

Disabled people reveal their experiences of social care

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At a time when Social Care in England is at a 'tipping point', according to the Care Quality Commission, it is vital that local authorities find ways of working together with people who use social care services. With that goal in mind, a group of disabled people have recently carried out research in co-production with researchers at the University of Bristol.

The research team based at Bristol's Norah Fry Centre for Disability Studies, who worked in partnership with WECIL (West of England Centre for Inclusive Living), hope the work will improve assessments for disabled people across the UK and lead to a more "person-centred" approach.

The study, which involved interviews with 30 practitioners and narratives of experience from 30 disabled people, was conducted to coincide with the implementation of the 2014 Care Act in 2015. The legislation urges practitioners to work in a way that gives individuals who are being assessed greater control of the process that determines the care and support provided.

Project lead Val Williams, Professor of Disability Studies at the University of Bristol, said: "Assessments can be worrying for anyone. In social care, an assessment is the way that the local authority decides what they might fund, in order to help people live as independently as possible. As we all know, times are not easy for [local authorities](#), and social care budgets are under immense pressure; so a lot depends on the assessment process.

"How do we know what makes good social care practice? What helps Disabled people to have a say in their own assessment, and to be in control of their own lives? The best voices to listen to are those who have direct experience of being assessed for social care."

The study, which was funded by NIHR School for Social Care Research, involved members of peer support networks at the West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL). It showed that for many disabled people, good assessments are honest, transparent and open. Mutual trust between [disabled people](#) and practitioners was also key. People in the WECIL group could also appreciate and empathise with the difficulties faced by social work practitioners.

"As an unemployed disabled person it is all too easy to feel that I am a burden on society, so it has been uplifting to be involved in a project where I could take part in intelligent and emotive discussions," said co-researcher and WECIL group member Nathan Hill.

"I had to question some of my own suppositions. I assumed that the level of initial and ongoing training of staff in the care sector was much higher than it actually is. This has reinforced my belief that the project's conclusions are very important and the work we contributed to could greatly improve people's experience of their interaction with social workers."

The study findings have been turned into a series of videos showcasing the viewpoints of the participants. These will be launched at Bristol Energy Hub today (19January) as part of WECIL's Peer Support Community Project Launch, which a large number of professionals working in the support sector are expected to attend.

Professor Williams added: 'This was an important project, and we hope that the films and other products will stimulate an honest conversation

about the problems faced by the [social care](#) sector, and about the ways we could work together to make changes to the system.'

The 'Values of Assessment' are dedicated to Dr Sue Porter, who died suddenly on 11 January 2017, whose inspiration and leadership made this project possible. Her untimely death was a tragic loss to the disability movement, and to disability research.

More information: The videos can be found on You Tube:
[www.youtube.com/playlist?list= ... A3QWlasx9tLL9MiVv6kD](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=...A3QWlasx9tLL9MiVv6kD)

Provided by University of Bristol

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