

Race Equality Foundation - developing a Personal Health Budget (PHB) offer with Black, Asian and minority ethnic people who had experienced severe mental illness living in Blackburn with Darwen.

Key Learning

- Developing a Personal Health Budget (PHB) pathway ensured all the organisations that needed to work together to deliver the PHB understood their role and were able to collaborate efficiently.
- Sharing the experience of another area that had developed a PHB offer was used to learn lessons from as well as sense check the work that was being undertaken.
- Allocating resources ensured that small organisations could afford to participate.

The Race Equality Foundation and Association of Mental Health Providers worked with a range of people and organisations to produce a Personal Health Budget offer to Black, Asian and minority ethnic people who had experienced severe mental illness living in Blackburn with Darwen.

The pandemic and continuing pressures combined with the practicalities of co-producing projects whilst people were running to catch-up meant the development of new ways of working were not necessarily a priority. With central direction, including from NHS England, and local cooperation a valuable approach to addressing health inequalities was developed and implemented.

Who was involved

Participants were from a range of organisations, including voluntary and statutory sector, including Blackburn with Darwen Healthy Living, MIND, Age UK as well as from NHS England. Participants performed various roles in their organisations from Chief Executive to Service Manager to Finance Manager to an NHS Commissioner. People with lived experience were involved through a survey.

What we did

We ran a series of action learning sets, which included structured input accompanied by setting tasks for participants (what data do you collect and what does it tell you about who you are working with currently) and then using the results of these tasks to identify what action needed to be taken.

The structured input also included sharing the experience of another area that had developed a PHB offer and pathway and this was used to learn lessons from as well as sense check the work that was being undertaken in Blackburn with Darwen.

As relationships were established work outside of the action learning sets was taken forward, including developing some training for all works involved in the PHB pathway.

The challenges and solutions

Beyond the challenges posed by the pandemic, there were two key challenges.

- Securing direct involvement of people with lived experience in action learning sessions.

Whilst this was an ambition and attempts were made this did not come to fruition. We instead relied on survey work and the work of some of the organisations to get a lived experience perspective.

- Unease about how well small organisations could/would be involved and whether they would be able to influence how the PHB offer, and pathway would develop.

We made significant effort to ensure that these issues were surfaced and that participants felt safe to raise and discuss them. At the same time, we allocated resources to ensure that small organisations could afford to participate in the sessions.

The Outcome

A PHB offer and a PHB pathway for people with severe mental illness from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities has been established and at least seven people have now had a PHB.

The success of this way of working, has seen plans to replicate this model in other parts of the ICB, but also focusing on other forms of support, so discussions are currently taking place with local authority to extend the offer to aspects of social work. It is worth noting that the systematic approach to the development of the pathway has meant that whilst staff have come and gone, the pathway has continued to work smoothly.