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## **The beginning.**

In March 2018 Co:Create were approached by the Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health, Complex Needs and Housing Related Support at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. The commissioner was keen to incorporate co- design into the recommissioning of housing related support services for Young People (between 16 and 25 years old) experiencing or at risk of Homelessness.

Co:Create agreed to take the lead on engaging with all the stakeholders involved, including relevant provider organisations. This input would be collated to inform and influence the specification to be used to retender the services as part of the commissioning process.

## **What we did.**

Over a period of 5 months Co:Create used a wide range of creative and stimulating engagement activities to gather the views, hopes and aspirations of all people involved – ranging from people using the existing services provided, the current service provider, providers of similar services locally and nationally as well as a range of internal stakeholders within Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. In total Co:Create had the privilege to speak with 58 people.

It emerged during the lifetime of the project that one way to engage with those living in the current housing related support provision would be to join in with some of the existing activities taking place – the most popular of which was a Graffiti workshop run by a local Graffiti artist



The Appreciative Inquiry approach was used across all stakeholders to lead a self-determined approach to changes within future service provision and act as a tool to inform the co-design of the future specification.



What emerged from the engagement sessions was incredibly powerful for two reasons. What we heard was powerful firstly because of the common themes that emerged across all stakeholders and secondly because of how we heard people explaining the importance of strengths based approaches in their own words. For example one young man explained that what would work when supporting him would be to; “praise me for what I am doing well and help me to do more of that”

## Key themes that emerged

### Person centred support

- "We need the service to support us with our individual needs, goals and aspirations"
- "I need the service to be flexible so I don't get caught in a benefit trap and unable to work"

### Strengths- based approach

- "I want a service that will build on what I am already achieving and focus on identifying the skills and resources that I possess whilst helping me develop new skills"

### Building trusting relationships

- "We want to develop strong relationships based on trust between us and the staff supporting us"

### Co-delivery of the service

- "We want to be included and involved at an operational level, such as decision making, structures and ongoing arrangements in the service"
- "We want to do things with our support worker, we want to do things together"

A place that  
feels like  
home

- "Where I live needs to feel welcoming, homely and warm"
- "Supported housing needs to feel like a home, not a hostel"

Safe and  
secure  
environment

- "Where I live needs to feel safe and secure"

Multi-agency  
working,  
clear service  
level  
agreements

- this emerged consistently from the current service provider and from the service provider engagement event

Mental  
health and  
Wellbeing  
support

- "I want to improve my mental health and wellbeing"

## **The difference it made**

The impact of listening to the richness of all the voices, stories and experiences Co:Create had the privilege to hear was evident in the final specification that went out to Tender. The service design translated the key themes into action and the specification felt like a living document that captured the vision of those involved in the Appreciative Inquiry 'Discover' and 'Dream' activities.

In the words of the Commissioner;

*“Co:Create has enabled a co-designed service specification and clearly has the voice of service users embedded in the design. I moved away from the traditional format and added quotes from those using existing services into the specification”*

Helen Caulfield-Browne  
Strategic Commissioner for Mental Health,  
Complex Needs and Housing Related Support at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council