

INCLUSIVE INVOLVEMENT IN COMMISSIONING

A Guide for People with Lived Experience

TURNING POINT

LDE
Learning Disability England

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WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is for you if you have been asked to be, or would like to be, involved in commissioning services.

Commissioning is:

- Planning services
- Buying services
- Checking services.

This makes sure people get the support they need.

It is usually done by:

- Your local council
- The NHS.

Sometimes they join together to commission services.

The council or NHS workers doing this are called "commissioners".

Commissioners decide what support should look like and who should provide it.

Support is often provided by groups with special skills and knowledge in supporting people.

They are called "service providers".



The process of commissioning services for people with learning disabilities and Autistic people needs to involve people with these lived experiences throughout.



This is the law.

But it can be hard for people with learning disabilities and Autistic people to take part in commissioning because:



Processes are complicated



Processes are not explained clearly



Processes aren't accessible when people don't use words to communicate.

This guide will show you what commissioners should do:



How processes should make you feel



So you can talk to commissioners about how they could make things better.

WHAT IS GOOD INVOLVEMENT?

People with learning disabilities and Autistic people should work alongside commissioners throughout every stage of commissioning.

This means:



Being involved from the start



Understanding what decisions are being made



Having real influence over what happens.

You may not make every decision, but commissioners should be clear about what you can have a say in.

People with lived experience and commissioners working together in this way is good involvement.

Commissioning often involves words and phrases that can be difficult to understand.

We will explain these as they come up throughout this guide.

There is also a list explaining important words and phrases at the end of this guide.

You can use this to remember what words mean if you need to.

WHAT DOES GOOD INVOLVEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Step 1 - Market Engagement

Commissioners ask local people what support they need and want.

They do this through different ways, like:

- **Surveys**
- **Group conversations.**

This is called market engagement.



When this is done well:



You are asked if you want to be involved at the start.



You are not the only person with lived experience in the conversation.



You are asked how you would like any supporters or family members to be involved and your answers are listened to.



Conversations happen in a place you can easily reach, in rooms that are comfortable, and at times that work for you.



You are asked how you prefer to take part in conversations and given any support you ask for.



Your opinion feels valued and important, and you are offered payment for your time and expertise.



You have enough time to understand what you're being asked to do, and to prepare for any tasks.



Everyone is invited to share their thoughts.



You can share your views directly with the people making decisions.



What you say is recorded and used in the future.

Step 2 - The Service Specification

Next, commissioners plan the new service.

They use what people said they want and need to decide how the service will support people.

They write all this down in a document called the Service Specification.

When this is done well:

3+

People with lived experience are still involved – there should be at least 3 people with different experiences.

The process is explained to you clearly with information broken down into chunks:

Commissioners explain any uncommon words or phrases they'll be using clearly.

You understand what information must be kept private until the end of the process.

You understand the service being planned, who it will support, and what influence you will have over decisions.

Things you or other people with lived experience shared earlier are included in the specification.

The specification is written in plain English.

Commissioners will explain why if something you suggest cannot be included.

Step 3 – Setting Evaluation Criteria

Together, commissioners and people with lived experience then decide:

What questions they should ask people who want to provide the service.

What answers those people could give that would match the plan in the service specification.

This is called Setting Evaluation Criteria.

When this is done well:



Commissioners clearly explain what good criteria is.



You have enough time to ask questions and understand what would make an answer good.



There are breaks between conversation topics so it's clear what you're talking about.



The things you or other people with lived experience shared earlier are in the final documents.



You are asked what questions are most important to you.



Final documents are simple to read and encourage people responding to involve people with lived experience in their answers.



You are reminded about what information must be kept private until the end of the process.

Step 4 - Bidding

Commissioners then run a legal competition.

Service providers answer questions on:

Their experience

How they would provide the new service.

The answers to these questions are sometimes called a "bid" or "tender" - these are the same thing!

When this is done well:

You are told how long it will be before you see bidders' answers.

You know what the next task will be and how to prepare.

This might include training on how to score and evaluate bids.



Step 5 - The Evaluation Panel

Next, you should be invited to be part of a group called an evaluation panel.

People on this panel read answers to the questions they helped write and score them against the criteria chosen at Step 3.



This part of the process has strict time limits, so may be the most challenging!

When this is done well:



You feel prepared to do the task ahead of you.



You are given enough time to think and discuss your views with a trusted person before sharing them with the whole group.



You can see all the information you need to make an informed decision.



You receive any support you need to read complicated documents.



Any family members involved in supporting you share your views with the group rather than their own.



There are regular breaks between different provider bids to avoid confusion.



You understand that you must not tell anyone outside the Evaluation Panel about the answers you read until the end of the process.



Step 6 – Scoring

You'll then work with the rest of the evaluation panel and commissioners.

You'll give a score for each service provider's answers.

When this is done well:

- **You understand how the scoring system works and it makes sense to you.**
- **You understand the difference between the different scores you could give.**
- **The scores you give reflect what you think.**
- **You know that final scores will be talked about and agreed with a bigger group.**
- **You understand that scores must be kept private until the end of the process.**

Step 7 - Presentations

Sometimes, bidders are also asked to give presentations.

They talk more about their plans for the new service and answer questions.

When this is done well:



You are invited to watch the presentations.



Other people with lived experience are involved in giving the presentations.



Everyone involved is treated with respect.



You are given any support you might need to understand the presentations.



You have the chance to ask bidders questions if you want to.



You have the chance to introduce yourself to presenting teams to make things more comfortable.



You have time after presentations to decide scores, so you don't have to do more than one thing at a time.



Your thoughts are valued and you have a say in the decision made.



You are reminded about what information must be kept private until the end of the process.

Step 8 - Contract Award

The provider with the highest score wins the competition.

They then get the contract and provide the service.

When this is done well:



You are involved in deciding what feedback bidders should get:

- **What they did well**
- **What could be done better next time.**



Commissioners explain when they will share scores and feedback with bidders.



You know when you can talk about your experience with other people.



You know when and how you will receive payment for your work.



You know how your voice influenced the decision.



You are asked about your experience of being involved:

- **What worked well for you**
- **What could be done better next time.**



Commissioners tell you how you could be involved in any regular co-production groups in the future.

Commissioners should talk with you about:

- **What you would like to do**
- **What you feel comfortable doing**
- **What support you need.**

Commissioners can also give you the money to find and pay a support provider yourself.

This is called a Direct Payment.

You can talk to your support team and local council about this option if you want to.



WHAT IF INVOLVEMENT ISN'T BEING DONE WELL?

It is okay to question how you are being involved if:

You feel you are only being asked for your views after decisions have already been made

You do not understand what is happening

You cannot see how your views are making a difference.



You could ask:

"What difference will my views make?"

"What decisions can I help make?"

"How have you used what we told you?"

"Why was this decision made?"

"What could we do differently so I can take part properly?"

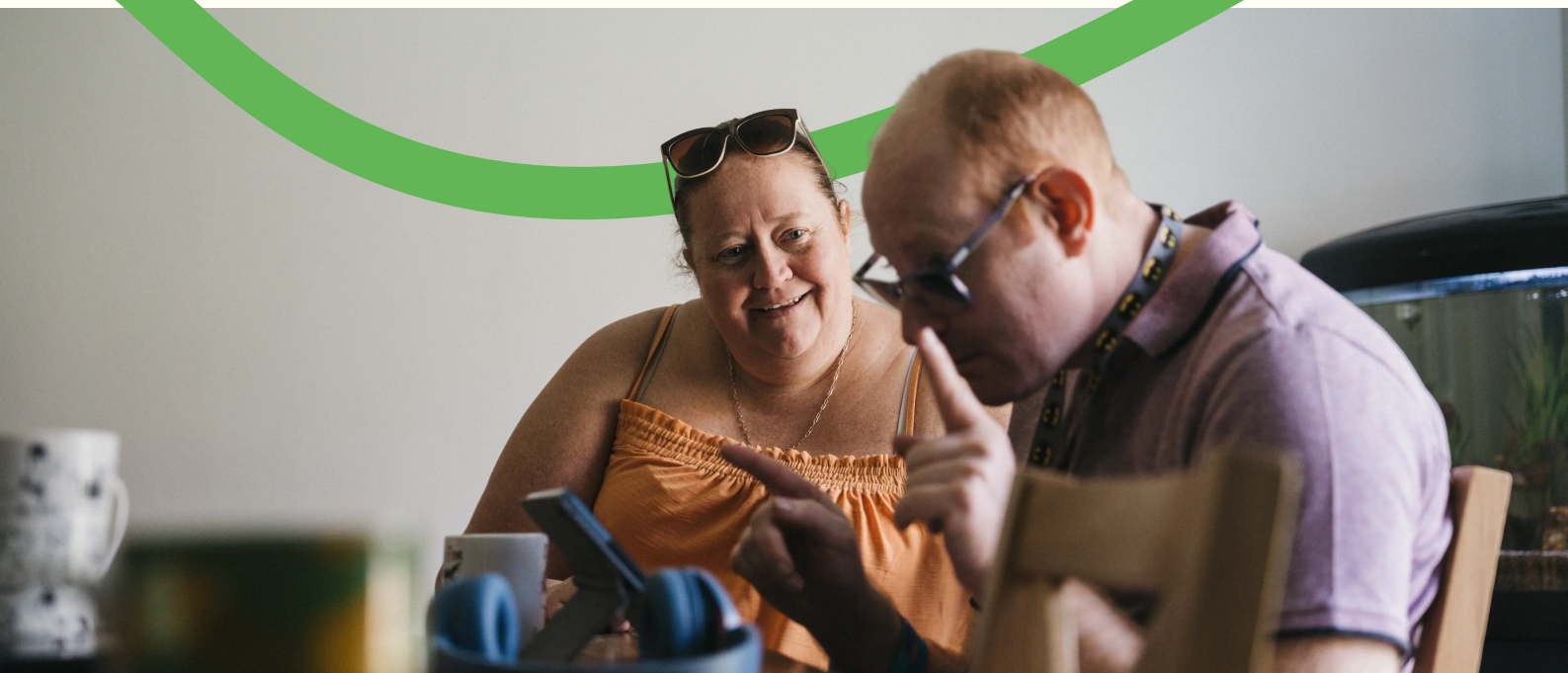
WHERE TO START

If you would like to be involved in helping commission services, you can contact your local:

- **Adult Social Care Team**
- **Learning Disability Partnership Board**
- **Disability advocacy groups.**

You could ask:

- **“What forums or co-production groups do you have?”**
- **“How do these work?”**
- **“How can I join?”**



ONCE YOU BEGIN

Here are some things to think about when you're involved in commissioning.

This can help you decide if you feel your involvement is meaningful and working well for you.

	Yes	Sometimes	No
I can take part in ways that work for me	☐	☐	☐
I am involved early enough to make a difference	☐	☐	☐
Information is shared in a way I can understand	☐	☐	☐
I get the support I need to take part	☐	☐	☐
I know what decisions I can have a say in	☐	☐	☐
My views are listened to and respected	☐	☐	☐
I am told what happens because of my involvement	☐	☐	☐
My time and experience are valued	☐	☐	☐
I know who to contact if I need support	☐	☐	☐

Speak to the person from the team who supports your involvement about anything you answered 'Sometimes' or 'No' to. Ask them what could be done differently for these things.

WHAT WOULD MAKE IT BETTER FOR ME?

You can use this page to make notes...

IMPORTANT WORDS AND PHRASES

Advocate / Advocacy Group
Someone who helps a person understand information, share their views, and make decisions.

Bidder
An organisation that would like to provide a service and puts in a proposal about how they would do it.

Commissioners
People responsible for planning, designing, funding, and deciding who provides services.

Commissioning
How the NHS and local authorities plan, design, fund, and decide who provides services.

Co-production
People who use services, carers, families and staff work together to share ideas, make decisions and improve things.

Criteria
A description of what commissioners want to see in the bid.

Evaluation
Comparing and scoring provider bids to decide who gets the contract.

Evaluation Panel
A group of people whose job it is to compare and score provider bids to decide who gets the contract.

Inclusive Involvement
Supporting people to take part in ways that work for them.

Market
All the organisations and services that provide care and support to people.

People with Lived Experience
People who have Learning Disabilities, Autistic people, or people who care for others who do and can share insights based on that experience.

Provider
An organisation that provides a service.

Service Specification
A document describing what a service should do and who it is for.

Tender
A formal invitation for organisations to submit a proposal to provide a service.

HOW WAS THIS GUIDANCE PUT TOGETHER?

Turning Point and Learning Disability England are pleased to have co-produced this guidance with people with lived experience, family members, and experts by profession through a series of workshops co-chaired by learning disability advocates, Paradigm.

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TURNING POINT inspired by possibility

LDE Learning Disability England

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