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Embedding design in a mental health network

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Abstract

Service Design in Mind (SDiM) is a programme run by Mind, the national mental health charity. The programme aims to embed service design techniques and methods into a network of local voluntary organisations that deliver mental health services. This case study describes how the programme, based on the idea that everybody designs and everyone can be a designer, aimed to create a diffused design culture (Manzini, 2015) across the charity and its network. By capitalising on existing internal design expertise and sensibility, Mind developed a bespoke design approach and a set of resources, as well as skills and capabilities to improve and transform mental health services.

KEYWORDS: service design, mental health, embedding design, voluntary sector

Introduction

Mind is a federated charity that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of people living in England and Wales. They operate at a national level by providing advice and information to people experiencing mental health problems and campaigning for better public services and support. At a local level, they support a network of around 150 local Minds who are independent charities in their own right. The local Minds are of varying sizes, ranging from a few thousand pounds in turnover, to a few million pounds. As independent charities operating in differing localities, the services they provide, although all aimed at improving mental health and wellbeing, also vary widely.

Despite this variance, a significant proportion of local Minds' funding comes from delivering local NHS and local authority services. Recent public sector reform (HM Government, 2010) in the UK has therefore had a significant impact on the local Mind network. It has posed the difficult challenge of how to meet complex service user needs, and evidence that those needs have been met, with restricted budgets. In 2013, recognising the unprecedented changes impacting on its network, Mind began to look into new approaches that would

support local Minds to meet their organisational aims in new, innovative ways. The increasing use of design in public sector and mental health contexts (for example, the use of design in the Lambeth Living Well Collaborative), as well as a local Mind's successful experience of using service design to rethink their offer (Warwick, 2015) led the team to consider the benefit of a design-led approach.

Based on the principle that everyone has the capacity to design (Manzini, 2015), Mind recognised that there would be latent creativity across the network that they could cultivate, but that the mental health expertise and lived experience of its staff that was crucial to applying the approach effectively could not be so easily replicated. As a result, a programme was developed in collaboration with local Minds and design agency Innovation Unit to create a *diffused design culture* (Manzini, 2015); embedding design methods and techniques throughout Mind's work.

This case study will describe the prototyping of the Service Design in Mind (SDiM) programme: testing the relevance and applicability of a design-led approach to the Mind network and developing a Mind-specific design methodology and set of resources. It will also detail the programme's outcomes to date and the strategy to share and scale the practice across the 150 local Minds.

Prototyping Service Design

As Mind wanted to capitalise on the existing design capabilities of its staff, the SDiM support and resources needed to be as useful and relevant to local Minds as possible. To do this, staff from across the organisation were brought together to explore their current methods for developing services and explore a range of different design processes, in order to extract the principles and requirements for a Mind-specific methodology. Innovation Unit used the insights gained at this event to create a SDiM Methodology with five phases (see Figure 1), where the output of each phase powered the design activity in the next one.

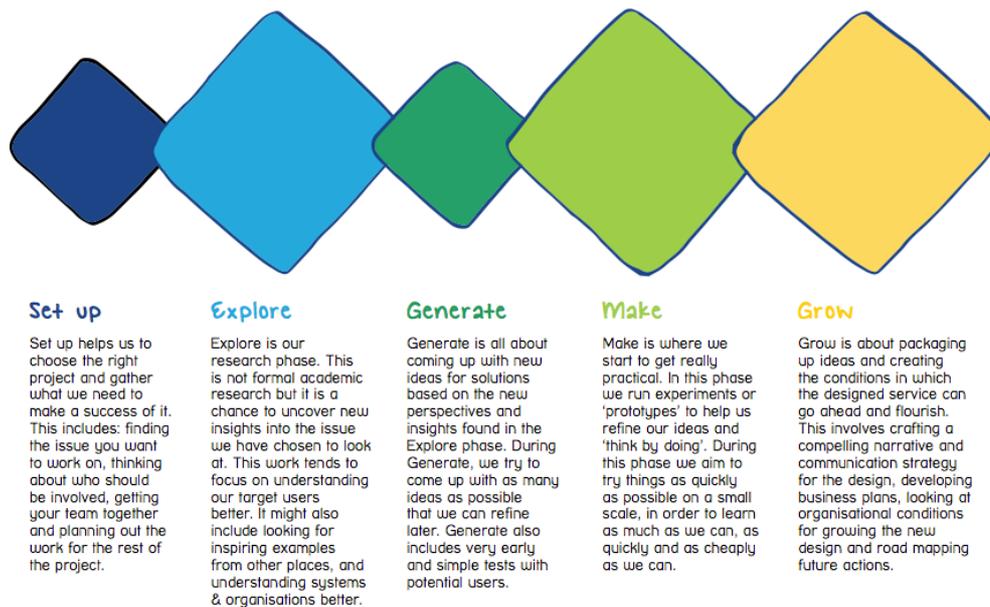


Figure 1: SDiM Methodology Phases

The SDiM Methodology draws on the Double Diamond process (Design Council, 2005) and

its convergent and divergent thinking modes, but is bespoke to Mind for several reasons:

- » *It has two additional phases.* ‘Set-up’ and ‘grow’ align to more traditional project management approaches, which are predominant in the voluntary sector. They help to guide local Minds on steps such as selecting the right team to work on the project and packaging evidence and pitching an idea to commissioners; stages that are crucial to local Minds but generally overlooked by the Double Diamond;
- » *It is a guided process.* It uses a step-by-step approach where service design practice, thinking modes, key concepts and language are introduced progressively, alongside language, contexts and cases that are sector-specific and relevant to local Minds.
- » *It encourages teams to ‘loop’ around the structure.* Local Minds can conduct a full project quickly to build experience and generate evidence, energy and buy-in, and then carry out a more in-depth project when they have created conducive organisational conditions.

To pilot this methodology and accompanying resources, five local Minds were recruited to be prototyping sites. As part of the selection process, local Minds were invited to describe a current challenge they were facing and outline why they felt service design could be used to address that challenge. In order to truly understand the relevance and applicability of the methodology, Mind selected a mix of: service-focused and organisational challenges; small and larger local Minds; and urban and rural localities. The five prototype sites that were selected (Tyneside Mind; Hillingdon Mind; Bedford, Luton & Milton Keynes (BLMK) Mind; Scarborough, Whitby & Ryedale (SWR) Mind; and Suffolk Mind) engaged in a four-month structured programme of work called Design in Action, which consisted of service design workshops in a central location, followed by their own practical application of the tools and methods they had been introduced to. Each prototyping site was represented by two members of staff who were charged with applying the process in their own organisation. Each site also had a supporting team comprising a design partner from the national Mind organisation and a design coach from the Innovation Unit.



Figure 2: Photo taken at the ‘grow’ phase workshop

Between February and May 2014, the teams came together five times for an all-day workshop (one for each of the phases – see **Error! Reference source not found.**). They were first introduced to the theory underpinning that phase of the methodology, before trying out some of the phase’s methods and tools. At the end of each workshop, each team agreed a set of activities to undertake in their own organisation in order to apply the phase of the methodology to their particular challenge.

At the end of the programme, all of the teams came together to discuss their experiences and opinions of the process, methodology, tools, methods and support. This, alongside a

formative evaluation conducted by an external evaluator, helped to ascertain the value of service design to Mind. The feedback from the different stakeholders involved was generally very positive: the programme was well designed, being ambitious and visionary from the outset; tying the work directly to existing projects ensured that the activities were contextualised and relevant; and all stakeholders saw that service design was a valuable process that could benefit them during times of austerity. The local Minds also felt that the strong personal relationships they developed with their support teams during the programme were also key to the success of the initiative. Because people worked side-by-side together without reference to their job titles or level of seniority, it created a space where people were encouraged to experiment, learn something new, express their latent creativity and be unafraid of failure- all of which were conducive to a positive learning environment.

The evaluation also showed that the five-phased approach (with its added emphasis on creating the right project conditions in 'set-up', and packaging up learning in the 'grow' phase) was appropriate and useful for local Minds. Although new concepts such as prototyping were initially difficult for people to understand, the simplicity of service design techniques translated well and ultimately led to new behaviours. In each of the prototyping sites, the use of service design resulted in a change of direction, whether in terms of the service focus, partnerships, or the business model, which ultimately benefitted the local Mind and their service users. Suffolk Mind and SWR Mind had their new service concepts (both of which replaced failing or decommissioned offers) funded by local trusts or commissioners, receiving around £40,000 to deliver successful pilots. The projects also generated impact beyond income and revenue: from enabling better relationships with communities, to supporting staff development and organisational capacity. BLMK Mind, for example, used service design tools to enable better relationships with services users in each of their localities, which has helped them to recognise and respond to need more efficiently.

However, the programme was not without its challenges and the evaluation also captured what people felt could be improved in the future. For example, orientating people with how the process was going to *feel* upfront (design's fuzzy front-end was very distinct from their usual service development approaches) was identified as an opportunity for improving future similar programmes. The SDiM team have subsequently developed an introduction to the approach through a 'service design project in a day'. These intense demonstrations based on fictional scenarios help people that are totally new to service design to understand from the outset what the whole process (in a nutshell) looks and feels like. In this way, the team avoid some of the negativity and frustration understandably experienced by the Design in Action participants, who felt that they were taken into the unknown.

The evaluation also showed that there were high expectations from the stakeholders in the local Minds that service design was about *new* services and technologies and they struggled to expose people quickly to the values of service design beyond 'innovation'. Although the SDiM team recognised and valued impacts such as incremental change and new staff behaviours and attitudes, these were not originally communicated as potential outcomes. This was taken into account in the production of future communication to ensure that the value of service design beyond 'new', and indeed beyond 'service', was effectively described. Managing expectation of the speed and the extent of the service design outcomes was also difficult; it took longer than expected to show the impact of SDiM against traditional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Service design processes, especially when new to an organisation, take more time to result in outcomes than less participative and iterative processes. However, it is also possible that traditional KPIs are not appropriate measures for the impact of service design and may need to be revised once the process is embedded.

‘Performing’ Service Design in Mind

During the initial prototyping phase, Mind learned a huge amount about their existing design legacies (Junginger, 2014) and the best ways for the internal Mind team to introduce and grow design capabilities in the organisation and the wider network. This knowledge has helped to guide the programme from prototyping to performing; supporting people to use service design and make the value of that visible.

As a way of codifying the practice from the prototyping phase, and as a legacy for the organisation, a set of resources was developed to support local and national Mind teams to go through this methodology. These resources, launched in November 2014, include: a service design methodology handbook, which introduces the methodology step-by-step and acts as a reference guide for running service design projects; service design tools that support each of the activities in the methodology; an ethnography handbook to help people to plan their research and analyse their findings; a deck of more than 50 method cards available to filter and match to project need; and a set of case studies from the prototype local Minds that have been presented to inspire and pass on tips to people interested in using service design. Aside from the resources that support the ‘set-up’ and ‘grow’ phase, which are less common to existing design toolkits, many of the service design tools and methods are typical of the approach, but redescribed and closely linked to the unique circumstances of local Minds.

The SDiM offer has proved popular with the network: the team has supported more than 25 local Minds to use service design; over £50,000 of income has been generated for the network; more than 100 sets of resources have been distributed; and over 100 people elect to receive regular SDiM updates. Following this success, in April 2015 SDiM became part of Mind’s core offer both internally and externally, with dedicated resources and budget. A road map to effectively grow and scale SDiM, agreed by the Management Executive Team at Mind, identifies the priorities for the programme of work over the next year as:

- » Designing the demand and the offer around SDiM, which means promoting SDiM resources and generating evidence of impact to demonstrate its value;
- » Promoting new partnerships to help grow the practice and attract more funding; and
- » Creating space and time for people to learn more about SDiM, so they feel more confident in using service design techniques.

The initial prototyping phase highlighted that that toolkits and handbooks on their own are not enough to motivate people to use service design and to feel confident and enabled to achieve impact and generate new services; in-depth support is needed in order to grow the practice in an effective way. The next stage will be focused on generating even more opportunities for Mind and local Minds to be exposed to service design, including:

- » Tying service design more directly with the current work which is going on in Mind departments;
- » Linking service design with the Mind’s internal grants scheme; and
- » Creating opportunities for Mind and local Minds to work with service design students and interns to expose their stakeholders to the design approach.

There also needs to be a focus on understanding how those strong personal relationships that proved crucial in the prototyping phase can be replicated at scale. As such, Mind have asked Innovation Unit to build an on-going partnership and mentoring relationship, which will support the team to continue the process of embedding excellent service design in Mind. Innovation Unit’s mentors will work to support the delivery of service design projects by

supporting teams to effectively manage the process, including providing an honest space to discuss worries, hopes, problems and questions. The mentors will also ensure that SDiM's tools, methods and approach are updated and in-line with the fast-evolving field of service design by providing a fresh, external perspective that is grounded in the practice of experts.

Conclusions

The SDiM programme represents an innovative offer for the Mind network and an invaluable set of resources for the whole organisation. Mind places people with direct experience at the heart of everything it does and nowhere is that more important than in the design of services that meet people's needs and aspirations. Service design provides local Minds with a structure to capitalise on their existing capabilities and creatively, actively and meaningfully involve service users in service design. Embedding service design in Mind maximises the potential impact of service design on the whole organisation. As Mind has developed its own approach to service design, the methodology is more authentic and in-line with how they operate and is easier to integrate across the whole organisation. This will ensure the long-term sustainability of the approach, where Service Design in Mind is not a 'one team job' but is owned by and delivered across all teams and departments.

SDiM was created on the understanding that non-expert designers, if well supported and exposed to design techniques in the right way, can become increasingly skilled and confident in design (Manzini, 2015). However, the experience outlined in this case study has also shown that design experts still have a key role to play in stimulating and supporting the process at the right time and in the right ways. For this to happen, Mind has started changing and pushing the boundaries of the traditional 'client - designer' relationship in order to shape the nature and quality of the design outcome (Sangiorgi, Prendiville, Jung, & Yu, 2015).

This case study highlights both the benefit of, and an approach to, embedding service design within an organisation, as well as why different models of collaborative partnership across sectors can (and should) be built. It is hoped this experience will prompt thought and offer inspiration to others embarking on a similar process.

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