

# **A Project to Support More Effective Involvement of Service Users in Adult Support and Protection Activity**

## **A PROJECT TO SUPPORT MORE EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF SERVICE USERS IN ADULT SUPPORT AND PROTECTION ACTIVITY**

Submitted to the Scottish Government in fulfilment of the research contract titled 'A project to support more effective involvement of service users in adult support and protection activity'

### **By the Improving ASP Participation Project Team**

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October 2013

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## **Acknowledgements**

Many people contributed to the success of this project: the local authorities and the advocacy projects who gave their staff time to take part, the motivation and time given by all project members and the additional insights offered by the advisory group: Kirsty Kennedy, East Dunbartonshire Council, Paul Comley, WithScotland and Michelle Howorth, The Advocacy Project; Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability, Forum Theatre Group The Good Life, and Lois Cameron of Talking Mats

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **What is adult support and protection work?**

Local authorities have legal duties to inquire and investigate situations where an adult may be at risk of harm. They also have to consider whether they need to take action to support and protect the adult in question. The principles in the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 state that an adult at risk of harm should be supported to express their own views and to participate as fully as possible in decision-making processes. This depends on people understanding the context of why a practitioner is making contact: what is adult support and protection (ASP) and how might it be relevant to them? Thereafter, much of ASP work is about helping people to work through risks they may be facing and what they may wish to do about them.

### **Project aims and methods**

The overall aim of this short-term scoping project was to explore how social work service practitioners might be better equipped to understand the perspectives of people who may be at risk of harm and to identify ways to improve service user participation in investigations, decision-making and meetings. This was to be achieved by:

- a) Synthesising existing research and practice experience about what supports and limits service user involvement in ASP work and building on this knowledge in the current project
- b) Establishing small co-production locality teams of service users and practitioners to work together on an aspect of ASP work they wanted to improve by developing a tool or approach to address the issue

It was acknowledged that there would not be time, within the life of the project, to test out and evaluate any tools that were developed.

The potential benefits were:

- Raised awareness by welfare practitioners of *how* to improve understanding and participation, and confidence in trying out new methods of engaging with services users
- Diversification of the tools or approaches to more appropriately match people's needs and strengths

- Demonstration of the effectiveness of this co-production approach in tackling practice issues and improving the experience and participation of service users in ASP processes

A national network of four teams within local authority areas (Dundee City, East Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and Perth and Kinross) was established. The locality teams were made up of service users, social work practitioners and managers, and advocacy workers. The project ran from November 2012 to June 2013 and had two stages. Stage one (November to January) consisted of identifying and setting up the teams and producing a briefing paper on the research and development work undertaken to date in Scotland about ASP work. Stage two focussed on the teams working on their chosen issue, coming together in two national workshops to share and support each other's' work. This report pulls together all the learning about improving service user involvement in ASP work gained during the project, presents the tools developed and highlights the lessons learned about the co-production approach itself. There are plans to test out and evaluate the tools. This would provide practitioners with more detail about the outcomes the tools might achieve.

### **How is adult support and protection working in practice?**

Research, local evaluations and workshops highlighted that service users and carers have had mixed experiences of ASP. Some have been good, but some adults felt more could have been done to help them understand what ASP was about and to help them have more say along the way. This was confirmed by the locality teams who identified the following factors:

- There has been more of a focus on procedures than the service user perspective to date
- There appears to be an underlying presumption if you have told someone something then they will retain that information but emotions and stress can get in the way
- The service user gets very little written information along the way
- Time is needed to encourage and establish open dialogue
- There is an overreliance on traditional interview methods
- Practitioner knowledge of how a given person best participates is not easily accessible to others
- Case conferences need attention in terms of preparing people for them (if they wish to attend), getting their views heard and in terms of the person receiving feedback after the meeting

### **Tools developed**

All the tools aimed to increase the voice of the service user and encourage more meaningful dialogue. Two teams developed new tools: a visit summary sheet to be written with the service user at the time of the visit and a 'STOP! Make sure you include me' tool to record how best to communicate with and involve someone. The other two teams wanted to try out and adapt pre-existing tools which service users

could complete around risk-taking and support (Altrum Risk Research Team 2011). One team also explored how to integrate the visual tools with council IT systems. These tools should not be viewed as checklists, or purely pieces of paper, but are devices within a defined process to help service users to have more say and to help practitioners think more deeply about what supporting participation means.

### **Learning from the project**

A key factor that facilitated learning for all locality teams was bringing together different participants outside of one-to-one case work where each other's experiences and perspectives could be shared. There was a need to view ASP work from the perspective of service users because to date the focus has been on getting local authority policy and procedures right. This meant critically reviewing the processes and paperwork councils had generated around ASP work and which the script that practitioners worked from. In contrast the project locality teams sought to develop shared scripts between practitioners and service users.

### **Learning from developing the tools**

As a result the teams identified important ways of working that enable collaboration between practitioners and service users:

- Expect to consider a range of options before picking one
- Choose a discrete aspect of ASP work and be realistic
- Devise tools that are simple to use
- Change is achieved through the *process of using* the tool
- Provide guidance and support about how they are to be used
- Use symbols and pictures that are commonly understood
- Remember that paperwork is for service users too
- Think about transferability of formats; converting a paper-based tool to an electronic format can be complex
- Organisational change takes time: share the vision and its potential with practitioners as well as management

### **Learning from doing co-production**

In the process teams also identified a number of important points about co-production as a service development approach:

- Flexibility is required about how service users wish to work on projects: no one model fits, find out how they want to get involved
- Relationships take time to build and for everyone to feel comfortable about working in a different way with each other
- A 'nothing's off limits' approach helps to build trust and openness
- Acknowledge you can't fix it all and find a realistic starting point
- Co-production working develops practitioners' skills and knowledge that can then be used more widely

- Deadlines provide a useful framework for pacing work
- Humour is key: being able to laugh and relax together
- This local model of policy and practice development does take time as it is more of a journey of joint discovery but it sets the seeds for change *in situ*, and creates alliances and ways of working that can be built upon

## Conclusions

This project has demonstrated the value of a co-production approach to explore how service user involvement in ASP work might be improved. It has produced new tools and adapted existing ones (see Chapter Three and Appendix 2) which are ready to pilot and can then hopefully be put to use. There is a real appetite amongst local authorities to do this type of developmental work but for some work pressures prevented them from taking part. Whilst practitioners and managers are aware of the need to improve service user participation they do need to step back from day to day work to fully appreciate the barriers.

In particular the project demonstrated:

- Co-production with service users and advocacy workers has helped local authority staff to see their work through each other's eyes and experiences
- Small locality teams proved a good model because relationships could be developed in ways that are not possible within more formal working parties
- Service users will participate in different ways, it's about choice and what suits them best
- The teams demonstrated what might be described as a re-balancing of power between the practitioners and service users and as such model best practice.
- Bottom-up ideas and potential solutions are worth cultivating
- This type of work takes time and may require creative adaptation to respond to changes in circumstances that impact on service users' participation
- Having a national network was effective in promoting learning between the teams and was a catalyst for moving the work forward

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# Chapter 1 Background to the project

## Introduction

1.1 The idea for this project came out of research (Altrum Risk Research Team 2011, Mackay et al 2011) that was undertaken in the first few years after the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 [hereafter referred to as the ASPA] was implemented. This found that whilst there was a lot of good work being undertaken to support and protect adults at risk, there were occasions where there was a difference between the perception of the practitioners who undertook work and service users who experienced it. Differences centred on how well the service user understood what was happening, and the extent to which they had a meaningful voice in the process. This project was supported by the Scottish Government to build on this research to explore how we might improve service users' involvement in adult support and protection [hereafter ASP] work by bringing together service users and practitioners to co-productively develop tools or approaches. This chapter provides background information on adult support and protection and sets out the aims and methods of the project.

## Adult support and protection work

1.2 Local authorities have legal duties to inquire and investigate situations where an adult may be at risk of harm. They also have to consider whether they need to take action to support and protect the adult in question. The principles in the ASPA underline that an adult at risk of harm should be supported to express their own views and should be supported to participate as fully as possible in any decision-making processes. They also emphasize any action should benefit the person. Some people may have varying degrees of intellectual and/ or communication impairments and the onus is on the local authority practitioners to find ways to enable them to be involved as far as possible. Involvement depends on people understanding what the ASPA is all about, expressing their views, having those views taken into account and agreeing to any pursued action by local authorities unless there are exceptional circumstances.

1.3 ASP work is therefore about seeking to help people work through risks they may be facing in their lives. This often means helping a person sort through difficult feelings in stressful circumstances. It may mean rethinking important relationships or making decisions that will have a long term impact on their lives. It may involve the person working with several different services together, which can be confusing. Finding good solutions to risk needs to involve the adult at risk, use their strengths and ideas, and should keep their interests central. All these things can be summed up as participation.

## Previous research

1.4 The aims and methodology for this project arose from two recent projects, based at the School of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling. The first project, led by Kathryn Mackay, was a collaborative practitioner research study which interviewed practitioners and services users in three Scottish local authorities to explore the experiences of assessment and intervention under the new law (Mackay et al 2011). The second project, which Beth Cross helped facilitate, was a participatory project with service users that explored understandings of risk and developed tools to improve service users' involvement in adult support and protection work (Altrum Risk Research Team 2011).

1.5 This research highlighted the following factors that supported or limited service users' participation:

- The nature of the interaction between the practitioner and the person
- The person's confidence and levels of anxiety
- Opportunities and access to resources to help the person process information and understand ASP work, whether they have a communication disability or not
- Time and encouragement given to the person to express their views
- The way ASP work was structured by the agency e.g. how inquiries were undertaken, how they approached case conferences

1.6 Wider research into adult abuse from across the UK and internationally supports these findings, emphasising the centrality of the service user/practitioner relationship in supporting adults at risk of harm throughout the process (Bergeron 2006; Dixon et al 2010). Positive open relationships help to develop shared understanding and problem solving but also reduce the power imbalance that exists between worker and service user. Whilst sometimes crisis situations mean that workers have to act before such relationships are developed or where contact might only be a matter of an initial inquiry, the onus is still on the practitioner to ensure that the adult understands what is happening, why it is happening and has the opportunity to give their views and ask questions.

1.7 It is also important to note that there have been various small projects within Scottish local authorities since 2008 that aimed to evaluate people's experiences so far, to produce clear, easy information about ASP in written and DVD formats, and to raise awareness of adult abuse and harm through public events. The first step for this project was to synthesise learning from these various projects into a briefing paper that informed the work of this project.

## **Participative and co-production approaches**

1.8 The projects undertaken by Beth Cross and Kathryn Mackay demonstrated that local authorities, individual practitioners and service users were interested in working together to improve participation within ASP processes. However, neither project worked with both practitioners and service users together. A meeting between these two research projects demonstrated how practitioners and service users could share what were clearly different views of the ASP journey. It highlighted the potential value of a project where service users and practitioners worked together as team members and indicated the results might powerfully model good participatory practice. However, such an approach had been rarely carried out within statutory local authorities. Siting a project within locality teams might also demonstrate how this method could be used, thus taking a bottom-up as opposed to top-down approach to changing local policy and practice.

1.9 Beth Cross and Kathryn Mackay used the opportunity of delivering research dissemination workshops under the auspices of the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services, to bring together service users co-facilitating the workshops with practitioners attending the workshops in the spring of 2012. These workshops provided further insight into the potential of co-production processes and laid the groundwork for this research project. In addition the workshops also highlighted how specialist teams were more likely to be familiar with participative ways of working with service users than local authority teams. Particular challenges to participative ways of working were also highlighted, the principle one being the adoption of an overly legalistic or procedural approach by local authorities. Whilst there are times when local authorities have to act in emergencies, undertake court applications, and basically take control, most on-going ASP work is about working with the adult to minimise the potential of future harm.

1.10 In addition, it was also recognised that advocacy workers play a key role in supporting some service users through ASP work but that their perspective was missing from the research so far.

## **Overview of the project**

### **Project Aims**

1.11 The overall aim of this short-term scoping project was to explore how social work service practitioners might be better equipped to understand the perspectives of adults who may be at risk of harm and to identify ways to improve service user participation in investigations, decision-making and meetings. This was to be achieved by:

- a) Synthesising existing research and practice experience about what supports and limits service user involvement in ASP work
- b) Building on this knowledge in the current project
- c) Establishing small co-production locality teams of service users and practitioners to work together on an aspect of ASP work they wanted to improve and develop a tool or approach to address issues they identified

1.12 It was acknowledged that there would not be time within the life of this project to test out and evaluate any tools that were developed, but means might be found to do so at a later date. However, value lay in capturing and synthesising the learning around developing the tools themselves and from using a co-production model to develop policy and practice at the frontline of ASP work.

1.13 The potential benefits of this project were:

- Raised awareness by welfare practitioners of *how* to improve understanding and participation, and confidence in trying out new methods of engaging with all services users
- Diversification of the tools or approaches that more appropriately match people's needs and strengths
- Demonstration of the effectiveness of this co-production approach to tackle practice issues and therefore to improve the experience and participation of services users in ASP processes

1.14 The strategy was to establish a national network of four teams within local authority areas to work on their own chosen issue and find ways in which it might be tackled through developing 'tools' and/or approaches. The project ran from November 2012 to June 2013 and had two stages. Stage one (November to January) consisted of identifying and setting up the teams, and producing a briefing paper on the research and development work undertaken to date in Scotland about ASP work (chapter two summarises this paper). Stage two focussed on the teams working on their chosen issue and coming together in two national workshops to share their work and support each other's work. This project report pulls together all the learning about improving service user involvement in ASP work gained during the project, presents the tools developed and highlights the lessons learned about the co-production approach itself.

### **Co-production locality teams**

1.15 Local authorities with whom Beth Cross or Kathryn Mackay already had links were invited to take part. Several more than actually took part expressed an interest but were unable to proceed due to pressures of work. One local authority started but then withdrew for similar reasons. Dundee City, East Ayrshire, Perth and Kinross

Councils have been involved in the project throughout. North Lanarkshire Council and The Advocacy Project joined later.

1.16 Each team was a partnership between:

- Local authority social work service practitioners
- Local advocacy worker
- Service user(s)

1.17 The project drew upon the draft ethical UK guidelines and principles for community-based participatory research (CBPR) that were being developed by the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action at Durham University (2012) to guide its work. The core principles are:

- Mutual respect
- Equality and inclusion
- Democratic participation
- Active learning
- Making a difference
- Collective action
- Personal and professional integrity

### **Supporting the teams individually**

1.18 Kathryn Mackay and Beth Cross offered individual support to teams. Each team was visited at the start and then later on. The researchers were available by phone or email. However the teams all seemed to work well on their own though they appreciated the deadlines of meetings and workshops to push their work forward, as well as the debate and discussion of outsiders' views when they met with the researchers.

1.19 Claire Lightowler from the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services offered expertise on local project work and dissemination. She also set up a project blog on the IRISS website. This was populated by the briefing paper and full write ups of the two national workshops (see <http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/asp/f>). The blog did receive hits and one valuable connection with The Advocacy Project was made through this route (see section 3.26 for details).

### **Supporting the teams together**

1.20 The two national workshop days when the teams came together were an important aspect of the project. Their aims were to support, exchange, debate and share learning. The first in January was designed to launch and stimulate ideas for the second stage where teams started to undertake their own projects. Heavy snow on the day prevented many from coming but there was a representative from each team. Those who were there engaged in a number of activities and discussions.

These included sessions by Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) on how they developed co-production processes within their work and by Lois Cameron, from Talking Mats, who shared insights from a project working with disabled people on developing information using symbols to explain what ASP was about (Cameron and Place 2011). A member of the forum theatre group, The Good Life, spoke about service user led work on the issues of ASP and improvised with Lois Cameron a brief scene that demonstrated the usefulness of this technique for addressing issues and dynamics that may otherwise be difficult to broach or work through.

1.21 The second workshop in June had much better attendance and became a forum of lively debate where the teams shared their own work, gave and received feedback. It also helped to identify the learning each team had accumulated along their journey together. Further information about the workshops is contained in chapter 4.

## **Summary**

1.22 The ASPA legal principles underline the expectation that adults at risk of harm should be supported to express their views and participate as fully as possible in decision-making. This project built on previous work that highlighted factors which supported and limited service users' involvement in ASP and also demonstrated the value of participatory research methodologies. The aim of this project was to improve service user participation through establishing locality co-production teams who then selected an aspect of ASP work and then developed a tool or approach to improve service involvement. Learning about the challenges of improving service user participation and how the co-production model worked in practice at the frontline line in ASP work were also key elements of this project.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of Scottish Research**

### **Introduction**

2.1 This chapter provides a summary of the work that has been undertaken to date in Scotland. A request for information about any evaluations that may have been undertaken by local authorities was circulated to all lead ASP officers. We also drew upon wider research to consider whether themes coming out of the Scottish research reflected or contradicted the more general comments made within the literature on adult safeguarding and service user involvement.

2.2 In summing up what work has been done it is important to remember that service users contributed to the development of the ASP. Their views were listened to and helped shape how the law was worded (Mackay et al 2011, Scottish Government 2008). For example

- The term ‘vulnerable adults’ was replaced by ‘adults at risk of harm’.
- Age and receipt of community care services were deleted as criteria.
- The term ‘abuse’ and allied specific criteria was replaced to that of being ‘at risk of harm’ which has a more open ended meaning.

### **Listening to Those Who Have Been There**

#### **Service User Views**

2.3 A small survey carried out by East and Midlothian Adult Protection Committee’s APC (2010) found that some services users spoke highly of ASP, but others had mixed feelings. SCLD has carried out an evaluation for East Dunbartonshire, interviewing 8 service users with learning disabilities (Miller 2012). It found that most communication was verbal with only one respondent reporting they were given anything in writing. Respondents were unfamiliar with terminology of proceedings and were unsure what the process was, or, if an investigation had been carried out. Of the five respondents who said they had attended a case conference, three said they were given help to prepare for the meeting and four said they had had support in the meeting. However, many of their comments reflect the unease that they felt at the meetings:

“You walk in ‘blind’”

“You walk in a stranger. They all know each other and you’re the odd man out”

“They all had crib sheets in front of them”

“I didn’t know my role”

“I was like a fish out of water”

“They had all attended these meetings a hundred times” (Miller 2012)

2.4 Those who had help preparing for the meeting reported the most positive experience of the meeting itself (Miller 2012). It is interesting to note that one

respondent highlights their lack of a 'crib sheet' in contrast to everyone else around the table. This prompts the question: if they had accessible 'crib sheets' that they were able to bring to the table, would this have put them on a more equal footing with more confidence to participate?

2.5 This help beforehand can be done in a number of ways. For example in Dumfries and Galloway the chairperson of the case conference meets the person beforehand. Many people use an independent advocacy worker to speak for them or to help them speak for themselves. The papers a person brings to the table so that they have a 'crib sheet', to use the words of the person in the East Dunbartonshire evaluation, could be a list of things they want to say and questions they have. There are other ways in which a person can be helped to have their say. For example, a study that brought views together across three different local authorities (Mackay et al 2011) also found that one person was helped to express their views about the type of contact he wanted with his family through use of Talking Mats. This was then shared with other workers and the family. Talking Mats is a way of exploring and recording issues through the use of pictures.

2.6 Six service users and one relative were interviewed in the Mackay et al (2011) study. Most of those interviewed found that the process of investigation was stressful. There was anxiety about what social work might do, having to answer personal questions and attending case conferences. Some service users experienced losses as well as gains around changes in relationships. Though they have become safer, such losses needed to be acknowledged and where possible ameliorated.

2.7 The Altrum Risk Research Project (2011) consulted with 42 service users with a range of service needs about ASP work. Many of those consulted had experienced harm in the past, but only a few had worked with social workers about issues of harm since the ASPA has been implemented. Service users did express concerns about what the ASP process might be like. Their experience suggested any inquiry process can affect a person's sense of self. They raised concerns that risk assessment forms, capacity assessments and case conference reports may act to further damage a person's sense of self. They wanted attention to be given to the person's own sense of what they can do to recover and gain resilience.

### **Carers' Views**

2.8 East Dunbartonshire Adult Protection Committee also conducted an evaluation of carers' views through a local carers' group. Carers highlighted that whilst the outcomes were generally positive, there was criticism about the process. They felt ill-informed, found case conferences too nerve wracking to be able to say what they wanted to say and generally felt they were not always listened to. They raised concerns that language was intimidating and showed a lack of sympathy for the stress carers were under. Of the four carers contributing to the survey two felt that "more information should have been provided and help should have been offered earlier" (East Dunbartonshire Council 2012).



## **Social Workers' Views**

2.9 As well as interviewing service users, the study that looked at ASP work across three local authorities listened to social workers and involved them as co-researchers (Mackay et al 2011). Some of the key challenges were around balancing the individuals' rights with practitioners' legal duties and developing better inter-agency working. These same issues are evident in the wider literature (Calder 2010, Hogg et al 2009, Mackay 2008 and 2011, Patrick and Smith 2009 and Stewart 2012).

Half of the social workers interviewed felt that the ASPA had enabled them to take more time and therefore make sensitive efforts to gather and weigh up information, enabling them to build relationships with those at risk of harm more so than within their main role (Mackay et al 2012). Social workers reported that service users engaged with ASP investigations in a range of ways from welcoming openness to cautious acceptance to occasional rejection of contact, which was respected in some cases depending on the situation and the presence or absence of undue pressure. Social workers and those helped agreed that the adults at risk were safer and had a better quality of life as a result of the plans put in place through adult support and protection work. Positive outcomes included

- being safer
- feeling happier
- being able to make decisions
- staying at home
- having debts cleared
- being more socially active.

2.10 Social workers also recognised the process could be stressful and involve losses for the person as well as gains. This led to them making a number of recommendations about how to help the person participate more meaningfully in the future, which included developing alternative forms of capturing the person's story and looking at different types of case conferences. For this reason it is important that social workers consider using forms of communication beyond standard interviewing.

2.11 Members of the Altrum Risk Research Team and Kathryn Mackay carried out two workshops to discuss findings with social workers and other professionals who do ASP work. Those who came to the workshops discussed the findings, and the issues and challenges they were facing in their own contexts. In addition to these two workshops, the Altrum Risk Research Team ran a number of interactive workshops on increasing service user participation. These dissemination events provided a further mechanism for taking the pulse of adult support and protection implementation.

2.12 Some of the common themes practitioners raised across the above work were:

- Balancing respect of fully informed choices with a duty of care
- Being aware of and responding to the needs of adults, who for the most part cope on their own in the community, in ways that build on their strengths in addressing harm
- Working through issues around intimacy and relationships
- Balancing protection from harm with promotion of healthy risk taking as integral to a good quality of life
- Addressing tensions between giving the service user time to have their say and the procedural demands of agency decision-making: report writing, case conferences etc.

2.13 It was also observed that voluntary organisations seemed to have had more experience of using different type of tools and approaches to involving services users than local authority community care teams who carried out the bulk of ASP work.

### **Adult protection committees**

2.14 The Scottish Government (2009) recommends that the local adult protection committees, who oversee ASP work, have members who have received services and who are carers. The majority of committees now have some form of service user and carer involvement. Some sit on the main committee and have support to do this. Other committees have set up a sub-committee where larger groups of service users and carers can get together in a less formal setting to share views that are then forwarded to the main committee (Scottish Government 2011, Ekosgen 2013). There is a concern that unless the main committee is accountable to this sub-committee it becomes a talking shop (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2011). This accountability can take the form of the committee members meeting with the sub-committee and sharing their paperwork, decisions and explaining why they may not have accepted recommendations made by the sub-committee. In some cases volunteer groups and forums for older people, people with mental health issues, and disabled people choose their own committee members to represent them. However, the perceived meaningfulness from the view point of service users and carers has yet to be evaluated.

2.15 Reference groups are like forums that are set up to advise services. These can be at a local and national level. The Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability (SCLD) has led the way in developing a co-production approach. For example they established a reference group of people with learning disabilities to help them with their work with local area coordinators who are responsible for supporting and promoting independence of people with learning disabilities. They have also developed resources to encourage co-production and hosted events that introduce co-production to more services and organisations.

## **Raising awareness of the ASPA**

2.16 There are different ways to raise awareness. Several ASP committees have asked service users to develop leaflets. The service user on the Dundee ASP Committee and the peer advocacy group she is part of developed an accessible information leaflet. In Forth Valley a similar group also produced a video, alongside a leaflet that told the story of someone who had received support and protection. The design and wording of such leaflets is important as sometimes agency leaflets are not easy to read. For example the Dundee group also helpfully reviewed the leaflets developed by the Altrum Risk Research Project and provided insight into which images were helpful or not. Also some people will require information in a different format.

2.17 A second way to raise awareness is with tools developed by Talking Mats. Talking Mats is a project that uses a specific visual methodology to help anyone with communication support needs to get their views heard in different situations where they may be asked questions about any aspect of their life. They have used this methodology to develop a pack on the ASPA and have run workshops with practitioners and people with communication needs to identify symbols that make sense to them. In the course of this work they discovered that very few people actually knew about the ASPA. They used a co-production approach to train staff and have piloted the new symbols.

2.18 A third way to raise awareness is the use of drama. Several local authorities, drawing on the drama approach of the forum theatre group The Good Life, are developing use of co-produced forum theatre to raise awareness of risks people can face and encouraging them to seek help if they feel concerned. Fife Council is also using this approach to help service users understand better how a person harmed and a social worker could work together to protect them and help them recover from harm. Fife Council has also begun to use the Altrum Risk Research visual tools in awareness raising events such as the annual Carer and Service User Conference.

## **Developing resources and tools that help service users participate**

### **Tools to help participation in ASP work**

2.19 This chapter has already mentioned Talking Mats which is now a relatively well established communication tool which can be adapted to different subject areas and processes. These were originally developed for people with special communication needs but more recently their potential for use with people with no apparent communication impairments has been explored. As noted above there is a real challenge in ASP work about how you support an adult to express views and to participate as fully as they might wish in what are often emotionally upsetting and anxiety provoking situations, and where agencies and staff are seen as holding more of the power.

2.20 The Altrum Risk Research Team, as well as consulting with service users about their concerns about ASP implementation, also worked with service users to devise tools to help address their participation concerns. These tools include a diary tool to help service users track the progress through ASP, and a tool to help them prepare for risk planning. The latter tool frames a risk plan in the positive outcomes the service users want for themselves and records the strengths and experiences they bring to problem solving. These tools were based on a life planning ethos and use of visuals. They were devised to be integrated into risk planning based on an understanding that it is not about the filling in the right piece of paper in the right way, but about how these tools might shape and alter the discussions and interactions with workers on a one-to-one basis and within case conferences.

### **Relationship-based work**

2.21 This research project also highlighted other factors about ASP work that are worth further attention:

- There is an important cyclical relationship between information sharing and building trust
- Recognition is needed that situations rarely involve clear cut distinctions between goodies and baddies
- There is a need to develop ways of working with complex situations
- In negotiating the need to assess capacity there is a tension between building rapport, involving the person in an empowering way and being clear with them about what is at stake

2.22 In the work undertaken by the Altrum Risk Research Team, participants valued honesty about options, costs, capacity assessment, and other procedures, with clear explanations. They wanted this approach to be part of the relationship they had with any of the practitioners taking part in the investigation. They also highlighted the importance of flexibility about how case conference and risk planning is carried out. They suggested that visual tools can make the most of a person's communication strengths, and can let everyone in the room be human. These techniques could potentially transform a person's inclusion in formal ASP proceedings. Participants expressed the strong view that a successful process needs to incorporate supportive relationships and not one-off advocacy but sustainable support. One of the service user researchers on the Altrum Project explored the metaphor of face to eloquently encapsulate the relationship dynamics at stake for a person undergoing an ASP inquiry:

*The word 'face' summed up many important points. Building a relationship means coming face to face with each other. It means considering what face you present to the person at risk, and what you read in their face. A person's face is one of the most unique things about them. The degree to which we read faces is an important part of how we listen to them. Sometimes people*

*who struggle to read words are very adept at reading faces, more so than they are given credit for. Through an Adult Support and Protection journey the person at risk may be trying to save face, or put on a brave face. They may be struggling to find the resources to face things that are frightening and upsetting. An important part of healing is growing new skin over a wound, in other words, a new face. As one of the research team members reflected, it may mean “re-inventing the face you present to the world”. All of these things can be summed up as ‘consider what’s being faced’. (Altrum Risk Research Group 2011: 16)*

2.23 Participants discussed how a person can become resilient through ASP work and made recommendations about what support a person might need to develop this at every stage of the process (Altrum Risk Research Team 2011, Brookes et al 2012).

## **Summary**

2.24 The research, evaluations and fora for discussion taken together hold important lessons. Adults and carers have had mixed experiences of ASP. Some experiences have been good but some adults have felt more could have been done to help them understand what ASP was about and to help them have more say along the way. There are ways in which we can support people’s participation through giving people more time, changing the way meetings are run, use of drama, pictures and accessibly written tools. The mixed picture of good and bad experiences can be found in England (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2011) and in Wales (Magill, Yeates and Longley 2010).

2.25 However these lessons still need to be promoted, existing tools utilised and new tools developed for practitioners and adults at risk of harm. There is growing guidance across governments, local authorities and national institutions for ASP work: their focus is mainly on recognising the harm, the procedural aspects of undertaking investigations and providing protection. The person’s participation in reaching good outcomes for themselves is less resourced. In addition there are tools for general decision-making about care that have been developed for working with people with mental health concerns and learning disabilities but work needs to be done to adapt them to use in situations of risk faced by many different adults in many different situations. What is needed now is to build on the work that has been done so far and to get the examples of how to improve an individual’s participation in ASP out to all practitioners and agencies. The next chapter details how this project starts to address that need.

## **Chapter 3: The work of the teams**

### **Introduction**

3.1 This chapter gives an overview of each team's work. It details how they set up their team and why they chose the ASP issue they wished to work on. Their planning process, challenges faced and resulting tool or approach are reported. The summaries for each team have been developed from notes taken after meetings with the researchers and during the second workshop day as they discussed their tool and their journey.

### **City of Dundee Team: Importance of Participation**

#### **Team members**

Brian Rapley, advocacy worker for older people, Dundee Independent Advocacy  
Bobby Brown, an older person with experience of the ASP process  
Fiona Gaffney, Care Manager  
Maureen Conway, Care Manager  
Rose Sinclair, Senior Officer, ASP, Dundee City Council

#### **Team working**

3.2 Rose approached the care management team and the advocacy project with the idea of focussing on older people and their experiences of ASP work. A social worker from the First Contact Team approached a service user who had recently experienced adult support and protection work and Bobby agreed to be involved. Bobby does not read or write, has learning disabilities and was often accompanied to meetings by his close friend. As a group they brainstormed where they felt they did not do so well in ASP work, from the perspective of frontline workers and from the perspective of an advocacy worker. One meeting was given over to Bobby so they could listen to his story and learn from his experience. This allowed Bobby to talk through some of his feelings and emotions about the whole ASP process. This was described as a privilege by the workers because they appreciated this was a rare opportunity to meet service users outside of their own one-to-one work. This allowed them to see the work and its impact on him through his own words. It also helped to further free them up to think critically about their work and ASP procedures. They felt at times they were struggling with direction but part of the journey was realising there were various points in the ASP process that might be targeted for improvement but that their starting point needed to be something discrete and achievable.

#### **Chosen issue: Improving the service user's participation in ASP**

3.3 Bobby highlighted communication as a problem for him to take part in proceedings and it was one of the barriers identified by the group as a whole. Participation was a theme that underpinned all their ideas and Bobby's story

underlined the importance of practitioners knowing, and then responding to the fact that he does not read or write. The team felt this could be a factor particularly in ASP inquiries and investigations, where the practitioner is under pressure to gather information and make a judgement about risk of harm. These issues are even more likely to occur if the person is not known to social work. However, even when knowledge about how to effectively include people was built up by individual workers, it did not seem to be fully recorded or easily found by others who worked with the person later in the ASP process.

3.4 Therefore, the Dundee team wanted to raise awareness that identifying participation needs and addressing them, as far as possible, was an important part of investigation work. However, the team realised many of the barriers to participation were not about specialist technology but about the practitioner modifying their approach as guided by the needs of the service user, for example, where they should sit in relation to the person they were speaking to so they could see and hear them better, and finding out who helped the service user to speak out and who had the opposite effect. The team then started to think how they might devise a tool that might lead practitioners to support people to engage with the process as fully as possible and could be accessible to others involved in ASP work.

**The tool: ‘STOP! Make Sure You Include Me’**

3.5 The team developed a one page participation tool ‘STOP! Make Sure You Include Me’ which was designed to:

- a) Prompt the practitioner to consider the wide range of factors they had identified
- b) Identify and record ways in which the best participation could be achieved
- c) Lead to discussion with the person about referral on to services that might address participation barriers, for example, hearing and sight impairment
- d) Be easy to use and accessible across the agency.

A full sized copy on the tool has been placed in Appendix 2

**Piloting and dissemination**

3.6 The team were aware of the danger that their tool might be viewed as another piece of paperwork that had to be filled in. They hope that it is easy to use and that part of the next stage will be about identifying resources to improve participation of service users in all aspects of ASP, not just recording the issues on the form. They plan to trial it with care



Figure 1: Dundee City Tool

managers after gaining approval from senior management. They are also considering how Bobby's and others' real stories might help to get key messages across to their colleagues. There is also the possibility of a resources 'pack' of all different types of local support that might be grouped together for service users to access to overcome barriers to participation from hearing and sight services to computer classes. This might also reduce social isolation in general. There are also implementation questions that the teams are thinking through: should the service user get a copy? should it be routinely sent along with any referral to advocacy workers and any other agency?

## **East Ayrshire Team: Piloting existing risk planning tools and integrating them into council IT systems**

### **Team Members**

Jenny Bruce, ASP Learning and Development Practitioner  
Lee McLaughlin, Team Manager, Self- Directed Support  
Senga McCulloch, Manager, Balmoral Road Day Centre

### **Team working**

3.7 Jenny Bruce, Adult Support and Protection Learning and Development Practitioner, approached Lee McLaughlin, Team Manager, Self-Directed Support and Senga McCulloch, manager at a day centre with an open door policy where service users would have scope to contribute to the tool on a flexible basis. Involvement in the project was approved by both the Adult Protection Committee and senior management within East Ayrshire Social Work.

### **Chosen issue: Working with the Altrum Risk Research Team risk planning tool**

3.8 The project took place at a time when a lot of different strands of work such as child and adult protection and domestic violence were being brought together under the banner "Protecting People". This is being done to make it easier for a member of the public to raise a concern about harm to anyone they come in contact with, but will require better inter-professional working.

3.9 The East Ayrshire team's concern was to both stream line and make more accessible routes of communication and decision-making throughout the ASP process, with a particular concern for tools that young adults would want to engage with that would not be stigmatising. Digital media are increasingly an important part of young adults' lives and it was thought that creating tools which they could access digitally would be worth exploring. They are also increasingly important in how agencies support staff in practice and therefore another aspect of work currently



underway in this council is an exploration of digital technology to assist communication between a wide range of service providers and the public.

## Approach/tool developed

3.10 The team decided to:

- Pilot the Altrum Risk Research Team risk planning tool that takes a visual life planning approach used within self-directed support processes with younger disabled adults
- Use simple evaluation tools to capture practitioner and service users' experience of using the tool
- Develop a software application based on the tool that would engage younger service users and be compatible with the council's IT systems



**Figure 2: Altrum Risk Research Team's Risk Planning Tool**

A fuller sized copy is in Appendix 2

### 3. 11 Issues raised

- Concern that service users may shy away from involvement as they have not wanted to talk about sexual harm in the past
- Concern that one style or way of depicting things can't fit all. Images quickly pick up connotations from past service use which can be unhelpful. A tool that would allow service users to choose the style of illustration they would use would be useful
- Information technology systems and security of information: anything developed as an electronic version of the Altrum Risk Research Team risk tool needs to be secure and able to fit within or interact with existing Local Authority systems and technology
- Whilst the tools were pre-existing, this project highlights how the next stages - getting management and practitioners on board can be time consuming but worth the effort as a number of teams have now agreed to take part. This

project also demonstrates how services users are not a homogenous group and not always inclined to be part of an on-going project

### Piloting and Dissemination

3.12 A tool to capture evaluation from practitioners and service users was developed and distributed amongst the team. The open door policy at the day centre was used to gather service users' initial reactions to it.

3.13 Social Work Services within the Local Authority agreed to pilot the tool including Mental Health and Criminal Justice team. There is now organisational level agreement to do this but the workers who will do the piloting are still being determined. Once these people are identified, any training needs they may have in order to use the tool will need to be assessed and training delivered.

The image shows two side-by-side evaluation diary sheets. Both sheets have a header with 'DATE:' and 'PRACTITIONER ID:'. The left sheet is titled 'TOOL EVALUATION DIARY' and contains five questions: 'Did using this tool help me say what I wanted to?', 'If I come back and look at it again will the way it is laid out help me remember what we planned?', 'What would make it easier to use?', 'Would I recommend it to a friend?', and 'What advice would I give them about how to use it?'. The right sheet is titled 'TOOL DEVELOPMENT DIARY' and contains five questions: 'What did the screen get out of using this tool?', 'What did I do to help the screen get the most out of using this tool?', 'How was this process different than other ways of working I have used in the past?', 'What modifications or attached guides would make this tool better?', and 'Further reflections:'. At the bottom of the right sheet, it says 'THANKS FOR YOUR HELP'.

**Figure 3: Tool Evaluation Diary Sheets**

Full sized copies are in Appendix 2

3.14 Working towards an interactive IT application highlighted two unique learning points:

1. Utilising staff and student university resources: Beth Cross helped the East Ayrshire team explore partnership with The University of the West of Scotland School of Computing to involve fourth year students in designing a software application for ASP work. This involved students working with East Ayrshire Council representatives from ASP, IT services and the SWIFT (computer records system) support team to try to create a format that could be used securely with existing systems.
2. In-house attempts at creating an electronic version highlighted that IT client recording systems may not have applications that allow the Risk Planning Tool to be lodged there. Features of the hard copy design (large size and use of colour that makes it attractive document to work with services users) do not suit existing computer programmes that are based on word as text. Learning about the IT solutions for these challenges could open up council recording systems to the use of mediums other than standard text.

## **Perth & Kinross Team: Visit summary sheet**

3.16 This summary was written by the team themselves in order to present their work to the ASP lead officer. It is slightly re-ordered to fit with report headings

### **Team membership**

Susan Hynd: Depute manager for Kinnoull Day Opportunities, a community based day service for adults with learning disability

Neil Dunn: Service User, Kinnoull Day Opportunities

Rhona Maxwell: Independent Advocacy Worker

Helen Winter: Learning Disability Social Worker

We also consulted with Speech and language therapist, Karin Taylor

### **Team working**

3.17 The team looked at the objectives of the project and decided to focus their work on developing something which would improve the participation in and experience of the ASP process for service users. We decided to focus on learning disability service users within the ASP process as a high percentage of initial ASP referrals are for people in this group. We looked at the service users' perspective and tried to think about what kind of things may be helpful for them.

3.18 Initially we thought about designing some kind of easy-read version of current ASP literature, however, this proved difficult once we started to develop it. It was important that we gave people, using the leaflet, information that was relevant to them, without making it too broad and giving them too much detail about more specific aspects of the process that may never affect them, and putting them off.

3.19 After discussion with the speech and language therapist, the group changed their mind and decided to pursue developing what we now call our 'visit summary sheet'.

3.20 Neil completed a consultation with service users on the Talking Mats ASP symbols and found that when taken out of context they are often misinterpreted. There is currently a roll out of ASP training throughout Scotland for learning disability service users, and the expectation is that with repetition and consistency in the use of these symbols people will become more familiar with them. The more general symbols are currently used in a wide variety of literature on the topic, both nationally and locally. As well as the colours used reflecting those of existing local literature on the topic, the visit summary sheet is also written in the recommended format using Verdana font, size 14, with 1.5 line spacing.

**Chosen issue: Improving service users' understanding of the ASP processes by leaving them with a written record of any visit**

3.21 Our group have designed what we call a 'visit summary sheet' for social workers to use as a simple record of their ASP visit to a learning disability service user. This visit summary sheet is something which does not yet exist locally and there has been a need expressed for this kind of tool. The sheet was produced in consultation with speech and language therapy and has been designed specifically so that it may be used after a visit at any stage in the ASP process (initial visit, investigation visit or final meeting). The sheet serves as a memory prompt as there is space for the worker to fill out relevant information which they feel appropriate to leave with the client. It is not intended to be a full record of information on the work as this will be recorded by the worker in their own set formats and within their database. It is instead something for the benefit of the service users themselves to prompt their memory for answers to the 'who/why/where/what/when' questions that they may have following a visit.

### 3.22 Tool: Visit summary sheet

The form is titled 'Visit Summary Sheet' and features several sections for recording information. At the top left, there is an icon of two people under an umbrella. The form includes fields for 'Name', 'Date', 'We met because', 'We met at', 'We talked about', 'To help keep you safe, we agreed', 'I will', 'You will', 'Anything else?', 'If you feel unsafe tell', 'Or Phone', and 'Workers Name'. There are also icons for a person with a speech bubble, a person with a thumbs up, and a person with a speech bubble.

Figure 4: Visit Summary Sheet

Full sized copy in Appendix 2

**The following advice will be placed on an A5 diary sized card:**

**“Name”:** This should be the person’s first name only in order to preserve anonymity should the sheet get lost or fall into the wrong hands.

**“We met at...”:** This should be the name of a place (e.g. home, Day Centre, Dobbies), in order to keep things simple and anonymous.

**“We met because...”:** This section should record the nature of the concern that has been reported

**“We talked about...”** This should be a brief summary of important points of the discussion that took place during this visit.

**To help try to keep you safe, we agreed;**

**“I will...” (worker):** This is a description of measures has either already in place or to be put in place. This can be a wide range of things including putting additional support in place, increased supervision (e.g. in the workplace), speaking to others for more information, involving other services (e.g. police, health), arranging a case conference, making a referral to the independent advocacy service, holding more frequent review meetings etc.

**“You will...” (service user):** This should be a description of things the person themselves can agree to do, such as tell others if they are concerned about anything, or take action to avoid being in a vulnerable situation.

**“Anything else?”:** This section is for anything else that may have been brought up during the discussion which may not be directly relevant to ASP but is important to the person. For example the person may ask when they are next on respite or when the summer disco is. The worker can still record this and agree to pass this information or question on to someone.

**“If you feel unsafe tell”:** Through discussion the worker will agree one or two people who the service user trusts to speak to and who is readily available. The person(s) named should have frequent and direct contact with the client e.g. their mum/key worker.

**“or Phone...”:** This should be the duty social work and/or out of hours phone number.

**“Worker name”:** This should be the name of the lead worker who visited them today. If the person is allocated to another worker this information will be stored on the local authority database and be established by the person phoning the relevant number and giving their own details.

## **Piloting and dissemination**

3.23 Our intention is for this sheet to be adopted for use by learning disability social workers within Perth & Kinross Council, however, we believe it can be easily adapted for use with other groups subject to ASP procedures. For service users with less capacity or difficulty understanding written words, workers may consult with speech and language therapists and/or have access to other symbols which may be used to fill in the blank spaces.

3.24 Permission has been sought and given to pilot this tool within the learning disability team. We are aiming to use it with hopefully 10 service users and seek their views of how useful or not they found the sheet. The evaluation tool developed for the East Ayrshire team will be used for this purpose. We will then reflect on its overall impact and redesign it as necessary. There are plans to present our work at a practitioner forum and then see how more widely the tool might be used.

## **North Lanarkshire and The Advocacy Project**

### **Team members**

Kaye MacGregor, ASP Coordinator, North Lanarkshire  
Michelle Howorth, The Advocacy Project

3.25 Late into the planning stage of this research North Lanarkshire approached Beth Cross with a general interest in Altrum Risk Research Team Work. Although technically too late to be included in the proposal it was felt that continuing a dialogue with North Lanarkshire and the advocacy provider for them would be in the spirit of the project. Michelle contacted the research team via the IRISS blog as she had recently helped to undertake an ASP evaluation for North Lanarkshire and other councils. Whilst this information was yet to be approved for public sharing, it had motivated her to consider how to take the findings into changing practice. The Advocacy Project had a particular interest in the diary tool developed within the Altrum Project which provides service users with a record of meetings alongside an illustration that helps them place the meeting within the overall process of a risk investigation. The tool to evaluate how well the Altrum tool worked in practice, which had been devised with East Ayrshire, was shared with them and they gave initial feedback and made a commitment to begin to look for opportunities to pilot and evaluate the Altrum Meeting Diary Tool. At the time of writing this report these opportunities have not yet arisen.

3.26 However, the North Lanarkshire Team's presence at the second national day brought further perspectives to discussions about all the various tools developed and particular insight into forum theatre approaches that they had successfully used to explore relations between person at risk, carer and services at a local authority

carers and service users day. It also reinvigorated their desire to test out the tools in their own area and hopefully draw on the other teams' experiences.

## **Summary**

3.27 The teams' work demonstrates how effective small teams, made up of different perspectives, can be in short-term project work. Together the proposed tools have the potential to improve service users' understanding of ASP (what and why things are happening), to have their views heard and to be able to participate more meaningfully. The common underpinning aim is to aid communication as a two way process between service user and practitioner. This underlines that the tools are not an end in themselves. Instead, they should be seen in the context of why they were developed and how they might promote a better shared understanding between practitioners and service users, which then might ripple out into other parts of the ASP process.

## **Chapter Four: Key Findings**

### **Introduction**

4.1 This chapter pulls together the learning from all the teams about trying to improve service user involvement in ASP processes. It is divided into three parts starting with the common learning around ASP work. The second part reviews the learning from the work done to develop the tools themselves. The third part explores co-production lessons, drawing on expertise that contributed to the national workshop days, as well as lessons generated by the locality teams. The chapter concludes with reflections on the methodology of the project as a whole.

### **Learning about ASP work**

4.2 Teams identified a wide range of factors that meant that service users were not as involved as they could be. These views reflected the findings from the research undertaken so far in Scotland. These can be summarised as follows:

- Much of the development to date has focussed on procedures and raising awareness about ASP in their locality
- As a result there is a need to start looking in more depth at service user experiences and what can be done to improve their participation
- Whilst information sheets about ASP can be helpful, for some they are too detailed and cause anxiety
- The service user actually gets very little written information along the ASP journey and as a result their understanding can be limited
- There appears to be an underlying presumption that if you have told someone something then they will retain that information but emotions and stress can get in the way
- Mis-communication is at its greatest in the early stages and there is a need to slow things down, not everything is a crisis
- There is a need to spend more time establishing an open dialogue and building an effective relationship that allows both practitioners and service users to express views, ask questions and discuss different perspectives and options
- There is an overreliance on traditional interview methods
- Even where practitioners have learned what works best for someone to participate, this is not often clearly recorded, accessible and shared
- Case conferences need attention in terms of preparing people for them (if they wish to attend), getting their views heard and receiving feedback about the meeting

### **Framing change within different perspectives**

4.3 A useful way of looking at how ASP work has developed and what needs to change is to look at the different perspectives of those involved. It also became a useful dynamic within the project teams.



### *The local authority*

4.4 ASP work is still relatively new and local authorities have been getting the policies and procedures in place, training staff to identify and investigate situations where adults may be at risk of harm and raising awareness in their local communities, setting up adult protection committees and cementing inter-agency working. As a result it can feel very procedural. This is exemplified by one team member commenting that they considered doing away with all ASP paperwork and starting again as a means of improving participation. This leads to a concern that whilst there may now be clearly a defined 'scaffold' (to adopt a word used by Lois Cameron of Talking Mats) in which ASP work and narratives take place in each local authority, these narratives can become dominant ways of working and may not leave space for different approaches to engage with service users to emerge.

### *Local authority practitioners*

4.5 Those that carry out inquiries and investigations have an ASP 'script' that they follow. They are concerned with gaining information, separating fact from fiction, imparting information, making judgements and relaying this back to managers. This work is often done under pressure of time and there are occasions where immediate responses are required to crises.

### *Service users*

4.6 Service users, on the other hand, unless they have experienced ASP work, have no scaffold within which to place an inquiry or investigatory visit, case conference etc. Whether there is harm taking place or not, theirs may be a more emotional reaction: anxiety, anger, fear or a mixture of all. It may be hard to understand what is being said and to make sense of something called adult support and protection. Being left with information about the ASP in general does not really explain the who, what, why, and how of the concerns uppermost in the person's mind.

### *Advocacy workers*

4.7 Advocacy workers often meet service users for the first time when they are in the midst of an investigation. They are often asked 'what's this all about?'. These workers will have little information about the person they are meeting and yet may have only a day or two before supporting that person to attend a case conference or going to represent their views on their own. Much time is spent explaining what ASP work is about before then being able to explore with that person what their wishes and feelings might be. Not everyone will have an advocacy worker.

## **Developing a different scaffold**

4.8 It is clear that currently a procedural scaffold dominates ASP work. Much of the work of the locality teams involved exploring how the agency scaffold and scripts could be adapted or rebuilt from a shared perspective.

## **Learning from developing the tools**

### **Common Themes**

4.9 The common themes across the teams were:

- Appreciating differing perspectives of practitioners, advocacy workers and service users on the same process
- Good communication as a platform on which to build participation
- The importance of tools being used as part of a process rather than a tick list or as a form to be filled in.

### **Lessons across the process**

Lessons also emerged that are relevant at different points within ASP processes.

#### **Information**

4.10 Information is part of the platform on which to build communication and then hopefully participation. As noted above, standard information leaflets can raise more questions and anxiety than they aim to solve. A better approach for some would be to take a stepped approach to giving and discussing information as needed and as relevant to the service user and their own particular situation. What started as an inquiry visit information sheet for the Perth team became a tool that might be useful at all steps of the process, because at each step the practitioner should sound out again with an adult what it would be most helpful for them to know, to agree action together and to have this in written form

#### **Symbols and pictures**

4.11 There was also learning about use of symbols and pictures. On their own they can be of limited value. Symbols need to be in regular use within the group or setting familiar to an adult and be part of everyday communication to be most helpful in times of stress or crisis. It is also important to be aware that symbols and pictures can develop a negative meaning and then their effectiveness is limited. These observations about standard symbols apply to both paper based tools and any developed for phones and computers. Another approach in one-to-one work is for the service user to select their own symbols or pictures to convey their own specific meaning and for people around that person to learn that language.

#### **Focussing change work where it has most impact**

4.12 Some aspects of ASP work seemed better starting points than others for beginning to achieve change. In the early stages of ASP mis-communication of various kinds is more likely to occur. Reducing misunderstanding in the early stages will make for more effective involvement later on. The tools together suggest ways in which service users' participation can become more meaningful by ensuring

practitioners quickly find out how best to communicate with the person, help the person to understand key information about what is happening and why. This should open up service user-led ways of recording and presenting their views and wishes.

### **Individual participation needs**

4.13 The Dundee City tool sets out to try to ensure that practitioners keep a wide appreciation of how someone's participation can be supported or limited. Their tool assesses the many ways in which a service user's participation can be diminished. It goes beyond the obvious issues of sight and hearing impairment, and intellectual disabilities to include where interviews take place and who helps the person to express their views. Once the most effective ways of communicating with someone have been established, it is important that this knowledge is shared, facilitating greater involvement in the rest of the ASP process. It also puts the onus on the practitioner to consider referral to other resources that might help strengthen a person's inclusion more broadly.

### **Supporting understanding in an on-going basis**

4.14 The Perth and Kinross tool aims to address the uncertainty and confusion that service users are often left with after an ASP initial visit. Even where practitioners feel they have given a person space within a visit, it can become apparent later on that they are still trying to understand and process the information received. Leaving a straight forward written record with the person will help them to process the who said what, why and what might happen next. Whilst the focus was on ASP inquiry and investigation visits, if the tool was used as part of all service contact, it could help the service user build up an on-going record of their contact with social work. The key learning here is that records are not just for case files, records help service users remember, understand and make connections too.

### **Creating space for service users' views in agency IT systems**

4.15 East Ayrshire, in piloting the pre-existing tools and working towards making them compatible with IT systems, are addressing the issue that agency paperwork and processes around ASP do not yet really allow for service users' own stories, views and wishes to be recorded in their own words; and therefore tabled at any meeting where decisions are made. These tools are available yet are rarely used. There are questions about how practitioners view IT tools and how an agency may respond to service users taking more control over how their views and wishes are recorded.

## **Learning from doing co-production**

4.16 The national workshop days provided important learning opportunities in and of themselves, as well as allowing learning that had already taken place within teams to be shared.

### **Lessons on Co-production from previous work:**

4.17 It is useful to start with a summary of co-production lessons shared on the first national workshop day by Andy Millar, Angela Henderson, and Angela Halpin from SCLD about their experiences of co-production. Angela Halpin explained that “Co-production means working as a team”. They explained that if co-production is working, you see a shift in power and it’s clear it’s working “when it feels like a family”. It is important that the same people work together over time to build trust and relationships. As Angela explained the SCLD experience it worked well because “We all started together and learnt each other’s feelings”. People involved in SCLD co-production groups often have a capacity building plan to support their involvement. An approach, we agreed at the national workshop day that should be taken up more widely.

4.18 SCLD top tips for co-production:

- Involve people early
- Discover and use people’s gifts
- Help people to develop new skills
- Make sure there is enough time and money to do it properly
- Celebrate what you have achieved
- Think about what you have done – learn from it

4.19 The SCLD team also discussed the importance of doing planning beforehand to ensure there is an agreed focus for the work, having shared goals and shared values, and capturing all views.

### **Lessons on co-production from the project process**

4.20 The local authority teams’ work generated lessons which were brought together in the second workshop day. Factors that helped the teams work together were:

- Being given permission by managers to spend time away from their usual work so they could be part of this project
- Taking time to build up understanding and trust in a group can lead to powerful partnerships
- Taking a ‘nothings off limits approach’ helped team members to speak their mind, be open to other people’s ideas and be creative
- Acknowledging we can make progress but we are not going to ‘fix it’ once and for all
- Having deadlines as a mean of pushing their ideas on
- Humour was a key thing: being able to laugh and relax together

- Viewing the project work as a journey: sometimes of discovery, sometimes the way forward was not clear but a lot of valuable learning had taken place

4.21 The co-production approach was new to all teams and they at times experienced some confusion, particularly early on about what they were doing and why. This however was part of the democratic process as no one person was driving the agenda.

### **Making problem solving happen**

4.22 Comparing experiences across working groups on the national workshop days generated further lessons. Frequently discussions that examined how tools or approaches would work for the intended group opened out into an examination about how to adapt or modify them for other groups or contexts. This service wide scanning and comparison was very valuable, all the more so because teams were able to do this in a context that provided multiple perspectives from service user, advocacy and social work.

### **When perspectives clash**

4.23 The second workshop provided a good example of what happens when different people view the same thing through their own lenses. It revolved around the summary contact sheet which was designed to give accessible information to the service user at each contact and therefore a better understanding of what was happening and why. The agency lens was in evidence through discussion about whether workers should be making decisions that are recordable at that point. The advocacy lens viewed it as potentially helpful in helping to unpick with a service user what was happening and their views about it. Those with experience working with service users raised questions about the pronouns used in the form: should the form only say what the social worker had told the service user? Or should it be about what was talked about together and use the pronoun we?

4:24 However, because this debate took place away from everyone's own daily routines we were able to work through these different lenses in a way that led to better tools but also improved understanding of why we take the stances we do. A key element of working through differences was graphic facilitation, where key points were written up for everyone to see and briefly illustrated. When we read back through key points at the end of each session, people could hear their own and other's points read out in an impartial voice and could revise together the learning that came from them.

### **Making communication easier**

4.25 Lois Cameron, from Talking Mats, attended both national workshops and her reflections are recorded here as a summary about how communication can be better

structured. Lois shared a lesson from marketing strategy: start with the buyer. In ASP this translates to starting with service user instead of the service.

### **Clear Communication**

4.26 Keep written documents simple and easy to read. Using bullet points makes communication easier for everybody because they are:

- Easier to read
- Clearer
- More concise

4.27 Ways of writing things up that are not helpful are:

- **Serif Fonts**
- Underlining
- **CAPITALS.**

### **Using Symbols**

4.28 Visuals can help, can give a person another way to grasp what is at issue, but it is important to remember a symbol by itself can be misleading. Symbols shouldn't be a test. They work better with the story they are meant to visualise and can also help a person tell the story from their view. They should be used as a gateway to discussion not a replacement for it.

4.29 The Scottish Government with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (see resources list) has developed some symbols they would like everyone to use in relation to ASP work. The intention is that if these are used often people will become more familiar with them.

4.30 It is always good to have prompts for remembering. Anyone stressed needs help remembering. Visual symbols can help do this.

### **Translating Legal Language**

4.31 Law uses circular language. One term refers to another which refers to another and then back to the first. It can be difficult to break into the circle. It is important to keep this in mind because people who may be facing harm are often on the outside of this circle and find it difficult to begin to make sense of the terms used within decision-making processes. For this reason it is important that practitioners step out of their main role to look at how their language and ASP concepts are actually perceived and work to develop a more common language.

## **Recognising other influencing factors**

4.32 There are many other factors that can make it hard for a person to take in what is being said and to get their point across, like being worried they will miss their bus if the meeting goes on too long, or the impact decisions may have on cherished routines or on loved ones.

## **Making change happen**

4.33 A conclusion all teams came to was that tools are not checklists. Tools developed shouldn't become tick boxes. The intention is that they are used as prompts for better conversations between practitioners and service users. This in turn should aid the relationship and trust-building that people need to do. We are not seeking to replace that work with a quick short cut but hope the tools will help to avoid barriers or detours.

4.34 Tools should help to put the person first so that arrangements, decisions and plans should always have consideration of the person at the forefront, rather than the other way around. Whilst developing a phone app might suggest the service user does the risk planning on their own, the reality is that all these tools are for sharing and discussion. Time spent building relationships, relating to the person as a person, looking at the work they have done to solve problems can save time later on, lead to less stressful meetings, more beneficial processes and mean harm is not compounded by the process. As one service user said: "Sit down and do it together".

4.35 It's useful to remember that there is a wide spectrum of people, situations, problems and resources. Ways of doing things are always going to need to be adjusted and mean a variety of different ways to engage need to be possible. This also suggests choosing the approach or adjusting an existing one is something best done in collaboration with service users.

## **Making dissemination happen**

Claire Lightowler with the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) was involved in the project due to their expertise in project working with local authorities and other care agencies.

4.36 IRISS has done a great deal of work multiplying the effect of pilot projects and helping the learning from them to percolate across the sector. From this experience they have distilled some pointers that all teams in the project felt they could benefit from:

- Remember there is strength in numbers
- Find natural allies to introduce your innovation to first. Their recommendation can be more powerful than claims you would make by yourself
- Highlight what you have found to be successful (rather than what is wrong with current practice)

- Use stories to help people envisage how what you are proposing works in action and what kind of benefits it has for the people involved
- Consolidate learning into key points that are easy to follow

### **Value of the national network**

4.38 The value of gathering the teams into a national network was that it enhanced each other's learning by:

- Looking at each other's work
- Hearing from subject experts
- Discussing common themes and challenges

### **Summary**

4.39 In this project, teams have developed some very practical ideas about how to improve participation. What helped these teams to make such progress was that the teams were small and made up of local people with different perspectives. The co-production approach was new to all teams and they have demonstrated its potential. The workshops also helped to capture important learning about the process of developing tools co-productively that otherwise would have got lost. Sharing experience is particularly important in the development of co-production. It benefited the teams significantly and they modelled how this might be relevant to other service development areas.



## Chapter 5: Conclusions

### Introduction

5.1 This project has demonstrated the value of a co-production approach to explore how service user involvement in ASP work might be improved. It has produced new tools and adapted existing ones which are ready to pilot and can then hopefully be put to use. This chapter draws the findings together and makes recommendations for taking the work further.

### Project overview

5.2 The project approach has required more intensive team work than conventional research approaches. Data gathering and data analysis have not been discretely separate activities but have informed each other over successive cycles of learning and tool development, requiring reflection in action as well as reflection on action (Schön 1983). The project approach in this respect has similarities to the collaborative approach developed within Scottish health policy on patient safety and now being trialled by Scottish Government across a number of key sites of policy intervention (NHS Quality Improvement Scotland 2010). The collaborative approach sequences sessions for sharing learning with periods of action across a number of teams. Our project has entailed a similar sequencing and distribution of learning across teams, albeit on a smaller scale. Like the collaborative approach, lessons learned by one team have been picked up by other teams and adapted to suit differing contexts, such as use of the evaluation diaries for service users and practitioners first developed in East Ayrshire and subsequently adapted by North Lanarkshire and Perth teams.

5.3 The project has set in motion a process of change. Whilst the pilots will gain evaluative feedback from both practitioners and service users who use the tools, meaningful measurements of change if the tools are formally adopted within services have yet to be developed. However our literature review suggests several possible measurements would be useful:

- Increase in those who have experienced ASP services willing to participate in evaluation
- Service users participating in evaluation reporting better understanding of the process and better experience of case conference meetings and subsequent support and protection plans
- Increases in people self-referring for help from services
- A reduction in the same people repeatedly being referred under the ASPA.

5.4 This interactive approach is complex and has challenges as well as value. In reflecting on the process we have identified considerations applicable to co-production of policy implementation more generally.

## **Flexibility for service users**

5.5 For a variety of reasons service users did not always want to commit to a formal group process, or could not attend every meeting throughout the design process. Different teams developed different ways to involve service users in incremental steps that suited the level of participation the service user indicated they wanted.

## **Flexibility for social work teams**

5.6 A different set of pressures and dynamics also meant that social work services themselves faced challenges to participating in the process in the time frame designated. These included staffing changes and whether the timeframe clashed with other project work that was being undertaken.

5.7 A particular challenge for one team that did not progress was that the local advocacy project felt there was no scope within the contract with the local authority to release an advocacy worker from their caseload to undertake non-statutory work.

5.8 Flexibility also allowed one team to gain benefit from partial participation by joining the national network of the three teams who had participated in the project from the start. They were able to benefit from comparing practice with the other teams in a proactive problem solving context and identify strategies that could be taken up in the future. Teams further on in their process were able to pass on knowledge to those coming after them in what we hope can be sustained as an on-going learning and development chain.

## **Learning outcomes**

5.9 This project has demonstrated the value of a co-production approach to explore how service user involvement in ASP work might be improved. It has produced new tools and adapted existing ones which are ready to pilot and can then hopefully be put to use. There is a real appetite amongst local authorities to do this type of developmental work but for some work pressures prevented them from taking part. Whilst practitioners and managers are aware of the need to improve service user participation they do need time to step back from day to day work to fully appreciate the barriers.

## **Learning from developing the tools**

5.10 Ways of working that enable collaboration between practitioners and service users are:

- Expect to consider a range of options before picking one
- Choose a discrete aspect of ASP work and be realistic
- Devise tools that are simple to use
- Change is achieved through the *process of using* the tool
- Provide guidance and support about how they are to be used

- Use symbols and pictures that are commonly understood
- Paperwork is for service users too
- Think about transferability of formats: converting a paper-based tool to an electronic format can be complex
- Organisational change takes time: share the vision and its potential with practitioners as well as management.

## Learning from doing co-production

5.11 In the process teams also identified a number of important points about co-production as a service development approach:

- Flexibility is required about how service users wish to work on projects: no one model fits, find out how they want to get involved
- Relationships take time to build and for everyone to feel comfortable about working in a different way with each other
- A 'nothing's off limits' approach helps to build trust and openness
- Acknowledge you can't fix it all and find a realistic starting point
- Co-production working develops practitioners' skills and knowledge that can then be used more widely
- Deadlines provide a helpful framework for pacing work
- Humour is key: being able to laugh and relax together
- This local model of policy and practice development does take time as it is more of a journey of joint discovery but it sets the seeds for change *in situ*, and creates alliances and ways of working that can be built upon

## Project Outcomes

5.12 In particular the project demonstrated:

- Co-production with service users and advocacy workers has helped local authority staff to see their work through each other's eyes and experiences
- Small locality teams proved a good model because relationships could be developed in ways that are not possible within more formal working parties
- It was important to find a range of ways service users could participate enabling choice and dialogue about what suits them best
- The teams demonstrated what might be described as a re-balancing of power between the practitioners and service users. modelling best practice
- Bottom-up ideas and potential solutions were worth cultivating
- This type of work takes time and may require creative adaptation to respond to changes in circumstances that impact on service users' participation
- Having a national network was effective in promoting learning between the teams, acting as a catalyst for moving the work forward

## Recommendations

5.13 In light of these conclusions we have the following recommendations. Consideration should be given to:

- Piloting and evaluating the tools developed in this project
- Capturing the learning from the pilots through a range of media
- Disseminating findings from the project more widely through structured events and use of digital media platforms. Publishing the results of the pilots will provide practitioners with more detail about the outcomes the tools have achieved.
- Encouraging local authority ASP committees to explore how the co-production could contribute to their work
- Pursuing further exploration of flexible support to encourage the contributions service users want to make and to enable them to network and compare experiences with each other across localities, which is crucial to the capacity building of co-production on a strategic national basis.

### At a national level

5.14 There are a range of actions that could be taken on a national level, utilising existing ASP and other more general networks and agencies:

- Disseminate findings through the established ASP forum
- Establish a shared learning web presence, such as the one planned by With Scotland
- Consider how this type of front-line co-production work might be promoted more generally within the local social care and health workforce.
- Take the report's findings into account in the review of the draft amendments to ASPA Code of Practice

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## APPENDIX 1: HELPFUL RESOURCES AND LINKS

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<http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/co-production>

Talking Mats ASP toolkit:

[http://www.rcslt.org/asp\\_toolkit/adult\\_protection\\_communication\\_support\\_toolkit/ASP\\_toolkit\\_content](http://www.rcslt.org/asp_toolkit/adult_protection_communication_support_toolkit/ASP_toolkit_content)

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APPENDIX 2: PROJECT TOOLS



Visit Summary Sheet



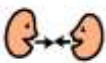
Date.....



Name..... We met at.....



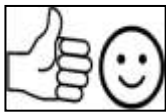
We met because.....



We talked about.....

.....

.....



To help keep you safe, we agreed;

I will .....

.....

You will .....

.....

Anything Else? .....



If you feel unsafe tell ..... OR .....









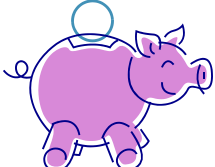

Or Phone.....



Workers Name.....



**STOP! Make sure you include me.**

In order to include me please consider : (Please tick relevant box and add a comment)My:			Comments	Resource
Hearing		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. hearing impairment in one ear	
Vision		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. light sensitivity	
Speech		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Literacy		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Learning Disability		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Level of Comprehension				
Cognitive Impairment		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. dementia	
Mental Health		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. depression	
Physical Disability		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. wheelchair user	
Environmental Difficulties		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. too light or dark, access difficulties	
Financial Constraints		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. travel expenses	
Time Constraints		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. person with MS could not attend early morning appointment, preferred time of day	
Religious		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. Islamic woman may not wish to speak with a man	
Family Conflict		<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. may not want brother present (very important could silence the adult)	

Issues with travel e.g. changing buses, etc.

Things that would help me participate:.....  
 .....  
 .....

.....  
Things that would hinder my participation:


.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Other issues/Why I might not want to go to case conference or participate






- Access to toilets
- Things I like/dislike to talk about
- Meeting breaks
- Embarrassment factors e.g. 'my life on show'



# Altrum Risk Research Group's Risk Planning Tool

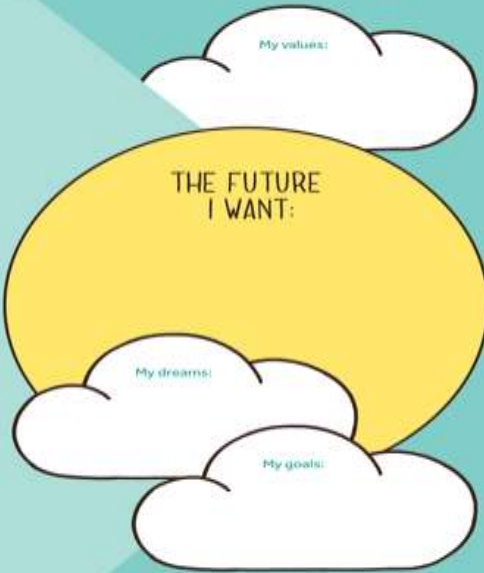
## MANAGING RISK WITHIN MY LIFE: MY PLAN



This plan can help a person keep track of how a risk plan develops. Before a case conference the person with support can fill in the box first at the right with their values, goals and dreams then work through the column at the left about how they problem solve. Together this team can set the context for risk planning during the case conference using the steps inside the arrow. The boxes at the bottom can be used to reflect and change some of the steps as time goes by.

<b>My Experience Solving Problems:</b> 	My plan:	My plan:	My plan:			
	My back-up:	My back-up:	My back-up:			
	How I know it's working:	How I know it's working:	How I know it's working:			
<b>What I'm good at:</b> 	My plan:	My plan:	My plan:			
	My back-up:	My back-up:	My back-up:			
	How I know it's working:	How I know it's working:	How I know it's working:			
<b>People and things that help me:</b> 	My plan:	My plan:	My plan:			
	My back-up:	My back-up:	My back-up:			
	How I know it's working:	How I know it's working:	How I know it's working:			
<b>Challenges and things I'd like to do better:</b> 	Tried:	Learned:	Tried:	Learned:	Tried:	Learned:
	Pleased:	Concerned:	Pleased:	Concerned:	Pleased:	Concerned:
<b>Things that are unhelpful:</b> 	NOW		IN A FEW MONTHS		IN SIX MONTHS	



## Tool Evaluation Diaries

Practitioner:

### TOOL DEVELOPMENT DIARY

What did the person get out of using this tool?

What did I do to help the person get the most out of using this tool?

How was this process different than other ways of working I have used in the past?

What modifications or attached guidance would make this tool better?

Further Reflections:

Service User:

?

**Did using this tool help me say what I wanted to?**

**If I come back and look at it again will the way it is laid out help me remember what we planned?**

**What would make it easier to use?**

**Would I recommend it to a friend?**

**What advice would I give them about how to use it?**



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ISBN: 978-1-78412-260-7 (web only)

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Produced for the Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS23753 (01/14)

Published by the Scottish Government, January 2014

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