

Is a Lived Experience Advisory Partnership (LEAP) right for my team?



A **Lived Experience Advisory Partnership (LEAP)** is an excellent way to strengthen your work by bringing in the voices of people with direct experience of the topic you are working on.

This short guide explains what a LEAP is, why it can be useful, and what to think about before setting one up.

What is a LEAP?

A LEAP is a **small group of local people (max 10)** who share relevant lived experience and bring their own perspectives.

LEAPs should be built on trust and collaboration, and groups are encouraged to choose a name to help create a sense of identity and belonging.

Why use LEAP?

LEAP members are **experts by experience**. Working with them can help your team to:

- Better understand how services are experienced in real life
- Hear honest feedback about what works and what does not
- Design materials and resources that are clear and accessible
- Engage communities in a more meaningful and respectful way

By involving people with lived experience, you are more likely to develop solutions that are **practical, effective, and sustainable**.

What can a LEAP support?

A LEAP can be involved in many types of work, including:



Research and evaluation

LEAP members can help shape questions, advise on respectful ways to gather feedback, reach people who are often overlooked, and help explain findings in clear and meaningful ways. This can lead to more accurate insights and better decision making.



Policy development and review

When developing or reviewing policies, hearing directly from those affected helps ensure policies are realistic, relevant, and informed by real experiences.



Service design and improvement

LEAP members can provide valuable feedback on how services work in practice, helping to improve accessibility, effectiveness, and compassion. Their involvement can also help raise awareness of services and share learning more widely.



Changes to services and infrastructure

Involving people with lived experience helps teams understand how planned changes may affect people in real life, including impacts that may not have been previously considered.

This is not an exhaustive list, and teams are encouraged to be creative in how they work with their LEAP.

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Do we have the capacity to run a LEAP?

A LEAP is an **active partnership**, not a one-off consultation. While this way of working can be very rewarding, it requires time, planning, and ongoing support. And, as LEAPs consist of those with lived experience on often challenging topics, careful consideration is required to ensure that needs are accommodated and best practice is implemented.

Before setting up a LEAP, it is important to consider the following:

Will LEAP members have genuine influence?

Is there real space for them to shape decisions and outcomes? Can you show how their input is used?

Is there a clear timeframe?

Have you identified key stages, and planned enough meetings or activities to support meaningful involvement?

Can roles be agreed and adapted together?

Will members be able to co-design their roles, and can these change as the partnership develops?

Are there opportunities for reflection and feedback?

Can the group regularly discuss what is working well and what could be improved, and will your team respond openly?

Is there a plan to check in on how the partnership is working?

Are you able to gather ongoing feedback and make changes where needed?

How will LEAP members be recognised and rewarded?

Members should be fairly recognised for their time and expertise. Is there a budget for this, and can you offer additional benefits such as training or development opportunities?

Being honest about your team's capacity helps ensure relationships are built on trust and the partnership is sustainable.

What next?

If you think a LEAP is the right approach for your team, please [contact the HDRC](#) for support in setting one up.

You can also use the **How to set up a Lived Experience Advisory Partnership handbook** for step-by-step guidance.

Contact: somersethdrc@somerset.gov.uk

