

Summary

Increasing participation in civic and public life: coproducing solutions

About the DRILL Programme

DRILL (Disability Research on Independent Living and Learning) was an innovative 5 year, UK wide programme led by disabled people, for disabled people and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Launched in 2015, the programme was managed by a partnership of Disability Action Northern Ireland, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales and Inclusion Scotland.

The aim of the programme was to build better evidence about approaches which enable disabled people to achieve independent living. The findings from the projects it funded can be used to inform future provision across a wide range of policy areas, and give a greater voice to disabled people in decisions which affect them.

This is one of a series of summaries of the project supported by DRILL. Final reports, toolkits and summaries of all the projects are available from the DRILL website at www.drilluk.org.uk.

Overview of the project

This project aimed to understand what stops people with lived experience of mental health problems from engaging further in civic and public life.

It offers solutions to challenge the barriers to participation across the community.

Approach

The Increasing participation project produced a survey which was publicised through social media and community-based mental health organisations across Scotland and received 249 completed responses.

This provided key conclusions and areas of interest to form the basis of the six focus groups.

Findings

Half of survey respondents expressed that they wanted to increase their level of involvement in public life.

Stress, anxiety and/or lack of confidence were identified as the strongest reasons for non-involvement. These were also identified as potential barriers to greater involvement.

Over three quarters of survey respondents used social media sites, with 91% of them using it to seek information on their community and 71% to participate in online campaigns. As expected, social media usage decreased with age.

Over 70% reported voting in each of five recent local and national elections.

Self-confidence, the impact of a mental health condition and a lack of time were the most common responses when asked to summarise the barriers to participation.

The focus groups identified the key barriers as stigma in the community, which also results in an internalised stigma when a person agrees with those stereotypes; and a fear of a negative impact on social security entitlements.

The best ways to overcome these barriers were to have a physical place to go to for information and direct support from a person.

Social media was seen by the focus groups as a positive means of participation by some, but many used it solely for social purposes and others had no interest in it at all.

Findings (continued)

All participants who had become involved in their communities would recommend other people with lived experience get involved in similar activities.

The most common roles sought by participants were volunteer and activist roles. This was often about informal relationships, with the overarching desire being to assist others.

Many people did not know where to go for information on local activities. Online information was useful for some, but others did not want to, or know how to, access this.

Recommendations

The project outlined many recommendations, some of which are listed here. All recommendations are included in the full report which is linked below.

- The Scottish Government should ensure the Local Governance Review engages directly with people with lived experience of mental health conditions
- Local authorities should adhere to the National Standards for Community Engagement and evaluate the impact of engagement
- Local authorities should invest in staff capacity to enable increased community engagement, including that of seldom heard groups, and monitor diversity and impact
- Third sector and community groups must be inclusive in relation to mental health
- Opportunities for advice and advocacy workers for people with lived experience of mental health should be identified
- Mental health services should orient themselves towards a recovery focus. They should encourage the uptake of opportunities in volunteering, education and employment
- Organisations should provide peer support or buddying services to facilitate the participation of people with lived experience of mental health conditions
- Political parties should advertise their willingness to consider applications for candidates for public office from people with lived experience of mental health conditions
- Research funders should support studies which focus on the links between citizenship and recovery.

Final report

[Increasing participation in civic and public life: coproducing solutions](#)

Please click on report name to read the full report.

Project partners

Voices of Experience



University of Strathclyde

