

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LIVED EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT?



Good lived experience engagement is about genuine collaboration and including people in decision making processes that effect them. Done in a non judgemental and safe way that includes a diversity of experience, it values the wisdom and experience of people who have lived with the consequences of being excluded from decisions about their lives.

This unique perspective can highlight gaps in what is needed, and what works. If done in an inclusive and safe way, it leads to better outcomes for organisations and the people they serve, while offering empowerment, dignity and even healing. In summary this approach can be summed up in "asking, instead of telling people what they need"

Lived Experience inclusion brings an essential perspective to the way things happen in the social services sector. This service user perspective should, ideally inform policy, practice, research and governance.

Do No Harm.

It is absolutely imperative that this work is conducted in ways that are trauma informed and resourced well. 'It cannot be about ticking a box'.

CJU wanted a way for some of the most impacted and least heard of our community members to meaningfully contribute to the direction and content of our work for climate justice - So we created the Justice LEAG.

"You listen, you respond, you let me explain. You let me be me, I dont have to pretend....[CJU Justice LEAG] is the only place i use my [Aboriginal] name. I am comfortable being me. The more I am me, the more you get out of me. I trust here. You say it and you mean it. You listen to what I've got to teach. You are open to my thoughts and experience."

"I try to help the best way I can. I don't want others to go through the same as I did. I am comfortable with the group (justice LEAG). I don't like high pressure environments. I need to take my time going through [things]. If you ask me a question, and I don't know how to answer it... others share and I realise 'that's what I was thinking.' I am not sure if my answer is valuable. I am scared to say [things]. Sometimes I am there, but I am gone. Sometimes it takes a while; it's like a void."

When talking about other organisations LEAG members said:

"I just want them to understand my situation. I don't want to repeat myself. I want to know if they can help me and then refer me where to go"

"[service providers] Need to understand me better. one program doesn't fit everyone, different people need different help."

"What is a trauma for one person, doesn't mean it is a trauma for another. [Services] shouldn't treat all trauma the same.. one person's little thing may be a big thing [trauma] for another."

"We see patterns because of our own diverse/unique experience. Including lived experience expertise can help reduce the frequency of which disadvantage happens to others."

