



Good Practice on Co-Creation

Name/title of activity done in co-creation

Mental Health and Family Caring Program

Name and Country of the entity leading/coordinating the co-creation activity

Mental Health Ireland and Family Carers Ireland

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Context

Mental Health Ireland and Family Carers Ireland came together in late 2019 to explore the development of a programme to address the needs of family carers supporting a person with a mental health problem. There was mutual agreement to co-create and co-facilitate a programme for this cohort, titled *Mental Health and Family Caring – Supporting the Supporters*.

Initial progress ceased due to the emergence of COVID-19. However, the co-creation group decided to recommence the design and delivery of the programme online. Learnings from people who had experience of previous delivery of family recovery programmes also informed the development of this programme.

Two pilot programs were hosted and evaluated and the program runs now in person or online cofacilitated with a member of staff of Mental Health Ireland and a family member, supported by Family Carers Ireland and many other groups working with families in Ireland. This helps to reduce isolation and stigma through group discussion, reduce barriers to access supports by meeting with representatives from organisations and enhance family members' awareness of the importance of their own self-care.

Overview of the activity

1. Ideation
Mental Health Ireland and Family Carers Ireland came together in late 2019 to explore the development of a programme to address the needs of family carers supporting a person with a mental health problem. There was mutual agreement to co-create and co-facilitate a programme for this cohort, titled Mental Health and Family Caring – Supporting the Supporters.
2. Design/development
The co-creation group comprised experts by experience and experts by profession; family carers, supporters, people with lived experience of mental health problems, a psychologist and staff representatives from both organisations. The voice of family carers lived experience was essential to the development of this programme as was previous experience of delivering family recovery programmes.
3. Implementation
Two pilot programs were hosted and evaluated and the program runs now in person or online cofacilitated with a member of staff of Mental Health Ireland and a family member, supported by Family Carers Ireland and many other groups working with families in Ireland. This helps to reduce isolation and stigma through group discussion, reduce barriers to access supports by meeting with representatives from organisations and enhance family members awareness of the importance of their own self-care.
4. Evaluation
<p>An evaluation process was factored into the programme in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• establish the value of programme content and demonstrate the viability of delivering future programmes in other areas.• review the impact, challenges and benefits of delivering the pilot.• make recommendations for future development and delivery of the programme. <p>Evaluation Process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1: Weekly documented “One Word “verbal evaluation – Participants were invited to express in one word their immediate experience and response to the session2: End of Programme evaluation through a short online survey for participants3: Facilitators feedback survey and panellist feedback.

Good Practice Indicators¹

1. Where all relevant stakeholders involved in the co-creation process?

Did you succeed in involving all relevant stakeholders (please elaborate)? Which stakeholders were involved in the co-creation process and in what ways?

Fully implemented

The co-creation group comprised experts by experience and experts by profession; family carers, supporters, people with lived experience of mental health problems, a psychologist and staff representatives from both organisations. The voice of family carers lived experience was essential to the development of this programme.

2. Did participants represent diverse profiles within their stakeholder group?

For example, consider the diverse experiences and expertise of individuals facing mental health problems, as well as those of their families, supporters, service providers, and community members, and take into account factors such as age, gender, socio-economic background, religion, and more.

If yes, how did you ensure diversity and inclusiveness? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

We ensured that the group was reflective of the needs of the participants of the programme we were developing and had input from the variety of perspectives. We sought representation that would bring an inclusivity to family recovery through existing lived experience groups and community organisations.

3. Were all resources needed for everyone's full engagement secured and allocated in a transparent way?

If yes, what types of supports were provided, and how were these resources managed? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

Members were invited from the beginning of the process to ensure equity. Terms of reference, agendas, and the project plan were agreed together as a group. All decisions were made in the group and resources developed by group members. Only certain tasks were outsourced such as printing a booklet which was recommended by the participants of the first 2 pilots.

¹ According to Mental Health Europe's Co-creation approach

4. Were participants aware of the expertise each was bringing?

If yes, how did the stakeholders' knowledge and skills contribute to the activity, and how was this expertise leveraged to support the co-creation process? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

Members of the group were selected due to their expertise across the area of recovery education and family recovery. This was expressed in the group forming stage where people were invited to introduce themselves and their interest in the work of the group.

Everyone's opinions were invited and encouraged and through discussion a consensus was reached. Where there was disagreement on an action, the group worked towards a compromise or sought evidence to support the best outcome.

5. Did participants understand what co-creation is and how it works?

If yes, what measures were taken to ensure all participants had a clear understanding of co-creation and its process? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

In the group formation stage, the process of cocreation was discussed – how it works, why it is a way of working that we promote, and worked together to create the guidelines such as the terms of reference, agendas, project plan, etc. and we used the principles of cocreation and recovery throughout the process in how we interacted and reached decisions.

6. Was the focus and expected outcome of the piece of work/activity to be done in co-creation been jointly discussed and agreed upon?

If yes, what methodology was used to define the scope and expected outcomes? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

We applied a project management process of development to our co-creation, which is conducive to and supportive of co-creation, and brings clarity across all areas of the project such as leadership, accountability, expected outcomes, decision making, timeline, budgeting, etc.

This supported us through all stages of the project, design, development, implementation and evaluation, making all decisions together through cocreation.

7. Was a written group agreement in place?

If yes, what was the process for establishing the modalities of collaboration, communication, and decision-making? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

Members were invited from the beginning of the process to ensure equity. A term of reference was co-created to provide us with clarity on how we would work together, our agendas were designed together based on what we felt was important to progress at each meeting, and the project plan was agreed together as a group showing the aim, objectives, tasks, leadership, timeline and budget for each stage.

Everyone's opinions were invited and encouraged and through discussion a consensus was reached. Where there was disagreement on an action, the group worked towards a compromise or sought evidence to support the best outcome.

8. Was there an action plan that outlined the steps involved in your co-created activity?

If yes, could you please elaborate on the process of formulating your action plan? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

The project plan was agreed together as a group showing the aim, objectives, tasks, leadership, timeline and budget for each stage of the project; design, development, implementation and evaluation. Everyone's opinions were invited and encouraged and through discussion a consensus was reached. Where there was disagreement on an action, the group worked towards a compromise or sought evidence to support the best outcome.

9. Were practical aspects, such as scheduling and accessibility, considered to accommodate everyone's circumstances and ensure their full participation?

If yes, in what manner were practical aspects considered to accommodate everyone's circumstances? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

The process began in person but moved online due to the pandemic but all members agreed upon accessibility and convenience together to ensure all accommodations could be made as required. When people needed assistance to get online a group member would make contact in advance to provide technical support to access and use tools. This was for the co-creation group and for participants of the program. The evaluation of the pilot also asked people to consider a preference for online or in person, and what time of day would work best.

10. Were all actors who were involved in co-creation able to contribute their perspective to the evaluation?

If yes, how did their insights enrich the evaluation process? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

Evaluation Co-Creation Process

- 1: Cocreation group agreed upon the evaluation process
- 2: Co facilitators weekly documented “One Word “verbal evaluation – Participants were invited to express in one word their immediate experience and response to the session
- 3: End of Programme evaluation through a short online survey for participants
- 4: Facilitators feedback survey and panellist feedback
- 5: Cocreation group reviewed data and agreed upon next steps for the program

11. Did you apply co-creation to evaluate a) your activity and b) the effectiveness and impact of the co-creation approach both in the short and long term?

If yes, what kind of process and tools did you use? If not, what were the reasons?

Fully implemented

An evaluation process was factored into the programme in order to:

- establish the value of programme content and to demonstrate the viability of delivering future programmes in other areas.
- review the impact, challenges and benefits of delivering the pilot.
- make recommendations for future development and delivery of the programme.

Evaluation Process

- 1: Weekly documented “One Word “verbal evaluation – Participants were invited to express in one word their immediate experience and response to the session
- 2: End of Programme evaluation through a short online survey for participants
- 3: Facilitators feedback survey and panellist feedback.

Lessons Learned

Challenges:

- Decision making took a bit longer but it was an important part of the process and we gave it the time it needed.
- Pandemic meant we needed to move online but this was managed swiftly and effectively and supported by the wider team.
- Longevity of the programme after the group ended, however we agreed to take the lead in Mental health Ireland and reach out to partners for further evaluation and support needs.

Supports:

- Lived experience was key to making a program that meets the needs of family members.
- Having experienced facilitators gave great confidence to the project and ensured a good learning experience for participants
- Partnership working brought the best expertise from a variety of perspectives and organisations to benefit participants