

## Enabling Participation of Deaf People in the Co-Production of Services: An Example in Service Design, Commissioning and Delivery in a London Borough

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**Abstract :** Co-producing services with the people that access them is considered best practice in the United Kingdom, with the Care Act 2014 arguing that people who access services and their carers should be involved in the design, commissioning and delivery of services. Co-production is a way of working with the community, breaking down barriers of access and providing meaningful opportunity for people to engage. Unfortunately, owing to a number of reported factors such as time constraints, practitioner experience and departmental budget restraints, this process is not always followed. In 2019, in a south London borough, d/Deaf people who access services were engaged in the design, commissioning and delivery of an information and advice service that would support their community to access local government services. To do this, sensory impairment social workers and commissioners collaborated to host a series of engagement events with the d/Deaf community. Interpreters were used to enable communication between the commissioners and d/Deaf participants. Initially, the community's opinions, ideas and requirements were noted. This was then summarized and fed back to the community to ensure accuracy. Subsequently, a service specification was developed which included performance metrics, inclusive of qualitative and quantitative indicators, such as 'I statements', whereby participants respond on an adapted Likert scale how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement in relation to their experience of the service. The service specification was reviewed by a smaller group of d/Deaf residents and social workers, to ensure that it met the community's requirements. The service was then tendered using the local authority's e-tender process. Bids were evaluated and scored in two parts; part one was by commissioners and social workers and part two was a presentation by prospective providers to an evaluation panel formed of four d/Deaf residents. The internal evaluation panel formed 75% of the overall score, whilst the d/Deaf resident evaluation panel formed 25% of the overall tender score. Co-producing the evaluation panel with social workers and the d/Deaf community meant that commissioners were able to meet the requirements of this community by developing evaluation questions and tools that were easily understood and use by this community. For example, the wording of questions were reviewed and the scoring mechanism consisted of three faces to reflect the d/Deaf residents' scores instead of traditional numbering. These faces were a happy face, a neutral face and a sad face. By making simple changes to the commissioning and tender evaluation process, d/Deaf people were able to have meaningful involvement in the design and commissioning process for a service that would benefit their community. Co-produced performance metrics means that it is incumbent on the successful provider to continue to engage with people accessing the service and ensure that the feedback is utilized. d/Deaf residents were grateful to have been involved in this process as this was not an opportunity that they had previously been afforded. In recognition of their time, each d/Deaf resident evaluator received a £40 gift voucher, bringing the total cost of this co-production to £160.

**Keywords :** co-production, community engagement, deaf and hearing impaired, service design

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