 40 minutes, depending on how much you have to say but we can take a break whenever needed.
- Our conversation is confidential, we will anonymise any quotes that we use in reports.
- Do you mind if we record this conversation so that we can remember everything that you tell us? Recordings will be kept securely and deleted when no longer needed.

Overview

- 1. Can you tell me a bit about your current role and responsibilities?
- 2. Has [organisation] worked with Every Step of the Way before? If so:
 - a) When was this?
 - b) Overview of type of engagement
- 3. Has your organisation involved people with lived experience in the design and delivery of services before? If so, how?

Views of Every Step of the Way

- 4. What is your understanding of Every Step of the Way? How would you describe ESOW to someone who did not know about the programme?
- 5. Do you think there is a good understanding and awareness of ESOW in Birmingham? Why/ why not?
 - a) How did you / your organisation find out about it?
 - b) Do you have any suggestions for how awareness and understanding can be improved so that more services incorporate Experts by Experience in their work?
 - c) [If relevant] Do you think there is anything that Core Group / No Wrong Door organisations could do to support and increase engagement with ESOW?
- 6. Do you think anything makes ESOW unique compared to [your internal service-user group/other service-user groups] in Birmingham?

Working with Every Step of the Way

If engaged with ESOW [check notes in advance of how to make specific reference when probing]:

- 7. Can you tell me a bit more about how you have worked with ESOW? *Probe: activities completed, length of involvement, how many members involved etc.*
- 8. Have there been any benefits of working with Every Step of the Way? *Probe: for organisation overall, for clients, for staff etc.*
- 9. Have you found anything particularly challenging or frustrating?
 - a) What was this?

- b) Why did you find it challenging / frustrating?
- c) Was anything done to try and address this?
- 10. Was anything noticeably different to what you expected?
- 11. Did you feel supported to work alongside ESOW? Was there anything else you would have liked?

If not worked with ESOW:

One of the (co-produced) systems change priorities for BCFT was that people who design and deliver services are reflective of the communities they serve. However, several organisations have never used ESOW.

- 12. Are there any particular reasons why [organisation] has not engaged and worked with Every Step of the Way to shape your service design in recent years?
- 13. Is there any kind of support or information that is needed to make this more likely?
- 14. [If not covered] Is there anything you think Core Group/ BCFT can do to ensure that more services include service users when designing provision?
- 15. Do you think that this (people designing and delivering services being reflective of the communities they serve) is still an important systems change priority? Why/ why not? *If yes: how can they support this going forward?*

Impact

If worked with ESOW:

- 16. Has there been any particular outcomes of working with ESOW?
 - a) If yes: did any specific activities or actions led to outcomes
 - b) If no: were there any barriers that prevented this from happening
 - c) Have you been able to share this information back with the ESOW team?
- 17. Do you think that working with ESOW changed your organisations views on lived experience involvement in the design and delivery of services? Why/ why not?

If has own internal service-user group:

- 18. Have there been any outcomes of working with your internal service user group(s)? [If relevant] anything specific to individuals with multiple and complex needs?
- 19. How do you share the learning and outcomes from your internal service user group(s)?
- 20. Has there been any challenges with running this? Have these been overcome? How?
- 21. How do you think ESOW could work more closely with your service user group to support the effective design and delivery of services in Birmingham? Do you think there would be any benefits of this? (E.g., MCN angle, not working separately, avoiding duplication, sharing learning)

Going forward

- 22. Do you think your organisation would involve individuals with lived experience in the design and delivery of services going forward? Why/ why not? *Probe: any examples of how or factors preventing this*
- 23. Is there anything that you think would improve ESOW and make the programme have a greater impact across Birmingham over the final 18 months of delivery?
 - a) [If relevant] How can we get Core Group and NWD organisations that haven't incorporated the EBEs into their service design to do so in the future?
- 24. How do you think learning about the impact of ESOW and lived experience involvement more generally could be shared across Birmingham?
- 25. Anything else not discussed/ had a chance to talk about?

Thanks and close

Annex 2: Topic guide, ESOW members focus group

Provide an overview of the evaluation and why we are doing the focus group.

Explain how information will be used and highlight confidentially. Check whether people are okay to record focus group.

Overview

- 1. Introductions/ Icebreaker
 - Name, how long have you been involved in Every Step of the Way?
- 2. How would you describe Every Step of the Way to someone who did not know about the programme?
 - Do you think anything makes ESOW unique compared to other service-user groups in Birmingham?
 - Do you think there is a good understanding and awareness of ESOW in Birmingham? Why/ why not?
- 3. What would you say the best thing about being involved is/ has been?
- 4. Have you found anything particularly challenging or frustrating?
 - What was this? Why did you find it challenging / frustrating?
 - Was anything done to try and address this?

Recent activities

- 5. What have been the main activities that ESOW has been involved in, in the past year or so?
 - What has gone well?
 - Has anything gone less well?
- 6. What do you think the impact of COVID-19 has been on ESOW and what you wanted to achieve?
 - Any changes you would like to keep post lockdown?
- 7. Have you received any support to participate in ESOW (from Birmingham Mind/BCFT)?
 - Probe: views of this and any suggested improvements

Impact

8. Do you think you have been able to change organisations views on lived experience involvement in the design and delivery of services?

If yes:

- What kinds of organisations?
- What makes you think this? (e.g., evidence of change/ feedback loop)
- How do you think you have done this? (e.g., specific activities leading to outcomes)

If no:

- Has anything in particular prevented this from happening?
- Are there any organisations that have you wanted to work with, but did not?
- 9. Is there anything that you think would improve ESOW and make the programme have a greater impact across Birmingham?
- 10. Anything else not discussed/ had a chance to talk about?

Annex 3: Draft menu of options for individuals making the transition from ESOW

Below is an initial draft of the Menu of Options that Birmingham Mind are developing in collaboration with experts to support individuals make the transition away from ESOW. It will be revised during the project shutdown period, based on feedback and as opportunities arise.

Introduction	The Team will create an overview document detailing the Exit Strategy from ESOW deliverables. This will dovetail the Personal Development Plans, a living document specific to each Expert. The PDPs will support a Menu of Options, that will focus on the present and future needs of each expert. Experts will be heavily involved in all stages of the Exit Strategy, working groups and support groups will lead on the content, support and development areas of all documentation. The needs of the Experts will evolve and change over the final periods of the programme. However, initial ideas for a starter Menu of Options has been detailed below. This list is a first draft.
Employment (Focus on Paid Employment Opportunities for the Experts)	 Potential Options, Networks, Contacts and Areas to Consider: Shaw Trust – Contract IPS joint work (email distribution list for Jobs) Pure Project Roles / Skills Experts have and areas of development Time to Change Combined Authorities' – Employment Roles No Wrong Door Network Justice Network (for other roles) Birmingham Mind Peer Mentor Roles Future funded roles in the network and contacts Fare Share Employability Scheme (other appropriate employability schemes) Offer of DBS Checks (for those who are concerned and put off applying for roles not knowing what may come up)
Volunteer (Focus on non-paid roles internally and externally)	 Volunteer databases / website links BVSC and the subsequent network Peer Mentor / Campaigning roles / Charitable Roles / Lived Experience Roles Networking / NWD Internal Volunteer Co-Ordinator Future funded roles in the network and contacts Being part of campaigning Groups (Time to Change and BSOL Co-Production Group) Mapping Community Development Service – Involved in Events & Workshops

EBE Achievements and Involvement in System Change (Focus on the achievements made within ESOW)	 EBE Certificates Graduation evening – Award Ceremonies Number of System Change made / impact of work delivered Video Profile – they own these videos (talking head) – Video CV
Training / Skills (Focus on the individual need for training and Skills)	 Campaigning Training Public speaking Training IT (Digikck) IT (Internal monthly basic workshop) Presentation Skills Job Focussed – CV Writing / Interview Techniques Social Media Skills Peer Mentor Training System Change Training Safeguarding Boundaries Training Our Internal Training List / Schedule – list of training opportunities Experts can attend Birmingham Mind Online Training Train the Trainer Co-production Training MH First Aid Training Suicide Prevention Training Domestic Violence Training Attending Mind's Internal HR Interview Training Faircroft (Courses) Bramwood (Courses) Future Learn (Training Free but pay for Certificate) Short and Long Term Training Courses Funded
Personal Development and Support (Focus on the support needs of the EBEs. Individual plans that focus on their personal development and goals)	 Goals and Targets (final goals post ESOW) Shadowing Opportunities within Mind and Network (i.e. on the Helpline / CDW Service) Supporting on how to share lived experience (i.e., when it's appropriate, who with, how much to share etc.) Holistic Support Therapeutic Options CBT / Counselling Options End of contract references for Experts (Future Jobs) - (NOTE: who to contact post contract end) Navigator assigned to each expert (singular project) Support in other Mind Areas
TEAM NOTES: Networking	 Partner Organisations – linking in with networks Mail Out / mail distribution lists Newsletters Links in with BVSC (June new funding key dates) Meet ups / meet and greet with providers

(Database of who we link in and contact made)	 Commonwealth Games ESOW Supported Opportunities – Reach out to them to see what Expert Ops they may have
TEAM NOTES: Tools / Subscriptions	 Diaglog+ Tech to support IT Equipment (Link in with IT support campaigns/ShawTrust/NewBigin for equipment)
(Key subs that Experts may need)	



Birmingham Changing Futures Together

138 Digbeth

Birmingham

B5 6DR

T 0121 678 8866

E changingfutures@bvsc.org

W www.changingfuturesbham.co.uk

@BhamCFT



Revolving Doors Agency

South Bank Technopark

90 London Road

London

SE1 6LN

T 020 7407 0747

E admin@revolving-doors.org.uk

W www.revolving-doors.org.uk



In partnership with:





