If you would like to find out more about SHIEN, join the network or contribute to the next SHIEN E-bulletin, contact:

T 0141 420 7272
E shien@ghn.org.uk
W www.ghn.org.uk/shien
P SHIEN at GHN
   Unit 16a, Adelphi Centre
   12 Commercial Rd
   Glasgow G5 0PQ
About Shien

SHIEN is the Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment Network, funded by Scottish Government and delivered by Glasgow Homelessness Network. SHIEN collaborates with a wide range of partners to promote ways in which people who experience poor housing and homelessness can fully participate in the decisions that affect them. We do this through an online resource exchange, regional workshops, e-bulletin and an annual conference.

Our conference

In March 2015, 73 individuals including people with lived experience, policy makers, frontline staff, academics, volunteers and community members from across Scotland attended the SHIEN national conference in Glasgow.

Why did we choose to explore co-production?

Our 2014 national conference focused on placing local people at the heart of housing and homelessness processes, while regional workshops throughout 2013-14 explored peer based approaches such as mentoring and advocacy. Our shared learning has lead us toward considering the next piece – co-production in homelessness services.

Co-production is about...

...delivering services with people rather than to them. An equal relationship between professionals, the people using the services, their families and their neighbours. When services are delivered in this way, the services themselves and the people who use them, become far more effective.
Our key speakers

Andrew Magowan, Community Development Manager
Link up-Inspiring Scotland

Building self-confidence so that individuals can recognise their own talents and expertise, Andrew stated, is a crucial foundation of co-productive approaches. Equally, seeing positive results of getting involved motivates people to keep going and other community members to get involved.

Nancy Greig, Development Coordinator
Health and Social Care Alliance

Nancy highlighted the prominence of co-productive approaches in caring and recovery services. And the importance of opportunities being of interest and relevant to everyone involved. (Read more from Nancy on page 10.)

Derek and Kate, Peer Advocates
Navigate, GHN

Derek and Kate offered insight into their different motivations for becoming volunteers, from using lived experience to support others, to increasing employability. Both highlighted the importance of witnessing positive impacts on individuals, services and wider communities, to motivate them to continue and become more involved. (Read more from Derek on page 6.)
Our key learning

Partnership working.
This topic recurred throughout the day, and referred to more effective co-ordination of similar services, as well as community members and volunteers working in partnership with local community services to identify and help fill gaps. Recognition should be given to where input from community members can complement existing services, for example, peer advocacy supporting the Housing Options approach.

Building self-confidence of individuals to recognise and harness life skills and lived experience.
This was recognised by each speaker and in several table discussions as a foundation of involvement. All volunteering roles were recognised as important in exploring skills. Witnessing the positive impacts on self, others and wider community ensures individuals are motivated to stay involved and also motivates others to get involved.

Co-productive approaches have to be realistic.
There are some services which cannot be co-produced, and so consideration should be given to what opportunities to get involved might complement such services, or in part. Wide recognition was given to the fact that an outcomes focus can overtake the quality of the individual’s journey. People should be afforded choice and involvement opportunities where possible.

Co-productive approaches could reduce stigma and stereotypes.
Traditional views of groups, such as people affected by homelessness, can be addressed where community members from a range of backgrounds work together for common goals within communities. Furthermore, communities do not have to be confined to geographical areas.

Staff training.
A recurring theme throughout SHIEN events, staff training could recognise how to involve people with lived experience in services. In addition, how to work with co-produced services to enhance their own service.
Co-Production...  
... from a peer volunteer’s perspective

Derek is a volunteer Peer Advocate with Navigate providing advocacy for Housing Options and homelessness services clients. Derek works with an average of eight clients at any one time, as well as supporting peers in their professional development, and raising the profile of homelessness issues in the media. Derek and fellow peer advocate Kate presented their experiences of volunteering at the SHIEN National Conference.

What do you see as the benefits of co-production?

I’ve been a peer advocate for about 18 months now – for about the same time before this I wasn’t working, the skills I knew I had were hidden and I couldn’t see a way of finding them. I’m really passionate about helping other people find their skills and their voices, so the Navigate project seemed the perfect place to start. Through working with my peers to develop the project, and supporting clients on their journeys, I’ve rediscovered the skills I thought were lost.

As well as building self-confidence, we are building the confidence and knowledge of our peers. One person can gain a lot of on the ground knowledge from supporting clients, but multiply that by twenty, and you have a lot of up to date knowledge about housing and welfare issues. We can share our knowledge with our wider networks too – it’s not just our clients who are affected by welfare reform, we can reach people who might otherwise not be engaged in services or have any way of getting relevant information.

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(1) Navigate provides independent Peer Advocacy support to help people find solutions to problems that may be affecting their daily life. Volunteers have been highly trained to use their life and local experiences to help others who may have a problem or worry about their housing or welfare benefits. The Volunteer works with the person to help them make them access specialist support and services, tell people about their problems and make their own decisions based upon the right information.
Could you give examples of being engaged in a co-produced service?
As a peer advocate, by sharing a wee bit of my experiences, by empathising, I’m able to build relationships with clients who have become closed off to a system they have come to view as insurmountable. Bit by bit we work together to set realistic, achievable goals. Crucially, we are working toward the client speaking up for themselves – often people don’t even realise the distance they’ve come!

I think co-production is a similar process – we’re building up the confidence and capacity of everyone involved to equally set the goals and actively work toward achieving them. It takes time, and a commitment to working in this way.

To what extent do you think your service is co-produced?
Co-production is a growing idea, it’s definitely more talked about now than when I started volunteering 18 months ago. It has opened up opportunities for people to get involved in different ways to the traditional types of volunteering.

In what ways do you think co-production could improve your service?
We’re at a point where peer volunteers are able to work together to plan actions, for example publicity to services and recruitment of peer advocates, with minimal input from staff, which means the capacity of the project is increased. Which in turn means we are able to help more clients.

What have you learned?
Sometimes there can be resistance from services, which is quickly dispersed when staff witness that clients are better able to articulate their needs and decisions. We help ensure an holistic, joined up approach for clients, which means less gaps and less double handling for services.

How can co-production be applied to the delivery of housing options and homelessness services?
The best part of being a peer advocate for me is witnessing a person picking up the reigns of their own life, and doing things they once said were impossible – it’s gold dust!

Navigate supports the delivery of statutory services, without being a statutory service itself, and because of this, it is more free to test concepts such as co-production and peer-based approaches.
Navigate supports the delivery of services as people are able to access the right statutory service more quickly by being informed of the service they need, and being supported to access it. So the peer support offered by Navigate, while one step removed from the job of getting someone a house, in my opinion should be an integral part of housing and homelessness services. That way, people know which services to access, have support to access them, and the peer volunteer is ensuring the partnership working we all know makes best use of all our resources.

Navigate is also able to play an important role in working with people to support them to make a decision about the best housing option for them. Someone’s housing is more likely to be sustainable if they have thought through the pros and cons of different options and we can use simple decision making tools to help people understand what their best option is. We understand that homelessness and housing options services often don’t have the time to do this so this is one way we can complement them.

**What could SHIEN do to support housing and homelessness services to introduce co-production?**

Keep being a forum for sharing ideas. For volunteers to stand up and tell people about their work, and bringing policy makers, staff clients and volunteers together hear about the work that’s going on across Scotland.
The best part of being a peer advocate for me is witnessing a person picking up the reigns of their own life, and doing things they once said were impossible – it’s gold dust!

Derek, Navigate
from a decision maker’s perspective

Nancy, Development Manager, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) focuses on providing practical tips and examples that services can use to develop co-productive approaches. The People Powered Health and Wellbeing team has worked with partners to develop ‘Co-production – how we make a difference together’ which is a suite of resources to help spread understanding of co-production.

What do you see as the benefits of co-production?

Having work valued is a positive motivator, especially when volunteering. Co-production can play an important role in identifying service need and ensuring that people using services are involved in developing answers and solutions.

Could you give examples of being engaged in a co-produced service?

The Keeping it Personal project is aimed at creating services and supports that are built for and by the people who will use them. The example used is the video study of the project is the development of Dementia Cafés. (Dementia Cafés provide a safe, comfortable and supportive environment for people with dementia and their carers to socialise.)

Dementia Cafés are staff led, and supported by volunteers and community members, as local people become more confident and grow in skills, they work toward shaping and eventually taking the lead delivery of the Cafés.

What have you learned?

The importance of opportunities being of interest and relevant to everyone involved. These are the greatest motivators for getting and staying involved and invested.

How can co-production be applied to the delivery of housing options and homelessness services?

Having a say in funding has been identified as important by volunteers and local people; even a small amount to fund an activity which has been identified and developed gives a sense of control, and is seen by volunteers as recognition and investment by policy makers in the work being carried out.
Social support services offering the wrap around support for people affected by homelessness are best placed to respond to local need – through listening to the needs of local people, and supporting the development of local groups. We’ve spoken about care and caring groups here, but the process of supporting local people to develop services for the community is as applicable to housing and homelessness services, including participatory budgeting.

**What could SHIEN do to support housing and homelessness services to introduce co-production?**

Share examples and resources, such as the ‘Co-production – how we make a difference together’ toolkit, available via the Scottish Co-production Network website.
Jim from Aberdeen City Council has attended a number of SHIEN events, and found the SHIEN conference of interest both personally and professionally:

What useful information did you get at the conference that you have been able to apply to your work?

As a commissioner of services, not a direct provider, the council can be a step removed from being able to directly implement co-productive approaches. Aberdeen City Council is moving toward requiring services commissioned by the council to evidence in their tender bids, how they work within, or are progressing toward a co-productive way of working.

Currently, services tendering for contracts are asked to evidence the wider community impact of their service, and co-productive approaches is the next step to this process.

What would you recommend SHIEN do to support local authorities to co-produce services?

Bring together different perspectives – policy makers, frontline staff, community members, and academics, to enable people to have a more rounded view of the topic – such as co-production. From a commissioning perspective, it is very useful to understand what the benefits and practical implications are for staff and users of services.
Bring together different perspectives – policy makers, frontline staff, community members, and academics, to enable people to have a more rounded view of the topic...

Jim, Aberdeen City Council
What did attending community members think of the day?

The conference received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with the following highlighted comments:

“The opportunity to hear from all perspectives - policy makers, staff, volunteers and service users was useful in considering the possibilities of co-production.”

“As well as hearing from volunteers, it would be useful to hear from service users who have been supported by co-productive approaches, to understand the full range of benefits to the individual.”
Hearing from community volunteers was the most inspiring part of the day for most people, with opportunities to recognise the benefits for the individual, for volunteers, for services and the community.