

Robyn:

Hello, I'm Robyn Steward and I'm a member of the core team at Heart n Soul at The Hub.

Nalini:

Hi, my name's Nalini Edwards and I am the research assistant at the Heart n Soul at The Hub project.

Robyn:

I think we decided that productivity might be an important topic, because often people with learning disabilities and autistic people are seen purely as service users and people who cost money, and not seen as productive in a typical sense. And I think we wanted to explore what productivity actually means, rather than the perception of what it is. And how there are lots of different ways of being productive.

Nalini:

There is quite a big gap in comparing people, neurotypical people who are in employment, and those with learning disabilities and autistic people being in employment, any form of employment at all. And I think that employment's often seen as a key form of productivity. And I think it would be interesting to see, well, if this particular community doesn't really have access to being employed, well, how do they spend the time? How can they be productive in other forms?

Robyn:

5.6% of people with a learning disability are in some kind of employment. And there's 1.5 million people in the UK with a learning

disability. And about 17% of autistic adults are in full-time work. And there's 700,000 autistic people in the UK.

Nalini:

Really quite stark figures there.

Robyn:

To start off with, we did a really boring-looking survey on a thing called Qualtrics, which wasn't accessible. And so I guess the survey didn't ... Not many people with learning disabilities or autistic people answered it.

Nalini:

No, that's right, Robyn. I don't think many did at all. We had in total about 290 responses. So I think in addition to doing this online survey, we also did three different focus groups, focused on different communities that may have had problems accessing employment. The first was carried out with learning-disabled people and autistic people who were from Heart n Soul. The second group was a group of people who had faced long-term unemployment and they were from the Annex in Hartlepool. And the final group that were involved in focus groups were, recently retired, or had been retired for a while ... were from Meet Me at the Albany, which is a project run by the charity Entelechy, which is based in Deptford.

The methods we used were a combination of semi-structured questions. So we thought of some questions beforehand that we'd like to ask them. And also discussing the vignettes that we'd also created. And at the end of the session, we had a very large piece of paper, which

we then drew out some of the topics that had come out through discussions regarding activities about being productive.

We used artistic methods, such as drawing what people felt was a productive person, but also what they felt was an unproductive person. And that activity was carried out throughout the session, whilst people could also talk about their experiences. So there's multiple ways of contributing.

Robyn:

With all the answers that we had from people, both from the original survey, and then from doing the focus groups, we wanted to create a way of showing what we'd learned and showing, I guess, the trends of what we'd learned. There were some themes that came out of it. And we wanted to do that in an accessible, interesting way. And I think Nalini came up with the idea of vignettes, which is like a little story. And so Nalini wrote these stories about fictional people, but drawn from, or ... It was reflective of the answers that we got from all the different places, from the survey, from the focus groups.

And then we had all these little stories and then we went back to the different groups of people that inspired that story. So, for example, Heart n Soul artists and participants. We went back to them and asked them if they felt that the story was reflective of their lives. And, obviously, the stories, although there were about one fictional person, they incorporate a lot of different people's experiences. And it was the same with older people, and the same with long-term unemployed people. And, obviously, the people that answered the survey, they were anonymous, so we couldn't really check in with them. But, the

idea of the stories was to present what we'd learned and the different ways in which someone can be productive in a fun and accessible way.

Nalini:

The method I used was thematic analysis, which is a rigorous methodology used to analyse qualitative data. What was interesting was they were quite different. They had very different ideas of what it meant to be productive. So, for example, those from Heart n Soul really talked about meaningful activities that were important to them. So making music, making steps towards independence, very personalised activities like knitting or cooking. Whereas with Hartlepool, I think they felt they were quite constrained by governmental policies that restricted their ability to be productive, in particular universal credit. That was a big theme, probably the most overarching theme for Hartlepool.

And for the Meet Me community, I think family was very important, making sure that they were no longer a burden. Lots of them went out every day to keep themselves busy and occupied. They were part of a choir. So, they kept themselves busy, but they also didn't want to be stereotyped as some old person who really wanted to do bingo all the time.

So, there were very three distinct lived experiences that weren't really very similar at all. Which is good, because it just shows how we understand productivity is, I suppose, very narrow. And that different people from different communities see it very differently.

Robyn:



Before you watch the videos, think about what productivity means to you. When you've watched the videos, think again about your first answer and whether it's changed.