

# Developing experience of involvement in a CLAHRC West project leads one public contributor to help to co-deliver training

## Background - work on a project about the acceptability of new needles

CLAHRC West has worked on a project finding out about the acceptability of low dead space needles by people who inject drugs, and Bristol Drugs Project (BDP) has been encouraging people who inject drugs to change over to the new “Total Dose” low dead space needles whenever they used the needle exchange service. The new needles are better because they reduce the risk of infection and do away with the need to flush out the syringe.

Not everyone was happy with the new needles. Some felt they were less sharp than the old ones. One of those was Stephen. Along with three other service users involved in this project, Stephen was consulted on his opinions on the new needles and what he thought would be the best way to encourage other people who inject drugs to change to the new low dead space needles.

Stephen wasn't keen to encourage others and was adamant that the new needles were less sharp than the ones he was used to. He said *“They don't feel as sharp. If they don't go in the first time and you try again in a different place – they definitely feel less sharp”*.

When CLAHRC West was looking for someone to co-present the findings of the consultation with service users at a national stakeholder event, Stephen jumped at the chance. He'd quickly realised that not only would it provide him with an opportunity to meet with, and possibly influence, commissioners and academics, but it was also a rare chance to meet the very people who were manufacturing and supplying the new “less sharp” low dead space needles.

When asked if he was happy for his full name to appear on the title slide of the presentation, Stephen said yes, of course, and then revealed he'd been attending BDP under a pseudonym for 2 years and that he would like to attend the event and co-present the findings under his real name, Darren.



The following week, with his real name on the presentation, Darren got his chance to meet Andrew Preston, the general manager of Exchange Supplies, the company responsible for the manufacture and provision of the low dead space “Total Dose” needles. It proved to be a useful meeting for both with

Darren finally accepting his perception that Total Dose needles were less sharp was wrong and Andrew accepting that Exchange Supplies had more work to do to overcome the belief of some users that they were being given an inferior product.

## Becoming a trainer with People in Health West of England

Darren had developed a good relationship with researchers and the public involvement team at CLAHRC West so when they were looking for a public contributor to help present a new workshop, especially designed to introduce researchers to public involvement, they asked Darren if he would help. He agreed without reservation and in May will be doing it for the third time, as well as supporting another public contributor who is new to training.

In their evaluation of the training, many of the participants were keen to point out how useful it was to be able to ask Darren about his experience and one said it was the best bit about the whole workshop.



Darren Said

*“As a service user, I had an opportunity to get involved in training and focus groups. It not only gives me a chance to give something back, for all the support I’ve received, but also sharing my experiences and knowledge, with health care professionals/trainers, can help to improve training, which can lead to an improved service for future users.*

*It’s important to involve services users as we have a unique perspective and able to highlight issues or concerns and gives an opportunity to discuss future plans and how they will affect the service users in the long run. “*

### More information

For more information about Darren and his work with us contact Mike Bell email: [mike.bell@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:mike.bell@bristol.ac.uk)