



## Good Practice on Co-Creation

### Name/title of activity done in co-creation

'Young Adults Programme' – Clubhouse Club Itaca Milan (Italy)

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

Progetto Itaca Milano, Club Itaca Milano (Italy)

### Contact details

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## Context

The **Young Adults Programme** at *Clubhouse Club Itaca Milan* was co-created to provide **psychosocial rehabilitation services and social reintegration opportunities** for young adults aged 18–35 with a history of major mental problems. The initiative aims to strengthen autonomy, social skills, and community belonging among young members, creating a safe environment for growth and peer support.

From its inception, the project was conceived, designed, written, and monitored jointly by Clubhouse members and staff. The co-creation process started with brainstorming sessions that involved staff workers, project writers, and young members, ensuring that the programme directly reflected members' needs and aspirations.

*"We all had the chance to gather a plurality of ideas, proposals, knowledge and points of view."* — **Valentina G.**, Clubhouse staff

## Overview of the activity

### 1. Ideation

The idea for the Young Adults Programme emerged from a shared need identified by both staff and members: to create a dedicated space and set of activities tailored to the younger members of the Clubhouse.

A joint brainstorming meeting gathered members and staff to design the initial concept. During this phase, all participants contributed ideas about the kinds of activities that would best support young adults, such as sports, cultural outings, social initiatives and rehabilitation activities.

This collaborative beginning ensured that the programme responded directly to the participants' interests and needs.

## **2. Design/development**

After collecting ideas, staff and members co-designed the programme structure.

The team worked together to define objectives, select activities, and organize logistics. Members' input was essential in making sure the activities were appealing, meaningful, and achievable. Staff members brought professional expertise in psychology and project design, while young adult members shared lived experience and practical insight.

During this phase, they also established a remote participation system (via video calls and a dedicated group chat) to ensure accessibility and inclusion, allowing everyone to contribute regardless of availability or personal circumstances.

## **3. Implementation**

The Young Adults Programme was then put into practice through weekly meetings and ongoing activities.

Members and staff jointly organised sports sessions, cultural outings, and other social activities designed to promote interaction and confidence-building.

Shared leadership and distributed responsibilities were encouraged. Young adults started to self-organise activities even without direct staff presence, showing autonomy and empowerment.

The staff ensured coordination and support but maintained a horizontal approach, where each participant had the opportunity to take responsibility and lead specific actions.

## **4. Evaluation**

Weekly meetings, also available online to ensure full participation, allowed members and staff to share feedback, reflect on what worked, and plan adjustments.

A consensus-based decision-making process was used; ideas and proposals were discussed collectively, and when consensus was difficult to reach, the team agreed to vote democratically.

Every six months, focus group discussions were held with all club staff, the project manager and the members involved in the project to assess progress, gather insights, and identify areas for improvement. After each focus group, informal gatherings such as shared dinners or aperitifs were organised to strengthen participation, foster team bonding, and encourage open dialogue in a more relaxed setting.

These evaluation moments also served as empowerment opportunities, reinforcing that every contribution and opinion carried the same weight.

## Good Practice Indicators<sup>1</sup>

### 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**

Members, staff, the club coordinator, project writer, and project manager all collaborated from the very beginning. Each step, from ideation to evaluation, was conducted together, ensuring that beneficiaries' perspectives guided the programme design.

### 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**

The process involved young adults with different experiences, interests, and recovery journeys, as well as staff with diverse professional backgrounds (psychologists, counsellors and educators). Diversity was intentionally valued and integrated.

### 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?*

#### **Mostly implemented**

The Clubhouse ensured accessibility to the weekly project planning and monitoring meetings by offering hybrid participation options (in-person and online). Located in a central area of Milan, the Clubhouse is easily reachable by all participants. For those who felt comfortable, outings and activities in the local community were also organised, while alternative activities were offered within the Clubhouse for those who preferred to stay on site.

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<sup>1</sup> 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**

Each person's skills and experience were openly acknowledged. Staff brought technical and clinical knowledge, while members contributed lived experience, creativity, and insight into what young adults truly need.

#### **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**

The Clubhouse model inherently promotes co-creation. Both staff and members are accustomed to working side by side and making collective decisions. During the first brainstorming session, the project manager clearly explained the purpose and method of shared creation, ensuring that everyone understood the collaborative approach from the outset.

#### **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**

All the objectives, such as improving social skills, fostering independence, and building a peer network, were established collaboratively during brainstorming meetings.

#### **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**

Weekly meetings followed clear rules of dialogue and mutual respect. Decision-making relied on consensus or majority voting, ensuring shared ownership and transparency.

**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?*

**Mostly implemented**

The group followed a clear yet informal plan that guided the entire process: from collecting ideas, to designing the programme, scheduling activities, and carrying out ongoing evaluations. Each phase was collaboratively defined and continuously adapted based on the group's reflections and emerging needs.

**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**

Meetings were scheduled at accessible times, usually in the afternoon, to allow those working in the morning to take part. Hybrid participation options (remote and in-person) ensured that everyone could join according to their needs. Social outings were organised in the evening for the same reason, promoting inclusion and participation. A group chat allowed continuous communication and connection among all participants.

**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**

Members and staff both participated in evaluation meetings, providing feedback and suggestions. Every voice was considered valuable for the programme's development.

**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?*

**Mostly implemented**

Evaluation focused on the success of activities and group dynamics, with ongoing reflection on the co-creation process itself. Feedback was used to refine both the programme and the method.

## Lessons learned

### Main Outcomes

- Co-creation fostered **greater motivation, inclusion, and ownership** among young adult members.
- The process enhanced **autonomy**, as participants began independently organising and managing activities.
- For staff, the project provided **new insights and professional growth** through the exchange of ideas and close collaboration with members.
- The organisation benefited from a **richer, more participatory model of service design**, directly aligned with members' real needs.

### Main Challenges

- Balancing different opinions and managing decision-making with many voices required time and patience.
- Keeping all participants focused on shared goals could sometimes be difficult due to differing priorities.
- Ensuring equal participation in hybrid meetings demanded attention to accessibility and inclusion.

### How Challenges Were Addressed

- Through clear communication and structured meetings, ensuring that everyone could express ideas and be heard.
- By adopting consensus-based and democratic decision-making, combining open discussion with majority voting when necessary.
- By using digital tools (group chat, remote meetings) to increase accessibility and engagement.