

Wandsworth CoProduction

Learning from Report on Dementia in South West London

Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network (WCEN)

We were pleased to work with South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust and the University of Stirling on conversations with members of our local communities, on ageing, on supporting each other as we get older, and on how we may be able to coproduce knowledge and 'services' in ways that respond to emerging needs.

WCEN was established to identify and enable communities, particularly in the Boroughs areas of greatest need, to participate in public policy decision making processes (These areas were and remain Battersea (Queenstown and Latchmere Wards). Tooting (including Graveney and Furzedown Wards) and Roehampton. These areas also have the highest percentage of people from black minority and ethnic communities.

Relationships with faith communities and their leaders and elders have always been a feature of the WCEN. In Wandsworth, these communities have been at the centre of providing facilities and activities for their own members and immediate surrounding areas, particularly for older members of our population. As such, as we started to consider ageing and dementia as having potential for coproduction collaborations within our communities, these local associational sites were considered best placed to begin to have these conversations.

Conversations with our Black Majority Church communities were facilitated by Dr Carlis Douglas, supported by Lystra Charles, with our White Majority Christian Churches by Catriona Robertson and with our Islamic communities by Malik Gul, supported by Naseem Aboobaker. These were small, relational group gatherings in community settings which participants were comfortable and familiar with, surrounded by people who they knew and trusted. These conversations were recorded and shared with the University of Stirling researchers. The researchers then participated in two larger workshops where they contributed their expert knowledge on dementia and well-being and these were then in turn fed back to the smaller groups, which allowed for further progressive conversations and knowledge building to continue.

This way of working is central to our learning on coproduction. The importance of sharing knowledge widely, the role of trusted community leaders to generate confidence and enablement, the practice of designing processes and "services" in which all participants have an equal contribution to make, which is equally valued, and the responsibility for any outcomes that emerge equally shared.

WCEN applies a "network" lens to our communities and public services at work and at rest. It is increasingly recognised that Public Agencies by themselves are no longer able to provide the "services" which populations need, and, in a much more networked society, one that is increasingly diverse, multi cultural and technologically enabled, a great deal of the knowledge and know how, expertise and resources that are required to undertake support and services are held not in public institutions, but distributed much more widely across social networks and communities.

Identifying, understanding and building these connections and relationships is an important part of designing and delivering the public services that we all rely on now and will need in the years to come. With an ageing population and with this the rise in cases of dementia, the need to do so in this “service” area is particularly urgent.

Before, during and after the work involved in compiling the Report and its findings, WCEN has held several conversations with the Coproduction lead at SWLSTG, various colleagues from SWLSTG Older Peoples services, the Commissioner for Older Peoples Services at Wandsworth CCG and more recently the Dementia Transformation lead at SWLSTG. These conversations have also been shared

with other “services” including Falls Prevention and Self Management of Long Term Conditions managers, amongst others. This has allowed for a much wider intelligence to be shared and for opportunities to emerge on how we can join up communities and ‘services” in much more smarter and better ways. (see Wandsworth Coproduction map)

The University of Stirling Report have enabled us to document in much more detail the types of issues and concerns that our communities share, and the challenges and faultlines with the current public service framing of dementia and dementia services.

The next stages of this work, our work together, is to begin to identify good fits between Commissioners and Providers and potential coproduction partners in our communities; to begin to start testing and piloting what works and serves.

Malik Gul

Director