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SERVICE USER EXPERIENCES OF INSPIRING CHANGE MANCHESTER

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Executive Summary

Inspiring Change Manchester (ICM) is an eight-year funded programme that offers a new and innovative approach to supporting those with multiple needs in Manchester.

Underpinned by multi-agency partnership working and collaboration.

This evaluation addressed the following objectives:

- Understanding the experiences of individual service users and volunteers engaged in the ICM programme.
- Exploring the impact of the GROW campus and GROW trainee programme.
- Ascertaining how 'person centred' approaches are embedded within the ICM programme.

Service user views and experiences are at the heart of the evaluation. As such, innovative peer-researcher methods were used to gather data to understand service user experience, explore the impact of the programme and explore how person centred approaches work within ICM. A key feature of the evaluation therefore was the engagement of service users as peer researchers who were trained and supported in collecting data from other service users in order to explore their personal journeys and experiences of ICM. To complement this, professional research staff were involved in interviewing service users who had specifically been involved in the GROW aspect of ICM and were also involved in interviewing the ICM programme team and delivery partners. In total, the views of 64 participants were gathered.

The evaluation provides evidence that ICM has been effective in supporting people with multiple and complex health and social needs. The holistic, joined-up approach of ICM was identified as a key factor in its success. Service users reported changes not only to their life circumstances but also with regard to increased self-belief, the confidence to make change and renewed hope for the future in terms of possibility and opportunity.

Several key ingredients of ICM's success were identified. Firstly, the nature of the relationship between the service user and engagement worker was very important; this was largely supportive, invested and meaningful. Secondly, ICM's ethos and value-base was also highlighted. This translated into real and valued ways of supporting service users in contrast to many of the prior experiences that service users had had when engaging with other agencies. Finally, the person-centred approaches used appear to be vital, enabling service-user needs to drive the process and for unique support to be tailored at an individual

level. Professional perspectives also highlighted how partnership-working, a lack of obvious hierarchy in ways of working and the critical role of the Core Group in the organisational structure as factors contributing to success.

A specific focus on the GROW traineeship element revealed several positives including the spectrum of activities and opportunities available for service users and the underpinning philosophy which recognises and builds on individual's strengths. All of the trainees interviewed had developed personally and professionally from the GROW experience.

The evaluation indicates good evidence of outcomes and learning for ICM and GROW in the first two years of the programme. ICM is a different way of working that appears to be making a real difference to service users in ways that have not previously been realised.

The evaluation has resulted in the following recommendations:

- ICM should ensure regular consultation and feedback from service-users to make sure that provision and support is delivered in appropriate and acceptable ways.
- Close monitoring of the GROW programme to ensure that individuals feel supported
- Further, long-term work is required to demonstrate the impact of the GROW programme and to capture personal and professional outcomes more effectively.
- Peer research within a structured support system is a valuable mechanism for gathering data from service users and should continue.

1. Background

Inspiring Change Manchester (ICM) is an eight-year funded programme that offers a new and innovative approach to supporting those with multiple needs in Manchester.

Underpinned by multi-agency partnership working and collaboration, ICM seeks to meet the diverse requirements of people with a variety of complex needs (including problems gaining or sustaining accommodation, mental ill-health, substance misuse, involvement in the criminal justice system). The project aims to break down barriers that can prevent people from leading fulfilling lives by delivering the right range of services at the right time (Inspiring Change Manchester, 2015).

The four outcomes of ICM are:

1. Manchester residents with three or more complex needs will have improved health, wellbeing, housing, employability, and reduced re-offending, and these outcomes will be sustainable
2. Manchester residents with multiple and complex needs will have more opportunities for involvement in the services they need, and influence on decisions that affect them
3. Services will share more information and better coordinate interventions for people with multiple and complex needs
4. Commissioning of mainstream services will respond to project learning, funding cost-effective evidence-based interventions for people with multiple and complex needs.

The evaluation of ICM is multi-faceted, covering the diverse aims of the programme. This includes examining systems-change as a result of ICM and ascertaining the extent to which ICM is cost-effective. The focus of this report however, is on exploring the following key objectives:

1. Understanding the experiences of individual service users and volunteers engaged in the ICM programme.
2. To explore the impact of the GROW campus and GROW trainee programme.
3. To understand the how 'person centred' approaches are embedded within the ICM programme.

This report highlights outcomes and learning from ICM, focussing particularly on the service user experience and those professional stakeholders working to support both ICM and the GROW Campus. The aim of this element of the evaluation was:

- to explore service user journeys throughout the ICM project;
- to assess service delivery effectiveness and differences within this;

- to gather service user experiences of delivery organisations and how these experiences differ.

The GROW Campus and GROW Traineeships

A further focus was to explore the GROW Campus (Getting Real Opportunities of Work), which enables individuals with lived experience of multiple and complex needs to access education, training and employment opportunities.

The ICM GROW approach in the first 2 years was based on a continuum of support with four identified stages of support:

- Engagement – Supporting people to look at activities and skills they may want to develop
- Sustaining – Supporting people to engage in specific structured activities and group work to build confidence and further skills
- Preparation – Through volunteering and GROW Traineeships, gaining real life work experience and training opportunities
- Succeeding at work – Through GROW Traineeships building key work-based skills, formal training and confidence to be both ready and succeed at work

The stages within the model are not rigid, but are intended:

- To provide forward momentum – avoiding getting ‘stuck’ and moving towards genuine independence and employability
- To match expectations appropriately to individual starting points, avoiding setting people up to fail.

Service users were to experience the stages of the GROW campus as a ‘bridge’ rather than a set of stepping stones. The GROW Campus was provided by Back-On-Track, A Manchester based ETE Provider that enables disadvantaged adults to make lasting positive change.

The GROW Traineeships formed a crucial element of this in terms of preparing people for work through a formal ‘on-the-job’ training programme developed originally by ICM to provide learning and training for adults with lived experience of multiple and complex needs. The key features of this are:

- A 12 month paid Traineeship, hosted by the ICM delivery partnership and overseen by a GROW Co-ordinator who provides overall management support to the Trainees.
- On-going support through the GROW Campus through specialised training, coaching work clubs and CV writing etc.
- A specific emphasis on moving people into on-going employment through personal development

2. Methodology

The evaluation sought to gain a '360 degree' view of the Inspiring Change Manchester Programme – highlighting learning and outcomes to date and moreover, focussing on the GROW initiative and the notion of adopting 'person centred approaches'. To do so, it was necessary to ascertain both the views of the recipients of the programme and the various stakeholders in contact with the programme. All aspects of the study were scrutinised and approved by the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences Ethics Committee, Leeds Beckett University.

Qualitative methods of enquiry have been central to data gathering, primarily focus group discussions and semi-structured interviewing conducted between October 2014 and May 2016. Both of these methods allow participants opportunity to discuss views openly and, in the case of focus group discussions, to understand where consensus and disagreement around certain issues with ICM occur (Then et al., 2014). Table 1 outlines who has been involved in sharing their views on ICM. Professional research staff were involved in interviewing service users who had specifically been involved in the GROW aspect of ICM and were also involved in interviewing the ICM programme team and delivery partners.

A key feature of the evaluation design has been the training and support of 'peer' researchers, i.e. individuals engaged with ICM that have been trained by Leeds Beckett University to interview other service users and explore personal journeys and experiences of the programme. As an evaluation team, our rationale for such an approach was twofold. First, evidence consistently demonstrates that such an approach often provides richer and detailed data about lived experience (Terry, 2016). People who understand and share common experiences, coupled with being trained in research skills and competencies, is potentially a much more viable way of really understanding people's views and thoughts (Green and South, 2006). Second, training people with lived experience of multiple needs is empowering for those involved and can provide opportunities for confidence building, raising

self-esteem as well as acquiring skills that can be transferred to other contexts (like applying for employment etc.) (Terry, 2016).

ICM Core Group members were recruited to become peer researchers through attending a half-day training event delivered by the Leeds Beckett team. This session introduced the purpose of peer research and outlined what would be expected. In addition, key skills such as active listening, working ethically and safely and asking open questions were provided to carry out the role should individuals wish to pursue the opportunity – this was done through group discussions and role-play scenarios. While 8 ICM Core Group members agreed to become a peer researcher, 4 people actually were involved in collecting interview data from other service users. These individuals had all experienced various personal challenges in their lives, but felt ‘ready’ to take on the role. Each peer researcher was individually supported when needed by the Leeds Beckett team. This was a particularly time-consuming element of the evaluation, but one which was deemed essential to both avoid attrition of the peer researchers and ensure safety and data quality. Good rapport between the peer researchers and the evaluation team was critical to all of this (Terry, 2016).

No pressures were placed on peer researchers to gather interviews from service-users. Instead this was driven at the peer researchers’ own pace. Issues such as personal setbacks and other commitments meant that in some cases several peer researchers only conducted a small number of interviews – something not unusual when using peer research in this context (Clover, 2011). Those peer researchers engaged in gathering data were all compensated for their time, skills and efforts through shopping vouchers – a process of good practice recognised in the literature (Terry, 2016).

The challenges associated with such participatory approaches are well-documented (Green et al., 2015) and yet these challenges were outweighed by the quality of the data gathered by the trained peer researchers and the feedback received from the training programme (further attention to this is provided in the conclusions and reflections section).

Table 1. Participant profile

Participant role	Number of participants
ICM Programme Team (Shelter)	4
ICM Delivery Partners	7
ICM Service Users	24 ¹

¹ 21 interviews gathered via trained ICM peer researchers

GROW Working Group	13
GROW Trainees	16
Total number of participants consulted	64

3. Findings

This section brings together salient themes that were discussed across the stakeholders involved in the evaluation. To illustrate areas of interest, anonymised direct quotations have been used and where data has been gathered by the ICM peer researchers this has been stated.

ICM addressing multiple and complex need

The criteria for referral into ICM are clear, focussing on individuals with multiple and complex needs. For many service users, their circumstances are intertwined but service users praised the ability of ICM to support their complex health and social needs. In some cases, delivery partners had underestimated the challenges that the programme presented. This had meant that during the inception of ICM some teams had been underprepared in relation to staff resourcing:

“We underestimated the complexity of the clients in the early stage, it will sound very silly saying it now because you think that’s exactly what it’s about.” (GROW Working Group)

Service user case studies examples

“When I was signed up [to ICM] I was living in an absolute shithole, not a very hygienic place with no gas and no electricity and arrears on the rent. They helped me out financially on that and I had weekly meetings with the support worker, sometimes daily telephone calls to see how I was doing to see how I was getting on and that helped me straighten my life out and see the negative influences...and they were very consistent with their support and non-judgemental....I live in a better house in a better area; I have healthy relationships with healthy people, if you know what I mean....my house is clean and tidy, I’m happy to bring friends round. Is this because of the support I’ve received? Absolutely.”

(Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

"I've been coming for 5 months now and when I first started I was on the floor and I was homeless, I had a big drug habit, I had nowhere to go and it was [engagement worker] who helped me out. He told me what he was doing and stuff and 5 months on I'm not using drugs, I'm stable on my medication, I'm coming down off that and there's a bit of light at the end of the tunnel. It's like there's a life out there. I can't complain it's been brilliant. They have sorted my housing out, I was homeless when I came in, my mental health wasn't great so I had a chat with the mental health team. It's all going good, they've got me on medication now, everything's been good...In five months I'm really happy with myself and I can't complain, it's going really well. I might go to college soon. I went with [name] from Back on Track so I'm hopefully starting in September to do an electricians course."

(Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

"They've helped with my mental health issues, they've helped me with my drug issues because I've smoked weed since I was thirteen. I've been through the whole coke [cocaine] phase, MDMA phase, alcohol phase, drinking until I blacked out...they've helped me with a lot of things, they've helped me with my way of thinking and perceptions of things...I've been helped with my accommodation as I was sofa surfing and sleeping under a tree in a park. I tried to sleep in town but it's too hard, too many people that are drunk. It's not very nice. So they helped me with my homelessness issues.

The way they treated me [at ICM] was so different. If it wasn't for ICM I wouldn't have had help from my GP as they were fobbing me off. They weren't helping me with any medication...it was through ICM that someone started coming to the appointments with the GP and their whole behaviour toward me was so different...I can understand that people may play on things, but I was finished I had broken down, there was nothing left. I consider myself a strong person, but I was broken I was just crying all the time, but it was ICM that helped."

(Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Several participants suggested that without ICM they would not be alive either through a drug overdose or through self-harm. Indeed, such narratives were frequently discussed by people:

“What would happen if I wasn’t involved with ICM? I’d be dead [long pause]. I’d be self-harming because of my mental health.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

“[If ICM was not available] I think I would have been dead, I would have ended it. The pain was too much in the end. I’d been fighting for thirteen years, I was just finished.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

“I had tried to commit suicide, taken paracetamol. I was at that stage where I either get some help or just finish it and kill yourself. So if it wasn’t for ICM I don’t think I would have been here. I would have ended it.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

The notion of taking an holistic approach was a key ingredient in ICM’s successful delivery. Recognising that service users often had a range of interconnecting issues was important and moreover ICM was seen as an approach which rejected reductionist strategies, i.e. looking at single health and social issues in isolation, to dealing with complex health and social contexts:

“ICM is a joined-up approach, it covers every aspect. For example, I’ve had counsellors who counsel me on mental health issues. Great. Fine. But none of those ever asked me about the roof above my head or so on. I go to my GP, who is great, but it just doesn’t do it. I go to a housing officer, but they don’t help me about the times I was getting down. What I’ve got here [ICM], I know there are people I can go to about all of those things.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Service users conceptualised ICM as a single-contact point for addressing their needs. A GROW trainee that had experienced Manchester health and social services over many years gave his view on how ICM acts as a central point to address people’s situations. Such a model mitigates against people being ‘lost’ between services or organisations:

“I used to go to one service and they would send me somewhere else to tell my story so I’d keep repeating myself and getting sent all over...I was in a chaotic lifestyle I couldn’t meet a lot of my appointments...and that’s what I like about ICM, when somebody comes to us we’ve got mental health here we’ve got probation we’ve got drug and alcohol we’ve got homelessness all under one roof you don’t have to send

someone all over the city telling their story all over again and then you know information can get lost, people fall through gaps.” (GROW Trainee)

Fostering self-belief and inspiring change

Service users suggested that, in their experience, ICM was unique in that not only did it work to address individuals’ acute health and social issues but it fostered self-belief and enthusiasm for the future:

“I was making the effort to get off drink and drugs already but ICM has given me that extra push and motivation. It made me want to do it as opposed to ‘I must stop drinking’ now I actually think I don’t want to drink and I really don’t want to do drugs- there is a better life out there and I am going to go out there and grab it .” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

ICM was viewed as providing people with meaning and purpose which put the person in the centre of everything:

“ICM gives me a lifeline...here I feel as though I have a meaning in life, there [previous services] I was living in a robot world.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

“It’s given me structure and purpose to my routine. It’s made me realise what I’m good at...I feel positive about the future and feel able to achieve goals that previously I wouldn’t have.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Many service users suggested that ICM had allowed them to take control of their lives again – this included feeling more integrated into the community:

“It’s done a lot for me personally. I do a little bit of socialising now. I split from my husband ten years ago. I never go out, never ever, ever go out, in ten years I hadn’t been out. So yeah it’s given me a lot of confidence, it’s made me realise that you know I can go back out there you know...it’s done a lot for me personally without going into loads of detail.” (ICM Service User)

ICM had offered individuals a myriad of opportunities and this has opened up possibilities that would otherwise not have been available. ICM allowed individuals to try new experiences and sample new activities – this was often through links with Back on Track, or by engaging in ICM Core Group activities. Others suggested how it had created a structure and purpose:

“I had nothing before ICM, I was in a hostel and I didn’t have no job or support or anything like that. I’ve done a cooking course, a history course and a computer

course...It's got me out in the days, I'm not bored, I'm doing something with myself and I'm hoping to get a job as well." (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

"I've got structure and routine more than anything and a sense of purpose. It's been good for my confidence building." (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

The fact that ICM offered new possibilities for people was a strong theme emerging in the data. The metaphor of 'opening-up doors' to activities and to new ways of thinking and living was a reoccurring concept:

"I feel much more positive, much more enthralled by the future and future possibilities and I'm feeling that there are opportunities that are there to be taken. I don't know where I'll be in five years, but if you asked me that a year ago I would have said I'd be dead. ICM is great in terms of support, but it has to come from the individual...but ICM show you the door to go through to change." (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Not only did ICM open-up new possibilities for individuals, it was also regarded as a sustainable intervention by allowing individuals to take greater control over their situation. In this example, providing service users with the potential to gain qualifications that would support future employment prospects:

"The help for people struggling is not there, it's getting better...the help I got from ICM has woken me up and inspired me to try and help others. I hope to start my course here at Back on Track so I can go to college." (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

As a result of ICM, several service-users suggested that they were considering other important relationships in their life. ICM had often given individuals the confidence to reconnect with people as it had provided a renewed sense of self for individuals:

"It's been a joy to get in touch with my inner-self. Does that sound pretentious? I'm exploring who I am, who I want to be and where I'm going and getting back to being a proper dad again." (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

For others the transformation as a result of ICM was less dramatic and was at a slower pace, but nonetheless service-users described the direction of travel in relation to self-belief and inspiring change as being positive:

“The future looks a bit brighter I can see the sun come peeking through the clouds a bit. I don’t want to say it’s going great but it is moseying along at a steady pace.”

(Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

ICM’s key ingredients for success

Within the data gathered there were several critical ingredients (or mechanisms) which increased the likelihood of ICM being successful in addressing the needs of individuals.

These elements suggest ‘how’ outcomes have been achieved for individuals and are discussed below.

The relationship between service user and engagement worker

Data gathered consistently showed that the relationship between ICM service users and engagement workers was a critical mechanism for success. The narratives of many ICM service users identified the engagement worker as a crucial factor in them achieving positive outcomes and successes:

“Without this support I think I would be gone [dead]. ICM is helping me with support and helping me to focus. I’ve got people looking after me- I call them my angels.”

(Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Service users suggested that relationships had often developed quite quickly over time, this was attributed to the seemingly endless amounts of time that engagement workers invested in the relationship:

“If I wasn’t with ICM, I’d be back in jail...my key worker is like a father figure to me. He’s always there for me....he’ll make time for me.” (Service user: data gathered by

ICM Peer Researcher)

“It’s like a comfort blanket for me I can see [name] anytime, she just opens the door with open arms and lets me speak to her. She’d never slam the door on me so that’s why I like coming here, I never dread coming here, they make me feel welcome.”

(Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

However, many service users admitted being mistrustful of developing relationships with professionals given their prior experiences of other services. One service user noted:

“I got into my head for thirteen years that no-one cared.” (Service user: data gathered

by ICM Peer Researcher)

Individuals suggested how ICM had enabled them to build meaningful relationships with professionals trying to support their needs:

“My [ICM key worker] has helped me focus and they work with me. It was like having a proper relationship again.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Empathy was an important constituent of the relationship. If service users perceived that they were being listened to and their views understood then this increased credibility in ICM. Knowing the engagement workers within ICM were experienced in managing a range of issues was important for service users:

“I think it’s great because they can talk to you, they know where you’re coming from, and they’re not someone who’s doing it from a text book. You’ve got to know that side of it but someone who’s been there and experienced it can give you their experience and they know where you’re coming from.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

“This service is more personal, [name of engagement worker] has been there before he’s not just got it from a book, he’s been there and done it and got the t-shirt so that helps.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Nonetheless, there were some criticisms as when continuity of support between the engagement worker and ICM service user ‘broke-down’ this provided immense frustration for service users. When prior commitments had not been upheld or when engagement workers had been changed this caused service users particular dissatisfaction, leading them to often revert back to their ‘distrust’ of services seeking to support them:

“There’s been one or two occasions when someone hasn’t been able to attend a job centre interview with me and someone has been lined up and it’s slipped through the net and I’ve had to ring ICM to chase it up. So that needs to be tighter.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

ICM’s ethos and value-base

A strong cross-cutting theme throughout the data gathered from stakeholders was the clarity of ICM’s ethos and value base and how this translates into practical ways of supporting service users. The ethos and value-base of ICM originally emerged from the research and needs analysis undertaken with Service Users and Service Providers when ICM was first set-up. This highlighted the need for services to be able to explore person-led approaches with those with the most complex needs.

It was difficult for service-users not to be comparative in their reflections of ICM against previous services they had used in Manchester. While these subjective views are of course valid, there was no scope in the research to validate these through gathering data from agencies across the city.

Service users reflected on the previous working models and practices for supporting individuals with highly complex health and social need in Manchester. The challenge has always been posed to services in providing collective support for those who face the most complex needs and are the most excluded in society. While this evaluation was unable to substantiate participants' claims, service users consistently depicted services devoid of co-ordination and disempowering to those who needed support the most.

"I was the person who was sat in services for twenty-odd years going nowhere, in and out, in and out, in and out, revolving door telling me story five hundred times to people who weren't really that bothered or motivated to help me change." (ICM Service User)

"I've had lots of problems in the past with agencies. They're crap. Awful...That's why I believe in ICM because those barriers that people face are terrible." (ICM Service User)

"I came through so many blocks in the system. It got me so down." (ICM Service User)

One participant, now a GROW Trainee, reflected on his experiences of services within the city. He commented (metaphorically or perhaps literally) of doors being closed on him by services and the inevitable struggles he would face moving from service-to-service:

"When I used services myself the door was closed on me. A piece of paper seemed to follow me from service-to-service and when that piece of paper landed, they read it and they read it, they had already judged me. They already knew or they thought they knew. You know worst case, up to no good, not going anywhere." (GROW Trainee)

Some caution may be needed here, given that previous services may not have had the same resource investment or capital to produce an effective wrap-around service. Multiple and Complex Needs remains a sensitive political issue leaving services under-resourced and working against a wider political tide. In addition, competitive commissioning environments make it complicated for services to be able to work closely together when they are placed into competitive relationships with each other.

In contrast, Service users suggested that the non-judgemental ethos of ICM was crucial, especially when addressing complex and sensitive personal issues:

“You’ve [ICM] helped me with things like turning up to courses. You’ve help me to talk about the abuse that I went through and I know that I can come and talk to you and no-one will judge me for it.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

“ICM is a bit like a sanctuary. That hub you come in is a bit like a sanctuary. When you come through those doors you feel a bit safer. Everyone knows that people there have issues, no-one is there to judge you.” (Service user: data gathered by ICM Peer Researcher)

Although some service users had only been connected with ICM for a relatively short period of time, there was already a tangible sense that ICM were developing positive approaches and being there to support those with complex need:

“I’ve been involved in a lot of services and none of them are particularly positive in their approach. They offer you the minimum and there’s no continuation of help. They may help for a ‘flash-in-the-pan’ week but after that the help stops. ICM gave me the impression that they are here for the long-run and I can be anything I want to be. So hugely different.” (ICM Service User)

In some cases, service users had not being supported by any statutory provision having ‘fallen through the net’ of health and social care providers. These service users, in effect, had been picked up and supported by ICM:

“Before ICM I was trying to look after myself with my drink and drugs, but I had no support.” (ICM Service User)

Person-centred approaches

Prominently, the notion of ‘person-centred’ approaches within ICM was a key thread mentioned (either explicitly or implicitly) by those interviewed. It was suggested that person-centred working within ICM reconfigures the service user/service provider dynamic. The individual (rather than system and service providers) drive the agenda with their needs at the forefront. This kind of approach is juxtaposed to previous ways of supporting individuals with complex need, whereby the individual is asked to fit within pre-existing service structures:

“Where it’s different is in the past you’re working with someone so they can fit within a pre-existing system...The difference with ICM is the ability for the system to be flexible and responsive to meet the person’s needs, that the system can shift and

change and be dynamic enough to do that through working in a more holistic responsive way.” (ICM Delivery Partner)

One of the tangible features of ICM’s person-centred approach was the flexible fund – a delegated budget which allows individuals to buy items that support their health and well-being.

Closely linked to the person-centred ethos is a commitment to empowerment and enabling service users to take control and make choices about their health and social circumstance. This means that the ICM programme is inherently flexible and bespoke to individuals’ needs:

“It’s being led by the person...trying to put their wishes at the forefront really of what we are doing.” (ICM Programme Team)

The ‘person-centred’ mandate of the ICM programme was an exciting element of the work that practitioners believed would make a difference to the lives of those with greatest needs. This, to some extent, may reconfigure the way success may be measured given that the flexibility of what can be provided to individuals is potentially infinite as noted by one interviewee:

“What we’re looking at is something different and putting that individual needs first regardless of what they are and actually something that might be flexible than how we achieve outcomes, I think is fascinating. Having a pot of money that can get someone a toaster or might get them a degree potentially is really exciting.” (ICM Programme Team)

The unconditional nature of the ICM programme also emerged as a key cornerstone and value. Whereas some services were described as being overly bureaucratic and contingent on service users meeting key requirements in order to access support (i.e. being addiction free; sober etc.), this same requirement was less rigidly applied in ICM processes.

Another key value of the programme articulated by many of the professionals interviewed was ideas of learning and reflecting on progress but also being prepared to take risks without fear. This was summarised succinctly by one of the ICM Programme Team:

“It’s OK to learn, that’s what’s really key within ICM. Give it a go and if it doesn’t work then the way the two year cycles are commissioned it lets us be reflective and fluid. It stops people being afraid of trying different things.”

As noted, the duration of the funding is an important constituent that allows periodic reflection and learning to take place. Many argued that the duration of the programme was critical as it allows time to address the intrinsic complexity that ICM service users face. Indeed, many suggested that it is simply naïve to think that change can occur in a short period of time. However a potential challenge of an eight-year funded programme was

noted, particularly maintaining drive and energy of services and professionals over a sustained period:

“The long term vision is a long way away, I think we are going to have to re-launch in terms of ideas and look again at some of the innovation lab ideas for new energy within the programme.” (ICM Delivery Partner)

Professional perspectives on ICM’s organisational strengths and challenges

In order to meet the ambitious goals of ICM, there was a clear understanding that partnership-working was necessary in order for success to occur. Many of the partners involved in ICM had pre-existing relationships, although the formalisation of partnership-working across multi-agency bodies was deemed as a key outcome of ICM to date.

Partners working toward delivering ICM outcomes considered themselves as partners, equally respected and listened to – there was no sense of a hierarchy, although the overarching management that Shelter provided (as lead organisation) was crucially recognised in orchestrating ICM strategy and practice. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that time was needed for multi-agency teams to work effectively together:

“...you don’t always get a well formed, well-functioning partnership because organisations come with their own history, cultures and ethos and it takes some time to pull together.” (ICM Programme Team)

Many professionals suggested that the Core Group was a critical factor in the organisational structure of ICM and an influential body in shaping programme delivery and direction. Taking the views of people with lived experience seriously, and not in tokenistic ways, was what was felt set ICM apart from other initiatives:

“The thing about this [ICM] that is different is it’s got running through it like a stick of rock ‘lived experience’ the voice of people with lived experience...It’s also starting to give voice to people who maybe have not been heard in the same way before, so its influencing commissioning and delivery.” (ICM Programme Team)

The Core Group was felt to provide both credibility and authenticity to the ICM programme, but this could also provide challenges in aligning service user perspectives against professional viewpoints – sometimes there was discordance between the two which required careful negotiation to resolve. The Service User Co-ordinator was considered a critical lynch-pin between the ICM delivery and programme team and the Core Group. This was considered an important, but difficult role – establishing regular communication with the Core Group, as one illustrative example, was noted:

“We have a Service User Co-ordinator who communicates to the Core Group. The Core Group are not used to communication in the way people in an office would do, the Service User Co-ordinator has to spend a lot of time chasing people up. We have also got to consider that people come from other back grounds you’ve got lived experiences and services, it’s not like they are used to managing their lives through an Outlook Calendar.” (ICM Programme Team)

There were, nevertheless, critiques of the Core Group from some individuals. This included a lack of clarity about the Core Group’s function and aim. In addition, there was a sense that the composition of the group (i.e. who could be involved and who could not) was not always articulated clearly:

“I guess it has been a bit slippery for us, it’s hard to know there isn’t much in writing about the remit of the Core Group and who can join it and how many people should be in it. We are being very responsive to their needs, but it can be quite hard to rationalise resources in the right place, because there doesn’t really seem to be a plan or not one that we have had access to that tells us what the aim of that Core Group is.” (ICM Delivery Partner)

GROW Traineeships: outcomes and learning

This section focuses on the specific elements of GROW which forms part of the ICM ‘toolkit’. It highlights early process issues and learning as well as key outcomes. Findings came from GROW Trainees the GROW Working Group and the ICM Programme Team.

By the end of year 2 there had been 15 GROW Trainees on the programme. They were recruited in 2 batches – A group of 4 were recruited in year 1 and a group of 11 were recruited in year 2 when the model expanded. GROWs had placements across the delivery partnership, reflecting their own personal interests and skills-base.

The GROW continuum

One of the strengths of the GROW intervention was the spectrum of activities that are available to service users. The GROW working group conceptualised this as a continuum with, at the one end, finding service users meaningful activities to do (occupations, hobbies etc.), while at the other end, GROW offered volunteer opportunities as well as paid traineeships:

“GROW campus is all about embedding education, training, employment and meaningful activities into Inspiring Change in any possible way. There are two main strands to that I suppose; one is making sure that new Inspiring Change clients as soon as possible are thinking about what they are doing in their lives – meaningful

activities, courses, hobbies, fulfilling their potentials, finding what they are good at filling their lives with positive things to move forward. The other side of it is creating work and skills opportunities within the delivery programme for people with lived experience of multiple complex needs...and then also paid GROW trainee opportunity's which is like a paid apprenticeship" (GROW Working Group)

The continuum is a useful way to consider the GROW intervention as it means individuals have a sense of moving along the spectrum toward 'mainstream' voluntary and paid work opportunities:

"There is always something to look up to and to move on to and there is always something to kind of inspire people" (GROW Working Group)

This also creates opportunities for positive role-modelling through individuals aspiring to achieve what their peers may have done.

The philosophy of GROW is built on recognising people's strengths, rather than identifying individuals' deficits or needs. This is a critical element of GROW as it allows individuals to discover hidden attributes that may not have otherwise have been recognised:

"It's about starting to dip your toe in the water with some of the arts, crafts or other activity work...having chats to people about aspirations and about things that people can do and not what they can't do and that is the difference." (ICM Delivery partner)

On a pragmatic level, this could concern finding occupational activities that service users like to do. Although this sounds simplistic, professionals suggested that some service users frequently did not know what they enjoyed doing. This was highlighted by one of the ICM Delivery Partners:

"It's really boring when you have stopped offending and stopped substance misuse, then you have a lot of time on your hands and it can be boring...I think one of the things I hear time and time again from service users is that they don't know what they enjoy. They have been caught in the cycle that is all consuming and they know they need to do new things they don't know what is out there and available. What's great about the GROW is that ability to go out to open doors to offer things that they don't know. Lots of variety from the arts and crafts right through to basic skills."

As suggested the diversity of activity under the GROW 'banner' was a real strength; nonetheless, at the time of interviewing service users there were some suggestions that the semantics of the programme (GROW campus, GROW trainee) were confusing and could confuse both service providers and service users.

GROW trainee programme: recruitment, selection and training

During this period of the evaluation, views were sought from several individuals that had been on, or were currently on, a GROW Traineeship. For these individuals, the nature of their GROW role varied and included administrative positions in voluntary sector organisations, to engagement and outreach roles with ICM service users.

The demand for such traineeships was evident in the accounts of the GROW Working Group and indeed many of the GROW Trainees considered themselves fortunate to have been selected to take on the role. There was variability in people's experiences of the application process for GROW – while some found the experience rewarding and confidence building, others suggested a more difficult and anxiety-inducing experience:

"I found it really difficult. It was really difficult to understand and it was a lot in it."

(GROW Trainee)

There was mixed opinion regarding the complexity of the application process. The overarching view was that support should be available at the outset of the application process in order to encourage more applicants:

"I suppose if you come from an area where you've never actually had to apply for a job that way it was quite confusing. It was pretty hard, I did need support with it, but there was support on board for applying for the jobs, but it wasn't the easiest..."

(GROW Trainee)

"I think they... if it's somebody who's been out of work for a long time and maybe their confidence is a bit low anyway, I think that process would've initially put, like I know for a fact it put a lot of people off applying anyway, people who were probably ok at doing the job, who had the skills but because of the application process that was a bit of hindrance. I think it definitely put people off applying." (GROW Trainee)

The interview process for the GROW Traineeship was reported as being informal and relaxed – for many individuals this was the first time they had been interviewed for a job in many years:

"I've not been in an interview for a long time, not for a job anyway, lots of police interviews...you build it up, you stress about it...I was kind of quite surprised it was quite informal it ended up more like a bit of a conversation really than an interview process but it was very informal." (GROW Trainee)

There was strong evidence that individuals had been able to access a wide-range of training to support them in their role. Several individuals commented on the skills and competencies they had gained and spoke positively about the delivery of training material:

“Yeah the training has been good. We have done professional boundaries, safeguarding, we have done a lot of e-learning you know like on the computer then we have been in training days like user outcomes stuff.” (GROW Trainee)

“I’ve received several lots of training. We had an induction to begin with that tells you the basics about Health and Safety, hazards, personal safety and training on mental health capacity.” (GROW trainee)

A number of individuals commented that the training had little ‘substance’ referring to the fact that accredited courses (i.e. NVQs) were not always offered. This meant that some courses had limited application for future job opportunities:

“We have had loads of training but nothing with substance...Nothing where I can walk away and say I have a NVQ or Health and Social Care you know what I mean stuff like that, I mean that weren’t available for us.” (GROW Trainee)

It was also stressed that there was a lack of consistency in training opportunities across organisations reflecting the importance of ensuring that GROW Trainees were given the same opportunities across the programme:

“There is but only, I think because I was employed by ‘XXX’ I was lucky, but if you’re say employed by ‘YYY’ or ‘ZZZ’ they don’t have the same opportunities.” (GROW trainee)

Several GROW Trainees suggested that they had felt overwhelmed in their role and, as one responder noted, ‘thrown into the Lion’s den’. Those GROW Trainees who had been one of the first to take on the new role felt like ‘guinea pigs’ and often felt unsupported. Participants felt as though ICM were ‘learning as they were going along’ in respect to the GROW positions. It is noteworthy, however, that later recruits to the Trainee positions did not share these experiences.

Outcomes and achievements from the GROW Trainee programme

Universally, all of the GROW Trainees interviewed had developed both personally and professionally from the experience.

Personal development

Increases in self-worth and confidence were commonly cited as was the feeling that they were becoming increasingly 'ready' for mainstream employment. One participant eloquently suggested that GROW Traineeship had been "a personal journey in becoming a professional". The opportunity to experience 'real' work opportunities was important for all of the Trainees, especially one participant who commented on what the programme meant to her:

"My first job in thirty-four years you know. It's been a big life changing thing for me so it was a bit scary...yeah it was scary in all honesty but no it's been great, the people have been great. Like I say regarding what I benefit umm a lot, a lot" (GROW Trainee)

The process of helping others to improve their lives fostered a sense of being valued amongst the trainees. With the role having a direct impact on other people's lives it has enabled trainees to gain a sense of fulfilment and to realise their own potential above and beyond what they had imagined to be capable of resulting in a sense of pride:

"I got growth as a person, there's no doubt about that. I got real growth; I learned how to engage with people, I learned how to get on people's level, I learned as Mick says, to build a rapport with people. But most, I learned- well I never learned it, I had it, but I didn't realise I had as much of it until I started being a volunteer, was empathy, and I didn't realise I cared about other people until I started volunteering. I used to think I was quite selfish- I can still be quite selfish, in my personal life- but when it comes to a client, I'm more selfless than selfish, I'll go the extra mile for a client and that surprised me" (GROW Trainee)

"I like what I see when I look in the mirror, and that's all been down to like volunteering and helping people. When I get back home at night and I know I've helped somebody; I gave somebody- even if it's 10 minutes- a better quality in their day" (GROW Trainee)

"I set out at half six every morning to come to ICM, cause I love it and I love the clients, I love doing what I do; and I only get home at 6 o'clock at night, but I love what I do- but it's personal what I've got out of it" (GROW trainee)

One of the more noticeable outcomes of the GROW programme was that it gave the trainees a sense of perspective on how far they had come on their own journey of recovery. They were able to recognise similar barriers that they themselves had faced and offer truly meaningful support and encouragement to those facing the same obstacles:

“mine is being an ex-service user myself, to be able to come in and join ICM, and try and break down some of the barriers that I faced when I was a service user; you kind of get pushed from pillar to post and nobody listening. So being an ex-service user myself, it was an ideal opportunity for me to try and change the way the services are run, and that’s what ICM are about; trying to change the services for people with multiple and complex needs.”

“Totally with my subconscious but mirroring their actions and their body language and we connect and I find it saves a lot of time when it comes to engaging with them because they respond better to people they realise have experience of where they are and where they’ve been.”

Professional development

As well as personal development, professional skills had also been acquired. These clearly varied contingent on the role, but included administrative skills and greater familiarity of digital technologies and computer processing. Embedding and becoming familiar with professional settings was also highly beneficial:

“What I gained was an injection of knowledge and just being around a workplace and professional setting.” (GROW Trainee)

“I consider myself to be professional. I’m coming to the end of my term now in the next couple of months and what that training has enabled me and being around the staff in that office, quite a lot of staff it made me into a professional, or I’ve made myself into a professional by watching them” (GROW Trainee)

The marked changes in individuals experiencing the traineeship highlights the progressive nature of the programme; trainees were able to recognise the tangible skills the traineeship had provided them with to be able to move into mainstream employment:

“I’ve been through the process it is a remarkable...If you were to take me 2 years ago and put me in McDonalds or something it would never have worked because it wouldn’t have encouraged or motivated me one bit. Stuff I do now and the responsibilities I have now I’ve done remarkable things for me and my self-esteem and the trust issues for people who have led a dishonest life through drug addiction or alcoholism, for people to put a trust in you to work and to train you to become professional is quite remarkable” (GROW Trainee)

“But when I applied for a job I was told I had no record keeping skills, so doing a GROW admin gave me my record-keeping skills, but at the same time it also gave

me a second career choice to follow because now I can apply for administrative work and I have got the qualities which I didn't have before I did the GROW" (GROW Trainee)

Continuity and transitioning

GROW Trainees did raise some concerns about the duration of the GROW Traineeship, citing that twelve months was insufficient. GROW Trainees who were supporting service users in an engagement role were particularly concerned that the duration of the traineeship could have adverse effects. These individuals suggested that after the ten month period the relationship and positive rapport building would be lost:

"I think the longer the GROW traineeship is the better, you know what I mean. I get the point that they wanna get more people, you know like on a roll but at the same time... you build a relationship with somebody you are working with and then you move on and I know it's unfortunate that happens...but at the same time, they need that stable consistency." (GROW Trainee)

"The only negative thing I would say is the length of the contract it's too short. 18 months even and you know I've created good relationships and rapport with my clients but in 2 months I'm going to move on and they're going to have to get to know another GROW so anything you might have achieved with that client it could all fall to pieces." (GROW Trainee)

In addition it was felt that the longer length programme would allow trainees to gain a broader spectrum of skills increasing confidence before moving on:

"It's not just the fact they would have more training and time because it takes 3 months to bed in, then you start learning and training and then you have the last 3 months which is intense because you're expected to move on. A 2 year contract for GROWs would be a lot easier on the person psychologically speaking and they'd have more time so maybe 6 months at the end to look for a job. Some of the GROWs have started to take jobs at a trainee level as they are now with the same wage so to me that's not moving on it's just making sure you're employed." (GROW Trainee)

"What I've noticed is a lot of the GROWs are applying for jobs now, it's quite fearful coming to the end of this contract for some, as they have never worked or never had proper legal jobs, and I think whilst the training is intense and stuff I think you could learn a lot more over a 2 year period." (GROW Trainee)

There were concerns from a small number of respondents about the transition after the GROW traineeship into mainstream employment. Individuals were apprehensive about whether they would be able to find suitable positions after the apprenticeship had ended. It was felt that better exit strategies needed to be in place to allow for a smoother transition. That said, there were several success stories of individuals that had successfully transitioned into paid employment after the GROW experience.

“It’s a bit selfish but I have to say it, I just want more opportunities come the end of it, I don’t want to be back on job seekers. I’ve come here for like 12 month contract now after the 12 month contract if I don’t get a job I’m back to a minimum thingy, wage and I can’t handle that.” (GROW Trainee)

“I got to about 6 or 7 months in and thought right I got to start making some moves now you know...I would have loved to have stayed, I love this job, I loved working here, you know, I was really quite passionate about it. that’s not what the GROW traineeship is about you know, it’s about kind of giving you that experience, moving you on and then bringing the next person in” (GROW Trainee)

That said, all but one of the GROW Trainees have found paid employment² following their GROW Traineeships.

The pace of GROW

There were some concerns in the early implementation of the GROW programme, that the processes for supporting GROW Trainees in paid positions had not been carried out as rigorously as it could have been. Moreover, a member of the GROW Working Group commented that the pace of implementing GROW had been too fast and that this had prevented crystallisation of good practice and reflection on learning.

² Although we should consider that there is a difference between finding employment and employment people find meaningful and sustainable

4. Conclusions, reflections and learning points

This evaluation report provides good evidence of outcomes and learning for ICM and the GROW Campus during the first 2 years of programme delivery. The evaluation has sought to provide a viewpoint of ICM from a range of perspectives, but at the forefront are the views of those directly involved in delivering and receiving ICM support. This data has been primarily gathered by a group of trained ICM peer researchers who have enabled an inclusive and participatory approach toward the evaluation to be achieved. As an evaluation team, we feel that the evidence gathered from this report (read in conjunction with other local evaluation reports) will provide affirmation of the success of ICM to this point and moreover suggest ways in which the programme can develop in the future.

A salient issue to emerge from the data from service users was that ICM is testing new and innovative approaches for working with people with Multiple and Complex Needs. Characteristics of ICM, underpinned by a strong philosophy of person-centredness, are recognised by service users and are largely delivered in practice. This ethos and value-base has not occurred coincidentally and has been borne out of strong collaboration with service-users before and during the ICM funding was awarded.

Learning Point:

The ethos and value-base of ICM are recognised by service-users. ICM should ensure regular consultation and feedback from service-users, potentially via the Core Group, to ensure that provision and support is delivered in appropriate and acceptable ways.

Service users feel supported and appreciate the single-contact point for addressing their needs. Working with individuals holistically and spending time to develop firm relationships between service users and engagement workers also seems critical to overall success. Where relationships between these two constituents 'breaks down' or is inconsistent, this seems to undermine the programme. It was clear from the data that ICM was working to address individuals' complex needs but in addition were also fostering self-belief and optimism for service-users who may not previously have been offered such opportunities.

Learning Point:

Relationships between service users and professionals are crucial to the implementation of ICM. Evidence suggests that where relationships 'break down' or are inconsistent, service-users feel that the programme is undermined.

Evidence within the report has highlighted many positive health and social outcomes for individuals engaged with the GROW Campus – this has ranged from occupational engagement in hobbies and activities, to individuals finding mainstream employment. The GROW campus has clearly been a success for many individuals and universally individuals that have participated in the evaluation had gained personally and professionally from their experiences. Some early GROW Trainees did feel unsupported and overwhelmed and this may have been symptomatic of the early pace of development within the GROW Campus which some felt was too quick.

Learning Point:

The GROW programme has been a success for many of those who have engaged in the process. Close monitoring should ensure that individuals progressing along the GROW continuum do not feel overwhelmed as this may be counter-productive.

Further exploration is needed to understand GROW Trainees' experiences after the traineeship as some individuals were concerned about the future and whether they would be able to transition effectively into the mainstream employment market.

Learning Point:

Further evidence is required to demonstrate the impact of the GROW programme. Longitudinal work should be considered to effectively capture personal and professional outcomes on individuals.

It is worth noting that the evaluation was led, in part, by trained peer researchers and their contribution was invaluable to accessing the views and perspectives of ICM service users. Building the research capacity of service users and those involved in the Core Group demanded, at times, the intensive support of individuals by the evaluation team but this was an anticipated feature of using peer research processes. Training people who understand and share common experiences with ICM service users is a credible and viable way of understanding people's views and thoughts (Green and South, 2006). While further training

of the peer researchers may have yielded better quality data – perhaps through refining interview techniques, such as effective prompting of interviewees etc. – given the resource and time allocated the schedule of training and support on reflection was appropriate. Any future peer research activity should build on the training that has already been delivered and should recompense individuals for their effort where possible. Albeit the number of peer researchers involved in data gathering was small these individuals were, in our view, highly committed and enthusiastic. Future models deploying peer researchers should, as a minimum, ensure that effective support mechanisms are established to ensure the appropriate governance and safety of researchers and interviewees and to allow a safe and reflective space so that peer researchers feel enabled to learn from their mistakes.

Learning Point:

Peer research processes can be effectively used to understand ICM service-user experience. Building on the research capacity of peer researchers already trained would be an effective way to develop ‘peer research champions’ who can, if needed, expand the number of individuals engaged in gathering data.

Support mechanisms for peer researchers should ensure a supportive infrastructure where challenges in data gathering can be discussed and where individuals feel enabled to learn from and reflect on the research process.

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