

USER VOICE

LIVED EXPERIENCE IN ACTION

COMMISSIONING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE SERVICES



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority Commissioned User Voice to set up a lived experience commissioning panel to help design the service specification and evaluate bids for a new restorative justice service across West Yorkshire.

People with experience of prison or probation, who have also been victims of crime, were trained to gain a qualification thanks to funding from the Mayor of West Yorkshire. The year-long project saw a group of six work with charity User Voice who are led by people with convictions, to achieve a level one Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) award in Peer Commissioning.

Involving individuals with lived experience in the commissioning process at a local government level has never been done before in West Yorkshire and across most regions in the country. Therefore, a full evaluation of the process was undertaken. This report maps out the experience of both the Peer Commissioners and relevant stakeholders to get a better understanding of the process and the benefits to both the Peer Commissioners and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.



USER VOICE

User Voice is a nationwide UK charity created and run by people with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

We bring together people impacted by the justice system with those who deliver its services to create much needed transformative change. We work with people with convictions to support and develop their confidence, skills and mindsets. They then deliver our programmes to many more people who are impacted by the criminal justice system.

These programmes include:

- User engagement, research and insights
- Supporting and developing leaders with lived experience of the justice system who meaningfully contribute to the reshaping of prisons and probation services whilst transforming their own lives.
- Transforming the criminal justice system through influencing policy and practice to create a safer society.

80% of our staff have convictions, meaning we've been there – in court, in prison, or on probation – we own our own pasts, so we understand the challenges first hand and use our own lived expertise to inform everything we do.

Since User Voice was founded in 2009, over 156,000 people in prison and on probation have been given a voice to effect change. User Voice has worked in half of UK prisons and three-quarters of probation services.

User Voice has co-produced over 120 peer research projects with over 20,000 participants. Our sector-leading research such as Spice, Coping with Covid, and Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice Sector have provided decision makers both really valuable feedback and effective solutions.

WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority's vision is to create a West Yorkshire that is prosperous, well connected, safe, inclusive and a hotbed of creativity and sustainability.

The Combined Authority brings together the local authorities of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. Working in partnership, to develop and deliver policies, programmes and services which directly benefit the people of West Yorkshire. West Yorkshire has a population of over 2.3 million people.

THE MAYOR OF WEST YORKSHIRE AND POLICING AND CRIME

In May 2021 the responsibility for exercising the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner in West Yorkshire transferred to the West Yorkshire Mayor. The Police and Crime Commissioners Office transferred to West Yorkshire Combined Authority. In August 2021 the Mayor appointed the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to oversee policing in the county, on behalf of the public.

The key functions of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime include commissioning services to support those harmed by crime and reduce reoffending, consulting the public to ensure that their views and priorities are considered, strengthening links such as inclusive growth, and community safety and cohesion.

The West Yorkshire Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime (DMPC) works with the Mayor to oversee policing in the county, on behalf of the public.

Other priorities include commissioning services to support those harmed by crime and reduce reoffending, consulting the public to ensure that their views and priorities are considered and strengthening links, such as inclusive growth and community safety and cohesion.

The development and delivery of restorative justice is part of bigger picture about improving services and support for victims of crime. A Safe Just Inclusive West Yorkshire is at the heart of the Mayor's Police and Crime Police Plan.

THE CASE FOR PEER COMMISSIONING

Through the joint work of the mayor, associated services and User Voice this project report outlines the case for Peer Commissioning, emphasizing the systemic strain on the criminal justice system due to rising demand and limited resources. It argues that excluding lived experience from service design leads to inefficiencies, misalignment, and reduced trust. Peer Commissioners—trained individuals with direct justice system experience—brought unique insights to this project that enhanced service quality, regulatory compliance, and community trust.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE OVERVIEW

Restorative justice brings those harmed by crime, and those responsible for that harm, into communication with each other. This contact can offer victims the opportunity to be heard, to ask questions of the offender, and to have their say in the resolution.

For victims, restorative justice offers an opportunity to be heard and to have a say in the resolution of offences, including agreeing rehabilitative or reparative activity for the offender with the victim following direct contact between them. It can provide a means of closure and enable the victim to move on. It has a proven, significant impact in supporting victims in achieving closure by allowing them to move on with their lives with 85% of participating victims indicating that they would recommend it to others.

Restorative Justice also provides an opportunity for offenders to face the consequences of their actions, recognise the impact that it has had upon others, and where possible make amends. In this way, Restorative Justice has the potential to help rehabilitate offenders and enable them to stop offending.

Restorative Justice can be used for any type of crime and at any stage of the criminal justice system, including alongside a prison sentence.

A Restorative Justice process can be delivered through:

- **Direct or indirect restorative justice processes:** the victim and offender, guided by a facilitator, communicate with one another. Other people can also be involved in the process such as supporters of the victim and offender, and members of the wider community. This can take place through a direct face-to-face meeting, or, when several other people are involved, a conference; or indirectly with the facilitator acting as 'go between' in 'shuttle mediation'. An agreement is usually reached to decide how best to repair the harm caused and a rehabilitative programme may be agreed.
- **Restorative Justice Conference:** where the victim meets their offender and are led by a trained facilitator who supports and prepares people taking part and ensures the process is safe. Other people can also be involved in the process such as supporters of the victim and offender.
- **Community Conferencing:** this involves members of the community that have been affected by a particular crime and all or some of the offenders. This process is similar to the Restorative Justice Conference but differs as it involves many people.
- **Mediation:** where contact between the victim and offender is made through a trained mediator to help resolve disputes and work out an agreement.

If face-to-face meetings are not suitable, or desired by the victim, then the facilitator can arrange for the victim and offender to communicate via written correspondence, recorded interviews and video. For any communication to take place, the offender must have admitted the crime, and both victim and offender must be willing to participate.

COMMISSIONING OVERVIEW

Commissioning is the way the Combined Authority plan, buy, deliver and evaluate services for the communities of West Yorkshire. Commissioning includes:

- Commissioning new services.
- Re-commissioning a successful service.
- Varying a commissioned service to respond to changing need or resources or legislation.
- Decommissioning a service that is no longer required or where the provider has failed to comply with requirements.

As a public sector organisation, the Combined Authority has a duty to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

All commissioning is undertaken in line with the Combined Authority Contract Standing Orders approved by the Mayor under the scheme of delegation and financial regulations. Depending on the value of the contract the procurement activity is undertaken either through the Combined Authority procurement process.

The Combined Authority will enter into a contract with providers for goods and services. This will involve testing the market in some form, agreement to a service specification, and then starting a contractual relationship to meet those requirements.

THE COMMISSIONING CYCLE

1. UNDERSTAND

The Combined Authorities aim is to understand what the current and future need is and potential gaps where the Mayor could use resources to achieve our priorities. We listen to local communities through our public consultation surveys and our extensive engagement to understand where we are now and whether services are delivered to meet needs.

We also work with and listen to our other partners and stakeholders. For example, West Yorkshire's five Community Safety Partnerships, West Yorkshire Police, partners, key stakeholders, service providers.

We constantly horizon scan national priorities including changes in legislation to support our understanding.

Our participation in national consultation ensures we are influencing and informing what needs to be delivered and how. Our considerations include engagement with national groups and the work the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime undertake to represent West Yorkshire.

2. PLAN

The Mayor's Police and Crime Plan priorities and statutory obligations form the basis of the activities the Combined Authority need to undertake and the services that need to be commissioned.

Our strategic planning and engagement support recommendations on the commissioning choices available to the Mayor. All recommendations are presented to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, based on information and evidence gathered in the understand phase of our cycle. This information and evidence support the decisions made to secure services through a formal tender process or through a grant arrangement.

3. DO

The Combined Authority undertake the commissioning or granting process once the budget and/or funding to secure services and activities has been agreed. We use a range of approaches, and this will be a combination of contracts, grants, co-commissioned and/or co-funded activity to meet our priorities. We use a range of approaches to secure the right services and activities. We do this through formally procured contracts, direct grants and collaborative commissioning with partners which provide an opportunity to pool budgets and funding and deliver jointly agreed outcomes.

Where the Mayor provides funding by way of a direct grant to an organisation, our arrangement is set out in a grant agreement this states our required outputs, intended outcomes, terms and conditions, monitoring and payment arrangements

4. REVIEW

The Combined Authority review stage feeds into the next phases of commissioning, as it is a key source of information for planning and informs our understanding. In this stage we use a continuous improvement approach, to ensure learning from the delivery of services and activity supports our approach.

All contracts and grants are monitored and assessed using both quantitative and qualitative monitoring information to support the assessment of delivery.

This commissioning activity is subject to internal audit scrutiny and the findings from this also form part of the continuous improvement approach. This all helps the Mayor to understand how well commissioned services and activities are supporting the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan priorities and helps shape future commissioning activity.

1. UNDERSTAND

- Engage with stakeholders
- Research, information, and evidence to identify current and future needs analysis
- Map and review current provision
- Map different options to address need
- Evaluate best practice, legislation, and guidance
- Learn lessons
- Agree outcomes to be achieved
- Plan procurement

2. PLAN

- Engage with stakeholders
- Ensure recommendations are evidence based
- Ensure legal requirements are met
- Design/re-design services Identification of available budgets and/or funding
- Plan for capacity and demand
- Plan the procurement or granting process
- Provide legal support to meet requirements



4. REVIEW

- Stakeholder engagement
- Evaluation
- Data and reporting validation
- Inform and influence strategic planning
- Inform our understanding
- Exit and de-commissioning planning, if appropriate

3. DO

- Engage with stakeholders
- Access and use agreed budgets and/or funding
- Monitor performance
- Validate and report data
- Formulate exit plans
- Inform and influence

COMMISSIONING APPROACH FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The Mayor sought to appoint a single provider to lead the delivery and further development of Restorative Justice in West Yorkshire over a maximum contract period of seven years.

Due to the specialist and complex nature of this requirement there is no internal expertise to enable the Combined Authority to deliver this service without appointing an external provider. It requires a dedicated and fully tailored service which can be accessed easily and scaled up or down depending on the fluctuations in demand for services. The supplier appointed to deliver the new contract must be able to demonstrate they have the skills, experience and capacity to deliver a victim focused service suitable of supporting resolution and progression from a range of complex and sensitive areas of crime.

The supplier engagement event was held to deliver an overview of the services required and the complexities involved to the market, to ensure that resultant bidders were geared up for when the tender goes live and had an understanding of the nature of the services and whether they were in a position to deliver them to a high standard or not prior to submitting a bid.

The procurement route chosen was open tender. The Combined Authority investigated whether there were any existing frameworks or routes to market, but due to the specialist nature of the requirements there were none available, therefore an open tender procedure was undertaken due to the high value (over threshold) and the desire to engage with potential new bidders to make this a fair and compliant tender process.

The statement of requirements (service specification) provided a detailed overview of the business needs to establish a clear context and communicate to all bidders the Combined Authority's requirements from the contract. The specification was sufficiently detailed to provide clear and enforceable obligations of the provider including objectives,

expected quality standards, deliverables, contract performance monitoring and liaison arrangements. It was a combination of an input and output specification detailing some very specific conditions whilst also leaving many areas for suppliers to provide a range of innovative solutions.

The Pricing element was given a 20% weighting to ensure the quality of the bids were the main focus of the evaluation.

Price / Quality Weighting Split: Price: 20% and Quality including 10% social value: 80%. The Quality element includes 10% for the face-to-face presentations to the Peer Commissioners where the supplier was required present a solution to a scenario posed. Peer commissioners undertook the scoring of relevant questions and formed part of the overall scoring panel.

CONCEPT

Policing and Crime piloted, for the first time, for those with lived experience to have a say on the services that are commissioned to help them rehabilitate and recover, ultimately reducing crime and protecting the public. Working closely with User Voice and partners to plan for the re-commissioning of the Restorative Justice service provided an opportunity to undertake this approach.

The project lead Julia Clough at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority told us where the idea initially came from:

"My background is over 23 years in voluntary community and social enterprise sector before coming to the Public sector. This developed my understanding and belief that the people who the service is for need to be right at the centre of its design and you can't get it wrong. Rather than the default position that by simply having a role you have the expertise to be able to design a service. The experts are those with lived experience So that's where the idea was born from."

The project was originally planned for 2022 in which a cohort of peer commissioners were recruited and trained in peer commissioning. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the contract for restorative justice services in West Yorkshire was extended and the project was delayed until the following year.

One of the peer commissioners from the 2022 cohort continued to volunteer with User Voice and gained employment at the organisation. The individual worked the project in a supportive role to the lead facilitator.

PURPOSE

One of the Mayor’s responsibilities is to commission quality and inclusive services that meet the needs of West Yorkshire diverse communities. The Mayor’s vision is for a strong, sustainable West Yorkshire Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, value for money and the highest quality service for the people in the region.

One of the Mayor’s key principles is that the commissioning approach for community-based services will be community focused with an ambition for co-design with people who have lived experience.

Staff members from the West Yorkshire combined authority gave us the following insights:

“It’s really about being based on the experience and seeing the value of people who have lived experience of a service helping design it and co-design it.”

“it’s offenders and victims using the restorative justice service, so to me it makes total sense that victims and offenders are involved in that design work of that service.

“Ultimately they’re going to be the service users and they know best.”



NFCE LEVEL 1 QUALIFICATION IN PEER COMMISSIONING

As part of the process, peer commissioners worked towards a qualification in peer commissioning through the NCFE, an awarding organisation registered as an educational charity. The thought process behind this was to give the process rigour and give back to the peer commissioners for volunteering their time.

The course was delivered by the lead project facilitator from User Voice who has lived experience of the criminal justice system. Three modules were taught through interactive learning in the following areas: the commissioning process, evaluating tenders, and scoring bids. Upon completion of the modules, peer commissioners sat an exam that was independently marked by the NFCE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The West Yorkshire Peer Commissioning project demonstrated a transformative approach that directly involved people who were impacted by the justice system in the commissioning and procurement of restorative justice services, aligned with a range of positive impacts for service providers and Commissioners.

These included:

- Higher service user engagement and satisfaction in services – resulting in greater adoption and effectiveness.
- Regulatory compliance – Active user involvement ensured adherence to regulatory standards.
- Service Quality – Direct feedback improved service, efficiency and performance.
- The provision of accredited training to Peer Commissioners.

From this highly successful work we have detailed below our key recommendations:



FOR JUSTICE SECTOR COMMISSIONERS AND POLICYMAKERS

1. Embed Peer Commissioning in Procurement Frameworks

Mandate the inclusion of lived experience in all stages of justice service commissioning to improve relevance and outcomes.

2. Allocate Dedicated Resources

Ensure funding and infrastructure support for recruiting, training, and sustaining Peer Commissioners.

3. Adopt Co-Design Principles

Move beyond tokenistic involvement to genuine co-design and co-commissioning practices with service users.

4. Monitor and Evaluate Impact

Establish metrics to assess the effectiveness of Peer Commissioning in improving service delivery, user satisfaction, and cost-efficiency.

FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

5. Collaborate with Peer Commissioners

Involve Peer Commissioners in service design, delivery, and evaluation to ensure services meet actual user needs.

6. Foster Continuous Feedback Loops

Implement mechanisms for ongoing input from service users to adapt and refine services over time.

FOR PEER COMMISSIONERS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

7. Promote Peer Commissioner Pathways

Highlight the personal and professional development opportunities Peer Commissioning offers, including employment and community leadership.

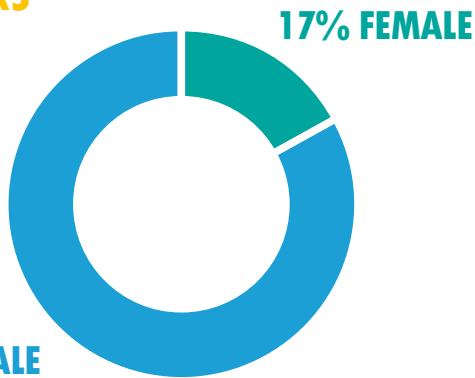
8. Build Networks and Share Best Practices

Encourage collaboration across regions and sectors to share insights and strengthen the Peer Commissioning model.

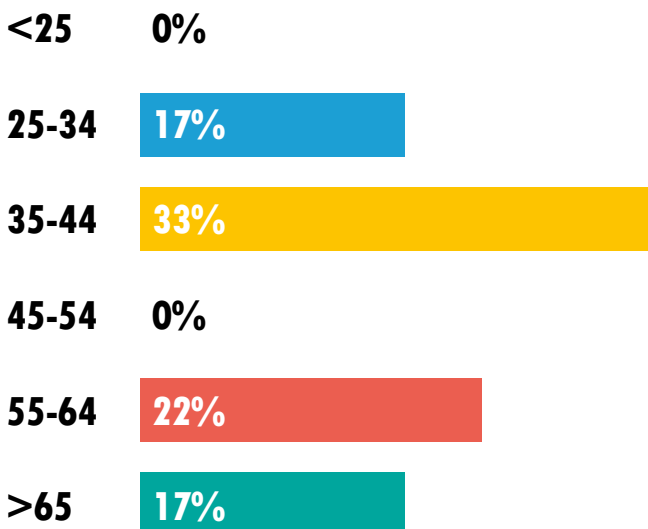
PEER COMMISSIONERS

- 1** INDIVIDUAL LIVING WITH A DISABILITY
- 2** PEOPLE FROM THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY
- 2** PEOPLE WITH NEURODIVERSE CONDITIONS
- 6** WERE FROM A WHITE BRITISH BACKGROUND

GENDERS



AGE RANGE



Hi, I'm Iain. I volunteer as a Peer Commissioner because I want to give back. I'd like to be a part of something that will make things better and give people hope and a chance for the future.



Hi, I'm Phoenix. I volunteer as a Peer Commissioner because I'm doing a criminology degree and I would like to expand my knowledge in all areas of rehabilitation. I believe people with lived experience have the best knowledge of certain aspects of the justice system.



Hi, I'm Peter. I volunteer as a Peer Commissioner because I want to make my lived experience as an ex-offender count for something. I have skills from my time before offending that I believe I can offer. I have qualities of empathy and understanding.



Hi, I'm John. I volunteer as a Peer Commissioner to use my knowledge of the prison and probation system to better inform policy and change people's lives.



Hi, I'm Jay. I volunteer as a Peer Commissioner because I want to develop my confidence, better myself and learn about peer commissioning whilst making a difference.



Hi, I'm Arthur. I volunteer as a Peer Commissioner to better myself, learn and help others who are in the same situation as I've been in.

RECRUITMENT

Peer commissioners were recruited from across West Yorkshire, where the opportunity was widely advertised and supported by third sector organisations, such as the Leeds CFO activity hub. Who not only referred volunteers, but hosted trainings and meetings at no cost. Applications were received online, reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with all applicants being interviewed for suitability.

“I heard about User Voice through my support worker here at the hub. She thought I might be interested in the project so put me forward for it. I came to the project with limited knowledge but soon learnt a lot more and I'm very keen to have my voice heard and hopefully make a difference through my experience.”

“I was invited by a User Voice volunteer to become a member of the group. I admire User Voice. It is a great privilege to become part of this process.”

“I was recommended by my case worker.”



SAFEGUARDING

As a lived experience-led organisation, User Voice has 15 years of knowledge and expertise that comes with safeguarding staff, people with criminal convictions, and working in prisons – with specifically designed safeguarding policies and training for these environments. Having completed projects working with people with additional needs, disabilities as well as vulnerable adults and children, User Voice are well equipped to recognise potential safeguarding issues. User Voice has appropriate safeguarding policies and practices in place, all staff undertake safeguarding training, and the designated safeguarding lead is a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Regarding this project, peer Commissioners were vetted by User Voice during the recruitment process. As part of this process, Peer Commissioners had to disclose their criminal record and discuss it with the Lead Facilitator. Some peer commissioners found reliving their experiences difficult and required support after the session – something that is a must for future cohorts.

“You get a bit apprehensive about the disclosure and I did emotional over it. It was difficult because you think you've dealt with it all... You know you've done your scope and thinking skills programmes and other things in jail and then you suddenly have that sprung on you about that and you like going back in time to things that you thought you'd got over... I mean, alright, emotionally it only lasted 15 – 20 minutes or so, but it was a bit upsetting at first... Chrissie was quite understanding and she, you know, very sympathetic and helpful with it also. That was good, you know.”

REPORT PLAN

1

STAGE 1 – PROJECT INCEPTION

- Recruitment
- Introductory interviews and surveys
- Develop a project baseline
- Outline the motivations
- Capture hopes and expectations

2

STAGE 2 – KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPMENT

- Facilitator-led sessions
- Introduction to the commissioning process
- Develop understanding
- Introduction to qualification requirements

3

STAGE 3 – DEVELOPING SCENARIOS AND QUESTIONS

- Service specification
- Invitation to tender (ITT)
- Draft questions
- Presentation requirements

5

STAGE 5 – SCORING TRAINING

- Learning about specific scoring process
- How to assess bids
- Fairness
- Transparency

6

STAGE 6 – BIDDERS PRESENTATION

- Opportunity for peer commissioners to meet bidders
- Organisation of the panel
- Agreed questions
- Peer Commissioners panel scoring deliberation and consensus

4

STAGE 4 – MARKET ENGAGEMENT EVENT

- Co-produced with peer commissioners
- Agreed slides and scripts
- De-brief after the event

7

STAGE 7 – SCORING THE BIDS

- Facilitated session for peer commissioners
- Joint panel scoring deliberation and consensus

CAPTURING THE LEARNING

CONCEPT

An evaluation was conducted by User Voice across the yearlong project to evidence the journey of the peer commissioners and stakeholders to better understand what worked, what didn't work and what impact the experience had on the peer commissioners.

Further, the aim was to provide a foundation for which lived experience can be incorporated into the commissioning of future public services nationwide. Through capturing the learning, we established a sustainable model for the involvement of lived experience and recommendations for how to involve lived experience in the commissioning process in a non-tokenistic way where all parties benefit. This is evidenced in this report and can also be found in the accompanying good practice guide.

"We wanted to do it from a basis of learning and how we as an organisation want to share our learning to make sure that we captured that journey. Through this we can play our part in influencing such programmes nationally by evidencing what the journey of real peer commissioning looks like. Great, good, bad, ugly, what worked, what didn't work, how did it work, why did it work, why didn't it work, what we do differently etc."

"There are 43 police forces in in England and Wales, that's 43 police and crime commissioner officers, Mayor's offices, and we would hope that this will give them the foundations to make sure that they're involving lived experience in a non-tokenistic way - that they're doing in a real, kind of co-design, co-commissioned way."

METHODOLOGY

User Voice took a mixed methods approach to capturing the learning. Insights were collected from peer commissioners and stakeholders from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority at five points across the yearlong project. All data was thematically analysed by the research team at User Voice. The findings follow in the chapters of this report.

In total:

28 surveys were completed by peer commissioners.

08 focus groups and interviews were conducted with peer commissioners.

14 interviews were conducted with staff from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

05 interviews were conducted with staff from User Voice.



STAGE 1: PROJECT INCEPTION

“Getting back into the society sometimes can bring your self-esteem down because you have a door shut on your face so now, we are given opportunities to do things that make a difference. And not being deemed as ex-offenders but deemed as people with lived experience.”

STAGE 1 OVERVIEW

The first stage of capturing the learning consisted of introductory interviews and surveys to develop a baseline for the project and to capture the understanding of the commissioning process from peer commissioners before any work was done.

In this stage, we aimed to outline the motivations of peer commissioners for volunteering their time, whilst capturing their expectations and hopes for the project.

HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

All peer commissioners told us that they hoped to make a difference to the system and their local society through volunteering as peer commissioners.

“I hope to become a valuable member of the team and would like to make change for the better for people like me who has been on the wrong side of the criminal justice system.”

“To try and make a small difference to help inform policy.”

“I’m hoping to get out of it gain confidence and try and make a change and put my experience to good use to help other cause the system’s crap to be honest. Something got to be changed about something. I’m hoping that if I can make one change it’d be better than nothing.”

“Through the group here doing the work, it contributes something back in. At the moment I just sit in my flat, twiddling my thumbs and watching TV. I do other little things that keep

me fingers busy, my mind going yeah, but nothing that adds real value, that’s what I want to get.”

Peer commissioners hoped to develop a better understanding of the criminal justice system while volunteering on the project. Some wanted to develop their understanding of specific areas such as restorative justice. Whereas others wanted to learn more about peer commissioning and the wider criminal justice system to be able to give back.

“I’d like to achieve a wide range of knowledge about restorative justice.”

“I’m very interested in criminal justice system... I just want to learn as much as I can and I want to do something for a change and give back. I’m hoping this course open some doors... I’d like to do talks in prisons short telling my story because I’m not the finished article, I won’t be preaching I’d just be saying now how much of a struggle it is for me and where I’m going.”

Peer commissioners told us that the project was an opportunity to have their voice heard in a space where it often isn’t. They recognised that their lived experience is an underutilised tool that can help improve the system and services.

“It’s important to me to be involved because my voice has been taken away because of what I did... You’re never going to rectify what happened, but you can make a difference, and you can help people that have been in the same position as we’ve been in and you can help people that been on the other side that we’ve been on right. And that’s what I want to do.”

“I think the cons and ex-cons have got a lot of knowledge of the system and the justice system and the parole system and the procurement system. We’ve got a lot of knowledge that policy makers are not interested in listening to but some of that knowledge is really important because it can help to channel policy in a better direction.”

DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS

Some peer commissioners have had their confidence affected by their experiences in the criminal justice system and hoped that volunteering on the project would allow them to gain that confidence back.

"I'd like to develop me social skills, my confidence and my knowledge."

"I'm hoping to gain confidence again 'cause my confidence was really knocked by the arresting and imprisonment and everything and then being all the doors closing on me. I want to actually give something back to society develop new skills and be able to contribute to something which I feel is very worthwhile."

All peer commissioners told us that they wanted to develop skills whilst volunteering with User Voice. Some wanted to develop their communication skills by improving their ability to interact in a group or speak in public, whereas others wanted to develop skills in project management.

"I want to improve my ability to put my point across in a way that everyone can understand. development of my communication skills and a greater knowledge on how all the different authorities work together."

"My knowledge database! And skills that will drive me forward."

"I want to develop my skills in project management."

"I've had experienced some speaking public speaking that I've had experience in counselling empathy that kind of thing so I'd like to be able to redevelop you know reawaken those skills. Being able to be more involved in teams again I think it would be a good skill to develop having been on my own quite a bit."

LONG-TERM GOALS

We asked peer commissioners about their long-term goals and how volunteering on the project could help them achieve it. For example, one peer commissioner is currently undertaking a degree in criminology and hoped this project would help their academic journey.

Others wanted to use the opportunity as a launch point for full-time employment and saw being a peer commissioner as a good way to further contribute to society, specifically to people like themselves, in the future.

"My long-term goal is to work as a support worker within rehabilitation. Volunteering as a peer commissioner will allow me to expand my knowledge and help me throughout my academic journey."

"Long term, I'd like to be employed full time within the organisation. Volunteering for the project gives me the knowledge and skills to be able to do this."

"I hope to use my lived experience for the service of other ex-offenders and for the wider community. I believe that the process will give me the confidence and tools I need to begin to do this."

"To be more active in the community and contribute more to society."

"To help others, especially those of my own age group."

CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of restorative justice?

VERY GOOD 0%

GOOD 17%

NEUTRAL 67%

POOR 17%

VERY POOR 0%

Prior to taking part, only one of the six peer commissioners told us that they had a good understanding of restorative justice.

“I understand it to be a way to bring together the victim of crime with the offender for an explanation as to why he committed the crime

and for a possible alternative way of making resolution without custody.”

“Restorative justice is where a perpetrator and victim come together to understand what happened.”

CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of peer commissioning and the commissioning process?

VERY GOOD 0%

GOOD 17%

NEUTRAL 50%

POOR 33%

VERY POOR 0%

Prior to taking part, only one of the six peer commissioners told us that they had a good understanding of peer commissioning and the overall commissioning process.

“It is the process where bids are made for contracts and the process behind it to get the best outcome and value for money.”

“At the moment as it is a blank page. So I feel I will learn as I progress.”

At the start of their journey as peer commissioners, there was doubt among the group about the legitimacy of who gets awarded government contracts. High-profile media cases as that of the PPE scandal led to peer commissioners telling us that they had concerns about the legitimacy of the way government contracts are commissioned.

“From an outside perspective it seems like a bit of a you know but what’s the word the same boys get the same contract the same companies get the same contract year after year after year. And that can’t go on.”

“There’s a lot of back handers”

“Sometimes it’s who you know in these kinds of things but this isn’t”

“I’ve found that it’s biggest envelope that gets all of it.”

Prior to taking part, only one of the six peer commissioners told us that they had a good understanding of how police and local authorities work together.

“Police and local authorities will share information to help reduce crime and the causes of crime.”

“I have no knowledge of how they work together.”

“I don’t really have an understand of how police and local authorities work.”

“I understand in Safeguarding matters police and Social Services work together.”

CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF HOW POLICE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES WORK TOGETHER

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of how the police and local authorities work together?

VERY GOOD 0%

GOOD 17%

NEUTRAL 50%

POOR 17%

VERY POOR 17%

STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

We asked staff from the West Combined Authority what their expectations were for the project. Fundamentally, they told us that they wanted the project and contract to be a success. Their expectation was for the peer commissioners to develop their knowledge of the commissioning process, procurement, and develop the ability to score any bids received for the delivery of restorative justice services in West Yorkshire.

“The expectations are that the peer commissioners will work through their qualification and then we will jointly start to co-design what needs to be in a specification, what do we need to ask the providers, do we want to go out and ask the victim’s any more questions around this... So that’s kind of that expectation is that we can go through each of the stages of a procurement commission and

collectively, we can decide which elements are going to be done with the peer commissioners”

“We want the contract to be successful, we want it to be good value for money, we want it to have positive outcomes for everyone using it. so yeah, involving people with lived experience makes perfect sense.”

We asked stakeholders, what they wanted to get out of the process. All four members of staff told us that being involved could improve their day-to-day practice. They told us that working with people with lived experience could benefit their work and being involved is a good opportunity to adapt their training to a different audience.

“This is my first experience of peer commissioning so I’m kind of seeing this evolve as it happens. But from my first session today I like the way that it’s kind of very informal and friendly and really welcoming – I’m hoping to gain a lot from it.”

“As a commissioner, I want to be part of the journey, so it will influence me and my practice.”

“We’ve delivered training people that have some background in procurement, so if we can adapt that training to people who have very little understanding and their developing their understanding; it’ll be great for us as it means we can speak to a different audience.”

“This is the very first time in all my years, you know 13 years I’ve worked in policing and crime, that I’ve ever actually been in a meeting with ex-offenders. Normally I’m kind of removed ‘cause it’s always the provider that does that so for me, this is my first experience of being yeah and you wouldn’t think that would you after 13 years. So I really value being involved.”

Staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority expressed their hopes for the development of peer commissioners. They noticed a sense of passion from the peer commissioners on their first day and told us that they hoped the peer commissioners use that passion to complete the project, gain a qualification, and get a sense of achievement. Some peers told us that they hope the experience will be a beneficial step on their journey.

“We’ve heard today on the first session about some of the passion of why they’re doing it. They want to give something back, they want to change something, and I think that through working with that qualification, yes, I hope they succeed, and they get a real sense of achievement through that.”

“I was pleasantly surprised today to hear that in an initial session that passion coming through...It’s the motivation around it which motivates us as professionals as well... I hope that they would get that next step as part of their own journey in their life as well. It’s another level that is a positive that’s within their life that they can carry forward and be proud of and just have that sense of achievement that says ‘well if I can achieve this then, then I can move on to something else. I can aspire for something further’. And I would hope that it would play a small part in whatever their journey for the rest of their lives.”

“I’m hoping they will get a just a sense of achievement that they’ve delivered a mayoral service in West Yorkshire, that they’ve contributed to something that is up and running across West Yorkshire. And hopefully they will gain a qualification from it as well from being part of the panel.”

PEER COMMISSIONERS’ TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 1

1. GET THE RIGHT STAFF

The project facilitator is key to the success of the project. It is important that the facilitator works with an organisation that has a demonstrated history of working with people with lived experience. They must create a comfortable and safe environment as we need to have that trust to get through the door.

2. CREATE A GOOD GROUP

During recruitment, it is essential to be selective and recruit team members that will create a positive group environment that respects one another and will be able to stay the course of the programme as a team.

3. HAVE A CUT-OFF POINT FOR RECRUITMENT

There should be no additions to the team after the team has started to work towards the qualification and developing their knowledge. Integrating new members into the group could be difficult and may disrupt the advancement of others. As a mitigation, those that are interested in taking part after this phase can be recruited for the next cohort.

4. BE SUPPORTIVE DURING DISCLOSURE

Disclosing your lived experience can be difficult. It is important that the individual is disclosing to somebody with lived experience that they have already met two or three times. There must be support available after the session such as debriefing sessions with trained staff.

STAGE 2: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

“What we were doing before in the training, we split into little groups and if we didn't understand something somebody else will help. so, there's always something that someone will always not understand, other people around the room will help.”

STAGE 2 OVERVIEW

During Stage 2 of the project, peer commissioners worked towards an NFCE Level 1 qualification in peer commissioning. A User Voice facilitator-led sessions on an introduction to the commissioning process, evaluating tenders, and scoring bids.

Staff from both User Voice and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority led sessions to develop understanding in areas relevant to this specific procurement such as restorative justice.

The slides below were taken from the sessions led by User Voice during the training for the NFCE Level 1 qualification.

Q: Overall, how would you rate the training phase of the project whilst working towards your NFCE Level 1?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

EVALUATION SESSION 2

Today's session

- Knowing how a Peer Commissioner should evaluate a tender
- Understanding a Peer Commissioners obligation
- How to participate in a Consensus Meeting

USER VOICE **NCFE**

NCFE Level 1 – Peer Commissioning

Unit 1 – Introduction to commissioning

- Completed in advance of any commissioning activity

Unit 2 – The role of a Peer Commissioner and Tender Evaluation

- Completed in advance of any commissioning activity

Unit 3 – Peer Commissioning: Longer term impact

- Completed once the learner has participated in any tender evaluations

What are the 5 Rs? **USER VOICE**

- A great way to understand the Restorative Justice process is to look at it through the lens of the 5 R's:
- Relationship,
- Respect,
- Responsibility,
- Repair,
- Reintegration

Peer commissioners emphasised the patience of User Voice staff and their ability to facilitate sessions in an accessible and easily understandable manner. Everyone agreed that the training sessions fostered a sense of camaraderie, enhancing their learning experience. Those who initially felt nervous about how they would be perceived by others were reassured during this phase of the programme.

“Group work well together, lesson taught in a manner in which I could understand, Taught very well.”

“Based on my apprehensions and nervousness at the beginning, especially with the disclosure, would I be safe, what would the others think of me, I was soon put at ease my confidence raised and my nervousness disappeared.”

“The training helped me to understand and appreciate the process of commissioning it also brought the group together and enabled us to value the gifts that each of us bring to the process.”

KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

After the peer commissioners completed the training phase of the project, we asked them about their understanding of what they had learned.

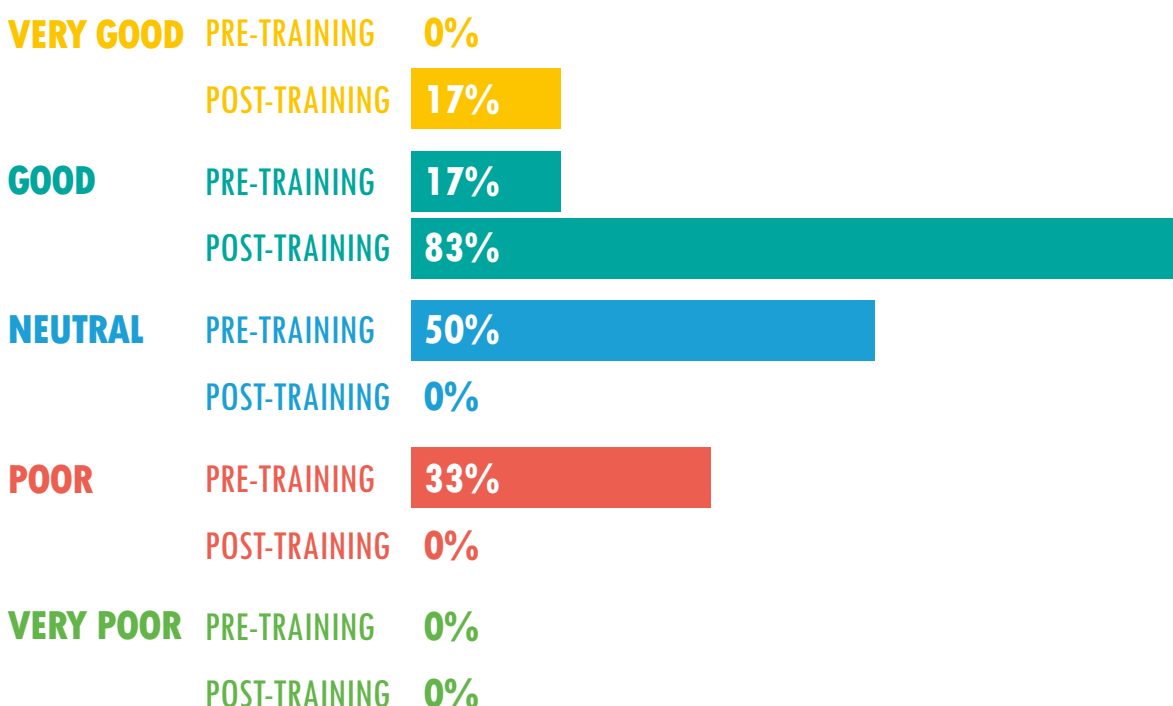
When asked, what the peer commissioners know about the commissioning process that they did not know before the Stage 2 training, most said they now know how to score different bids and that they understand what commissioning service providers means. A few mentioned that they will learn more and better when doing the procuring in practice. While some few also mentioned they are now more familiar and appreciative of restorative justice, which has the potential to help victims and perpetrators.

“I didn’t know much about the peer commissioning process, but now I know how the bids are scored and process of commissioning goods and services.”

“I have a fair understanding of the process, but I think I will gain more experience doing it rather than writing about it. Doing things practically instils into my head rather than reading and writing about it, putting it into action.”

“I have an appreciation of the restorative justice and commissioning process; however, I don’t think that until start doing properly will I start to fully understand it.”

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of the commissioning process?



Q: How would you rate your current understanding of the process to evaluate tenders?

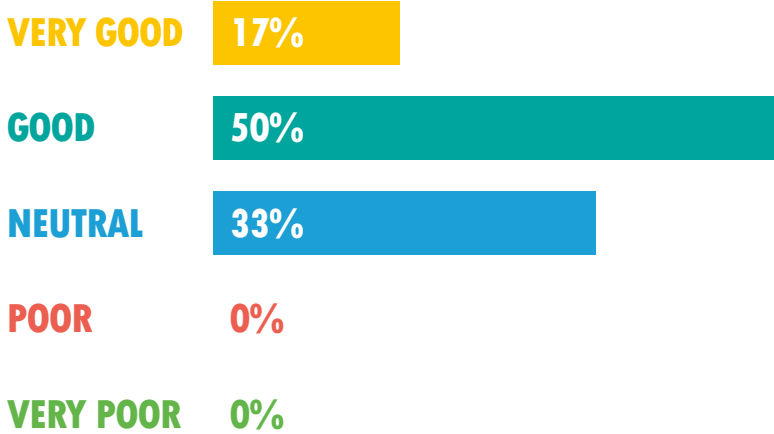


The peer commissioners were asked what they had learned about evaluating tenders in Stage 2. Most explained how they now understand that the evaluation criteria changes depending on the service that is being commissioned. While some said that they were still learning about the process.

“I know about the criteria used to evaluate bidders and understand that the criteria will change depending on the different types of goods being commissioned.”

“I’m still learning how to evaluate tenders, but I have more understanding than I did before.”

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of evaluating the potential service provider that is going to be commissioned?



When asked what they now know about evaluating a potential service provider that they didn’t know before the Stage 2 training, most peer commissioners said that they just

know slightly more than before and that they are still learning. One peer said they have learned that they “will use the scoring criteria to evaluate the tender”.

PEER COMMISSIONERS' EXPERIENCE OF STAGE 2

Due to the clear communication and people skills of User Voice staff, all peer commissioners agreed that the program was delivered in a clear and understandable manner.

Q: How would you rate how the programme has been delivered so far?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

“Yes, the course was delivered well and made things that maybe weren’t initially understood, we would go through it more thoroughly until everyone understood it better.”

“There was no legal [language], everything was put in an understandable way.”

“What we were doing before in the training, we split into little groups and if we didn’t understand something somebody else will help. so, there’s always something that someone will always not understand, other people around the room will help.”

“I think all of it really, there’s not been a bad part about it. the whole process has been good with guidance from Chrissie and Dan. I don’t think anyone was prepared for how intense it’s been, but it’s been quite clear.”

All peer commissioners reported that they enjoyed working together, noting that the experience enhanced their social skills and boosted their confidence. The strong teamwork within the group enabled them to assist each other to better understand what was being taught to them.

Learning how to work as a team was the most mentioned skill that the group had gained during Stage 2. They spoke about learning to take other people’s opinions into consideration while also having the confidence to share and to value their own. This, they told us, had improved their self-confidence and self-esteem.

“Yeah, I agree, we are a good team. If anyone is struggling, we pick each other up.”

“I’ve enjoyed the discussions with other ex-convicts about what works and doesn’t work in the justice system.”

“It’s been a very good positive engaging experience, and everyone has been a pleasure to work with. All our opinions have been valued and heard in a non-judgemental manner.”

“Developed more team working skills, personal development, my self-confidence, and it’s helped me believe more in my ability to be a valued part of this project.”

“Definitely more confidence, I speak a lot more. I felt imposter syndrome, ‘do I deserve to be here getting these big opportunities’, but now I feel like I do.”

Most peer commissioners did not want to change anything about the process so far. Some mentioned that the group can get noisy and wished there were a way to tackle that more efficiently.

“I struggled with that [noise]. if I’m working, I struggle with dyslexia so when people are talking my concentrations levels are gone.”

When reflecting after the project’s completion, peer commissioners told us that they would change some aspects of the knowledge development phase of the programme. Although most were happy with the training materials, some told us that they could have been more engaging and interesting.

“Perhaps look again at the training materials. They were not always clear or interesting enough.”

“I think some of the training manuals could have been a bit easier to understand.”

Also, whilst reflecting at the end of the programme, peer commissioners told us that they weren’t well informed enough regarding restorative justice and more sessions should have been held to improve their knowledge. They told us that it is imperative to have a deep understanding of the topic that is being commissioned and although it was covered well at the start, it could have been embedded throughout the process to reinforce their knowledge base.

“I think more time should be given to the restorative side of the subject during the training so we have a better knowledge of what we expect the tender to provide.”

“Maybe a little more understanding of the restorative justice process itself would have helped us understand the way in which the service currently operates.”

STAKEHOLDERS’ EXPERIENCE OF STAGE 2

WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority were impressed how the group have a good understanding of the relatively complex concepts of ‘commissioning’ and ‘procurement’ after Stage 2. They told us that the peer commissioners seem very interested and invested in the topic and the whole process.

“I think my expectations have been met or if not, succeeded. I think we’ve got a small group of peer commissioners who are engaged, enthusiastic, they understand what is asked, they’re eager about the work and they’ve just been little groups of themselves, they’re doing the work. I can’t explain the passion they’ve got for this work and I think on paper if you looked at this work you’d think “what’s commissioning?”

“They have questions to ask that feel like they kind of understand that concept, they’ve got the grasp of that concept, not that I would have expected anything different but we know from our profession that both commissioning and procurement can be quite complex and quite technical and they kinda got it and that really came through today and just that kind of vibe in the room really of their really invested in it and still interested in that topic.”

Staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority talked about the benefits of using lived experienced peers, stating that the peer commissioners are asking questions that they themselves would have never even taught about.

“They’re asking questions that I wouldn’t think of and that’s the level of their understanding, but it also shows their coming from a different perspective than I am and that’s when you know that they’re asking questions and you’re like “I didn’t think of that.””

“User Voice staff, and their ability to make sure everyone was talking about the same issue and understood each other, was said to be a key element for the success of the programme.”

“Chrissie especially does it – I will say something, she reads the room and she will then either repeat it back to me or check, she’ll ask me a question in a different way so I say it in a different way so that she knows she’s not leaving anybody in that room behind. Fantastic facilitation and techniques and skills there and I think that’s why it’s important that we are working with User Voice.”

Furthermore, discussing the Stage 2 training delivery, staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority were complementary about how User Voice staff were able to cater for everyone’s individual needs and learning abilities.

“Chrissie has catered to everyone’s needs and how different people are learning, she understands what information they need as a group and I think it’s seeing that and how everyone’s still picks up different bits from the way they learn as well.”

The programme timeframe and the translation of technical and jargon language, in the commissioning and procurement world were issues that WYCA staff were most worried about during Stage 2.

“I think I’m worried about the shrinking timeframe; I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t, we battle with this all the time because we’re under pressure all the time.”

“... it’s very easy for me in my everyday job and my everyday language that I start to fall into that [using technical language]. I’m being really mindful of trying not to slip into the technicality of it.”

USER VOICE

The project facilitators from User Voice told us that to deliver such training to people with lived experience, you need to be empathetic and deliver the programme tailored to their individual needs and ways of learning.

“I think it’s down to the tutor, how you present yourself, I’m aware that the mature clients- the people that have gone through a harrowing time, they’re aware they’ve put other people through a harrowing time but we let them know that actually that doesn’t really matter, at this point, we’re looking at them as individuals and as part of their progression.”

“We were prepared for that and identified the different learning needs, so what I did was spoke as a group, and luckily it’s a group that all get on well together, we’ve just got this very relaxed atmosphere in the room.”

“And then they’ve identified different ways of learning so as an example one struggled, really struggled with hearing and sight so I do his work in a bigger text, so his handouts were always in a bigger text so he could read them, we split into separate groups within the groups because of hearing aspects that sometimes if someone’s talking over there but that groups talking over there, they could hear so we split the tables so there was a bigger difference.”

“We’ve identified people who work together well and ensured that they have been paired up in certain groups. Also any people who didn’t see eye to eye were ensured that they were kept separate and also the person delivering the information was to suited to the person with the lowest capacity to take the information in.”

Even at this early stage, User Voice staff noticed the difference being on the program made to some of the peer commissioners’ lives. The main facilitator told of how excited the peer commissioners were to work towards a qualification.

“One person came in, and he’s not old, he’s middle aged and he was like “my life is over, my life as I know it is over, everybody just

thinks I'm scum." He's not long been out of prison, he was still on a tag, nothing was going right for him, very very emotional and sat there and said "I don't know why I'm fucking here." However, we've nurtured him, and his confidence has absolutely excelled, and we've actually seen the true person now, not the person he was. And he himself has said how much his confidence is grown, because he feels valued as an individual."

"Very good, he missed the first session because he was on holiday, so he was a bit concerned about coming in last minute. It wasn't a problem, and we had a few discussions about it. He struggled sometimes with confidence so putting him in at ease and making him feel comfortable. Letting him know that were not here to judge and that any contribution is helpful."

"As one person said "the only certificate I ever had is my birth certificate." So to get awarded from the Mayor of West Yorkshire a certificate to say that he's completed the peer commissioning NCFE level 1, he's very very excited."

User Voice staff reflected on the changes they made whilst delivering the training and what they would do differently.

"It's very much a learning process because it was the first time. The changes I would make regarding the handouts and the handbooks ... the workbooks arrived and there was no handouts so I had to physically then go and personally photocopy the handouts and all the other documentation that we needed, which worked out a lot really - I won't be doing that again."

"I think we should allow for catchup times. ... The next group might need more time working off the flip charts in a classroom setting, do you know what I mean? ... I think we should be aware that everybody learns and is learning at a different level and at a different speed and that perhaps we need a little bit more time on recapping and catching up."

TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 2

1. DOUGHNUTS! - LITTLE THINGS GO A LONG WAY

The lead facilitator brought sweet treats and snacks to each session. Such little things created a positive environment and helped the sessions run smoothly.

2. ICEBREAKERS

Each session started with an icebreaker which was a great welcome into the session. The icebreakers were often an opportunity for people to speak in a room full of people which improved the confidence of people and pushed them. It also let everyone get to know each other better.

3. MAKE IT FUN

Learning and working towards a qualification needs to be taken seriously but it can also be fun, using interactive activities for example. The terms used can often be complex and it's important that it's explained in plain language and in a way that everyone can understand - you can only go as fast as your slowest learner.

4. REFLECTION IS IMPORTANT

As part of capturing the learning for the project, we were asked to reflect on our experience which was very beneficial. It allowed us to think more about what we have done which both improved our confidence and felt rewarding. This feedback could come in the form of feedback forms and/or group debrief sessions that can be used as a tool to improve the programme for future cohorts.

CELEBRATING THE QUALIFICATION

"We were welcomed and affirmed as valued members of the commissioning team. The Mayor was very supportive and expressed her interest in using people with lived experience in the Combined Authority's activities."

As a celebration for achieving their NFCE Level 1 qualification in commissioning, peer commissioners were invited by the Major of West Yorkshire to a presentation evening in Leeds. The event was attended by User Voice staff as well as key figures from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority including the Major and the Deputy Major of Policing and Crime.

PEER COMMISSIONERS' EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENTATION EVENING

Q: How beneficial to you was the preparation and taking part in the presentation evening with the mayor?

COMPLETELY 100%

SOMEWHAT 0%

VERY LITTLE 0%

NOT AT ALL 0%

Peer Commissioners told us that they took pride in being presented with their qualifications by the Major. Many peer commissioners described it as the highlight of the project so far.

"It's like recognition for your hard work, we've done all the training, we've worked hard, we've listened, we've done it all. It's nice just to be given a certificate, just to say look you've achieved this thing, you know, you've accomplished what you set out to accomplish. So it was nice to see that."

"It's another thing in your life that you're achieving stuff, what you want to achieve and how you can help other people to achieve a better life."

"It was great to meet the mayor, and I was impressed how interested she was."

"It was a great experience, I learnt that the mayor is so focused on restorative justice."

"It's good to know how much this project means to the Mayor and that people have

confidence in our abilities to get this right, this boosted my confidence."

"Very warm, I was impressed by the fact she seemed interested. You expect the Mayor to just turn up and "yeah you alright next!" off to the next appointment but she genuinely seemed interested in what we were doing. She was actually asking questions and wanted to know about how we come to be here, she's genuinely interested in what's going on."

One peer commissioner spoke about his pride at being able describe complex terms whilst speaking at the market engagement event. He felt like he was able to represent himself and his group in a way that wouldn't have been possible in the past.

"I have developed an understanding of the complexity of the language used to describe the process. I was also able to represent the project in clear terms to the Mayor at the presentation evening which would have been daunting to me in the past."

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESENTATION EVENING

Six members of from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority attended the presentation evening including the Deputy Major of Police and Crime and the Majoy of West Yorkshire. Staff told us that the attendance of both to present the qualifications to the peer commissioners gave validation to their efforts and made sure they knew their involvement wasn't tokenistic.

"It was a positive experience. Having the Mayor and Deputy Mayor there demonstrated that this process was serious. It validated their participation in it, it made them aware that this wasn't tokenistic."

"Backed by the mayor her being there really sort of hits home that this is important to her and the Police and Crime Plan."

All members of staff that we spoke to told us that their favourite part of the evening was listening to the stories of the peer commissioners. Some staff members told us that they don't get to hear from people with lived experience often and thought it was valuable.

"Listening to their experiences. It was quite emotional listening to their aspirations for the future."

"I spent a lot of my time working at a level where I don't get out and about and meet people on the ground a great deal, so it was really good for me, I really enjoyed it. It made a lasting impression on me."

"The energy in the room felt positive and they were really inquisitive. We had the certificate presentation and had gift bags for them as well. It was a good feel factor and a nicely timed event."

"Hearing each of the peer commissioners talk about what it meant to them was my favourite part... It was just a powerful journey they've gone through where their voice now matters and they feel valued for it. It felt like a real process which is great. Seeing them getting their certificates and interacting with the Mayor."

"I felt like I was amongst friends that evening, they were really generous with their time and their stories which I appreciated. I share my story all the time and I really appreciate when other people tell their stories"

Very few areas for improvement were noted by staff members at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. However, the Deputy Major told us that she would have liked the peer commissioners to take more ownership of the evening and lead proceedings rather than the staff at User Voice.

"It's probably where they were at, they did rely on Chrstine, she did a lot of the talking. They were a bit shy. So, I'd like to see them next time leading, chairing, welcoming us to the room then we join. They should be more active and take ownership of it. Thats the manifestation of their confidence being maximised isn't it. And actually it was their meeting, we were visitors and guests. Christine led it. She's lovely, but going forward, all our public meetings should be chaired and lead by service users."

PEER COMMISSIONERS' TOP TIPS FOR THE PRESENTATION EVENING

1. INVITE A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

Achieving a qualification is a big moment for the peer commissioners and the presentation evening is an opportunity for them to celebrate with their family and friends. There should at least be a plus-one for each peer commissioner on the evening – two people would be even better!

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MAYOR'S ATTENDANCE

It's important to have the Mayor and/or other key influencers and contributors at the presentation evening to listen to those with lived experience. This celebrates the involvement of lived experience and makes it known that our work is recognised and valued.

3. LISTEN TO WHAT THE PEER COMMISSIONERS WANT FROM THE SESSION

The event should be co-designed with the peer commissioners. It's an opportunity to celebrate but also to share our stories. It's important that this is done right.



STAGE 3: DEVELOPING SCENARIOS AND QUESTIONS

STAGE 3 OVERVIEW

In this stage, peer commissioners contributed to both the service specification and the invitation to tender for the procurement of restorative justice services in West Yorkshire.

Peer commissioners met with stakeholders from User Voice and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to draft two questions for the invitation to tender. The peer commissioners brainstormed eight ideas to be included which were then whittled down by the group with the guidance of the stakeholders in the room who knew what could and what couldn't be included in the invitation to tender. However, it was important to everyone in the room that these questions came directly from those with lived experience.

A scenario was also drafted by the peer commissioners to be answered by the bidders when they came to present their bids to the peer commissioners.

"We were given a voice, we were listened to and that's a massive thing. Everyone took our views on board. We were given an opportunity to have our questions in there and it's a serious thing. It took us a while to decide on our questions but we did it."

"We were invited by WYCA to develop a question to go to those wishing to tender. We also decided in consultation with WYCA to develop a scenario which could provide the opportunity for those tendering to describe their work and their attitude to those with lived experience."

"We were asked to ask questions on how they would provide a service. We were guided as how to word the questions but weren't told we had to say this or that which made me feel more a part of the process."

"We brainstormed ideas of what question we thought would be one of the most important to ask, in order to gain a understanding of how the bidders would appropriately respond to the scenario presented."

"I've asked questions in the past on whatever subject I've been involved in but this was different. You had to think of questions that would hopefully help the tenders offer a better service to the users. So I suppose thinking outside the box is a skill I've learned."

SCENARIO QUESTION

What would be your solution if the two parties could not meet on the arranged day due to the offender not being available at short notice due to the prison going into lockdown?

Please include:

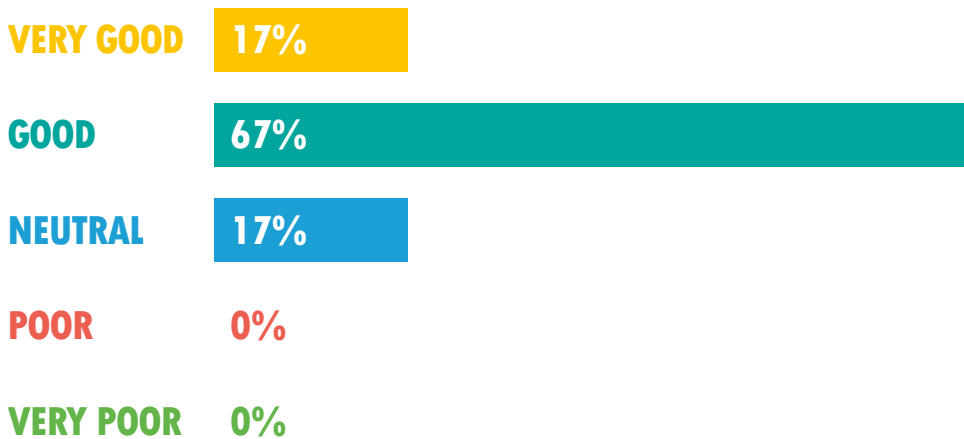
- Your communication approach with all parties involved, include identifying all parties.
- Working relationships with the prison staff, including their roles and how you will establish that relationship.
- How you will ensure your approach is respectful to all parties involved
- How you would define a positive outcome in this scenario.
- Timeframes in managing this scenario.

Q: Overall, how would you rate your experience when developing the questions and scenario to be included in the invitation to tender?



PEER COMMISSIONERS' EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND A SCENARIO FOR THE INVITATION TO TENDER

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of developing questions for potential bidders?



Five of the six peer commissioners rated their understanding of developing questions for potential bidders as either 'Good' or 'Very Good'. Peer commissioners told us that through the process they learned what would make an appropriate or inappropriate question to ask.

"I know there's some questions that are not suitable to ask, and that some questions may need to be adjusted to be more clear and precise."

Q: How would you rate how the support received whilst developing the questions and scenario to be included in the invitation to tender?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

All peer commissioners described the support they received in Stage 3 as 'Very Good.' Representatives from User Voice and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority were both present for the sessions. Peer commissioners told us that they had an effective working relationship with staff from both parties and were integral to the success of Stage 3.

"The staff from User Voice and the staff from WYCA were vital in encouraging and guiding us."

"The staff at User Voice have been very good at making sure we know what we are doing and West Yorkshire combined authority made us feel valued and committed and gave us all the help and information they could."

"I felt that, although with some scepticism on my part at first, they gave us an equal part to play without undermining our opinions."

"I felt included, listened to and part of the team."

The peer commissioners told us there were no suggested areas of improvement for Stage 3 and that it was enjoyable, and they felt a sense of achievement by having their say. They told us that having direct input into the invitation to tender made them feel valued and that they had an opportunity to make a difference to both the invitation to tender and the contract itself.

Being actively involved in question development opened the eyes of some peer commissioners to

how big of a part they played in the procurement of restorative justice services in West Yorkshire.

"I think today has really opened my eyes fully to the responsibility that has been entrusted in our opinion."

"Changing and adapting the question to make sure that all peer commissioners are agreed with it was the most enjoyable part."

"The sense of achievement in developing a question and scenario that were acceptable to the WYCA."

"Seeing all our work develop in to a well thought out and planned scenario was my favourite part."

"Feeling a valued part of the process."

Peer commissioners told us that the positive team environment is what made developing questions and scenarios a success. Everybody had the respect and space to voice their opinions when coming to a consensus on the outcomes.

"It was marvellous to work together to produce something worthy to be part of the tendering process."

"Very good. Everyone had something to say and we all worked very well together."

"I have really enjoyed working with them. We all have different ideas but no one says we're going to do it this way or that, we always worked it out between us which I feel is important."

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF THE PEER COMMISSIONERS DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND SCENARIOS FOR THE INVITATION TO TENDER

The project lead at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority only took positives from the sessions to develop questions for the invitation to tender and developing a scenario for the potential bidders to address in their presentations. She told us that the peer commissioners were open to adapting their ideas to make them more suitable.

“It was a great session around those questions and they were really open to me being able to say to them we can’t actually ask about, so an example was what would they do to make sure restorative justice session could happen if prisons were in lockdown, actually there’s nothing they can do is the prison is in lockdown so we actually reshaped that question is said what if something didn’t go to planning the day so that happens that’s more of a realistic situation.”

“The scenario planning was a great addition, we weren’t going have a scenario based question at the bidders presentations initially, but it came out of the group session and I’m really pleased that the presentation would be there, because if we were to run a normal presentation, it would just be the fundamentals of those professionals... but for them to run a scenario and to be able to get the value from that and I think the way these providers will present that scenario and I know that in that room they won’t have the wool pulled over their eyes.”

PEER COMMISSIONERS’ TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 3:

1. DEVELOP MORE QUESTIONS THAN YOU NEED INITIALLY

Develop six to eight questions from a lived experience perspective in the group and then come together with stakeholders to decide what the best questions and scenarios are to include.

2. GUIDANCE IS IMPORTANT

There’s a necessity to have the right guidance in the room. We have the ideas but it’s important that we are supported by people know how to frame the questions and understand the legality and reasoning for not being able to ask certain questions.

3. TRUST THE PEER COMMISSIONERS

There’s no need to put words in our mouths. You have to trust our lived experience and our perspective. This is where you will find true value from our inclusion. If it’s done right, we will come away feeling trusted, included and respected.



STAGE 4: MARKET ENGAGEMENT EVENT

"The way they're dealing with us as a person now, compared to what you would be when you were in prison. You don't get classed as a criminal and stuff like that. You're getting classed as a person now, and like your voice is being heard."

STAGE 4 OVERVIEW

The majority of Stage 4 was focused on the market engagement event in which potential bidders were invited to come to a session ran by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to learn more about the procurement of restorative justice services in West Yorkshire.

The event was co-produced with the peer commissioners. They played a key role in the event and presented a slide deck about their involvement in the commissioning process. Prior to the event, User Voice staff supported the peer commissioners to develop the slide deck and scripts used on the day.

"The members of the group of peer commissioners have become very close to one another through this process. We have come to value each other's strengths and gifts. I have no doubt that we shall be able to acquit ourselves fairly as peer commissioners. I have learned to value the other members of the group."

"My confidence is developing each time I come."

"The project has come a long way. It feels like it's coming together very well and I have learned a lot."

"So very happy to be involved in the whole process."

Q: Overall, how would you rate the benefit of your experiences in phase three?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

PEER COMMISSIONERS' EXPERIENCE OF THE MARKET ENGAGEMENT EVENT

Q: How beneficial to you was the preparation and taking part in the market engagement event?

COMPLETELY 100%

SOMEWHAT 0%

VERY LITTLE 0%

NOT AT ALL 0%

All peer commissioners reported that the preparation and taking part in the market engagement event was beneficial. One peer

commissioner told us that the in-depth preparation allowed them to perform more easily while presenting.

OUR ROLE

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

We represent service users and offer a unique perspective in the commissioning process of restorative justice services.

We use our lived experience to make sure the potential providers are going to deliver the best service possible for both victims and perpetrators of crime.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?

We have come together as a strong and cohesive team.

During training we have demonstrated that we have an excellent understanding of the scoring process and are skilled commissioners in our own right.

We have developed questions to ask you and a scoring matrix that reflects our lived experience.

WHY ARE WE QUALIFIED?

We are qualified through our life experience.

On top of this we have been trained by User Voice in the commissioning process.

We have achieved an NFCE Level 1 qualification in the commissioning process through User Voice.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We will provide you with a brief of our role and involvement in the commissioning process.

We will provide you with a scenario of the kind of challenges you might face and would like you to state how you would deal with the situation.

We will provide you with one question ahead of time that you can plan for.

We will be fully involved with questioning on the day of tender presentations.

“Just rehearsing what we were going to say and what’s going to happen, just so we know what to expect. If we just turned up here without any prep it would have been difficult. The fact that we went through it all, we had a script and we all knew what we were going to say and what we expect them to say, it helped us out didn’t it? It was easier.”

“The preparation for the event built up my confidence so that I was able to speak in public. I was able to see and value the professionalism of the West Yorkshire Commissioning Team.”

“We rehearsed what would happen on the meeting and what our roles would be.”

For some peer commissioners, speaking at the market engagement event made the process come to life. One person told us that although he is naturally sceptical, he had gained trust in the process as the project progressed. As such, peer commissioners reported feeling welcomed and valued members of the wider commissioning team.

“Personally, today my scepticism has not totally flown away, about the whole of all these projects, however it is diminishing because like now I feel as though like you say, today’s made it real, and today you think to yourself like actually, they are listening to us, they’re not just like using us as a tick box.”

“Julia, Catherine and Jay made us feel welcome and that we were valued members of the commissioning team.”

“It’s helping me be more confident when speaking out in front of new people.”

“I feel that today has been really productive and personally feel that our voice is actually being heard.”

“There’s something there about being valued, Not just from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority people, but also by the bidders, the people coming in as well. They saw us as an intrinsic part of the process.”

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF THE MARKET ENGAGEMENT EVENT

WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority told us that they were impressed by the presenting skills of the peer commissioners which reflected how well prepared they were.

“I think the lead up to the preparation was really good, hopefully it was clear why we were doing the event and what we would be saying, and what would be done with UserVoice for them to prepare for their presentation.”

“The way they introduce themselves and give a description and kind of the background, and I really liked the way they sectioned out why it is this important, and why are we qualified and really putting the value around it. So I’m hoping what came across is that we are not just doing this to tick box and that they’re are fundamental part of it.”

“What I really liked was that each of them introduce themselves in a different way, in a very personal way, it also gave an opportunity for those suppliers that we are targeting to understand the importance of central role that there playing.”

The market engagement event was the first time one staff member of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority was involved in the project. She told us that by taking part, she saw both the need and benefit of involving lived experience in the commissioning process.

“People with lived experience have a unique perspective on how people want to be engaged with how the service could be tailored to work for them someone who hasn’t been there and hasn’t been through the same kind of experience usually would not be able to deliver a service that works, think it’s interesting yeah it does provide a unique perspective.”

“They really bring it to life and they each bring a different experience of it. Different ages, they’ve been through different crime types, their time served is different, so they bring a whole different kind of dynamics to it and it’s just a very honest opinion.”

USER VOICE

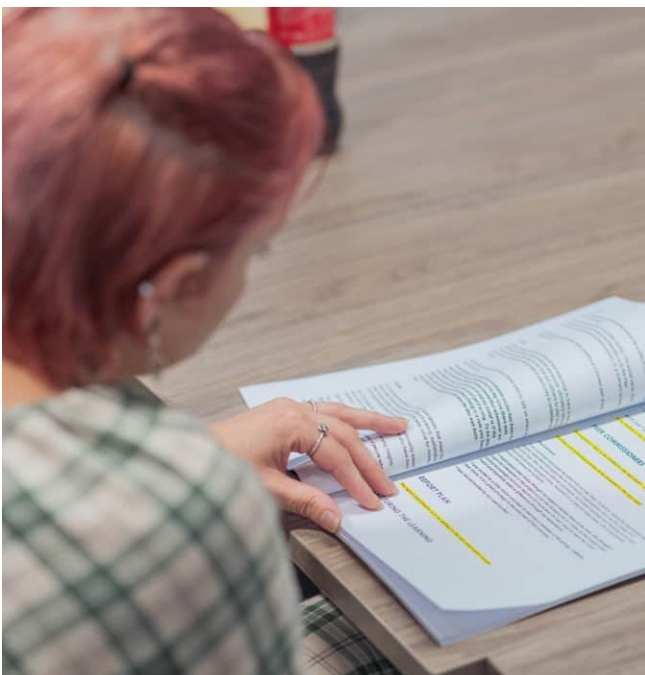
One staff member from User Voice attended both the preparation for the market engagement event and the event itself. He told us that although he facilitated the session, it was important that the peer commissioners took ownership of the script and the presentation slides.

“We made sure that, yes, we used a User Voice template for the slides but it was important that they chose the content, they decided what to say. It’s their project at the end of the day.”

Given that the peer commissioners had limited public speaking experience, the representative from User Voice expressed how impressed he was by the performance of the peer commissioners when presenting.

“We shouldn’t underestimate the pressure of public speaking and presenting. I know it gets to me sometimes and I do it often. Many of the peer researchers haven’t had much experience in presenting to professionals, and the ones that had, hadn’t done so for a long time. Taking that into consideration, they should be proud of their performance. It was faultless.”

“I thought it was interesting that most of the questions asked by potential bidders were for the peer commissioners themselves.”



PEER COMMISSIONERS’ TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 4

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PEER COMMISSIONERS SPEAKING AT THE EVENT

It’s important that those in the room with lived experience speak. We believe it humanises the involvement of lived experience in the peer commissioning process. It makes it known to the potential bidders that we are active contributors, and our involvement holds weight in the decision making.

2. FULLY PREPARE PEER COMMISSIONERS FOR THE EVENT

Peer commissioners need to be well supported. Communication of the plan for the day is crucial, as well as house rules on what can be said and what cannot.

3. SUPPORT PEER COMMISSIONERS TO PUT TOGETHER PRESENTATION SLIDES AND A SCRIPT.

It’s imperative that peer commissioners present at the market engagement event, but they may not have the skills to do so. Therefore, support must be offered in putting together both a script and slide deck for the day whilst still representing the voice of the peer commissioners. Practice makes perfect and peer commissioners should be supported during practice runs.

STAGE 5: SCORING TRAINING

“Each member of the team has their own experience and gifts to offer the group. As a whole, we are greater than the sum of our parts.”

STAGE 5 OVERVIEW

Stage 5 offered an opportunity for the peer commissioners to learn more about the specific scoring process they would be using when assessing bids for restorative justice services in West Yorkshire.

This stage came with challenges as one team member had to withdraw and the main project facilitator of the project being unable to take part in sessions due to illness. As a result, staff from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority took a more active role in leading some scoring sessions.

All peer commissioners rated their experience in Stage 5 as ‘Very Good.’ All mentioned that they enjoyed getting further insight into the scoring process and that it developed their confidence for what laid ahead.

“I am learning more than I thought, more confident building.”

“I’ve enjoyed learning about the scoring process a bit more in the class with Jay.”

Despite having a good understanding of the process, some peer commissioners still told us that they are nervous to put what they had learned into practice.

“I still am nervous because it’s new. It’s gonna be a big day.”

“I think on the day if you have the scoring guide with you to help you there, I mean you can’t remember every damn thing all the time.”

Q: Overall, how would you rate stage five of the project and the benefit of your experiences in stage five?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

PEER COMMISSIONERS' EXPERIENCE OF STAGE 5

Through Stage 4 the peer commissioners continued to work effectively as a team and came to regard the group as "a strong and cohesive unit" and "as family."

"I've been continuing to learn how to work effectively as a team. Seeing us all grow in confidence together has been a great journey and being recognised for our work."

"In the time we have worked together, we have become a strong and cohesive unit."

"Nervous to be in the group at first but now I consider them all, especially the mentors, as family."

"Having a great team helps with everything."

The delivery of Phase 5 was facilitated by both User Voice members of staff and staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Commissioning and Contracts Officer at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority delivered a session to reinforce the peer commissioners' understanding of the scoring and evaluation process. This session included a refresher on: the procurement process, marking principles, the marking scheme, evaluation documents, scoring criteria and insight into the

Peer commissioners described the delivery of the training from both organisations as "excellent."

Q: How would you rate how the support you have received in phase five of the programme?

VERY GOOD 100%

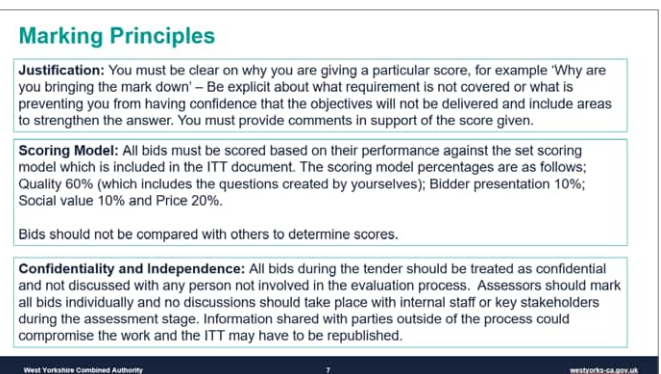
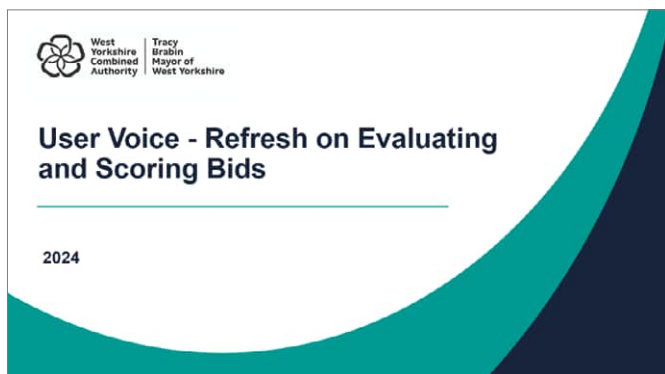
GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

The images below were taken from the slide deck from the refresher session.



“The whole experience was excellent. Chrissie explained things simply and concisely.”

“The leaders have been most welcoming and helpful in explaining how we should do the scoring. This made me feel that I was a valued member of the team due to my lived experience.”

“Phase four was taught really well until we all understood it fully.”

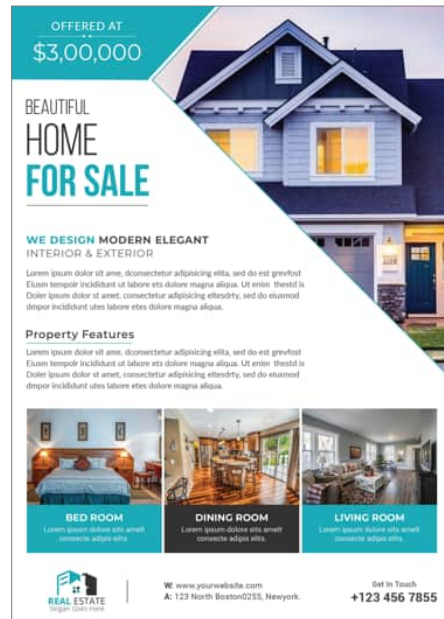
“It has been delivered very understandably, they take time for others.”

“Delivery was clear and concise. Chrissie is brilliant as a mentor, her passion and commitment is inspiring.”

“Julia has been generous in sharing her experience and insights in a way that was enormously helpful for understanding the process. Chrissie was wonderfully warm and supportive to the group, not least through the provision of doughnuts.”

“It’s easy to be taught something like you’re at school and there’s like a teacher – Chrissie’s just like a normal lass, she wants us to do well.”

The group praised a training session designed for them to better understand the need for deliberation during consensus meetings. These sessions used real life examples, such as comparing different perspectives on housing market, to debate people’s contrasting views and coming to a consensus



“Well I think the lesson that day was about how one person can score on a bid at a certain point but another person reading the same bid might score it

completely different because each person looks for certain things in a bid. Chrissie gave us different houses to look at and we all said our preference. So, the thing that Chrissie showed us was that in houses, everybody can look at a house and go “yeah that house is great, I’ll have it,” but next man won’t like that house. So five different people could score bids completely different based on what they look for, their own criteria.”

“Then we sat as a group and discussed each house and we came to a consensus, just like scoring the bids. Some of us adjusted our scores. I mean, I thought after talking to the other people, I’d been too harsh.”

Q: How would you rate your current understanding of evaluating and scoring bids?

VERY GOOD 20%

GOOD 60%

NEUTRAL 20%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

Four out of the five peer commissioners rated their understanding of evaluating and scoring bids as 'Good' or 'Very Good' after the scoring training. The sessions improved their overall knowledge and confidence to score bids. For example, peer commissioners learned the need to score each bid separately and not comparing bids during the scoring process.

"The training helped me understand the complexity of the bids and how much work goes into it."

"I know more about the way the scoring process works and how to apply my knowledge in practice a little more confidentiality."

"I now understand the principles of examining each bid separately."

All peer commissioners reported having gained skills in Stage 5. They told us that outside of increasing their understanding of scoring bids and the necessary terminology, their experience further improved their confidence and communication skills which for some has improved their mental health.

"I have learned to score bids which is building up my confidence."

"My communication skills have improved enormously, and it has helped my mentality."

"I have developed an understanding of the complexity of the language used to describe the process. I was also able to represent the project in clear terms to the Mayor at the presentation evening which would have been daunting to me in the past."

"Learning more and more about the process, all our confidence growing."

The technical language used in the documentation for the bids was seen as a big challenge in Stage 5. However, the peer commissioners stated the supportive team environment and the simple and comparative way the bid was broken down resulted in a good understanding.

"It's been really enjoyable, a little frustrating at times when I've been unsure if I'm understanding things properly but I've then been reassured of my capabilities."

"I think some of the very technical kind of language we had to deal with from the council has not been easy to deal with. But the way in which it is being presented has been very positive and very helpful I think."

"I think if one of us didn't understand something then there's lots of people that can explain it and help and make sure everybody understands it properly."

As the project progressed, peer commissioners began to understand the sense of responsibility on their shoulders. Peer commissioners told us that they're not used to having a sense of responsibility after being in prison and it is both scary and something they feel value.

"To come out of prison where you've had no responsibility for however many years you've been in and then to come out and have this on your shoulders, is a great responsibility but I think we've all risen to the challenge."

"We've got to get it right, that's our responsibility. Obviously, we don't have the entire say who gets the contract but our contribution is valuable."

"I think it's scary having that amount of responsibility but I think after the event we did and seeing the confidence that people have got in us to do this right and to get it right, that made me think well yeah and it helped my confidence."



Q: How would you rate how the support you have received in stage five of the programme?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

After Stage 4, peer commissioners reported having a positive relationship with the key staff members from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority was key to their progression.

"I think when Julia first came in and introduced herself I think we were all a little bit in awe of her and her role in what she does. Once she settled down she came across as one of us."

"It's easy for people in charge or authorities to sort of look down on people like us and be above us but Julia's been great, she's treated us like colleagues."

As scoring the bids was just around the corner, peer commissioners were excited to put what they've learned into practice.



"The tender and scoring, both excites me but also makes me nervous. Knowing that what I do can help people to move forward with their lives, victim and perpetrator."

"Looking forward to putting my new skills into practice."

"The panel and scoring, putting everything that we've learnt into practice and seeing it all come together."

Peer commissioners discussed the prospect of scoring the bids with other panel members at the consensus meeting. They hoped that they would be able to effectively represent their community and add a different perspective to the meetings. They also told us that having scores that are similar to other panel members would give them a sense of pride and validate the work they put in.

"You've got to score your bids how you see them, you can't score them based on how these might like these or I'll score what I think they might like."

"I think it would be nice if our scores were actually close to their scores because in a sense it would justify what we're about."

"I think it would be nice if our scores were actually close to their scores because in a sense it would justify what we're about."

"There's a reason we'll be in the room. Our unique perspective, so it could be different... throw a spanner in the works. Ruffle some feathers."

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF STAGE 5

Staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority took an active role in delivering scoring training in Stage 5. They told us that the peer commissioners took the information on board well and demonstrated a good understanding of the marking scheme.

"We've designed that bespoke for the team so the peer commissioners have the same training as the police and crime team. So Jay has designed that and he is very proficient with delivering it so he went and did the training."

"I liked the one online, couple of weeks ago, they took it on board really well. We did it over teams, so it was just talking them through, and we also gave them the background of it and some context of the process – what we've done before, what we can sort of expect from this one... They took it on board really well we had loads of questions to ask, engaged with it really well."

"They took it on board really well, they understood that they had to adhere to a marking scheme, which again they've used today, and, sort of, when they are trying to differentiate between a mark they want to give be it acceptable or good and you know how to define it and word it in their answers."

Staff from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority also facilitated an in-person session for the commissioners to help them better understand the documentation that they would need to score the bids effectively. The training mirrored the session delivered to staff at the Combined Authority.

"The last sessions we did were based around the various documentation that's involved in the process so statement of requirement, imitation to tend the document, these are all really sort of meaty documents which can be quite daunting at first but I feel like the, sort of, peer commissioners really, sort of, took it on board and they knew it was going to be a big, sort of, task ahead of them."

"Bringing out the, sort of, prominent, sort of, things within those documents and defining them for the peer commissioners in a way that they can understand and take on board and engage with as well."

"I think we still need to reflect on how much terminology we used in the training. We try to keep it as real to how we train our own staff as possible."

CHALLENGES DURING STAGE 5

During Stage 5, the peer commissioners lost a member of the team meaning five of the original six were still present in the group. However, they told us that although it was sad to see someone go, the group could still function as intended and that they were still "a family."

"It's a shame but the team is still there and we're still going by going strong, still family, just a shortened family. A bit dysfunctional but it works."

"We've got the same core people haven't we, the core groups still the same. We can afford to lose one or two and still keep the group."

"We've got a range of ages and experience which I think is quite valuable. So, it's not just about the number of people but also the actual – who those people are as well. Quality not quantity. The fact that we've got both genders as well and I think this is a very valuable."

The loss of a team member led to reflection from both the peer commissioners and staff at the Combined Authority as to how many team members would be a minimum for a successful project.

"It's a good cross section of people, I wouldn't want to lose anymore."

"I think it would affect it if half of us had to leave, yeah, of course. It would affect the dynamic."

"Then again if you've got more people to start off and then somebody says "well this isn't for me" and leaves, someone like or people get sick, you've still got a group that can do it. But if you're gonna have a minimum,

I mean, what would you set the minimum levels at? I mean, at least four."

"Minimum is four... Because you need that distinction. If there's four and above, you can have disagreements and respectful challenges."

"Regarding a maximum, It depends on how you do it. If we have 20, there would be 3 different panels which could be challenging and unmanageable. You just wouldn't put even 16 people in front of the bidder... I think you have to focus the group work very clearly. You would bring all the groups together to get the context but then work with each group separately. I don't think there's a detriment to it. I'm not sure what the right model is yet which is why we piloted it."

Another challenge that presented itself in Stage 5 was the loss of the principal project facilitator from User Voice due to illness. Peer commissioners told us that members of the Combined Authority attended in their absence to continue the learning process.

"I think it was very helpful of Julia who took a great part in leading us with her experience and she was just tremendous really. Yeah, it was really good to have her and Jay as well."

For staff at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority not having a User Voice member of staff in attendance to facilitate the sessions was challenging. A key learning that emerged from this was to have a second facilitator that knows the project well to step in when any unforeseen circumstances occur.

"The change to User Voice staff leading the sessions has been a bit challenging for us. There were three sessions where Jay and I have gone in on our own without staff from User Voice being there. That's the commitment we have for the project. I have admiration for the peer commissioners that it hasn't destabilised anything. Because we've interacted them for so long, we could just go in and deliver the session without a facilitator being there."

"For me as a professional, yes. But I think it's down to the peer commissioner and about their progression. Whether they want or need a facilitator there but ideally a User Voice member of staff should be at all sessions."

"There should always be two people that they can connect to so there's always a plan b. that was achieved in this project. you cant rely on one person, so there has to be that support that's available."

PEER COMMISSIONERS' TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 5

1. MAKE SURE MORE THAN ONE FACILITATOR CAN STEP IN

In the event of a change in facilitator, the person stepping in must be aware of the project, know what they're talking about and already be a part of the project. If possible, there needs to be a detailed handover for a smooth transition. There needs to be strength in depth of the organisation that delivers the project.

2. A WILLINGNESS OF THE COMMISSIONER TO HELP WHERE NEEDED

During parts of the process, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority took a lead on certain aspects of the programme which was even more essential when User Voice changed facilitator. The commissioner must have a willingness and invest that extra effort and time. Peer commissioners need to have a good relationship with the commissioners so take the time to get to know the group in the inception phase to make that easier.

3. USE EXAMPLE BIDS AS A REFRESHER

In a couple of sessions before scoring the actual bids, it's a good idea to have the peer commissioners score bids from other commissioning activities and work together to get a consensus. This builds confidence for the big day!

STAGE 6: BIDDERS PRESENTATIONS

“It was fascinating to hear the different presentations of the two bidders, and to listen to the responses of my fellow team members.”

STAGE 6 OVERVIEW

In Stage 6, two bidders presented to the peer commissioners at the offices of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. This was an opportunity for peer commissioners to meet representatives from each organisation and

hear about their plans if they were to be awarded the contract for restorative justice services in West Yorkshire. A large part of the presentations were responses to the scenario put forward by the peer commissioners.

At the end of each session, the group marked the presentations individually and then came together as a group to deliberate and come to a consensus in a session led by the designated chair. These scores contributed to the overall weighting of the two bids.

PEER COMMISSIONERS’ EXPERIENCE OF THE BIDDERS’ PRESENTATIONS

Q: How beneficial to you was the taking part in the session where bidders came to present their ideas/bids?



All peer commissioners told us that they found value in taking part in the session where bidders came to present their ideas. The in-person presentations gave them the opportunity to get to know the people behind the bids. No challenges were noted during this phase.

“Seeing the bidders as they did their presentation brought it all together.”

“It was great to hear the bidders’ side and how they worked.”

“It was good to hear from a person rather than reading lots of documents.”

Peer commissioners told us that they enjoyed the discussion when the group came together to deliberate and come to a consensus.

“I enjoyed the deliberation part of the day. I think we worked together really well as a team when we were discussing the scores. There was no conflict and people were happy to adjust their scores to the majority when hearing other people’s ideas.”

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF THE BIDDERS' PRESENTATIONS

WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

A representative from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority attended the session to facilitate the presentations but stepped out during the marking process to make sure the peer commissioners had ownership of the process. She told us that this independence in the scoring is key to the success of the project, and she did all she could not to influence their decision-making.

"So as part of the evaluation process, we do ask the evaluation panel to arrive at their scores independently. So it was very important that I wasn't involved in the discussions the peer Commission held to arrive at their scores for their presentations. I didn't want to unduly influence them in any way or question any of their conversation. And obviously my take on that might be a little bit different to their take because they have lived experience."

"It was really important that they owned that process and I think for them as well, we wanted them to feel like they were very much a part of the process and it wasn't just a token gesture to have them involved in this."

USER VOICE

Two members of staff from User Voice attended all parts of the day but did not contribute in any way, the objective was to observe the sessions for both the benefit of this report and future learning. One attendee told us that the intelligence and understanding the peer commissioners showed was impressive.

"I was really impressed with how the Peer Commissioners got on today, they asked educated questions and demonstrated clear understanding of the process and scoring when deliberating their scores. To see where the group were when the project started and to watch them intelligently discuss all aspects of the presentations and scores today, I was proud to see it, and they should be proud of themselves."

PEER COMMISSIONERS' TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 6

1. HAVE A MAXIMUM OF THREE PRESENTATIONS IN ONE DAY

Two bidders came to present to us which was doable but even that was a lot to take in whilst trying to score accurately. There should be a maximum of three in one day. Maximum of 4 in one day, – even that could be too long – two was doable and even that was a lot to take in.

2. MAKE SURE PEER COMMISSIONERS HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE AREA

The peer commissioners must have a good understanding of the topic is being commissioned. For example, for this cohort, the service being commissioned was restorative justice. To make sure they are able to follow on the day of the presentations, peers need to have an in-depth understanding of restorative justice and all the ins and outs.

3. PROVIDE THE SLIDES AND NOTES TO THE GROUP

It's important to provide a copy of the slides and notes to the peer commissioners to help them both follow the presentations and to help with deliberations whilst scoring.

STAGE 7: SCORING THE BIDS

“It was an excellent team experience where all our contributions were valued.”

STAGE 7 OVERVIEW

In the final stage of the process, the team of peer commissioners were given responses to the same two questions from each of the bidders. During a remote session led by a facilitator at User Voice, peer commissioners came together to score the two bids.

When the group came to a consensus, their marks were submitted to the lead at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Later that week, peer commissioners joined a consensus meeting with panel members from West Yorkshire Police and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. For each question, all panel members stated their justification for their scores after which the group deliberated and came to a consensus.

PEER COMMISSIONERS’ EXPERIENCE OF SCORING THE BIDS

Q: Overall, how would you rate stage seven of the project and the benefit of your experiences in stage seven?



All peer commissioners found the final stage of the project beneficial. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the group were not able to complete the scoring of the two bids in person as originally planned. Instead, the five peer commissioners and two members of User Voice staff met remotely to score the bids.

Peer commissioners told us that they would prefer to score the bids in-person as it is easier to communicate but understood that sometimes circumstance dictates what is an isn't possible.

“Some things you just talk about with each other online and you can't really hear. That was the only bad thing about it, but it's acceptable if you have to do it.”

“I always think it's a bit more difficult online because you can't gauge people's faces... you can't read the room, that's what it is yeah, exactly what it is.”

Q: How would you rate how the support you have received in phase five of the programme?

VERY GOOD 100%

GOOD 0%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

Peer commissioners told us that they felt fully prepared to score the bids and that User Voice took the time to make sure that they were ready.

“Yes it wasn’t rushed, they took time with us all to make sure we were fully prepared.”

“I think that we were involved and valued in everything.”

“Everything was clear and concise during the preparation for the scoring and in the scoring meeting. I think it ran smoothly.”

Q: How would you rate your experiencing in scoring the bids?

VERY GOOD 80%

GOOD 20%

NEUTRAL 0%

POOR 0%

VERY POOR 0%

All peer commissioners reported a positive experience when scoring the bids. They told us that their confidence came through their preparation and that the positive team environment was of great benefit.

“I followed my instincts for the scoring and scored accordingly.”

“After learning how to score the bids I was confident that we scored the bids accurately.”

“So one of the bidders, their way of actually approaching the question was completely different to the other one so we’re trying to make sense of it and trying to draw out what they were trying to say to us. I thought that was very interesting the way that happened. The discussions we had really brought it all together.”

“It was an excellent team experience where all our contributions were valued.”

Peer commissioners told us that there was a significant difference between the presentations of the two bidders and the written responses. The organisation that impressed peer commissioners the most during the presentation day was viewed to have submitted the weaker responses to the written questions. One peer commissioner explained to us that in their opinion this demonstrates the value of having both experiences.

“On the bidder’s presentation day, I think I was more impressed by the first bidder that came in than the second... but the written presentation that we saw, I’m guessing that’s done by other people, that was more impressive than the other one. It’s interesting to see how that happens and shows why it is important to do both.”

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF SCORING THE BIDS

One staff member at User Voice shadowed both scoring and deliberation sessions for bidders’ presentations and scoring the written bids. He observed a key difference between the two sessions. Namely, that the chair of the peer commissioners led the discussions for

the first event and the User Voice facilitator led the second. He stated that it is important that the peer commissioners have ownership of all sessions.

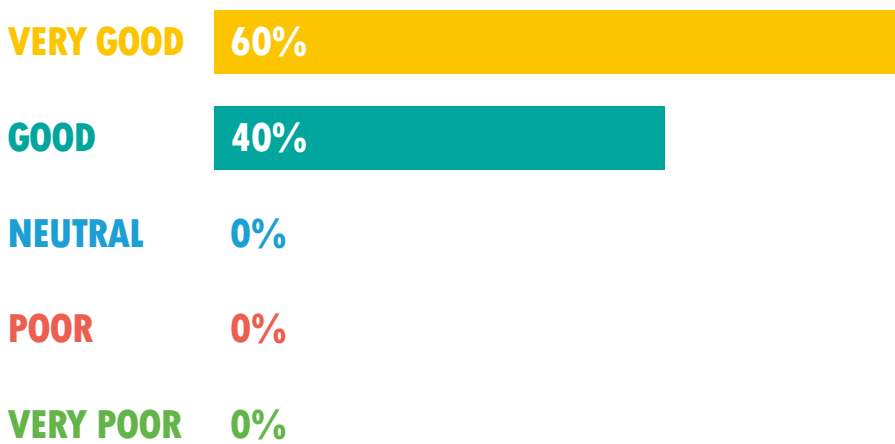
“My reflection as somebody that was just observing both sessions- on the day of the bidders presentation in person, you kind of, as a chair John, you led proceedings. Whereas, on the online one I don’t think it effected the results in anyway but Brenden was the one asking the questions. Personally, I liked it when you did it. Even though the results were the same, I liked the fact that as a group, or as a chair, you kind of took ownership of that and we were literally just sat back watching.”

The peer commissioners also voiced their opinion on the matter and told us that they should have taken ownership of the session.

“I feel like we should have led the session, our voices were taken away little. This was the most important part of the process, the thing we have been working towards and it was a shame that we didn’t lead the session... I don’t think it affected what we scored or anything, but we should have had ownership of our moment.”

PEER COMMISSIONERS’ EXPERIENCE OF ATTENDING THE CONSENSUS MEETING WITH OTHER DECISION-MAKERS

Q: How would you rate your experience in joining the other decision makers on the bid scoring consensus meeting?



All peer commissioners rated their experience of the consensus meeting as either 'Good' or 'Very Good.' Peer commissioners told us that they enjoyed the meeting and felt like they were both heard and valued during the session.

"I was a little nervous going into it but we was treated well and was listened to appropriately."

"Nobody slammed you down. Nobody said. Oh, no, you can't think that you can't do this. Your opinions and comments are all taken on board. At the end of the day, I did enjoy the process."

"I feel like we had an equal voice with everyone on the call, no complaints at all."

Peer commissioners took comfort in the fact that their scores were similar to the majority of others on the call. For them, it showed that the work they put in across the year was worthwhile and it validated their being in the room.

"It was good to see the responses of the other decision makers. It was gratifying that our responses were valued as being appropriate."

"The experience was great as you got to hear others' opinions and thoughts."

"I was quite surprised that our scores are so close to the board at the end... It showed we'd done the job properly and we'd been guided along through the process."

"I think I was just chuffed that most of our scores were the same as the professionals that do that for a living everyday. Our comments and thoughts were similar to what people offered more the most part."

Despite the scores given by the peer commissioners being similar to those of other panel members. Peer commissioners told us that they were happy to offer a different perspective.

"One example where our lived experience came out in terms of the questions we raised was about the restorative justice service and the ability to access complaints through the website. In prison there is no access to websites because there is no internet at all. This wasn't picked up by the other people in the room."

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCE OF ATTENDING THE CONSENSUS MEETING

All staff members from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority spoke positively about the involvement of the peer commissioners at the consensus meeting. They told us that everyone on the call offered a different perspective and that the input of those with lived experience offered a unique and value perspective compared to the rest of the group.

"I think it was really useful... So you got all these different opinions on how the service would be used and how it would impact people. So they, they all have different things that they were looking for and they were all looking at the bids from a different perspective, which is really brilliant because that helps us really make sure that we've assessed the bids from all angles."

"I know that the other evaluation panel members said that some of the points that peer Commissioners raised were not things that they had considered, which it really does strengthen our process and it just makes sure that we have captured that kind of element of the end user."

"Having people with lived experience involved really does add strength to the process and I think it really helps strengthen the feedback to suppliers as well. The bidders, I think they appreciated that live experience involvement as well."

"I was really impressed with the peer commissioners, they weren't afraid to speak up and put their voice across hopefully they felt involved in the process and that they were, you know, not just invited for the sake of it and to look good. They were adding value."

Both members of staff from User Voice and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority shared the peer commissioners' perspective that it was encouraging to see the scores of the peer commissioners were similar to other decision-makers whilst still being able to offer a unique perspective.

"It was interesting to me the other way in that some of the professionals on the course were seeing what the peer commissioners had seen."

"There were similar scores but different perspectives from the peer commissioners which was interesting... I think it shows that this process, in my opinion, as like an outsider looking in, has worked."



PEER COMMISSIONERS' TOP TIPS FOR STAGE 7

1. HAVE THE SCORING SESSION IN PERSON IF POSSIBLE

Hosting the scoring session in person gives everyone an ability to read the room and fully take part. The group will have been working together for a long time and it is more supportive to be in-person.

2. LET THE PEER COMMISSIONERS LEAD AND CHAIR THE SCORING SESSION

Across the project, we developed expertise and a detailed understanding of the process which allowed us to take responsibility. All scoring sessions should be led by a nominated chair with any stakeholders present there to support and observe.

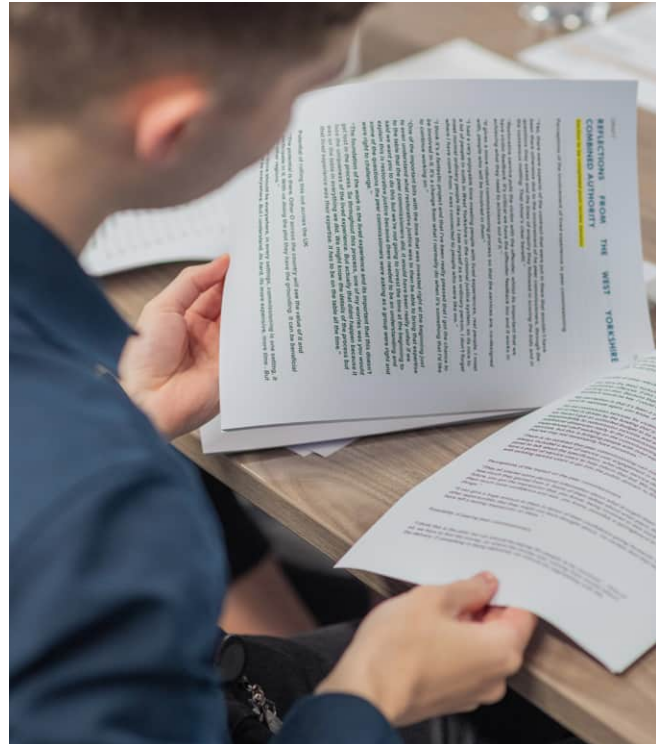
3. RESPECT EVERYONE IN THE ROOM

The peer commissioners shouldn't be there as window dressing. It's important that our voices be independent but still be heard in the room of the professionals with equal weighting. It's imperative for everyone to respect what others have to say.

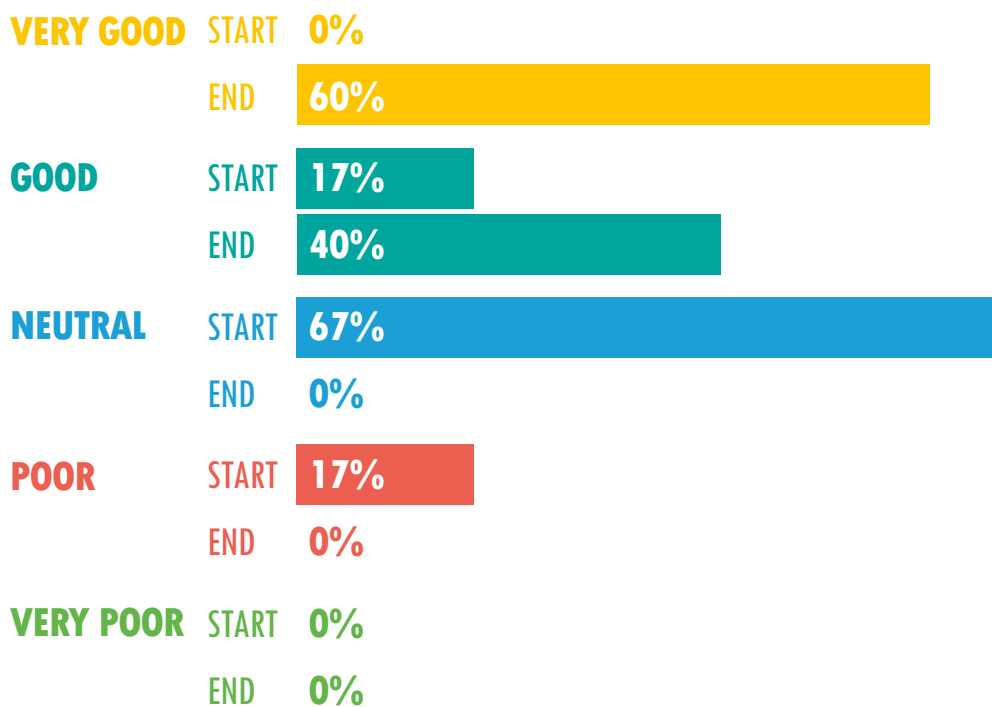
THE IMPACT ON PEER COMMISSIONERS

KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

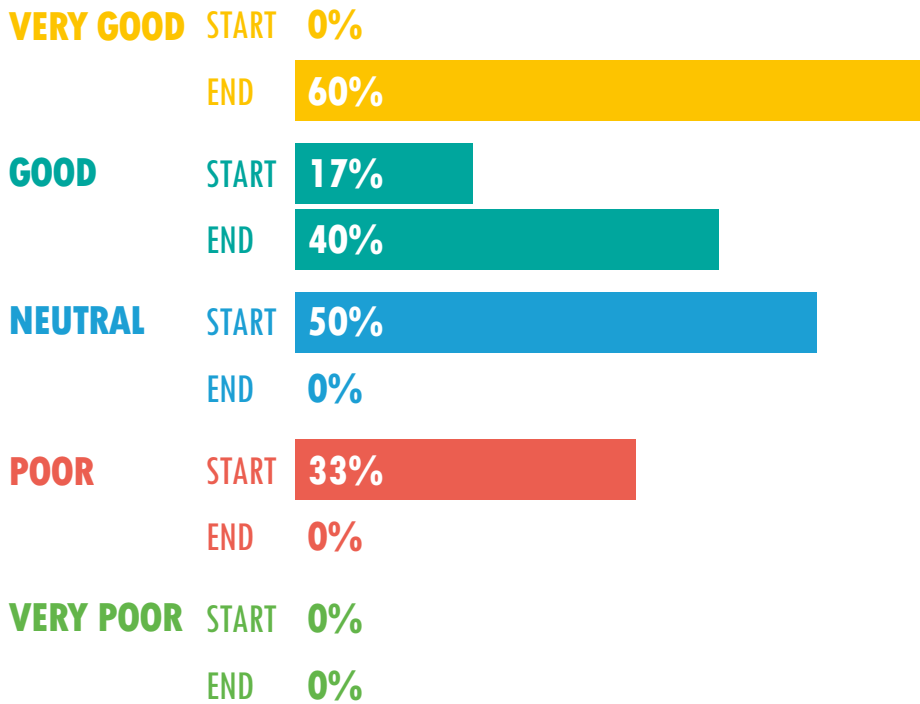
We surveyed the peer commissioners at both project inception and competition. All peer commissioners showed an increase in knowledge across their understanding of restorative justice, their understanding of the commissioning process and their understanding of how the police and local authorities work together.



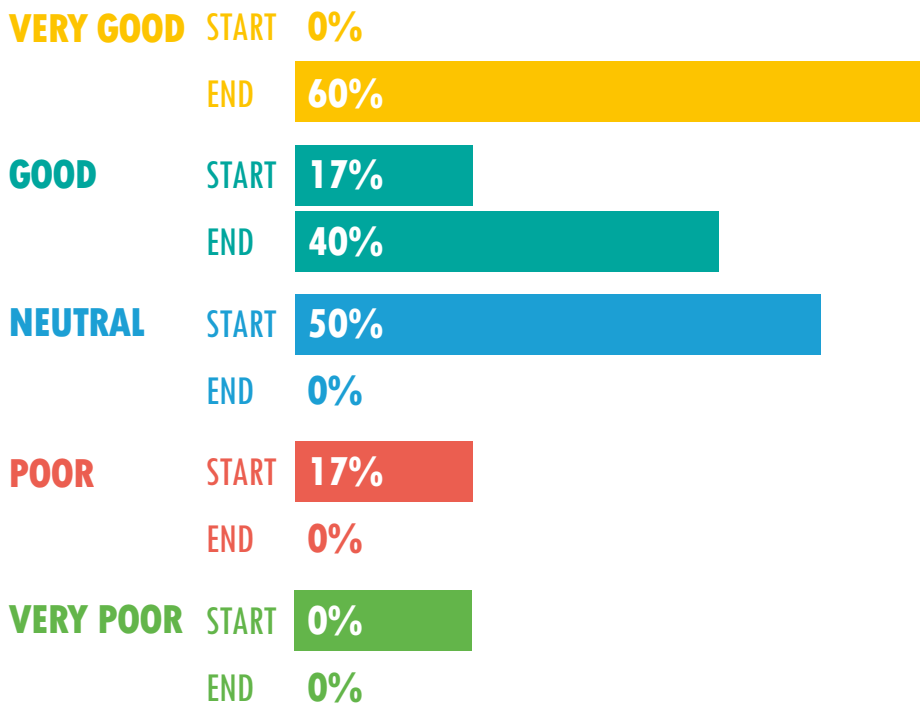
Q: How would you rate your current understanding of restorative justice?



Q: How would you rate your current understanding of peer commissioning and the commissioning process?



Q: How would you rate your current understanding of how the police and local authorities work together?



SKILL ACQUISITION

Throughout the year-long project, we asked peer commissioners what skills they had developed whilst volunteering on the project.

The main change for most peer commissioners was a significant increase to their confidence and self-esteem.

“Definitely more confidence, I speak a lot more. I felt imposter syndrome, ‘do I deserve to be here getting these big opportunities’, but now I feel like I do.”

“My confidence has been greatly improved. I have been grateful to be able to make mine and my colleagues points of view heard.”

“I’m developing within myself. With my self-esteem and my ability to contribute well within a team.”

Peer commissioners told us that upon completion of the programme, they are better able to work effectively as part of a valued team.

“Developed more team working skills, personal development, my self-confidence, and it’s helped me believe more in my ability to be a valued part of this project.”

“The members of the group of Peer Commissioners have become very close to one another through this process. We have come to value each other’s strengths and gifts. I have no doubt that we shall be able to acquit ourselves fairly as Peer Commissioners. I have learned to value the other members of the group.”

Peer commissioners told us that they have effectively developed both their listening and communication skills whilst volunteering on the project. Two individuals told us that doing so has subsequently improved their mental health.

“My communication skills have improved enormously and it has helped my mentality.”

“My listening skills have improved and I now have an awareness of my own value.”



"I now have an ability to listen more to other opinions and reaching an agreed outcome."

"I would say I developed some personal skills in interacting with the team and with other people... when you live on your own, I'm not interacting with people other than probation or BPU or girl on the checkout, you know. But to be in a room where everybody focused on that same thing, it's a bit daunting because you don't know these people are all strangers to you... I would say that experience has give me more confidence in that respect to talk to people in the street or other people in the shops, whereas before where you and especially when you first come out of jail and you're always looking, your eyes are like peeled."

"I think I've come out at the end of better person than I was really, you know, because well like now I'm communicating. I wouldn't have thought about doing this last year, I wouldn't be able to do this."

"When we are in a group meeting and I had to talk, I couldn't have done that prior to it. So yes, my social skills have come back or been reinforced."

The Peer Commissioners told us that the project has increased their ability to "throw themselves into the unknown." Some members of the group have taken on other roles with the organisation since volunteering as a peer commissioner that they wouldn't have if not for the experience. It allowed them the confidence and the increase in self-esteem to do so.

"For me, a big change is that I'm now able to throw myself into things that I wouldn't have been able to do before. Before I would look at a project and say 'ahh I'm not interested in this' or 'I'm not knowledgeable enough, I won't be able to contribute to this' but now I feel like I can throw myself into things

knowing that I will be able to learn it and contribute instead of just avoiding a good opportunity. It's having the confidence and self-esteem to do that now whereas before the project I didn't think my voice mattered or that anyone would listen."

Some members of the group told us that being a part of the team has allowed them to regain skills that they thought they had lost. For example, some told us that they once again have the ability to communicate with others, whereas others regained skills in leadership and public speaking that they never thought they would.

"I've always been the person to slip under the radar and this has given me the opportunity to stand up and contribute to something that I believe in and speak. I have pushed myself doing it to interact with others... It's a skill I had before but I've lost over the years because of my experience in prison. I worked all my life being social and getting things done but then I spent time in jail keeping my head down and surviving. That still keeps going when you first come out, you're a lot more sheltered. Before this, I couldn't walk around the street corner without worrying. Now, I just go around the street corner without any worries and chatting to my neighbours. It's this that the project has given me back. It's given me the confidence that I can do this, I can speak more."

"I'm not scared of stepping up in a leadership role. In the past I've led pipe bands and other teams so it's not new to me but I do think I lost a certain part of that which chairing the market engagement event gave me back. I didn't want to let the team down so I stepped up."

CASE STUDY

PETER GAINS FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT WHILST VOLUNTEERING AS A PEER COMMISSIONER

Whilst volunteering as a peer commissioner, one of the team members Peter gained full time employment after struggling with gaining employment since leaving prison in 2022. Peter told us that his experiences as a peer commissioner were vital in increasing his confidence to find work with the skills learned on the project being pivotal to his success in his applications and interviews.

"I'm an associate for TJX Europe. At the moment I'm putting tickets on to items that come into the processing centre where I'm working and then there fixed by selectors and then sent off to distribution centres and sent off to stores..."

...Despite a brief stint in a hotel a couple of months back, gosh, I was unemployed ever since I left prison on the very last day of November 2022. I was living on a company pension but I only just managed to survive and get by...

...Being a peer commissioner gave me the confidence so that I could actually then begin to take on interviews, and actually, in the end, succeed in an interview. Which was really good, you know...

...For example, we had the market engagement event and I was able to talk in public in that which was quite something at the time for me. Then also Marriott Hotel talking in front of the mayor was quite something as well, you know. So, to have that underneath my belt and then of course to be involved in the actual bidding process, I was building my confidence and building the sense that I've got something to contribute. It taught me that I'm not just, you know, I'm not defined by my crime...

...I mentioned I mentioned during my interview that I was part of this peer commissioning.

I didn't actually say what lived experience was all about, but they didn't pick on that. What they did see was that I was part of a team and that teamwork mattered to me. Something that I was able to demonstrate as a result of volunteering on project.

...We were very much a team and the role is very team focused. At TJX we all work well together and we help each other. I think I was seen as being an important part of the team on the project, a valuable part of the team, which was really, really good and something I'm not using in my job daily...

...Other than that, the qualification we did, it was very much a basis of working with text and writing, you know and providing analysis of text. This is something I had to do for my application to be with TJX, so that I'd already kind of exhibited that as part of being part of the peer commissioners training, so that was very helpful...

...I would definitely recommend being a peer commissioner, especially for those that want to find a pathway to employment. I think in many different ways it builds up your sense of self value, your confidence and also gives you some of the tools you need to work in our society. Things had moved on while I was away, you know it changed you know and got more kind of complicated, being on the project helped that...

...Volunteering on the project led me to the [User Voice] National Council which was also helpful. I think as well because I was able to see very different people and see that we all had a part to play and that was good...

... I just want to say something about how supported I felt by User Voice. We couldn't have done anything really without User Voice's support."

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

We asked the six peer commissioners what their plans were after volunteering on the project:

“VOLUNTEERING ON THE PROJECT HAS GIVEN ME CONFIDENCE TO LOOK FOR WORK AGAIN.”

“I’M HOPING TO DEVELOP A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP AND I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO CONTINUE WORKING IN MY NEW ROLE.”

“CONTINUE TO DO THINGS OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE TO INCREASE MY CONFIDENCE.”

“I’VE IMPROVED MY CONFIDENCE TALKING IN GROUPS AND I WANT TO USE THIS IN MY DAY-TO-DAY LIFE. I WANT TO BE AN EXAMPLE, ESPECIALLY TO MY YOUNGER BROTHER. I WANT TO TAKE WHAT I’VE LEARNED ON THE PROJECT AND CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT IT IN THE FUTURE.”

“TO FINISH MY DEGREE IN CRIMINOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY AND THEN CONTINUE TO DO A MASTER’S DEGREE. I’M DOING COURSES WHILST VOLUNTEERING AT THE HUB LIKE SAFEGUARDING ETC... I WANT TO BE A SUPPORT WORKER WITHIN REHABILITATION BUT I’LL EXPLORE MY OPTIONS WHEN I’VE FINISHED MY DEGREE.”

“I’VE STARTED TO WORK WITH CRYSTAL PATHWAY WHO HELP YOU TO LOOK FOR WORK. HOPEFULLY THAT WILL HELP ME GAIN EMPLOYMENT. THIS PROJECT HAS HELPED ME GAIN THE NECESSARY SKILLS TO MOVE FORWARD.”

“I WOULD LIKE TO HELP OTHERS IN THE FUTURE AND USE MY LIVED EXPERIENCE.”

“AS I’M NEARING 70, I WON’T BE LOOKING FOR WORK. I’VE BECOME MORE SOCIAL DURING THE PROJECT AND I’D LIKE TO CONTINUE THAT.”

“TO REBUILD MY SOCIAL NETWORK, INCLUDING THE PEOPLE THAT I VOLUNTEERED WITH.”

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PEER COMMISSIONERS

Q: Now the project is drawing to a close, how has your experience of the project lived up to your expectations?

COMPLETELY 100%

SOMEWHAT 0%

VERY LITTLE 0%

NOT AT ALL 0%

During the inception phase, we asked the six Peer Commissioners why they wanted to volunteer as a peer commissioner on the project. We then

asked them to reflect on their initial response and how it met their expectations. Their responses both pre and post project are below:

PRE-PROJECT

"I am doing a criminology degree in September and I would like to expand my knowledge in all areas of rehabilitation. I believe people with lived experience have the best knowledge within certain aspects of the justice system."

"I want to make my lived experience as an ex-offender to count for something. I have skills from my time before offending that I believe I can offer. I have qualities of empathy and understanding."

POST-PROJECT

"I've now passed my first year of my degree and I'm going into my second. I've been accepted into Psychology and I'll be combining my degree. I'm also volunteering at Hub."

I think this project has proven that people with lived experience are invaluable and can offer something most can't."

"I feel like I've received more than I've given from the group. Through the project we've shown that lived experience does add something to the understanding of issues in society. Issues that only we can understand."

I think volunteering on the project has brought my qualities of empathy and understanding out.

Being in the project has increased my confidence in groups and has allowed me to gain employment."

“To try and use my knowledge of the prison/ probation system to better inform policy.”

“By being in prison and on probation, I know how victims and offenders feel and how ex-offenders are overlooked. It’s been nice to be around people who can change policy and to have our voices heard by those who influence services and policies. It’s been nice to be listened to.”

“I want to give back and I’d like to be a part of something that will make things better and give people hope and a chance for the future.”

“I’m not 100% sure if I’ve met my goal due to me being recalled during the project.

Up until the point I left, I was the spokesperson for the group and felt like I was giving back and growing. The reason I came back to the project tis because I want his project to succeed and I want to be part of it’s wider success.

However, I feel disenfranchised by the system. I believe that people with lived experience offer value, but I still don’t believe that wider society and institutions in the cjs believe we do.”

“To be more confident, to better myself and learn about peer commissioning.”

“I’ve become more confident by volunteering in the group. I found speaking in a room of people more difficult at the start. since being on the project, it’s been getting better each time, although I still find it difficult...

I’m also volunteering on the User Voice National Council and implemented a research project on healthcare.”

“To better myself, learn and help others that are in the same situation. ”

“When I came out I was cynical, a lack of empathy but being in a group I have learned what empathy is. It has given me the confidence to be in groups and deal with interactions in daily life.

I’d like to think the project can help others and that a little bit of this can help others, especially those who are just out of jail or currently in jail.”

REFLECTIONS ON HOW ENJOYABLE THE PROJECT WAS

All peer commissioners told us that they enjoyed being playing a part in the project and that it was enjoyable from start to finish. They told us that it was a privilege to be involved with and that "hopefully it is the start of something big."

"It was a joy and privilege to be involved in this process."

"I have really enjoyed the project and it has improved my confidence with the knowledge that even though you may have convictions you can still make valuable contributions to society and the end contract was better than the previous one because of our input."

"The whole process from start to finish has been enjoyable and I feel that I along with my colleagues have been listened to and we have been valued as part of the whole process."

"I'm grateful for this experience and the opportunity to give something back and use my lived experience as a learning tool in a positive way."

"I didn't really have expectations as it was so new, but they were vastly exceeded."

"Yes, definitely as I was able to use my lived experience to help others in the future."

"Amazing project, hopefully the start of something big."

"Well, I think it's lived up to it and more. I didn't quite know what to expect from the beginning. So I was quite surprised how well it went."

REFLECTIONS ON THE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

The Peer Commissioners truly valued being part of a team. They told us that they "became a family" throughout the project and that a positive team environment was essential to the success of the programme.

"Amazing, unreal a brilliant experience getting to know individuals and combining our skills and experiences to produce a positive outcome."

"It has been great to have group discussions and also have some light hearted chats about our own personal experiences which helped put people at ease and promote inclusion."

REFLECTIONS ON THE QUALIFICATION

The peer commissioners told us that working towards a qualification was an essential part of the process. It gave them the necessary confidence to uphold their duties to a high standard.

"For me it meant that we knew what we were doing, we knew how to do this now, we knew how to sort pages, we knew how to score bids and how it works and why not to compare bids and that was all in the training."

"We were doing were more confident going into it because we'd done this training and because we'd got a qualification out of it."

"Yeah, I think the qualification gave us a certain level of confidence for us to go ahead and do this. And confidence when you've been in prison is on quite a short supply when you come out."

"You need that certification because you don't wanna mess anything up do ya. This is all bloody government contracts and so massively important and high level business people, you don't wanna be just some ex con that comes in and ticks the wrong box and cost the council 200,000 in legal fees. You don't wanna do that so you're nervous too."

REFLECTIONS ON USER VOICE

The peer commissioners valued the support from User Voice, in particular the lead facilitator, throughout the process. They praised the way the project was delivered, and the environment fostered by the organisation.

“I can’t speak for everyone here but whoever thought of this idea to use people like us around this table, to be part of the committee or group or team or whatever you want to call it wants a massive pat on the back.”

“They have seen something that the vast majority of people don’t see. They’ve seen that yeah we’ve committed a crime however we’ve got a lot of experience, we’ve got a lot of lived experience, we’ve got knowledge of this that and the other; that we can pass onto other people. And that in my mind is worth a shitload, to the whole of the community.”

“I would like to thank User Voice for being interested in what we are doing and seeing that we may be the pioneers of a helpful project that might be the inspiration for further projects in this area.”

“The User Voice staff have been excellent and the project/training was delivered in a way that does not exclude anybody and does not progress until everybody understands.”

REFLECTION ON THE LENGTH ON THE PROGRAMME

Peer commissioners told us that the project could have been condensed. Although meeting every two weeks worked well, there were some unforeseen gaps in time between stages that shouldn’t happen if possible. They told us it could have been done in nine months instead of being a year-long project.

“The one thing I would say, I think it’s been a long and drawn-out process and it could be a little shorter.”

“To me it seems a bit stretched. I get people are busy so we can’t meet more than every two week but there were parts where not much happened because we were waiting

for the next steps. The release date for the invitation to tender got put back a few months which delayed things.”

“The project itself is fantastic and enjoyable. Although it is overly long.”

FAIRNESS OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS

There was a stark change in the perceptions of most peer commissioners regarding the fairness of the procurement process. At the inception phase, peer commissioners told us that government contracts were often awarded “under the table.” However, since being involved in the process, peer commissioners told us that they were impressed by the fairness and thought that goes into who wins what services.

“At the start I thought I’m blinded by it all and I’ve got no chance, I don’t know what any of this is about. Never worked in an office in my life and never will do... Now, I think it’s a lot, I’ve learnt that it’s a lot more fairer than I thought, there’s a lot more oversight going into it.”

THE NUMBER OF PEER COMMISSIONERS AND THEIR ROLES

Peer commissioners reflected on the amount of people that should be recruited to be part of the project. They decide that four is a minimum to create a healthy debate whilst scoring. Whereas eight would be the maximum and six would be the ideal number with one member being elected chair.

“Four is the minimum, if there’s three people, it isn’t enough to get a consensus. There has to be at least six ideally.”

“It’s better to have more people because everyone brings different things to the table.”

“If this group of 7 started and 4 dropped out then you would have had to look for 4 or 5 more people and train them. Even now if 2 more people were to join our group now, we’d be happy to sit with them and help them through it. We’re like mentors now.”

REFLECTIONS FROM THE WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Mayor's Policing and Crime Commissioning and Contracts Team and colleagues from Commercial Service in West Yorkshire Combined Authority have provided the following reflections of the project

It was essential that Policing and Crime piloted this approach in collaboration with User Voice, an experienced organisation enabling service users with lived experience to have an input during the recommissioning process.

Policing and Crime worked closely with User Voice and the group of trained peer commissioners all with lived experience throughout the process. Each peer commissioner completed their training designed to equip them with the skills and confidence to undertake a range of different roles involved in the commissioning of services. The Level 1 NCFE accredited award which comprises of three units; Introduction to Commissioning, Tender Evaluation and Peer Commissioning: Longer Term Impact gave additional confidence to the process.

"From our perspective the real value of the work that User Voice said they'd be able to support us with was the qualification was the real seller in the reason that individuals with lived experience personally benefitted from that it. It wasn't just that they were doing this bit of work and see you later with nothing to take from it other than a memory and an experience."

"I can't see it going forward in this way without the opportunity for a qualification at the beginning. You could do it differently and not be as involved but you're pushing it towards tokenism so I think that it's almost- we've said about it being platinum, bronze, silver, gold kind of what does that look like and I think that not everybody and not every area will be able to do this right at the beginning."

From the commissioner's perspective this was opportunity for the peer commissioners to develop additional skills to support their future ambitions.

"It can give a huge amount to them in terms of their confidence going forwards or other opportunities that they might not have thought about. I'm certain the work would have left a lasting impression on them."

The key reflections from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and team members involved are noted below:

INVOLVEMENT OF LIVED EXPERIENCE IN PEER COMMISSIONING

Additional aspects of the service contract were developed through the sharing of the lived experience of the peer commissioners as experts by experience. For example, the ability for the service to accept offender-initiated referrals except for cases of Domestic Violence/ Abuse (DVA) or Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB).

"The peer commissioners bringing their own experience added real contractual value to the process. A fundamental shift in our thinking was based on their experiences about the importance of offenders also being an active part of starting the process of RJ where possible and how they too wanted the ability to do this. All the peer commissioners had a real understanding and acceptance of safeguarding needs in certain cases. I can honestly say, this would not have been an approach in the service contract if it were not for their request of inclusion and using their own lived experience to evidence why it was important."

The benefit of the lived experience perspective through bespoke questions, scenarios and lines of enquiry throughout the process that a professional perspective only would not have achieved.

“The peer commissioners had the ability to set a scenario question to be part of the bidders’ presentations and formed part of the evaluation scoring. This scenario was based on their lived experience, it not only brought it to life in a way that professionals commissioning the service could not but also included the reality of what a quality answer would be due to their experience of a real-life scenario.”

More robust commissioning process that enables services co-designed with those with lived experience and their expertise.

“Restorative service puts the victim with the offender, whilst it’s important that we have victim feedback. It’s critical we have the offender feedback too and it works in achieving what they need to achieve out of it.”

The opportunity for professionals to meet, interact and learn from those with lived experience.

“They all shared some personal information about what brought them to this point, how much they gained from it. Some of them talked about what plans they’d got in the future, you got the impression that being involved in this work had given them much more confidence and was possibly a springboard to other things.”

The investment of time from the Policing and Crime Team was essential to ensure the peer commissioners were at a level playing field in their knowledge of Restorative Justice.

“One of the important bits with the time that was invested right at the beginning just to even understand what restorative justice was to then be able to bring that expertise to the table that the peer commissioners did, it would have been really unfair if we said we want you to do this but we’re not going to invest the time at the beginning to explain this is restorative justice because there needed to be an understanding and some of the questions the peer commissioners were asking as a group were right and were right to challenge.”

Keeping the lived experience aspect at the centre of the process and ensuring it was not drowned out by the volume of legality and process that procurement requires.

“The foundation of the work is the lived experience and it’s important that this doesn’t get lost in the process. So, throughout this process, one of my worries was you would lose the uniqueness of the lived experience. But actually, that didn’t happen because it was on the table in everything we did. We might know the details of the process, but that lived experience was their expertise. It has to be on the table all the time.”

THE POTENTIAL OF ROLLING THIS OUT ACROSS THE UK

The investment made by the Mayor in the Peer Commissioning project was to ensure the learning influenced future approaches and to ensure the learning is shared nationally. It is essential to have a lead organisation that have the established trusted relationship with peer commissioners with lived experience

The costs to ensure peer commissioners with lived experience are involved needs to be built in right from the start of the commissioning and procurement process. During which, funding bodies should request evidence of co-designed services and commissioning with those with lived experience from the delivery organisation.

“The potential is there. We hope other authorities across the country will see the value of it and participate in it. With us doing the pilot they have the grounding. It can be beneficial for other regions.”

“User Voice should be everywhere, in every setting, commissioning is one setting, it should be everywhere. But I understand, it’s hard, it’s more expensive, more time. But it’s more efficient and its better. The process of engagement of co-production is therapeutic in itself. So if you’re delivering a service and you have all these outcomes, using co-production as an activity itself will deliver you better outcomes for the people. It can also be a pathway to paid work.”

POTENTIAL OF OTHER RELEVANT COMMISSIONING ACTIVITIES IN WEST YORKSHIRE

West Yorkshire is committed to developing opportunities for peer commissioners with lived experience to be involved in future projects. Cemented by the experience on this project, future resources for commissioning will include lived experience approaches and learning will inform the Mayor's next Commissioning Strategy.

"We have the West Yorkshire perpetrator service which deals with first-time perpetrator offences. If this comes up for renewal, something like this similarly working on that. Because that is directed at offenders working in groups so their feedback would be key. I could see it working for the perpetrator service."

"My perception is that it's been a very successful programme and one that we would want to replicate again, you know, if we had the opportunity going forward."

"There is no contract that peer commissioning cannot be involved in in my view. We always included a level of service user engagement in every bid we wrote, we have a panel to talk about the specification, what does service delivery look like. We would have a panel of service users to help inform that bid. We might do some consultation with existing service users or go into the public domain to find service user groups."

POSSIBILITY OF PAYING PEER COMMISSIONERS

"I think this is the pilot, but we should be paying for people to be involved... First of all, we have to find the money, so where the money was coming from would inform the delivery. if something is being delivered, we should be negotiating with the service provider, and saying any savings in a year, we need a X amount of money back so we can get User Voice to fund service users."

"If we're funding a charity like User Voice, I would want to know if User Voice are paying participants because I didn't know they were paying them. We paid, anything above 4 hours we paid £30."

DIVERSITY OF PEER COMMISSIONERS

"I suppose what we could do from a commissioning perspective is set in our specification our expectations that we would include voices from the representative of West Yorkshire. We know that 23% of Black or Asians. We would say we expect 23% of the voices that we have in this process to be Black or Asian. This would then put the responsibility back on User Voice to recruit those people. If we set the expectations then User Voice has got a job to do in going out for recruitment. We can demand that and we did have commissioners demanded that specification across the board."

REFLECTIONS FROM USER VOICE

Incorporating lived experience into the commissioning of services is a key part of effective service design. We are therefore delighted to have worked with West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the Mayor of West Yorkshire on embedding lived experience in commissioning restorative justice services, and highly commend their decision to genuinely embed those voices in this innovative commissioning project. We have a track record of embedding lived experience insights by bringing together people impacted by the justice system and those that deliver services across prison and probation services as well as the NHS. Through this work over many years it is clear to us that incorporating the lived experience voice in commissioning processes benefits all stakeholders including commissioners, service providers and peer commissioners.

Involving people with lived experience in service design through commissioning leads to:

- **Higher service user engagement and satisfaction in services** – Resulting in greater adoption and effectiveness.
- **Regulatory compliance** – Active user involvement ensures adherence to regulatory standards.
- **Service Quality** – Direct feedback improves service, efficiency and performance.

Involving people with lived experience therefore builds trust and credibility, ensuring services are better designed and meet user needs leading to more tailored, innovative solutions which are more likely to have traction with their intended audiences.

In reference to the benefits to people with lived experience, in this programme . we watched each person grow throughout the project and saw them upskilled and in a much better place generally than where they started. All six team members were vital to the project's success and can be proud of their contributions and achievements.

In summary peer commissioners got:

- An opportunity to make a difference in the lives of other people
- A chance to learn new skills and increased confidence
- A sense of reward and achievement
- The ability to assess good points and faults in services in the criminal justice system
- The experience of feeling that they are at the heart of decisions
- Satisfaction when changes to services happen as a result of their involvement
- Improved understanding of how the system works
- An increased level of responsibility and ownership



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