

# **NCFH: Co-Production from a service user's point of view**

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## My background

- adoptive parent of two girls, aged 5 and 6 at placement, now teenagers
- transracial family
- direct contact with older siblings, who are in care and care leavers
- in contact with all former social workers and foster carers as well as with the social worker of a sibling

## Participation at the AFC/NCFH

- AFC participation programme: about 60 parent champions, youth champions and parent participation workers
- involved in all areas of the AFC's work, except for therapy (recruitment, research, training)

### My involvement in NCFH

- recruitment of communications officer
- input at workshops to create modules for the toolkit
- feedback on the toolkit modules

# Setting the Scene

## The central problem: not being listened to

- particularly foster carers and children in care due to structural problems, irrespective of level of education and/or experience
  - not making MH resources available until too late, even in high risk cases (score of 10 ACEs and noticeable MH problems from an early age) and even though being made aware by foster carers
  - offering services not at the right level of need
  - lack of knowledge about trauma and MH (school, MH professionals), not recognising our expertise
- > issues not being tackled at the stage where most impact can be made
- > failing the most vulnerable

-> **Anna Freud** increases the cost to society in the long run

## Further challenges

- high level of turnover in social workers / MH professionals
  - professionals don't communicate enough with each other and with service users
  - lack of transparency, decision making processes sometimes unclear to service users
- > negative impact on MH and the sense of identity of those needing MH services

## How could co-production improve this?

- Listening to service users is at the core of co-production and participation. Co-production gives service users a voice and openly acknowledges their expertise.
- By doing so, it turns something that is often seen as a problem (a MH “disorder”) into a strength, an asset - an expertise. This can positively impact service users’ sense of identity and strengthen their self-esteem.
- Co-production impacts the power imbalance between service providers and service users and gives service users the chance to influence structures and procedures.

## How could co-production improve this? continued

- While co-production often focuses on creating or improving structures and services, it also gives service users the opportunity to voice concerns about problems they have experienced at an individual service user level.
  - Co-production improves the communication between service provider and service user and changes their relationship, which would hopefully reduce high turnover due to increased job satisfaction for the professionals providing services.
- > Therefore the previously mentioned problems could be improved on by good co-production.

## Final remarks

- I have several family members who are involved in participation and co-production, who feel that they have not been listened to in the past and that this has negatively impacted their MH, their current life and their future prospects.
- They take pride in their participation and their expertise. Their goal is to make sure that others will have a better experience and will get access to MH services earlier. Co-production can help achieve this.

Thank you for listening.