

FROM LIVED EXPERIENCE TO STUDENT LEADERSHIP: A CO-PRODUCTION MODEL FOR TRANSFERABLE DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

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Healthcare professionals need to understand how disability can affect communication, access to services and people’s experiences of healthcare. Our students already benefit from disability-awareness workshops led by educators with lived experience of deafness, blindness and physical disability. These sessions provide powerful opportunities to learn directly from people’s experiences.

With support from FBMH Social Responsibility funding, we wanted to build on this learning and explore how its impact could reach more students.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students who had participated in disability-awareness training were invited to a focus group to reflect on their experiences. Rather than staff deciding what students needed, we asked students what had stayed with them, what they found most valuable and what future students should learn.

Their perspectives have directly informed the development of an interactive digital learning resource, designed to make key learning accessible to students beyond those able to attend the original workshop.

The funding has also enabled further students to participate in the lived-experience disability-awareness course, continuing the cycle of experience, reflection and student-informed development.



KEY OUTPUTS

- Student co-production focus group involving undergraduate and postgraduate healthcare students who had completed the disability awareness workshop.
- Interactive digital disability awareness resource, developed from the themes and priorities identified by students. See the screenshot attached
- Wider access to lived experience education, with project funding enabling an additional group of students to attend the disability-awareness course.
- A transferable approach to disability awareness education, combining lived experience, student voice and digital learning.
- Foundation for future development, with potential to extend the approach to additional student cohorts and areas of disability and inclusion.

IMPACT

The project is helping us move from a valuable learning experience available to individual student groups towards an approach that can influence a much wider student community.

Students have not simply been recipients of disability-awareness education; their experiences and perspectives are actively shaping what future students will learn. The resulting digital resource will allow key messages from lived-experience teaching to reach students across different programmes and stages of study.

Importantly, the project does not seek to replace learning directly from people with lived experience. Instead, it extends and reinforces that learning, while the funding has also enabled more students to participate in the original disability-awareness course.

In the longer term, we hope this approach will support healthcare students to feel more confident communicating with and providing inclusive care for people with disabilities, while demonstrating a practical model for embedding lived experience and student co-production within healthcare education.

We are currently working with the UoM library team on developing the content for our disability awareness interactive online space.