



Expert Citizens  
CIC

## Portfolio of Positive Practice

Supporting People Experiencing Multiple Disadvantage

A showcase of outstanding practice that provide insight to new ways of working and ideas for systems change



**“Then along came the Expert Citizens. What a vision! What a vision to be a part of! Changing the way things for complex needs in Stoke on Trent are delivered. Helping the person on the street: homeless, mental health, drug and alcohol issues, reoffending and really doing some good”.**

**— Expert Citizen**

2014

## **Acknowledgements**

Expert Citizens C.I.C. would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported with the INSIGHT Conference and Awards past and present. We would also like to express thanks to everyone who has nominated an individual or service that they feel have gone above and beyond and are truly making a difference. Without these nominations, we would not be able to showcase the outstanding practice that occurs nationally and share them in this portfolio for us all to celebrate.

This has been made possible by funding from VOICES through The National Lottery Community Fund.



**Darren Murinas**  
*Chief Executive — Expert Citizens C.I.C.*



**Rachele Hine**  
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# Introduction

Expert Citizens C.I.C. began as volunteers in a citywide partnership of services delivering the Fulfilling Lives: supporting people experiencing multiple needs programme in Stoke-on-Trent. From the very start of project design, we were involved in sharing our experiences and ideas and being part of decision-making processes. We supported the partnership to lead in local systems change by providing insight through our experiences to the barriers, challenges and gaps that people face when experiencing multiple needs. Through this partnership we have developed our skills, knowledge and assets and have now formed our own organisation.

We are a non-profit Community Interest Company established in 2016. All our staff and volunteers have experienced multiple needs – combinations of mental ill-health, homelessness, offending, addiction, domestic violence and poverty. We all have powerful stories to tell and we use these to be a voice for others; to share learning; to reduce stigma; to challenge stereotypes and to provide insight to influence systems change.

As ambassadors of lived experience, we encourage decision-makers to welcome, listen to, learn from and lead with lived experiences so that they are better able to ensure fair and equal access for all and to make our services even better.

Our work to date has featured on BBC, ITV, the Guardian, Huffington Post and across social media.

Expert Citizens C.I.C. offer the following services

- Consultancy
- Guest Speaking
- Research and Evaluation
- Customer Consultation
- Bespoke Learning Opportunities
- Volunteering Opportunities
- INSIGHT<sup>®</sup> Service Evaluation



# National INSIGHT® Awards

Since 2015 Expert Citizens C.I.C. hosts an annual national conference to share learning and to celebrate some of the best examples of professionals from across the country who have worked in new and creative ways to better support people experiencing multiple needs.

The INSIGHT® conference includes Guest Speakers who are national experts and often with lived experience of multiple disadvantage, a marketplace, a learning event and an Awards Ceremony. Leading up to the conference people can nominate colleagues or other people that they know for an Award. Nominations are submitted to Expert Citizens C.I.C. and Staff and volunteers work together to decide what are the best examples and who should win the Awards. At the conference over almost 250 people come together to celebrate the winners and their achievements.



# Purpose

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We believe that the examples included in this guide show that professionals are breaking new ground in supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage. They demonstrate new ways of working that are innovative, creative and inclusive. We have designed the Good Practice Guide to celebrate the achievements of people involved and the differences that the changes have made for customers.

There are a variety of stories included in this guide that have emerged from a diverse range of services and unique circumstances. At the core of these examples are professionals who identified an opportunity to make a change and were resourceful and imaginative in implementing the change. These have resulted in customers experiencing

- More Psychologically Informed Environments
- Sustained Engagement with Services
- Being better understood
- Solution-focused Outcomes
- Accessing services at a time and pace that is right for them
- Asset-based support leading to opportunities to use own skills
- Seeing services through a new and positive lens
- Opportunities to influence service design and delivery as a result of their experiences and insight being valued
- Improved support through effective signposting
- Specialist Advocacy
- Empowerment and Co-production

We are confident you will agree that the examples are outstanding and yet, quite simple to apply in any service. It is important to clarify that most did not require any significant funding or resources. If the ethos of these real cases is included in service design, policies, procedures and practice, people experiencing multiple needs would have more positive experiences and services better outcomes. Hence, we should all remember that small change can lead to systems change.

Our hope is that you can use and share this guide as an inspiration to become change-makers within your own service.



# Outstanding Practice Examples

A collection of INSIGHT® Award Nominations and Winners

The contents of this section provide real stories of professionals who have made changes in their role or organisation that clearly demonstrate what works well in supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage as measured against the INSIGHT® standards. All organisations and individuals included in this section have been nominated for or have received an INSIGHT® Award at our previous national conferences.



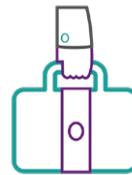
The Welcoming Award is presented to individuals or services who have demonstrated that they warmly welcome people with multiple disadvantage; encouraging participation with positive engagement that focuses on the assets and aspirations of people in need and not making judgements based on historical experiences.



# Welcoming People Award

## Ben Wood

Work Coach,  
Department of Work and Pensions



Work and Pensions

When Ben joined the DWP, he recognised the opportunity to use learning from his own lived experience for the benefit of others.

Ben had previously been the victim of several mental and serious physical assaults and recognised the importance of providing reassurance to people in creating a safe environment. Ben organised for every desk in the Job Centre to have a small LGBT flag to help people from the LGBT community feel welcome. During Pride week, Ben arranged for 100 DWP staff to hear people's stories through local people and organisations. Ben bravely told colleagues of his own difficult experiences. He then arranged for a display featuring information about local LGBT services in the Job Centre. He is now rolling out this learning to other offices across his area.

Ben's warm welcome is truly reaching far and wide.



## Why this works well

It is not uncommon for people to feel as though they may not be welcome in a service due to stigma and stereotyping that they may have experienced; by adding a visual symbol for people to see they can be provided with reassurance that they are not only welcome, but that they will not be judged. Something as simple as this can be the difference in a person engaging effectively with a service from the moment they arrive and contributing to trusting the professional to support them in the best way possible.



Expert Citizens C.I.C. received numerous nominations for officers from Staffordshire Police, making it difficult to distinguish between them; such was the strength of the response that Expert Citizens felt that this reflected a wider culture of welcoming and joint working to help people with multiple disadvantage. Below are just a few of the examples received.

## Welcoming new ways of working

Two officers that took the time to work with a Solution Focused Practitioner in relation to the most appropriate means of engaging with an individual that had come to their attention in a local town centre. They took an active part in coaching for a psychologically informed intervention and applied their learning in their actions with the individual.

## Welcoming partners

VOICES Service Coordinators were invited to work with colleagues on a Staffordshire Police Operation: it was felt that there may be people in need of help and support at the location. By having Service Coordinators at the scene, and then later in the Custody Suite, the Police ensured that the safety and wellbeing of people involved was at the forefront of the operation. This also enabled immediate access to the specialist knowledge of the Service Coordinators in supporting people in traumatic situations and having the knowledge of services that could be accessed to provide help and support.

Staffordshire Police have also worked in partnership with VOICES to ensure that support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage is taken to where people are located; Service Coordinators have shadowed on police shifts, in particular, early morning when people who are rough sleeping can be seen and approached to offer support.



## Why this works well

Through welcoming new ways of working and the learning from a specialist, police officers were better able to understand the needs and, more importantly, the behaviours of the person involved. By adapting their approach, they changed the environment for the person and the ethos of their intervention, thus instilling trust and creating a solution-focused outcome.

Taking a service to a person can save a lot of time and can mean the difference between a person accessing or not accessing support.

# Listening to People Award



The Listening to people award is presented to individuals or services who have demonstrated that, in supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage, they have acted on feedback and conversations that have provided lived experience insight. People can show that they have applied this new awareness to make positive changes, enabling improved customer experiences.



# Fionna Wilson

Community Psychiatric Nurse,  
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Nurse



Nursing

Living with multiple disadvantage is something that people experience all day, every day. This can make attending appointments difficult. Many services are not set up to have the necessary flexibility to work with people that find it difficult to attend appointments. This is not the case with Fionna and the early Intervention team.

Fionna demonstrated that the service can consider the specific circumstances of an individual who was struggling to attend fixed appointments. Instead, Fionna kept an open appointment for the person to attend when they felt they were able. By working with the person and listening to others involved in their care, Fionna was able to assess their needs and to secure the resources necessary for a specialist residential mental health service.



## Why this works well

People experiencing fluctuating symptoms of mental ill-health are often in situations where they do not feel able to get up, get ready and attend appointments; by listening to professionals to better understand the customers' difficulties Fionna was able to ensure that this individual was not excluded from the service due to non-attendance. Flexibility was the key to successful and sustained engagement that led to appropriate support.



## Richard Machin

*Lecturer of Social Welfare, Law,  
Policy and Practice Advice,  
Staffordshire University*

When one of Richard's students approached him and disclosed multiple disadvantage, he sought the help and support required immediately. As well as teaching this person Richard was their personal tutor and dissertation supervisor, providing her with academic and pastoral support.

As a result, the person was able to access the counselling they needed. With renewed confidence, the person decided to use their lived experience as an asset and went on to help others by volunteering as a Peer Mentor. This approach not only helped the person to stay on the course in difficult circumstances, but they went on to graduate with a 2.1 degree and, thereafter, into full time employment.

Richard is described as

**“Always available to listen and dedicated to training new professionals for the sector.”**



## Why this works well

Taking time to listen to somebody's experiences and difficulties enables a well-planned and solution-focused approach. In this case Richard demonstrated his non-judgemental attitude and a culture of inclusion, empowerment and support. From this example we can appreciate the value of lived experiences as an asset to contribute to the enhancement of our own knowledge and the progression of others whilst simultaneously building the confidence of the person involved.

# Kevin Wright

Support Worker,  
Brighter Futures



Support

There's no better testimony than that of lived experience. The person who nominated Kevin described his work as follows,

“I was pessimistic when I arrived at Furlong Court due to my previous experiences of support. I quickly found Kev's professional work ethic to be outstanding. Kev's empathy is of a natural quality. His insight and understanding are inspirational. He encouraged me to overcome my social anxiety by using public transport. He convinced me to get stable on my methadone and motivated me to beat my addiction to sedatives. Kev introduced me to holistic therapies and attended acupuncture sessions alongside me. When I had difficulty registering with a GP, Kev helped me to register and attended appointments with me. My fear of hospitals was a result of my parents being admitted and, sadly, never being discharged. Kev took time to go with me. It wasn't easy; Kev would often challenge my perceptions and offer me an alternative. He taught me to see my past experiences as an opportunity and, to use my experience to help others in their recovery. This has made me the person I am today. I now have confidence to do the things I've always wanted.”



## Why this works well

Kev sought to see 'past the problem' and to better understand the person. This enabled exploring new ways of working and support planning based on individual needs and at a pace that the customer was comfortable with. In challenging perceptions Kev was able to help in the person changing their view of services and support that led to re-engagement and positive outcomes.

The Learning Award is presented to individuals or services who have demonstrated that, in supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage, they have made changes based on learning gained from

- **the insight of people with lived experience or other stakeholders**
- **training or learning opportunities**
- **best practice examples**

Learning organisations and people continuously strive to become more confident, skilled and knowledgeable in supporting people with multiple needs and may go on to share their learning with others.



# Learning Award

## Carl Taylor

Commissioning Officer,  
Gateshead Council



Local Council

When Carl was approached by the Jigsaw Recovery Project, he immediately recognised an opportunity for coproduction. Encouraging the project to build a business plan around the idea, Carl successfully explored prospects for seed funding to run a pilot. The Jigsaw recovery project are now running a scheme to help care leavers find suitable accommodation. Carl is described as learning from people because he states that,

“Lived experience is a valued commodity in today's society.”

However, Carl did not stop there. Carl stuck with the project and supported the people involved to design data capture systems.

Designed by people with lived experience that are also now delivering the service, this dataset prototype has been rolled out across the North east to other services. Carl is truly putting people in the lead.



## Why this works well

By welcoming and listening to the insight of people with lived experience and offering to work together, sharing learning and skills, we can achieve positive change through methods of coproduction. In achieving success, we are then able to share the outcomes and learning with others. This is a unique example of a Commissioner actively listening to the people who services will affect.



## Julie Norton

*Consultant in Emergency Care,  
Royal Stoke University Hospital*

Life as a consultant in the NHS is extremely busy and demanding. But Julie makes time to take extra care of patients experiencing multiple needs.

Julie first approached Expert Citizens and VOICES in 2017. She requested time to learn about our work and to see if there were any ways in which we could help her department to better support people experiencing homelessness. Julie was highly experienced in seeing people repeat returning to the Accident and Emergency Department following treatment for physical and mental health needs and sought to understand the reasons why. Since the first meeting, Julie has taken the lead in her department to bring people with lived experience into staff sessions to share their experiences to promote insight and learning. As a result, the department is now distributing improved information to staff; this includes information that highlights the barriers to accessing primary healthcare and other services. It also includes information on how to access care and support services.

Julie has a demanding role and a family to care for, but this doesn't stop Julie finding time to collect quality clothing from individuals and taking it to work to store for when needed. A person experiencing homelessness, for example, may have been admitted for treatment and their clothes either be soaking wet from the weather, not appropriate for the weather or spoiled with bodily fluids. Julie and colleagues strive to maintain the dignity of these people by providing clean and warm clothing.

As a result of Julie's work, the department is now actively engaging in a citywide learning programme for services supporting people experiencing multiple needs. Other departments at Royal Stoke have since been proactive in enhancing their



awareness. They are also working towards making changes in their electronic system so that people of no fixed abode can be identified easily in a similar way to safeguarding adults.

## Why this works well

Through applying professional curiosity, we can gain insight and understanding of the difficulties our customers face, enabling improved experiences. By better understanding the system and the barriers within it, along with learning about changes in legislation Julie and colleagues can see how all of this affects the roles and responsibilities of the service and how they can apply their new knowledge when seeking support for patients from others.

The Leading Award is presented to individuals or services who have demonstrated that, in supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage, they have

- **developed examples for fair access and inclusion with personalisation through a strength-based approach**
- **actively recruited and developed volunteers with lived experience**
- **shared their learning through the design and delivery of learning opportunities**
- **put people with lived experience in the lead of service design, development and delivery through applying the philosophy of coproduction**



# Leading Award



## Dr Baskaran Sridharan

*Consultant Neuropsychiatrist,  
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust*

Dr Sridharan's support with a person experiencing cognitive dysfunction was instrumental in gaining access to the required services. The person had a long history of being evicted from housing and excluded from services due to non-engagement or behavioural issues. Dr Sridharan was flexible and persistent in providing his own service to assess the person and arrive at a confident diagnosis. Then, making the time to attend each multi-agency meeting, Dr Sridharan helped other professionals to see the person's situation differently. As a result, fellow professionals saw the person through the lens of disability rather than of non-compliance or disengagement. The person was allocated a package of support and agreed to have an appointee to help with financial management. This enabled access to housing, support and care needed through a sheltered housing placement and this improved circumstances dramatically. their awareness. They are also working towards making changes in their electronic system so that people of no fixed abode can be identified easily in a similar way to safeguarding adults.



## Why this works well

Ensuring accurate diagnosis of neurological conditions is crucial in helping professionals to see the difference in a person being 'not able to engage' rather than them being viewed as 'will not engage'. The fact that Dr Sridharan went on to communicate the findings within multi-agency meetings meant that he was best placed to advocate for the person. Dr Sridharan did not just have the diagnosis, but also the knowledge to be able to effectively communicate how this would impact on the person's ability and wellbeing.

## Sophie Murtha, Caitlin Wilson, Laura Christer and Rochelle Artus

*Domestic Violence Peer Educators,  
West End Women and Girls*



Support

These inspirational young women established the 'Safe Project' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Their work in schools provides training and support to help young women identify when a relationship is coercive or abusive. Thanks to their work, each year group in local secondary schools now has trained individuals that others can go to with their concerns. Their service has now been established over four years.

These amazing young women were described in their nomination as

“Showing incredible passion, drive and proactivity in supporting others to keep themselves safe.”



### Why this works well

Using lived experiences to educate others, resulting in increased knowledge, skills and confidence contributes to the development of projects and organisations and the scope of people who the awareness can reach. Many more young women in this area have now been educated and better understand how to keep themselves safe. The transition from 'learner' to 'educator' is a fine example of empowerment and coproduction.

## Jane Morton

*Advanced Nurse Practitioner - Homelessness, NHS*



Nursing

Jane is widely recognised across the City for her outstanding work with people experiencing multiple disadvantage over many years. Expert Citizens noted Jane's leadership in ensuring that those often furthest away from accessing physical health care get the treatment they need – when and where they need it. As well as leading others by example, Jane passes on her expertise by teaching student nurses and other healthcare professionals. As Community Matron for the homeless in Stoke-on-Trent, Jane has been an innovator of health services being delivered on an outreach basis to some of the most vulnerable people in the City.



### Why this works well

Delivering services to people through outreach ensures fair access and inclusion. Understanding that people may not be able to come to the service and working in a way that takes the service to them means that we are still able to provide crucial support. Using examples of her own experiences, Jane has shared her learning with others through her teaching role and has also encouraged and motivated other services to work in flexible ways.

## Karen Dunn

Specialist Benefits Advisor,  
Citizens Advice Staffordshire and North Stoke-on-Trent



Support

Karen works as an embedded benefit advisor in a team dealing exclusively with people experiencing multiple disadvantage. Far from the media stereotype, most people with multiple disadvantage are not claiming the benefits to which they are entitled. Some have no income whatsoever. Karen works on an outreach basis with people and their support workers to submit and process timely claims. She provides key expert advice and training on likely eligibility and, where necessary, supports people through

the sometimes-difficult process of appeals. In doing so, Karen is often able to secure a firm and legitimate financial footing as a base from which people can begin to find stability. The person making this nomination said simply that,

“Every team working with homeless and vulnerable people should have a Karen.”



## Why this works well

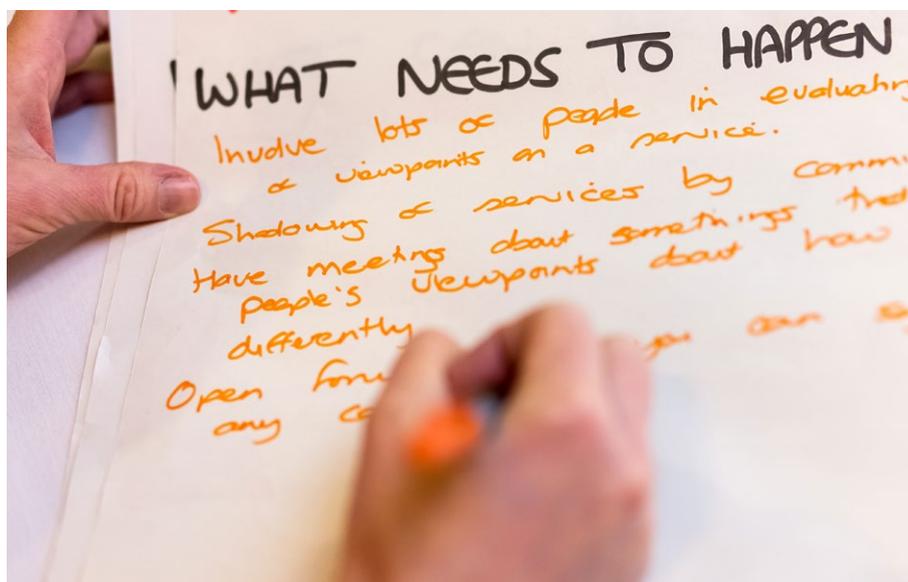
People experiencing multiple disadvantage often have trouble in attending appointments and, due to anxiety, waiting in queues can be difficult. In embedding the specialist within a team, we are better able to engage with the person in a place and at a time and pace that suits them. Karen has been able to interpret information from people's wellbeing plans in appeal hearings that clearly demonstrate fluctuating needs and conditions that mean a person is unable to work. In working within a Service Coordination team Karen has upskilled colleagues to be confident and competent in supporting customers with their applications. As a result of this model Karen is now leading a team of outreach advisors placed within several services across Stoke-on-Trent.

# INSIGHT® Service Evaluation Programme

## INSIGHT® Service Evaluation Framework

Through working in the citywide partnership Expert Citizens C.I.C. identified gaps in the system that presented as barriers for people experiencing multiple disadvantages when attempting to engage or re-engage with services. Through qualitative interviews and other research methods we also recognised that many customers experienced stigma and felt as though they were not listened to. To respond to this, Expert Citizens C.I.C. developed a set of standards to measure how well a service is supporting people and to look at the level of involvement in services of people experiencing multiple needs. This has developed our INSIGHT® Service Evaluation Framework.

The INSIGHT© Standards were coproduced by Expert Citizens with representatives from the VOICES partnership. They are a set of measurable standards that describe best practice in working with people with multiple disadvantage. A team of specially trained Expert Citizen Evaluators explore how far a service is meeting the INSIGHT© Standards; they use a range of methods including interviews and observations. The Evaluators ask the services to provide some information too, for example, case studies and a self-assessment. Information is then measured against the INSIGHT© standards and the findings are presented in a report for the service. The report may include recommendations from the Evaluators. Results aim to celebrate good practice and help to reinforce this within other services. Services who take part in an INSIGHT© evaluation are issued with an official INSIGHT© Standard logo to demonstrate the level they have achieved in welcoming and supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage. The logo can be displayed on letterheads, doors, reception areas etc. to show others how far they have progressed. It is anticipated that services who choose to participate will be visited regularly and at least every two years.





# Portfolio of Positive Practice

## Supporting People Experiencing Multiple Disadvantage

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