Developing culturally sensitive and accessible services

Resources to support providers and commissioners, developed by the Flourishing Communities partnership.

Introduction to our partnership

Flourishing Communities is a National Lottery funded partnership between THCVS, Women's Inclusive Team, Limehouse project and Praxis to address the inequity experienced by global majority women and their sexual and reproductive health. The project is led by a steering group of women from Bangladeshi, Somali and refugee and asylum seeker communities to identify the gaps in service and develop community-led responses to address the inequalities.

www.wit.org.uk
www.limehouseproject.org.uk
www.praxis.org.uk
www.thcvs.org.uk

The partnership has been supported by the London College of Communications (LCC) – University of the Arts (UAL) Service Design department. The Flourishing communities project worked with two MA students on mapping the experiences of women through the health care system to strengthen the project's theory of change and support the development of funding applications.

What we did.

We initially developed a set of tools to support the Flourishing Communities' partners to better understand the eco system that impacts on women's sexual and reproductive health, and the impact on the women who use the services. Our aim was to develop the work of the partnership, by better understanding the enablers and blockers in the system. In order to do this, we worked with voluntary sector organisations, health providers, commissioners and place-based partnership leads to create a series of resources including an eco-system map, a set of personas to reflect the feelings of service users and reflect intersectionality issues, and question sheets to use when developing a new service.

The resources

We developed a set of resources to help healthcare commissioners, providers and residents to co-create services that are culturally sensitive and accessible to diverse communities.

The resources include:
- **A set of personas** to better understand service users and to enable a closer exploration of the service design.
- **A set of question sheets** for developing a new service, specifically a partnership or to review what is currently being delivered.
- **An eco-system map** for stakeholders to understand how services are connected and where the gaps are.

The resources can be used in a variety of different ways:
- To understand the eco system you are working in.
- To better understand the needs of clients who use your services.
- To set up or review your services,

We have co-created these resources in partnership with residents, service users and other key stakeholders. We would suggest that you take a moment to decide if and how you will coproduce your approach to reviewing or establishing a new service. Implementing a coproduction approach is a journey that requires commitment, collaboration and continuous improvement. We appreciate that it is time consuming but it does create solutions that are ultimately cost effective and most importantly meet the needs of residents. So, don't just use a survey to say you have coproduced.

The principles we have used are:
- **Journey, not methodology:** Embrace coproduction as an ongoing process of collaboration with stakeholders, rather than a fixed methodology.
- **Expertise and knowledge:** Leverage the expertise of community members and professionals to co-create solutions.
- **Rethink service development:** Challenge traditional approaches and innovate to meet the evolving needs of the community.
- **Asset-based approaches:** Focus on the strengths and resources within the community to build sustainable services.

Click here for the **THCVS resources page**.

The personas

The LCC students, **Sharvari Joshi** and **Divya Charlie**, developed a **set of personas** to enable the partnership and stakeholders, to better understand some of the other intersections that impact on women and that contribute to their experience of exclusion from health services.

We applied an intersectional lens to help identify gaps in existing structures such as awareness of services, communication approaches and referral pathways, that perpetuate systemic inequalities. The aim is that health partners develop more inclusive policies and approaches that address the unique challenges faced by individuals and to enable greater equity.

The Flourishing Communities project developed personas to reflect the feelings of service users rather than looking at their specific experiences. The personas challenge long-standing misrepresentation of individuals and look beyond the often-reductive narratives of crisis and struggle that can represent individuals accessing services. This approach enabled us to think about intersectionality issues that could impact on each persona and how the promotion of our services as well as the interdependencies between other organisations working with women could be improved. Our approach was to better understand how we could strengthen messaging and build health literacy approaches across the differing needs of individuals to improve their health outcomes and experiences of health services.
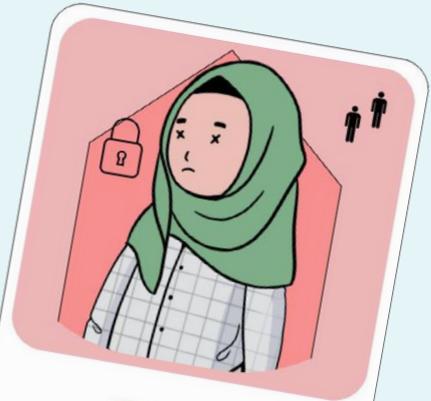
The Isolated

Pain Points: No one to talk to, fear sharing problems, dont acknowledge milestones

Challenge: Feels disconnected from supportive networks, lack for being able to have conversations with peers, and is hesitant to engage due to domestic/religious/cultural constraints

The Misunderstood

Pain Points: Not comfortable with English, cultural constraints, restricted movement in the community.

Challenge: Faces language barriers and cultural limitations that prevent her from fully engaging with healthcare providers.

The Culturally Bound

Pain Points: Religious constraints, cultural constraints, not comfortable with English, unable to travel during prayer times, myths and misconceptions

Challenge: Cultural and religious expectations, along with language barriers, hinder ability to access and advocate for healthcare services effectively.

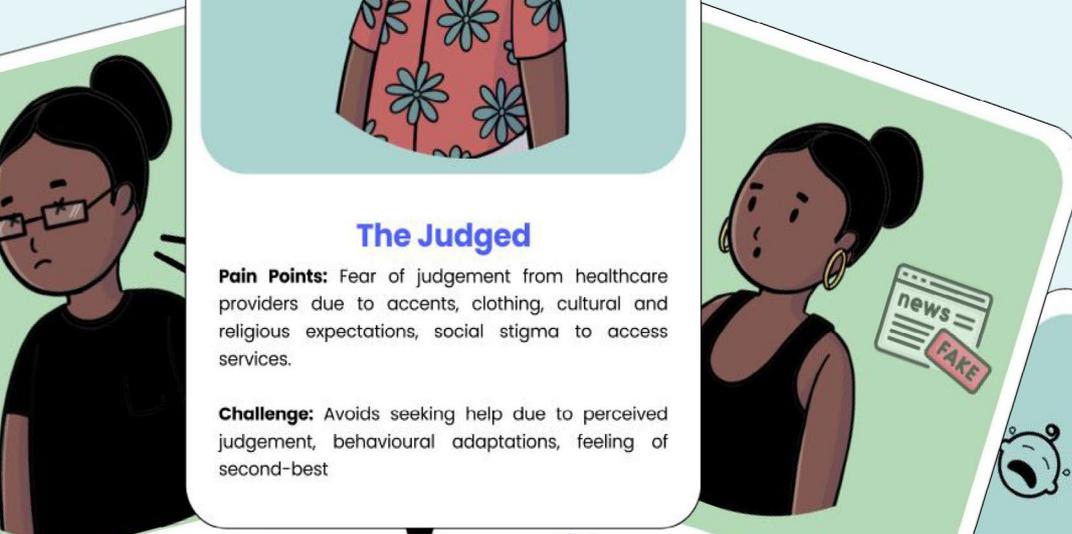# How to use personas to tailor services

1. **Either create tailored personas or adapt ours**: Develop detailed profiles representing different segments of the community, including demographics, cultural background, health needs, and preferences.

2. **Identify needs:** Use personas to understand the specific needs and challenges faced by each group. Also identify other partners and providers in the eco system who could respond to service users needs.

3. **Tailor services:** Design services that address the unique needs of each persona, ensuring cultural sensitivity and accessibility.

4. **Build partnerships:** Network to develop partnerships with other providers to strengthen referral pathways for support or potential collaborations.

GUILTY

The Judged

Pain Points: Fear of judgement from healthcare providers due to accents, clothing, cultural and religious expectations, social stigma to access services.
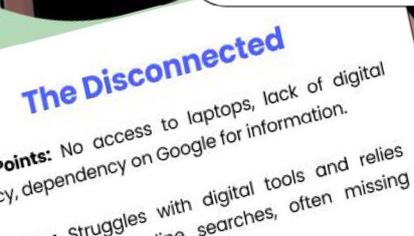
Challenge: Avoids seeking help due to perceived judgement, behavioural adaptations, feeling of second-best

The Disconnected

Points: No access to laptops, lack of digital cy, dependency on Google for information.

Struggles with digital tools and relies searches, often missing

The Misinformed

Pain Points: Hearsay, influenced by social media, no knowledge of system/expectation, not informed of options that could be helpful.

Challenge: Relies on unverifi s a clear understa m work

The question sheets

As part of a partnership with 12 organisations who collaborated around the issues of domestic abuse and mental health, we developed a set of questions that would enable the organisations to design their services and discuss with the other organisations how they would raise awareness, develop accessible communications and strengthen referral pathways. We again used the personas to better understand how health and social care structures demarginalize individuals and primarily how structures make certain identities the consequence of and the vehicle for discriminations.

These **question sheets** were developed after considering how the partnership could rapidly develop its programme after creating the eco system map. It was influenced by the **Newham Health Equity Toolkit – The ART Framework** that supports organisations to review their services and improve accessibility to seldom heard communities.

The question sheets create a simple framework that can assist service providers to communicate the structure of their service and how it will meet the needs of potential service users to commissioners and funders.

SETTING UP

Which communities is the project targeting ?

What services would be most useful or effective for residents in the borough.

What data do we need to evidence the need?

Who does the project need to network with to embed the work with the health and social care system ?

What meetings does the partnership need to have representation at?

PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURE

What structure would work best to support the partnership ?

Is there going to be a lead organisation ?

How are you going to deal with disagreements ?

How is the partnership going to communicate to coordinate the work?

How are you going to deal with safeguarding issues ?

How will the partnership evaluate the work and its impact?

STAFFING

What staff skills are needed ?

What training and support are needed?

How will staff collaborate across the partnership ?

What other support is needed?

What system will they use to record the work done?

STAFF SUPPORT

How are we going to collaborate across all partners ?

What other support is needed?

IMPROVING ACCESS

How can we ensure the service users reflect the population?

How will we record the data and review it?

Which languages are needed?

How can we ensure the staff team is representative of the local population?

What data will we need to collect from the service users ?

BUILDING TRUST

How can we codesign the service with communities?

How can we build partnership with health and social care services to develop effective collaboration ?

How will we network with other services working with communities on domestic abuse and mental health to build referral and collaborations?

PROMOTION

How are we going to promote the service to communities who would need to use the service know about it? And know how to access it.

How can we make the service accessible at convenient times?

What is the best way to communicate with communities. i.e. audio, social media ,leaflets, online – webpage
Translation and signing costs

Is the communication in a language and format that everyone is able to understand? E.g. the signage at a venue, the appointment letter, or spoken advice.

The ecosystem maps

The partnership, with support from LCC students created an **eco system map** as part of a process to update our theory of change for the partnership and as way to engage and involve other stakeholders in exploring how the system works and how to respond to the gaps in provision.
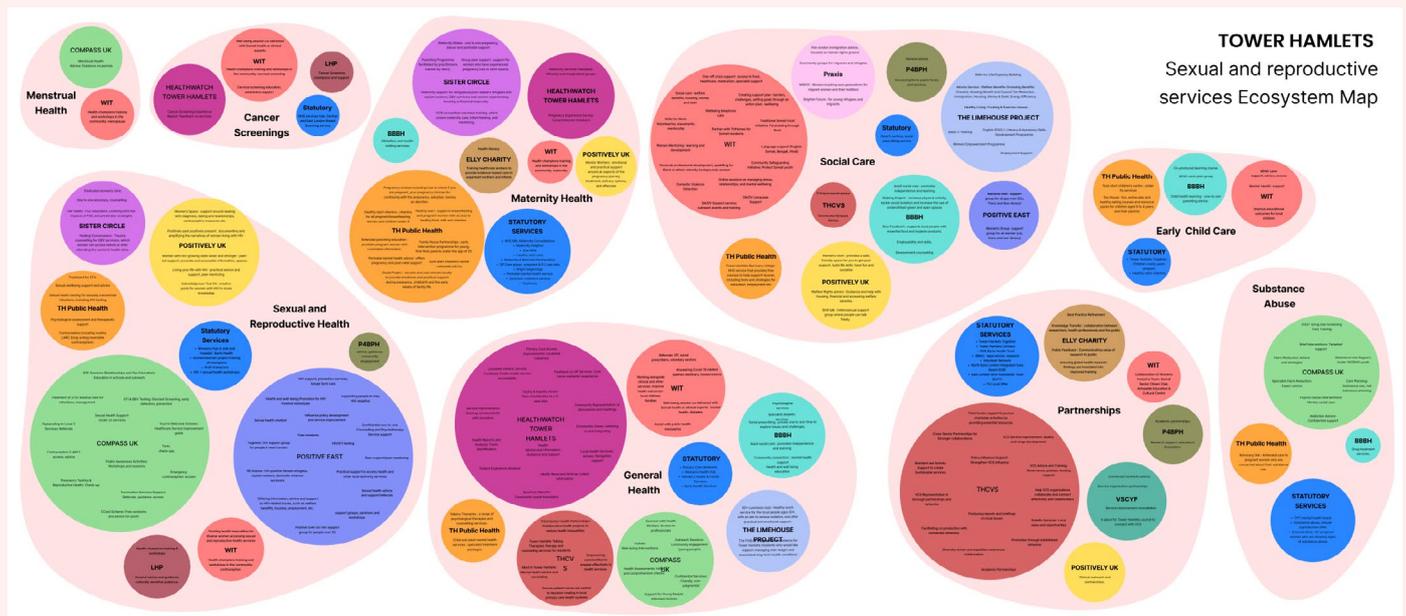
Ecosystem maps are visual tools that help illustrate the relationships and dependencies between various players, systems and processes within a wider system, service or organization. They help to identify the duplication, obstacles and opportunities and potential areas that block improved outcomes for all residents. Tower Hamlets CVS has created various system maps to look at different issues: The Flourishing Communities project looked at the eco system around sexual and reproductive health and maternity services for women from global majority communities using a Figma board.

How to use an ecosystem mapping tool

1. **Identify key stakeholders:** List all relevant stakeholders, including patients, healthcare providers, community leaders, and support services.

2. **Map relationships:** Visualise the connections between stakeholders to under stand the flow of information, resources, and support.

3. **Analyse gaps:** Identify areas where services may be lacking or where communication could be improved.

4. **Develop strategies:** Create action plans to address gaps and strengthen the ecosystem.

Resources for creating ecosystem maps

There are several tools available to help you create ecosystem maps. Here are some popular options. There is a cost for some tools:

1. Miro
Miro is a versatile online collaborative whiteboard platform that offers templates specifically for ecosystem mapping. It allows you to visualize relationships, dependencies, and flows within your ecosystem. You can easily share and collaborate with team members in real-time.

2. Lucidchart
Lucidchart is a web-based diagramming tool that provides a range of templates for creating ecosystem maps. It supports drag-and-drop functionality, making it easy to create detailed and visually appealing maps. Lucidchart also integrates with other tools like Google Drive and Slack for seamless collaboration.

3. MindMeister
MindMeister is a mind mapping tool that can be used to create ecosystem maps. It allows you to visually represent relationships between different components of your ecosystem. MindMeister offers features like real-time collaboration, task management, and integration with other productivity tools.

4. Microsoft Visio
Microsoft Visio is a powerful diagramming tool that offers a wide range of templates and shapes for creating ecosystem maps. It is particularly useful for creating detailed and complex maps. Visio integrates well with other Microsoft Office applications, making it a good choice for organizations already using Microsoft products.

5. Canva
Canva is a user-friendly design tool that offers templates for creating ecosystem maps. It is ideal for those who prefer a more visual and creative approach. Canva provides a variety of design elements, icons, and collaboration features to enhance your maps.

6. ArcGIS
ArcGIS is a geographic information system (GIS) software that can be used to create detailed ecosystem maps, especially for environmental and spatial analysis. It is suitable for mapping complex interactions within natural ecosystems and provides advanced analytical tools.

7. Helio
Helio offers a step-by-step guide to creating ecosystem maps, focusing on understanding and visualizing complex interactions within ecosystems. It is particularly useful for researchers and environmentalists.
These tools can help you create effective and visually compelling ecosystem maps tailored to your specific needs. Would you like more detailed guidance on using any of these tools?

8. Figma Board / FigJam
Figma a visual collaborative whiteboard where teams changes to designs, making it useful for multidisciplinary and collaborative teams can diagram, brainstorm, and organize ideas together. It is an online collaborative design tool that allows multiple users to access a board and make changes to designs making it useful for multidisciplinary and collaborative teams.

Steps for collaboration

1. **Choose the right tool that works for you.**

2. **Set clear objectives:**
- Define the purpose of the ecosystem map and the goals you aim to achieve.
- Ensure all participants understand the objectives and their roles in the process.

3. **Organize collaborative sessions:**
- Workshops: Conduct workshops to brainstorm ideas and co-create the map.
- Focus groups: Organize focus groups to gather detailed insights from specific community segments.
- Virtual meetings: Use video conferencing tools to facilitate remote collaboration.

4. **Use collaborative features:**
- Real-time editing: Allow multiple users to edit the map simultaneously.
- Comments and feedback: Enable commenting features for participants to provide feedback and suggestions.
- Version control: Keep track of changes and maintain version control to avoid conflicts.

5. **Gather Input from diverse stakeholders:**
- Include representatives from different segments of the community to ensure diverse perspectives.
- Use surveys and interviews to gather input from stakeholders who cannot participate in real-time sessions.

6. **Review and refine:**
- Regularly review the map with all participants to ensure it accurately represents the ecosystem.
- Make necessary adjustments based on feedback and changing needs.

We hope you have found the introduction to these resources useful and that they help you to codesign responsive and sensitive services.

For further information contact alison.robert@thcvs.org.uk.

Tower Hamlets Tower Hamlets CVS supports voluntary and community groups in Tower Hamlets to run their organisations effectively, secure funding to deliver services and to connect and collaborate with each other. We are also an embedded strategic partner in the borough, bridging the space between the voluntary and community sector and statutory and other partners, enabling us to give a voice to the voluntary and community groups, and advocate on their behalf.

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