Disabled people’s organisations are unique in that our conscious commitment to using our values at every level of our practice is our primary method for delivering better outcomes for disabled people. Deaf and Disabled people’s organisations (DDPOs) and user led organisations (ULOs) are always value-led but not always value-managed. This handbook includes a framework for implementing organisational management systems that support the practical application and delivery of values. It was co-produced with more than 20 organisations and features the wealth of expertise in disabled people’s organisations.

Inclusion Barnet is a Deaf and Disabled people’s organisation (DDPO). DDPOs are organisations that are run and controlled by disabled people. This means that most of our staff and trustees have lived experience of disability, mental health issues or chronic illness. We believe, as peers, that our lived experience of disability enables us to achieve our aims of promoting independent living so that disabled people can have more choice and control over our own lives. We employ around 20 staff, many of whom are part-time. Our strategic priorities are: Community Leadership, Empowerment and Rights, Support to fulfil Potential, The User-Led Movement.

We deliver a self-advocacy service which is run by a team of people with learning difficulties, a multi-agency social prescribing service, two community libraries in Barnet, a peer support and planning brokerage service, a community fundraising service, a service which enables more disabled people to take part in sport and we are also developing our practitioner research capabilities.

**Project background**

The overall objective of the project was to develop a handbook for the managers of peer led DDPOs, and ULOs. As a peer led DDPO ourselves, we found that there was very little literature, standards, best practice or management information that talked us through tackling the specific challenges related to our organisations, which can often lead to managers feeling isolated. The issues are outlined below: There are specific challenges involved when managing an organisation which employs...
disabled people almost exclusively, is relatively small in size, serves a particularly marginalised community and importantly, working in a sector which is committed to delivering on equality for disabled people. There are further complications caused by the fact that many DDPOs collaborate with organisations in social care that operate from disablist models of care and support.

In relation to this, we also know from our relationships with other DDPOs that very few managers use existing management standards in their work and we wanted to write something which would incorporate these standards into a handbook that also dealt with DDPO specific issues to make them more accessible.

**What we wanted to achieve**

Our project aimed to address the lack of management guidance, especially relating to working practices for managers of peer-led DDPOs.

As DDPOs, our working philosophies are based in models such as The Social Model, Independent Living Model, Human Rights and Civil Rights based frameworks. Often, people mistake the academic discipline of Disability Studies as direct and practically useful for DDPOs. While this is true in a conceptual sense, it is not true for practical service delivery and design.

As DDPOs, there is little to no practical guidance and advice on how to apply equalities based frameworks to our working practices. This lack can also make more generic information feel unrelated to our work too. So, we had two aims that we wanted to bring together.

First, to write a resource that brings together managers of successful DDPOs, learn from their experience and write a handbook which captured the collective wisdom of managers already working in the sector.

Secondly, to reference generic management standards and information that is useful to the development of DDPOs.

Overall our aim was to write a handbook that begins to meld DDPO specific management information, resources and guidance with more generic standards to create a resource that managers of DDPOs could use to help them with different elements of their practice.

**What we did**

Our philosophy in doing this work was: what we did didn’t matter as much as how we did it. We were serious about co-production and used this approach to engage with other managers in our sector to decide together what our collective issues were, and also to learn from people’s management expertise.

We believe that many of the reasons for our successes in this project centre on this effort to think about how we wanted to do things. We worked hard to consider different personal investments, socio-political contexts or perceptions of reality of the people that we worked with. We used our experience of the sector to understand how this was relevant to our work, and to anticipate how this might affect how we planned our events and wrote our research.

We have tried to capture this briefly in the guide.

**Planning**

**Bid-writing/project development**

We put a lot of thought into the initial planning stages of our project. Given the short duration of the project and limited resources we wanted to ensure that we maximised every aspect of our work. We thought about how to gather information, how that information was to be reviewed, written up, re-reviewed and how different aspects of the project could achieve multiple goals simultaneously.

**Practice evaluation**

As an organisation, we were relatively new to research. We finished one project almost immediately before this one started. Our project lead reflected on lessons learned and implemented any necessary changes to ensure best practice for this work.

**Staff needs-based project planning**

Before planning how our project was going to run, the staff team met and spoke with one another about how best to work together. For example: collective decisions about how often to have meetings based on staff needs, and what was required to keep up motivation.
**Delivery**

**Understanding the importance of context**

We knew that the success of this project relied on being able to take a different approach to this work. We knew that managers of DDPOs didn’t use mainstream management materials because they weren’t useful to them so we spent a lot of time thinking about how not to replicate this problem. We didn’t want to assume that our experience of working in one or two DDPOs meant that we understood the entire sector. We tried to make our decisions evidence based, so we:

- spoke to people informally to understand what might make material useful
- read up on different political, social and cultural models of disability
- familiarised ourselves with the meaning that different words, concepts or action carried in different environments and used this knowledge to try and make our work and working practices inclusive.

**Research – workshops, interviews, reading workshop**

We decided to run workshops with managers and CEOs of Deaf and Disabled people’s organisations and we went to Inclusion London (London’s leading second tier organisation for DDPOs) to help us organise and recruit people. We placed importance on planning how to communicate in advance with delegates, how to welcome people, and ensured we were organised on the day and delegates were clear about what we wanted to achieve in the workshop. We held two workshops – we used the first to help us decide on content priorities, and the second as feedback sessions on content that we’d written.

**Interviews**

We took a varied approach to information gathering in our interviews. We asked managers questions that gathered from their knowledge, helped us to understand difficulties in their work, but also how who they are as people impacts on how they work. This helped us to think more laterally about the relationship between the ‘self’ and managing practices.

**Process**

As a team, we had high aspirations for this work and we were very ambitious with our remit. At the start we deliberately tried not to limit ourselves, however we had to balance this with outputs. We met as a team regularly to review our progress against our priorities, and importantly, we re-calibrated our work in order to keep on track with timing, or re-visited our plans in order to meet our desired objectives.

**What we achieved**

The work that we were trying to achieve had never been done before for disability-based organisations. We brought together a lot of management knowledge from the sector and beyond, techniques and tools (many from Skills for Care) that some managers in DDPOs were not aware of, or didn’t use.

We also believe some of our handbook to be original. Our research led us to borrowing the working, thinking and structuring of models from disciplines such as Disability Studies, Critical Social Policy, Black Feminist Studies, and Feminist Psychosocial Studies. We feel that a new understanding of managing values through an organisation’s work has emerged from this work. We have triggered discussions for managers about how they work and the methods they use.

As I said at the workshop the other day - I wish there’d been a book like this when I set up my organisation. I really didn’t have any experience of managing an organisation and had to learn the painful way. This handbook really is a tour de force.

Elsie Lyons, Chair, Barnet Voice

We feel that we have made one major achievement for our sector, and that is, to start the process of recording best practice, and collectively voicing what the sector needs in order to develop further. In developing this handbook, and starting some very important
conversations, we hope that this handbook is the first step in strengthening our sector and also harnessing the knowledge of our sector.

We specifically used our project plan for the production of content in order to achieve multiple goals simultaneously. Over 20 organisations were involved in the shaping of our content – and through engaging in this work, they also reflected on their own management practice, as well as hearing from other managers reflect on their own.

What we learnt
Our main and biggest discovery was that DDPOs are value led, but not always value managed. By this, we mean that while organisations are committed to delivering ethical approaches – often this varied because the delivery of values was left up to each individual member of staff. Generally – systems for value delivery and measuring against values was less common.

Leading on from the first point, we worked hard to create an original and useful guide for developing and delivering effective value based approaches within organisations. We also discovered that if an organisation is value managed then generic management knowledge, techniques and tools from other sectors can be successfully adapted for use in peer led DDPOs.

We feel that one of the main reasons for our success in the co-production process was that we took a lot of time to plan how we communicated with everyone who was involved with the project. We sent them aims and objectives ahead of time along with friendly and kind personalised e-mails. We made sure our workshops were well-planned and showed gratitude for people’s involvement in the process. We really felt that this relationship building built a lot of good will up among our colleagues and was one key to our success.

Due to the fact that there were few resources that focused on achieving the kind of approach that we wanted – it was extremely difficult to know where to go to find resources. We had to be extremely creative and put a lot of work into being innovative in our approaches. In working in this way, we used disability studies, critical race theory, critical social policy and psychosocial theory to produce our work, as well as more mainstream management material. This has taught us that the links in the work are not always clear or linear and thinking creatively is important.

This project addressed the 2016/17 priority on:
Supporting the development of knowledge and skills to support the implementation of the wellbeing principle, including the development and implementation of co-production and person-centred assessment and care planning approaches.

Thanks there is some really useful stuff in the handbook which will be valuable for both people who are new to management and leadership, and those who have been in that role for some time as a way of reflecting on current practice. I think the focus on values is especially helpful as a starting point to the handbook including the emphasis on how this should underpin the way an organisation develops its strategic direction and operates on a day to day basis. It has certainly made me reflect on my organisation.

Anonymous, CEO, Critical Review Participant

While we have talked about some of the benefits of our work above, we believe that the majority of the benefit from our work is still to be achieved. We believe that our handbook will really benefit managers over time, as they use this work to improve their own practice over time and reflect on the use of value-led processes and systems.
For more information please contact:

Project lead: Amanpreet Ahluwalia
amanpreet@inclusionbarnet.org.uk
www.inclusionbarnet.org.uk

Skills for Care recommends

Skills for Care produces a wide range of products and services related to learning and development and practical tools for people who access services from Deaf and Disabled people’s organisations and for those organisations who support them.

<table>
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<th>Information hub for individual employers and personal assistants</th>
<th>Employing your own care and support</th>
<th>Values based recruitment toolkit</th>
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<tr>
<td>The hub includes a section for support organisations.</td>
<td>We have a range of resources to help make the role of being an individual employer a little easier.</td>
<td>Social care organisations who are interested in implementing values in their work place can use this toolkit.</td>
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www.skillsforcare.org.uk/iepahub
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/individualemployers
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/vbr

Skills for Care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP
telephone 0113 245 1716
e-mail info@skillsforcare.org.uk
web www.skillsforcare.org.uk

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