

## BRIEFING #3

# Upskilling the wider workforce

## Workforce development and multiple disadvantage

**Evaluation of Fulfilling Lives:**  
Supporting people experiencing  
multiple disadvantage

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CFE Research and  
The University of Sheffield,  
with the Systems Change  
Action Network



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This briefing examines the workforce development needs of staff whose work affects those experiencing multiple disadvantage but who are not necessarily specialists in this field. It focuses, in particular, on how the Fulfilling Lives programme has worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to enhance Jobcentre Plus staff awareness and skills.

Since 2014, the Fulfilling Lives programme has supported nearly 4,000 people with experience of multiple forms of disadvantage, including homelessness, alcohol and substance misuse, reoffending, mental ill-health, domestic violence and physical and learning disabilities.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the interviewees and focus group participants who gave up their time to share their experiences of workforce development and multiple disadvantage. Our thanks also go to staff at The National Lottery Community Fund, members of the Systems Change Action Network, the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition and the Evaluation Steering Group for reviewing and commenting on drafts of this briefing.

## Key messages

People experiencing multiple disadvantage come into contact with staff in a wide range of roles, such as paramedics, GPs and their receptionists, pharmacists, police officers and Jobcentre staff. It is important that staff, who are not necessarily specialists in supporting people facing multiple disadvantage, have the skills, experience and confidence needed to effectively provide services for this group.

Frontline staff providing services for people facing multiple disadvantage need to be **comfortable having open conversations** with people about their needs. They need to **understand how trauma may affect behaviour** and have good knowledge of local support available so they can refer people on to this.

Engaging and supporting the wider workforce to work differently can be challenging. **A shift in organisational culture** may be needed and change is often feared. Where staff have high workloads, finding time to invest in training may be difficult, particularly if understanding multiple disadvantage is not a priority.

The experiences of Fulfilling Lives partnerships show **longer-term commitment and collaboration** with service providers is key to developing effective workforce development programmes. A programme is more likely to succeed if **all partners have ownership** and none feel that another organisation is imposing their way of working. **Raising awareness of multiple disadvantage at a community level** may be a good way to generate initial interest in workforce development among key stakeholders.

**Involving staff at all levels** is also vital. Without both senior manager and frontline worker buy-in, workforce development programmes will be harder to implement and less likely to be sustainable.

The **voice of lived experience is crucial** to any work of this kind. Experts by experience can help identify workforce development needs through peer research and mystery shopping. Involving experts in delivering training adds an authentic voice and can help motivate staff.

In order to ensure the impacts of upskilling are sustained, training and learning needs to be embedded in job descriptions, staff recruitment and induction and development policies.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this briefing, the Systems Change Action Network (a group representing the programme leads from each of the Fulfilling Lives partnerships) offer the following recommendations. These recommendations are the collective view of the SCAN members and not of CFE Research, University of Sheffield or the National Lottery Community Fund.

- **Public services must invest in the knowledge, skills and behaviours of its wider workforce to effectively engage with people experiencing multiple disadvantage.**

This should encompass all areas of the local system that an individual experiencing multiple disadvantage is likely to come into contact with. For example, DWP, probation, housing options, healthcare professionals, etc, as well as those with strategic oversight, for example, Directors of Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Integrated Clinical Systems.

Multi-agency workforce development programmes have been developed within some Fulfilling Lives areas with independent evaluations and recommendations to guide replication of these models elsewhere.

- **There should be a deliberate cultural shift that encompasses all elements of the workforce and not just those within frontline service provider roles.**

This should include a commitment from all sectors within a local area to dedicate time and resources to building multi-agency relationships.

- **The wider workforce should be equipped to take a gender and trauma informed approach to all aspects of its work and to acknowledge the specific needs of marginalised groups.**

A system in which all parts understand the role of trauma, gender and discrimination, will be more effective in supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage and more likely to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Trauma informed training should be delivered by people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage and with the recognition that training itself is not enough. Its principles must be embedded within all elements of the local system.

## Introduction

Ensuring the workforce is equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes is an essential part of providing effective services and support for people experiencing multiple disadvantage. System-wide workforce development is one of five collective strategic priorities identified by Fulfilling Lives partnerships and intended to create sustainable change.<sup>1</sup>

People experiencing multiple disadvantage come into contact with staff in a wide range of roles, such as paramedics, GPs, pharmacists, police officers and Jobcentre staff. Many of these staff will not be specialists in multiple disadvantage. The aim of this briefing, is to share learning from the Fulfilling Lives partnerships about how to engage, train and support the wider workforce so they are better equipped to work with people experiencing multiple disadvantage. In this briefing, we focus particularly on the work Fulfilling Lives partnerships have undertaken with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and staff at Jobcentre Plus.

This briefing answers three key questions:

- What skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are needed by the wider workforce to effectively engage with and support people experiencing multiple disadvantage?
- What are the barriers to getting the wider workforce to engage with issues relating to multiple disadvantage?
- How have Fulfilling Lives partnerships addressed these barriers? What approaches to engaging and supporting the wider workforce have been effective? What has been the impact of upskilling the wider workforce?

The briefing also includes a range of resources from Fulfilling Lives partnerships to help with wider workforce development (links are at the end of this briefing).

The briefing draws upon the experiences and insights of Fulfilling Lives staff members, people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage (sometimes referred to as experts by experience) and staff in other organisations that have taken part in training and other support provided by the programme (see page 24 for more detail on our research method). The briefing will

be of interest to public and community and voluntary sector employers whose staff regularly come into contact with people affected by multiple disadvantage, and their training providers.

This briefing is number 3 in a series of 4 exploring different aspects of workforce development. Briefing 1 looks at the ways people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage can be supported into the workforce. Briefing 2 looks at the role of the multiple disadvantage navigator and the skills and support they need to be effective. Briefing 4 considers the needs of commissioners and policy-makers.

## What skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are needed?



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**Staff need an understanding of trauma and how it affects behaviour**

Frontline staff in a variety of services will come into contact with people experiencing multiple disadvantage and need to be able to effectively support them. A lack of training or experience in multiple disadvantage can create nervousness and a risk-averse attitude. This may manifest as stigma and result in staff making judgements about individuals rather than focusing on working with them to understand the support they need. If a worker does not understand trauma, and have the confidence to deal with someone affected by trauma, situations can escalate unnecessarily and put both at risk.

The skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that are important when working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage include:

- **Being comfortable to have open and honest conversations about particular needs**, such as addiction or domestic violence, in order to provide suitable help. Depending on the role, this will not always be necessary but in some cases discussing sensitive issues will be crucial. This might include being able to identify issues that are hidden.



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**The environment should be a welcoming and non-threatening space**

- **Having local knowledge of the support available (such as through Fulfilling Lives) to signpost people correctly to other organisations if necessary.** This does not mean every member of staff in an organisation knowing everything, but having expertise across a team and being able to draw upon this.
- **An understanding of how people might present as a result of previous experiences of trauma or particular needs,** and how to effectively deal with problematic or risky behaviours.
- **Empathy and a non-judgemental approach** to working with all individuals, regardless of their background or current situation.
- **Being confident enough to put all of the above into practice.**

It is also important to consider the environment in which services are delivered. All aspects of the environment should be welcoming, including the physical building and the culture amongst staff members, to create a non-threatening space for anyone who enters.

## **What are the challenges in upskilling the wider workforce?**

As working with people facing multiple disadvantage is not the main focus of the wider workforce, they may not be specialists in this area. This creates a gap in skills and understanding. While Fulfilling Lives partnerships have worked to help organisations address this gap, there are a number of challenges in engaging and upskilling organisations and their staff.



## A lack of experience and training

Employees in the wider workforce do not generally spend most of their time working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage. As a result, they are unlikely to have received training in how to work effectively with this group and may have limited previous experience in supporting those with the most complex needs.

Without this experience and training, staff may lack understanding of: multiple disadvantage; related concepts such as trauma and how this might affect someone; how people end up in certain situations; and why they behave as they do. Lack of experience and knowledge creates fear: fear of risk to themselves and others, and fear of getting things wrong. Staff are sometimes concerned that if they say or do the wrong thing, they will make the situation worse for the person they are trying to help.

“ There’s quite a lot of nervousness from [staff in non-specialist services] just being worried about saying the wrong thing, that they’re going to drop a clanger ... say something that’s going to make the situation worse.

Fulfilling Lives partnership staff member



### Change can take time

## Not being open to change

In some organisations, a wider cultural or organisational shift is required in order to better accommodate the needs of people experiencing multiple disadvantage. This can be difficult to achieve and will take time. If people have been in a role for a long time, existing practices can be ingrained. Changes to ways of working can be feared and unwillingness to change can limit ability to engage in new ways of working.

## Limited resource and time

Staff working in support services can be stretched, working with limited time or resources and with an increasing workload. As a result, they may feel unable to commit time to training and development.

**“ We had to make the [training sessions] very bespoke and short, because it’s not often that your A&E consultants and your senior nurses can be allowed time off to go on a full training day that isn’t medical-related.**

Partnership staff member

In addition, if staff have been in a role for a long time or have limited contact with people facing multiple disadvantage, they may feel additional training is not needed.

## Constraints of the role

Frontline staff are sometimes constrained by their role and how they understand it. For example, if they perceive their role as enforcement, focusing on this may direct their work away from being more understanding and offering support. Staff can also be constrained by the way organisations are structured and this can limit the potential to work flexibly and take positive risks.

**“ They’re really good people who really want to make a difference, but the way that those services are commissioned and managed makes them a closed shop for flexible working.**

Fulfilling Lives partnership staff member

## How has Fulfilling Lives engaged and upskilled the wider workforce?

Over the course of the programme, Fulfilling Lives partnerships have developed positive relationships with local support organisations, embedded themselves in local networks and promoted the need for workforce development. Their expertise in supporting people with experience of multiple disadvantage is increasingly recognised and many have developed support

programmes to help local organisations work more effectively with this group. Their work has largely fallen within three inter-related areas.

## Building relationships with organisations and services



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Bringing different services together can encourage collaboration

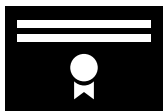
The navigator role\* is key to gaining access to services, identifying skills gaps in those services and developing relationships with gatekeepers and frontline staff. These relationships form the basis for discussions around what partnerships might be able to offer in terms of workforce development.

Bringing multiple services together on boards, groups or communities of practice has encouraged collaboration and Fulfilling Lives partnerships have used these to connect with organisations or services outside their immediate sectors. For example, West Yorkshire Finding Independence (WY-FI) established multi-agency practice development groups across each of the five localities they cover. These were open to different organisations and disciplines, with a focus on improving skills and practice as well as resilience around working with people with experience of multiple disadvantage.<sup>2</sup>

## Developing training programmes

All partnerships have developed formal training, workshops and other resources that organisations in the wider workforce can use to learn more about either multiple disadvantage in general or specific aspects of working with this group. This includes, for example, dealing with complexity, supporting people with particular needs (for example, victims of domestic violence) or relevant legislation. Sessions might be open to any organisation or targeted at a specific local service, such as police or social workers. Partnerships have received positive feedback on these sessions.<sup>3</sup> However, it is often difficult to assess whether this has translated into changed working

\* A navigator is a service-neutral staff member who works with people affected by multiple disadvantage and supports them to secure and coordinate a range of support and services as needed. See briefing 2 in this series for more information on this role.



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Accreditations demonstrate a commitment to supporting people facing multiple disadvantage

practices or attitudes unless an ongoing relationship has been developed with the organisation receiving the training.

Partnerships have developed different ways of engaging with organisations who may benefit from their training. The box below gives one example.

### Opportunity Nottingham's Practice Development Unit

The Practice Development Unit (PDU), run by Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service and Opportunity Nottingham, is a free hub that offers free online and face-to-face content on working with multiple disadvantage. The hub facilitates collaborative learning, sharing good practice and relationship building across different services in the city, and is open to professionals from voluntary, public and private sector services who work with people with experience of multiple disadvantage in some way. Online learning sessions range from an introduction to working with multiple disadvantage to dealing with specific needs such as domestic abuse survivors, novel psychoactive substance (NPS) use and Housing First. Most recently, sessions have focused on working within COVID restrictions.

For more information on the PDU, see [here](#) and [here](#).

## Adopting a community-wide approach

As partnerships have become embedded in the community, they have been able to reach a wider cross-section of the local workforce. This work involves raising awareness of the needs of people with experience of multiple disadvantage and encouraging the wider workforce to engage with this in different ways. This can then lead to participation in formal training or the development of tailor-made learning programmes to meet the specific needs of an organisation. Some partnerships have developed accreditations or awards for local services that demonstrate their commitment to supporting people with experience of multiple disadvantage. The example below shows

an innovative approach to raising awareness and engaging organisations across the community that might not otherwise search out training in multiple disadvantage.

### Voices of Independence, Change & Empowerment in Stoke-on-Trent (VOICES): Creative community engagement

VOICES has developed a comprehensive learning programme with the aim of increasing cross-organisational working to enhance the support provided for people experiencing multiple disadvantage across the city. The programme has been delivered for a number of years through courses, bespoke workshops and communities of practice.

The partnership has explored creative ways of extending the reach of the programme into the wider community. In February 2020, two local performing arts companies performed *In Plain Sight: The Lives and Hopes of Invisible People*. This was a live performance set in a warehouse and based on VOICES customers' experiences, with stories delivered by professional actors, singers and musicians.

The event was run eight times and was successful in attracting audience members from a variety of sectors. It was particularly effective at reaching key influencers by offering VIP tickets to high-profile attendees including MPs and senior representatives of local statutory service providers. Following the event, VOICES received requests for more learning and bespoke sessions from key organisations that had not previously engaged in the learning programme.

Read more about VOICES' learning programme [here](#) and *In Plain Sight* [here](#).

## Focus on: Engagement with the DWP



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DWP are seeing increased levels of need in their clients

Across the Fulfilling Lives programme, positive relationships have been built with the DWP. Several partnerships have developed programmes to support the DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff to enable them to work more effectively with people facing multiple disadvantage. It was suggested that Jobcentre Plus staff are seeing increased levels of need in their clients and are often not trained to manage this.

“ [DWP] were very open and honest about the fact that what their work coaches were now facing ... all these variables that [they] are really worried about. [They] might have someone that’s just come out of a domestic violence relationship and doesn’t know how to access the Jobcentre safely ... or we might have somebody that’s just been released from prison, coming back into the community.

Fulfilling Lives staff member

### What was involved?

Three elements have been crucial to this work:

1. developing a relationship with DWP locally and identifying the workforce development needs,
2. co-producing a programme to meet this need, and
3. delivering the programme with the support of DWP.

All partners have been involved in all elements. As work with DWP is ongoing and constantly evolving, these may not occur in a discrete and linear way but are presented like this for clarity. Each element is illustrated with boxed examples of how Fulfilling Lives partnerships have been involved. Delivering the programme is also not the end of the relationship – Fulfilling Lives

partnerships and DWP have demonstrated a commitment to build on this work and consider ways in which the learning can be embedded in policy and practice to ensure the work is sustainable.

### **1. Develop a relationship and identify the need**

Often it is a key individual in the DWP with a relationship with Fulfilling Lives who instigates activity. They recognise how they might be able to work with Fulfilling Lives to benefit the workforce and customers. There is a recognition in the DWP centrally that they could do more to support clients with the most complex needs who come into Jobcentres.

Mystery shopping exercises, peer research and customer feedback questionnaires have all been initiated by Fulfilling Lives partnerships to understand the customer experience and identify workforce development needs. People with lived experience of multiple disadvantage (referred to as 'experts') have suggested where they felt the service could be improved, based on their interactions with their Jobcentre. This insight indicated where improvements could be made, but also provided examples of positive experiences and good practice to draw upon in considering what effective support should look like.



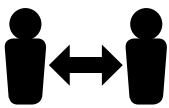
**For about 10 years I wasn't getting any help from DWP; they were just seeing me as somebody who couldn't be helped until I'd got off the drink, whereas maybe a few years earlier if they'd pointed us in the right direction of some help, I would have been having this conversation with you maybe 10 years ago.**

*Expert by experience*

When feeding back findings from mystery shopping or peer research, it is important that managers and decision-makers are present and included in this process to ensure both the necessary organisational buy-in and that key messages reach frontline staff.

In Newcastle and Gateshead, the DWP recognised a rise in footfall in Jobcentres and that customers were coming in with an increasingly complex set of circumstances and needs. Staff felt they did not have the necessary skills or experience to support people effectively. Customer feedback questionnaires indicated that the experience for some was negative; they felt stigmatised and the support offered was process-driven rather than person-centred.

In the South East, a mystery shopping exercise identified two main areas where the support offered by Jobcentre Plus could be enhanced: the physical environment and the customer service experience. The environment was felt to be unwelcoming and sterile. Customers felt although staff were welcoming upon arrival, they were not always asking the right questions and not spending the time needed with them to fully understand their situation and offer support.



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### Co-production is crucial to success

#### **2. Co-produce a response to address the need**

Fulfilling Lives partnerships worked closely with local DWP partners to design a response to meet the identified needs. Co-production is at the heart of this type of work; all parties need to be invested in the process to ensure success. This includes working with expert groups to ensure that any changes enhance the customer experience. Having a senior DWP representative heavily involved sends a message to local teams that this is integral to the organisation, as well as offering reassurance that staff will not be censured for trying new approaches. There is a strategic commitment from DWP to this work, which has been essential to successful relationship building.

Two working groups were created in the South East to take forward findings from the mystery shopping exercise. Each group included senior DWP managers, frontline Jobcentre Plus staff, Fulfilling Lives staff and experts by experience. An action plan with recommendations was devised by each working group, alongside a review of policy and procedures.



Recognising the need for change can be difficult, but honesty from all involved is helpful and shows integrity. This includes acknowledging that changes need to be made at all levels of an organisation and not just directing criticism at frontline staff. This also includes being honest about the challenges involved in this type of work and having open discussions about how these might be overcome.

When designing a response, it is important that all partners remain in ongoing contact. Inviting stakeholders to attend a one-off meeting can be perceived as tokenistic. Building a relationship that will be long lasting takes time and patience on all sides.

### **3. Deliver the programme**

Fulfilling Lives partnerships have delivered training for DWP, both face-to-face and online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The content of training includes:

- Introduction to multiple disadvantage
- Trauma-informed practice
- Exploring the customer experience
- Dealing with emotional distress
- Navigating complexity

To engage frontline staff, the tone of the programme needs careful thought. Staff may be more likely to engage if they feel they are not being singled out. Combining positive feedback with points for improvement ensures current good practice is recognised.

The South East Fulfilling Lives partnership designed a two-hour face-to-face training session for Jobcentre Plus staff. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the content was distilled into five 10-minute online modules. These were pre-recorded for staff to watch in their own time while they are working remotely. This was then followed by three live, online workshops delivered by either the service user involvement team or frontline teams. 36 work coaches from Brighton and Hove Jobcentre received the training.

As well as providing training on working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage, the sessions have been shaped in response to COVID-19 restrictions to help staff working remotely to engage as best as possible with people who face multiple disadvantage.

Discussions are underway about using the training materials to offer similar training to temporary accommodation providers in the region.

People with lived experience of multiple disadvantage add authenticity to the training, can answer questions and explain reasons for disengagement or certain behaviours (see below).

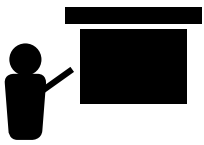


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**Lived experience  
of multiple disadvantage  
adds authenticity  
to training**

## **Building on training**

After delivery, partnerships review and assess the evidence of impact, reflect on what has gone well and less well, and consider what more could be done. Local work between DWP and Fulfilling Lives partnerships is an ongoing process, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experts we spoke to identified further areas for improvement, for example, the impact of a welcoming space and empathetic staff inside a Jobcentre is limited if customers are first met by aggressive security guards on the door. The box below shows how this work has developed in one partnership.



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**Training has helped challenge stigma around people with experience of multiple disadvantage**

In Newcastle and Gateshead, both partners are keen to build on their initial work together. Training sessions have been supplemented with other methods of engagement to continue to develop the positive relationship.

Open mornings were held at Jobcentres. Local services and organisations were invited to attend and show what support for people facing multiple disadvantage was available across the locality. Experts attended and discussed their experiences with current customers, Jobcentre Plus staff and the wider workforce who were in attendance. These events allowed Jobcentre Plus staff to learn more about services available, to meet people from those services and to start to build relationships that would help with signposting customers.

Experts were also invited to attend DWP case conferences on customers with particularly complex needs to offer their insights (customers were not identified as part of this process). This had been successfully piloted on a small scale and was due to be rolled out more widely before the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **What has been the impact of engaging with the DWP?**

As with all workforce development programmes, it is accepted that embedding changes to working cultures, practices and policies will take time. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the longer-term impact of what is ongoing work. However, Fulfilling Lives staff, experts and DWP representatives highlighted emerging impacts of the relationship between the two organisations.

### **Impact on staff**

Jobcentre Plus staff gave positive feedback on training sessions and reported that the training will positively affect their working practice. Training has challenged the stigma that some staff hold around people with experience of multiple disadvantage and prompted thinking about a person-centred approach.



**[I learnt] not to judge, listen and ask the right questions.**

Jobcentre Plus staff member

In Newcastle and Gateshead, experts who took part in training sessions for Jobcentre Plus staff have noticed a difference in the way coaches from one Jobcentre work. They felt that staff there were more welcoming and understanding. Feedback from current customers is also positive.

### **Impact on the environment**

As a result of engaging with Fulfilling Lives, DWP has modified the environment in some Jobcentres to be more psychologically-informed and less intimidating. This includes open-plan or private room options for conversations, a self-help wall signposting to services, staff bringing in artwork to create colourful displays and lowering the reception desk.

Improving the environment has not just made it more welcoming for customers but, in some cases, has also improved staff morale and attitude.



**We knew that making improvements and changes to the environment would naturally improve the service... I think it's turned a few [staff] around, as well. Probably one of the most negative people, who was very negative, very disruptive, ... she's then gone away, and actually done the most in the whole office in terms of [improving] the environment.**

DWP staff member

### **Impact on the organisation**

Staff from Fulfilling Lives and the DWP are positive about the impact this work is having on the way DWP and Jobcentre Plus work. They report more flexibility, more openness to change and working differently, and a commitment to improving the service at all levels.

A Disability Employment Advisor Lead within the DWP in Newcastle and Gateshead manages this work and ensures that a consistent approach to reviewing practice is adopted across the region.

## What difference does involving people with lived experience make?

Involving people with lived experience is a key component to all aspects of Fulfilling Lives. For DWP staff, hearing from an individual who has been supported through their journey shows that recovery is possible and that a person-centred approach can work. Sharing real-life stories and experiences, good and bad, can be powerful for attendees and bring to life what can sometimes seem abstract issues. Highlighting negative experience can give real insights into reasons for disengagement and pinpoint areas for improvement. Sharing positive experiences can also help motivate staff.

**“ I was quite highly educated, did a lot of successful stuff in a previous life, but when you’re in that madness [of multiple disadvantage] you need somebody to guide you out of it. I was really struggling, and thankfully I found one [job coach] who did. Being able to tell my story to other job coaches, and seeing the penny drop and think, ‘Oh, hang on, I’ve got a [client] like that. Perhaps I haven’t given him much of a chance.’**

Expert by experience

**“ It was beneficial having someone there with lived experience as it was very inspiring how the right approach and support can help change the lives of individuals. It was good to hear from [the expert]’s point of view how they felt and were treated while attending JCP.**

Jobcentre Plus staff member

Involvement can also have a positive impact on experts. They value the opportunity to take part in work that aims to change the system and improve services for other people with experience of multiple disadvantage.<sup>4</sup> It allows them to give something back, sharing positive experiences and how these helped in their recovery.

Being treated as an equal can be empowering and can also help to break down stereotypes that clients might have about staff. Hearing about the challenges faced by Jobcentre Plus staff, such as high caseloads and how

they may feel nervous about saying the wrong thing, also helps experts to be more understanding of frontline roles. As experts often have links to current customers, this message can be spread more widely to encourage greater understanding of how Jobcentre staff can help.

“ If people say, ‘I’m not going there [Jobcentre], I know what they’re like,’ then we can turn around and say, ‘Well actually, we have done some work with them and they’re really not as bad as they’re being painted at the minute’. We can quote examples so that’s good.

Expert by experience



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**Embedding changes in culture and policies is needed for them to be sustainable**

## How can changes be made sustainable?

Building positive relationships with organisations and services can often be reliant on a small number of individuals who are passionate about change. There is a risk that if these key individuals leave, the work does not continue and changes are not sustained.

As they approach the end of their funding, Fulfilling Lives partnerships are working hard to ensure that there is a legacy from the programme. Work on workforce development is focused on embedding positive changes into organisational cultures and policies. Ensuring commitment throughout the different levels of an organisation is key to this.

In the South East, work is underway to ensure the sustainability of positive changes by embedding learning in job descriptions, recruitment processes and induction policies. The online training will form the basis of this. Key to longer-term change is working with the local DWP capability team who are responsible for recruitment and staff training. Having buy-in at this level brings confidence that recent changes will become embedded in future practice after the end of the Fulfilling Lives programme.



We're starting to look at policies as well, to make sure that the training isn't just a one-off and a nice activity that people have done that benefits a few. ... We're really keen to make sure that the job descriptions, induction processes and interviews continue as a key junction point for getting in the staff you want, but also setting the tone right from the start about the behaviour that's expected and what they're going to be appraised on. We see that as a vehicle for then sustaining the change.

Fulfilling Lives staff member

## Concluding remarks

In this briefing, we have demonstrated how engaging service providers and working collaboratively with them can help to ensure people receive welcoming and thoughtful help and support outside of specialist provision. Staff may lack confidence and feel unprepared to support people experiencing multiple disadvantage if they are not their main client group. Fulfilling Lives partnerships have identified a clear need for workforce development for these services. Working with services and organisations in ways that support a cultural shift and sustainable change, rather than one-off engagement, can be challenging but is important. Committing to a long-term programme of work, securing buy-in at all levels and having the voice of lived experience at the core, can all help to stimulate and embed change.

The example of Fulfilling Lives partnerships' work with DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff shows what can be achieved when an organisation commits to change at a senior level. The example also emphasises the need for longer-term programmes of workforce development support, rather than one-off training courses. As the COVID-19 pandemic so starkly illustrates, there are always new challenges in service delivery to be addressed. However, recognising and working with the expertise of Fulfilling Lives partnerships, and those with lived experience in particular, results in greater understanding and better services can be realised.

## About this research

This briefing draws on research undertaken between March and October 2020. The research involved the following activities:

- Review of evaluation reports and other evidence produced by Fulfilling Lives partnerships.
- A focus group discussion with seven staff, volunteers and people with lived experience from four Fulfilling Lives partnerships.
- Online video or telephone interviews with ten Fulfilling Lives and DWP staff and experts involved in workforce development training.

We combined and analysed findings from all activities using a framework approach to identify commonalities and key themes. We shared a draft of the briefing with Fulfilling Lives partnerships and the Evaluation Steering Group, who provided additional insights and interpretation.

## About Fulfilling Lives

The National Lottery Community Fund is investing £112 million over 8 years (2014 to 2022) in local partnerships in 12 areas across England, helping people facing multiple disadvantage access more joined-up services tailored to their needs. The programme aims to change lives, change systems and involve beneficiaries. The programme is not a preventative programme, but instead aims to better support those with entrenched needs who are not otherwise engaging with services. The programme uses co-production to put people with lived experience in the lead and builds on their assets to end the revolving door of disjointed care for adults. The programme also has a strong focus on systems change, so that these new ways of working can become sustainable.

For more information about this report, please contact [Joanna.welford@cfe.org.uk](mailto:Joanna.welford@cfe.org.uk)

For more information about the Fulfilling Lives programme, visit [www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/multiple-needs](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/strategic-investments/multiple-needs)



For more information about the evaluation of Fulfilling Lives, including partnership-level evaluations, please visit [www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org](http://www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org)

## Useful resources and further information

### Learning opportunities

Learning programme, VOICES [www.voicesofstoke.org.uk/learning](http://www.voicesofstoke.org.uk/learning)

Practice Development Unit, Opportunity Nottingham  
[www.pdunottingham.org](http://www.pdunottingham.org)

Workforce development training, Newcastle and Gateshead Fulfilling Lives  
[www.fulfillinglives-ng.org.uk/workforce-development](http://www.fulfillinglives-ng.org.uk/workforce-development)

### Evaluations of learning and training programmes

**Workforce Development: Interim evaluation (2019)** Fulfilling Lives Newcastle and Gateshead [www.fulfillinglives-ng.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/WFD-Interim-Evaluation-Report-WEB.pdf](http://www.fulfillinglives-ng.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/WFD-Interim-Evaluation-Report-WEB.pdf)

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**The VOICES Citywide Learning Programme, Stoke-on-Trent: Shared learning opportunities to improve support for people experiencing multiple needs (2020)** [www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd\\_category\\_id=337&wpfd\\_file\\_id=6800&token=87a89a5d9bd0ec32e676197c582b2daf&preview=1](http://www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd_category_id=337&wpfd_file_id=6800&token=87a89a5d9bd0ec32e676197c582b2daf&preview=1)

**Workforce Development and Learning: Year 4 Impact Report & Year 5 Activities Proposal (2018)** WY-FI [www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd\\_category\\_id=338&wpfd\\_file\\_id=5978&token=87a89a5d9bd0ec32e676197c582b2daf&preview=1](http://www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd_category_id=338&wpfd_file_id=5978&token=87a89a5d9bd0ec32e676197c582b2daf&preview=1)

## **Lived experience and systems change**

**The Role of Lived Experience in Creating Systems Change (2020)** National Evaluation [www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd\\_category\\_id=324&wpfd\\_file\\_id=6821&token=55e4dbeeade1c975c43242ab61fa997&preview=1](http://www.fulfillinglivesevaluation.org/wp-admin/admin-ajax.php?juwpfisadmin=false&action=wpfd&task=file.download&wpfd_category_id=324&wpfd_file_id=6821&token=55e4dbeeade1c975c43242ab61fa997&preview=1)

## Endnotes

1. The National Lottery Community Fund/MEAM/Fulfilling Lives partnerships (2019) *Fulfilling Lives: Changing systems for people facing multiple disadvantage*. <http://meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MEAMJ7105-Fulfilling-lives-publication-WEB.pdf>
2. Abbott, R. and Dixon, S. (2018) *WY-FI Workforce Development and Learning Year 4 Impact Report & Year 5 Activities Proposal* WY-FI. <https://wy-fi.org.uk/2018/07/04/impact-study-of-the-wy-fi-workforce-development-programme/>
3. For example, see Pollard, N & Rice, B (2020) *The VOICES Citywide Learning Programme, Stoke-on-Trent: Shared learning opportunities to improve support for people experiencing multiple needs*. [https://issuu.com/voicesofstoke/docs/voices\\_learning\\_programme\\_evaluation\\_2020\\_final](https://issuu.com/voicesofstoke/docs/voices_learning_programme_evaluation_2020_final)
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