



ARC West

How can we design weight management services with under-represented groups?

2024



Weight management services give people living with obesity support with diet and physical activity.

However, services haven't always benefitted all groups of people equally. Those living in more deprived areas, ethnic minorities, people with complex needs and men are less likely to benefit from services.

One possible solution is to design services with under-represented groups, so that services might better meet their needs.

There are currently several co-designed weight management services in the West of England.

What was the aim of the project?

We wanted to know:

- How adult weight management services were co-designed
- Barriers and facilitators to co-design
- What this means for commissioning services in the future

What did we do?

We selected four adult weight management services in the West of England that incorporated co-design. These case studies represented a range of populations and settings.

We spoke to seven commissioners, eight providers and three community members involved in co-designing the services.



What did we learn?

Participants across all four services saw the potential benefits of co-designing weight management services with community members.

However, they also saw co-design as challenging and needing significant time and effort.

They felt co-design could:

- Create more suitable services
- Reach populations traditionally excluded from mainstream services
- Increase engagement

Building strong relationships was viewed as



critical to co-design.

Evaluating services and building the evidence base was seen as challenging, but important.

Funding for co-design was often short-term and unpredictable. Participants noted this unpredictability could damage relationships with communities.

Some participants felt that commissioning for co-design required a 'change in mindset and culture'.

What next?

We identified key considerations for those wanting to co-design health services:

- Build relationships (inc. connect with communities, develop shared values, strengthen relationships)
- Create supportive organisational cultures (inc. get comfortable with uncertainty, reflect on commissioning practices, think about the long game)
- Develop evidence base

Read the paper by Langford et al.
Co-designing adult weight management services: a qualitative study exploring barriers, facilitators, and considerations for future commissioning

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bring research evidence into practice and provide training for the local workforce.

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