

Amplified Trailblazer: Devon CAMHS



The story so far...

Devon CAMHS (Virgin Care Ltd.) applied to become a Trailblazer to increase the diversity of their Young People's Advisory groups, by reaching out to young people who identify themselves as belonging to the LGBT+ community to encourage their active involvement in participation.

Over the course of the Trailblazer project, working alongside YoungMinds, the young people and staff from Devon CAMHS:

- Reached out to existing networks, actively recruiting additional young people who identified as LGBT+
- Co-produced a digital insights survey for young people across the region, in order to collect data on LGBT+ experience of the MH system
- Took part in a creative workshop, identifying changes required within the local system
- Co-designed and delivered a workshop on 'how to communicate more effectively with LGBT+ young people', as part of CAMHS workers' regional conference
- Evaluated the impact of their work, and have now begun to plan the next steps for improving access to the system for LGBT+ young people in the region

We asked the group to tell us more... below are the words of Eleanor, Mia, Taylor, and their Participation Lead, Robin.

YMs: Tell us about what motivated this project / campaign

Robin: We recognised that in a rural community minority groups can go unseen and feel particularly isolated and discriminated against. This project is part of a culture change towards participation that has been going on gradually over several years. Like a ship turning around.

YMs: What made you want to get involved?

Mia: Having a focus on LGBT+ helped me to get involved because I'm obviously interested in it – I'm already involved in LGBT stuff

Eleanor: It's a topic I'm really passionate about so I have a lot to say

YMs: What were key barriers to it being successful?

Robin: Being able to pitch the conference session with the right level of advice without making it seem like we were just criticising the staff and the work they do.

YMs: What expertise or skills did you have in your team/organisation, what did you need to bring in from outside? Whose buy-in was important and how was it demonstrated?

Robin: CAMHS senior managers are very supportive of participation work and ensure that we always speak to young people before we make changes to our service.



It's really helpful if you can get senior members of your organisation onboard with a project as that really encourages young people to know their project is already being well-received and taken seriously!

YMs: What did you learn along the journey about co-production and participation?

Eleanor: My approach to the conference was that I'm going to come along, and if I feel able to say something then I can. It's a lot easier to join in when there's no pressure to have to participate - I even ended up acting as our session compere!

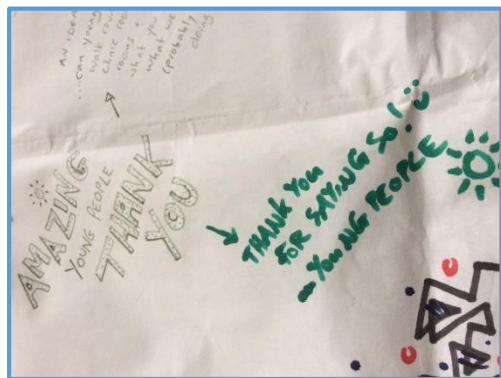
I also learnt that it's important for youth participation to remain flexible as there's a role that can be found or created for everyone.

If there's a group of you there you can springboard off each other.

YMs: What impact have you had? What impact do you hope to have?

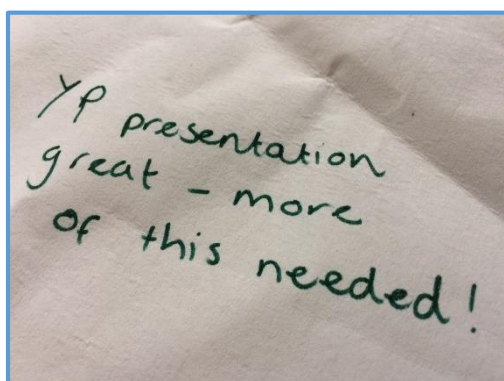
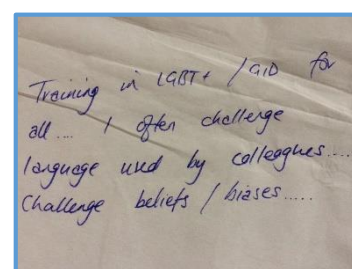
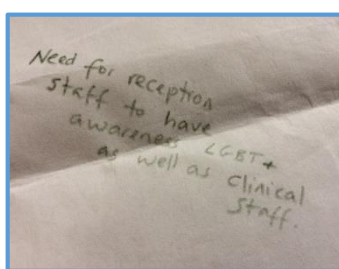
Taylor: The 'wrong name' exercise was good because it created confusion for the staff. It was hard to focus on the task when someone was using the wrong name for you. It gave them an idea of how we feel.

Eleanor: Staff members were approaching me in the waiting area and saying 'I remember you from the conference!' and saying how beneficial they felt our session had been and how much they'd enjoyed the input of young people.



Mia: Their (professionals) vocabulary has changed.

Taylor: It's the little things that are changing - like being asked "are you in a relationship?" or "do you have a partner?" rather than "Do you have a girlfriend / boyfriend?"



Feedback from the CAMHS Conference



"I found the young peoples' presentation at the service day thought provoking as it helped me to think more about how I might broach certain topics with people. In particular, I found the feedback from the YPs about directly asking how they would like to be addressed was very helpful. It has reminded me about the importance of keeping diversity in mind and not making assumptions."

- Alice Taylor, CAMHS Practitioner/Mental Health Nurse

"I was at the CAMHS day for the presentation and the young people were so open about their experiences that it helped me to improve my own practice by:

- 1. asking the YP what they prefer to be called*
- 2. being aware when talking to parents of the potential issues e.g. the YP not wanting parents to know about their gender identify/sexuality, parental acceptance and awareness that I may need to support parents to seek support for their child/teenager*
- 3. the presentation raised my awareness so that when I now meet parents of YP under the Tavistock clinic I can encourage parents to listen to their child's needs and inform them it might not be 'just a phase' (I recently heard this comment from a parent and was grateful to having seen the presentation!)*

It was a great presentation so thank you."

- Claire Greenfield. Tavistock CAMHS, Virgin Care

What comes next for your project?

Eleanor: We'd discussed the possibility of taking our organisation (CAMHS) to events within the LGBT+ community such as Pride in order to raise the profile of the changes we're making to improve the accessibility of services and participation to young people from the LGBT+ community...

www.youngminds.org.uk/amplified



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