



## Ben Williams

### Profile:

Ben is an experienced project lead managing complex, cross-partnership programmes and projects in the health and social care industry.

He has expertise in dementia, older people's housing, mental capacity, safeguarding and care standards. He does public speaking arrangements on dementia.

Ben joined Care City in 2019 and has worked on managing health innovation integration for social care, the NHS, Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards. He was part of the committee that wrote the National NICE dementia guidance NG97 and remains an Expert Advisor for NICE.

He has many years of experience as a social care practice excellence advisor, safeguarding lead and policy officer for a large housing and care provider. During this time he set up the 'Dementia Friendly London Housing Group' which is now run from the Mayor of London's office.

### Transcript:

[00:00:00] Hi my name's Ben Williams. I'm the head of innovation at an organisation called Care City. I live with mental health disorder, general anxiety disorder. And I've been working for the last ten years doing co-production with people living with different disabilities.

(Voiceover) Why is it important to have diverse inputs in research?

[00:00:20] A lot of work and effort goes into producing research and making sure that it's successful. And actually, if you only hear one or two voices, then you don't get the output that you expect. You'll only have it working for one or two people. So it's really important to spend time making sure you hear from as many different people as possible.

(Voiceover) Have you been involved in contributing to co-design?

[00:00:44] So, I've been working in co-design for about the last 10 years. I've been working with different groups of people with different disabilities. And trying to make sure that their voice is heard when we're working and doing research. So, Sometimes I'm involved with design layouts for, for buildings and making sure that spaces are accessible and clear and can be used by all and make sure that they're accessible for all.

[00:01:06] Other times we're involved in designing technologies or services. So we might be working with technology that will help someone with a daily aspect of their day to day living. And we try to make sure that that technology is tested as well as it can be with different groups of people so that they can try it out.

(Voiceover) What advice would you recommend to early career researchers to create inclusive settings when co-creating or conducting research?

[00:01:22] So it's thinking through the logistics of what that person's experience will be, the participants that you're working with. Try to make sure you think through how their journey will be to get to the place where they're going to do the research.

[00:01:40] Think about what their experience will be so that when they come they have all their concerns reassured. They, they know, you know where the toilets are, you know where the facilities are for them to get something to eat and drink and make sure that they feel comfortable. It's also a good idea to prepare a few thoughts in mind with regards to explaining what the research is involved and how you also want to end the conversation with people because often those things are the things that really make the most or biggest impact upon the participants involved.

(Voiceover) In terms of your lived experience, what have you seen done well? What has worked well for you in the past?

[00:02:09] I think the thing that's really difficult is the thing that is the most beneficial is giving people time and often you're under a lot of pressure in order to get things done, to achieve what you want to do with the research and really having giving people time to be able to express themselves or to settle into being in a frame of mind that helps, that really helps me when I, when I'm dealing with things. And when I'm dealing with people and I'm involved in the sessions.

(Voiceover) Can you share any common mistakes that researchers should avoid?

[00:03:02] It's important to make sure that the, the research that we do is not transactional. Often we'll, we'll want to try and achieve something and we're on a tight, limited time basis, but really to get people to open up and really express how they, they feel, not just on a service level, but really, with the way they feel about things, you need to spend time with people. And so often, if you go to a place where, where people are, or a group where people are already meeting together and going together, then you can go and have a conversation with people, get to know them first and then settle in the situation.

[00:03:20] So they know who you are, they feel comfortable with you, and then you can go and talk to them again. And also always make sure that the people know the outcome of the research, and know where they can see the outputs that have taken place. So they don't just feel like they're a minor participant that gets overlooked, but they're actually part of this whole endeavour.

(Voiceover) Is there anything else researchers should be mindful of when working with the disabled community?

[00:03:58] It's really important to think about the form and the way that you're engaging with people. So if you're using like a paper form to get people to sign things off or to go through things, that's a very different interaction to when you're talking to people and asking them questions. So for example, on the PHQ 9 questionnaire that talks about depression, there's a question there about you know, do you feel like you've let your family down? Now that's a very different interaction if you're being asked that question by someone else to seeing it on a piece of paper where you just tick it off.

[00:04:16] So think about the ways you're delivering the information and the impact that might have on the person, because you definitely don't want to start enforcing attitudes or thoughts that weren't there in the first place.

(Voiceover) Do you have any final tips or recommendations you would like to share?

[00:04:31] I think it's always good to do research in pairs. So that one person can engage with the person and the other person can do the recording of what's going on so they can monitor the situation and think of things that maybe you're not able to think about. It's also good when you're doing research to phone your line manager or the person you're working with to let them know when you're arriving at a venue or when you're leaving at a venue.

[00:04:52] There's lots of safeguarding concerns you might want to consider and review when you are doing research with people. You want to know what the telephone number example for is for the local safeguarding board. So that if there is any issues that, or someone may disclose a problem, you can react to that in a timely manner.

[00:05:09] Something that we do in our organisation. If we're going to someone's home and speaking to them about an issue or doing some research or doing an interview, we will have a code phrase that we use where we don't necessarily want to alert or alarm the person if we feel that there is an issue of concern.

[00:05:30] We will just say, I need to phone up the office and say, hi, I need to I've left the purple folder on my desk. And that's code for your line manager to go, okay, we need to phone the police and make sure that they can come and see you there. So there's, there's lots of different ways I would highly recommend safeguarding training and making sure that people can go through those.

[00:05:49] But those are some of the different things that we, we like to do, go in pairs. Make sure you're familiar with the safeguarding processes and procedures.