Co-Production Community of Practice

PDU Practice Development Unit

Topic **Holding Effective Meetings**

Often co-production happens in meetings...

This question was the focus of discussion for a recent PDU Co-Production Community of Practice.

How can you plan meetings so they run smoothly, feel like safe spaces for sharing, and ensure that all voices are heard, validated and acknowledged?
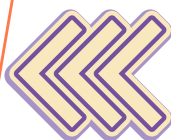
We reflected on what we felt were the things that help and hinder this, taking into account our own experiences as both participants and facilitators.

Below are some of our shared thoughts around good practice:

Help!

Creating Psychological Safety

HELPFUL TIPS

- Not passing judgment or criticism on anyone's answer.
- Never forcing someone to answer.
- Not making it too personal or crossing personal boundaries.

✔ Be Flexible

✔ Build trust

✔ Be Inclusive

✔ Act honestly

Don't forget to recap

Giving a quick update on what has been discussed previously helps ensure everyone is up to speed

Why are they helpful?

Check-ins are short activities for expressing and taking note of each team member's mood

Importance of Check In's and Check Out's

✓ Time for expressing agreement and values

✓ Checking-out offers closure and gives opportunity for reflection.

✓ Helps set the tone of the meeting

✓ A way to check that people are happy to be where they are and feel able to participate

✓ Can be an important time to build connection with others and helps aid group bonding

✓ Helps give people permission to be in the room

✓ Checking-in puts emphasis on presence, focus, and group commitment

✓ Gives people the opportunity to speak- even if only once in the meeting

✓ If people are having a difficult time it can be helpful to acknowledge this

✓ Checking-in/out invites each member in a group to be present, seen, and heard.

People don't have to use words!

✓
- To help make check-ins more inclusive you can always offer the option for individuals to give a number between 1-10.
- This score helps give an indication into how someone is feeling without putting pressure on people to articulate this

The value of Group Agreements

- Can be useful tools for making your meeting a good experience for everyone involved
- Can help members to form an identity and gain participant buy in
- Having boundaries can help people to feel safe
- Helpful if these are reviewed or agreed upon each session. This allows new members to offer input and ensures they are considered every meeting and not forgotten
- Can be a nice way to ground people and get into the space
- Ground rules help to keep meetings on track and remind people of the need to work together effectively and respectfully
- It might be useful if these are bought to each meeting or put on display

Make time for introductions

Don't assume that everyone in the room has already met or knows who people are

If there are lots of you, ask that people introduce themselves before they speak

Be open to new ways of introducing members that don't always focus on job titles/roles, this can exclude experts by experience

HELLO
MY NAME IS

Offer people the chance to meet with others before the meeting so they have some level of comfort and familiarity

agenda

A meeting agenda is a list of topics or activities you plan to cover during your meeting. They are designed to give participants a clear outline of the meeting's structure and what to expect.

Getting the agenda right

Meeting agendas might not always be helpful

- If an agenda has too much content, the meeting can feel rushed and stressful-it doesn't give people chance to comment or properly explain
- If they are too rigid, people can feel excluded, may be less inclined to participate or find they are a "listening exercise" and not valuable

TO DO LIST

Create opportunities for participants to help decide meeting agendas

"People care more about meetings that they have helped design or have an interest in"

Allow space and opportunities for discussion- meetings are not about talking at a group or "ticking off boxes"

Involving lived experience in agenda setting, can help to share power and ownership of meetings

Offer participants a choice of topics to discuss rather than having set agenda points

Having a **flexible agenda** is important but can sometimes feel difficult when management have their own expectations on what meetings should look like, or there are deadlines/time pressures

When setting agenda, ask yourself who is benefitting from this and why are we setting agenda in this way?

Share documentation ahead of time

- Don't send important information out last minute
- Ensure participants are given plenty of time to familiarise themselves with the meeting agenda/ documentation to allow people the chance to process this and ask questions
- Documents don't always have to be wordy, they can also be visual too!

Avoid referring to meeting notes as "Papers" – this can be confusing and feel intimidating to both staff and lived experience experts

Use Ice Breakers

Can be really effective at putting people at ease

Don't have to be too personal or time consuming

Icebreakers can be energising- especially if they involve moving around a bit!

They help refocus attention and keep people engaged in the meeting

Prepare people for the experience of meetings

- Not everybody will have experienced a meeting before
- It is helpful if people have some idea of what to expect
- Meetings aren't for everyone- having the option to opt out is important

Remember to· factor in time for breaks and let people know about these at the start of the meeting to manage people's expectations

Create multiple opportunities for people to feed into meetings and give feedback- be mindful of people who might want to participate but aren't able to attend

Allow for different formats and learning styles

- Not everyone likes to learn or share information in the same way
- Give people the choice of how they want to engage- presentations, reports, discussions, brainstorming

The language we use matters

- Make a habit of avoiding **acronyms** and **jargon** when you talk
- It can be helpful to include a **jargon buster** ahead of meetings or in the minutes to help simplify this

Make time for building trust and relationships

- Getting "straight down to business" can rob us of chances to build relationships, especially when so many meetings now take place online rather than face to face
- Create opportunities for people to get to know one another
- Providing opportunities to be silly/ vulnerable can help people to feel connected

Invest in hybrid meetings

✓ Blended meetings give people more opportunities to participate

✓ Online options can improve accessibility for people with physical disabilities or mental health issues, not just those with busy time schedules

✓ Getting the location right is key

✓ Prioritise getting the necessary technology in place

✓ Look for ways to bring the online participants into the room

We are all individuals with our own preferences, by offering choice we encourage more opportunities for people to be able to participate and feel included

More than one facilitator!

- The best meetings have at least **two facilitators**
- Identify a "Conductor" to chair the meeting and keep the group focused on the agreed agenda
- Ensure there's at least one other person there to "Maintain" the space- deal with and respond to issues as they develop in the meeting
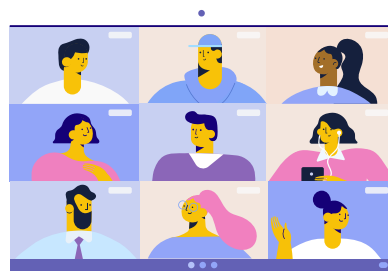
Give online attendees a "life-sized presence"

For example, where possible use a conference room with a large screen to broadcast remote participants and enable your in-person attendees to interact with them as if they're in the same room

Be willing to meet people where they are- come to them rather than expecting them to come to you

Feedback loops are really important!

It can be really demoralising when people are involved in consultations and don't receive any updates on how their feedback has been used or how a particular project has progressed

It's better to acknowledge that progress is slow or actions are not possible- than to offer no feedback at all

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

Booking in follow up meetings at the time of the consultation can help ensure this happens.

LISTEN. LISTEN...

Don't forget about "quieter voices"

- When needed, step in and manage relationships in the group to ensure certain people do not dominate meetings or conversations
- Actively invite people who have not spoken yet the chance to contribute
- Find creative ways to ensure people can share their thoughts and ideas- this could be use of the chat box or post it notes
- Breakout rooms with smaller numbers can provide opportunities for less confident members to feel able to contribute

✓ **Transparency is key**– being honest about what you can and can't do

✓ A **"you said / we did"** model can show how things have progressed and help people to feel validated

✓ Finding a way to **record people's queries** and offer channels to communicate answers can help validate people's contributions and provide clarity on what is/isn't being done

✓ Using **consultation request forms** to outline expectations around feedback can help underline why this is important and what is expected in return for participation

Review your meeting format

- ·This can often get forgotten about once meetings have been established.
- Find time to factor this into the agenda periodically, or make this part of your groups check out

Value people's time

Meetings are well received when they feel useful or purposeful

Do you really need the meeting or are there more creative ways the same outcomes can be achieved?

HOT TIP

And lastly... biscuits are always welcome!