



# Co-Production in Action: The Grapevine

## TRAC 2000 Parents and Carers

**The Grapevine was formed in 2017 following concerns raised by parents and carers of adults with learning disabilities regarding changes being made to services without them being involved or informed.**

In recognition of these concerns the managers of The Learning Curve created an opportunity for parents and carers to come together to discuss the things that were important to them. The concerns raised by this group included changes to day service provision, respite care and changes to the Social Work team and allocation of Social Workers. This group of parents and carers wanted to make sure that the best interests of their children and family members were considered by decision makers, and that as parents and carers they also had a voice that was heard and listened to.

Following growth and development throughout 2018, The Grapevine became a constituted group in January 2019, and saw further growth as they worked with RCT People First to host a dedicated worker to widen and increase membership and provide a collaboration link between the needs, thoughts and experiences of people with learning disabilities and their parents and carers. Through

this growth period, The Grapevine added groups in both The Gadlys and Treforest Learning Curves, providing an avenue for even more parents and carers to have their voices heard. Expansion into the Merthyr area took place in early 2020 and The Grapevine has now grown to over 60 members.

As part of their wider engagement strategy, The Grapevine have sought to increase their community visibility through the development of a distinctive logo and related marketing and promotional materials. They have had representation at a number of localised community-based events such as open days, Christmas fayres and specific carer events, as well as within key decision making bodies such as the Regional Partnership Board and All Wales Forum for parents and carers, to both share their collective voice with new audiences as well as attract new membership, increasing the impact of the work they do.

One of the strengths of The Grapevine is found in the understanding of the power of collective voice, and since its constitution in 2019 the local groups set up within it have worked with a range of partner organisations to take ownership of the change process as they advocate for vital improvements to Health and Social Care Services. Through this model the Gadlys group have been able to work closely with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) to resolve issues identified within the Respite services in the Cynon Valley. Equally, the Tonypany group have worked with RCTCBC to help improve their approach to Carers Assessments and the way they are conducted. This work was aimed at removing some of the barriers to Carers Assessments, to ensure carers are able to access appropriate support that benefits both themselves and the family member they are caring for.

The involvement of parents and carers through The Grapevine has proved invaluable to the improvement process, and as a result they are being included in more areas of service reform both within statutory and voluntary sector organisations and decision-making channels at local, regional and national levels.

“The Grapevine has supported me in certain decision making regarding the care of my grandson. They listened, gave guidance and advice and made me feel confident enough to talk about my concerns.”

**Grapevine member-Glynis**

“It makes a huge difference being part of this group as we are able to sort things out as a group & not as individuals something we haven’t had for a very long time.”

**Grapevine Member – Margaret**

## Engagement Tools utilised:

- Focused conversation: group and one-to-one
- Participant led agenda creation
- Supportive environment creation
- Informal feedback in group context
- Community visibility/event attendance
- Collaborative working with partner organisations

## Why is this co-production:

- **Empowerment** and opportunity creation to give parents and carers a **voice**
- **Equal** relationship between parents and carers and service providers across the region to help generate **solutions for change**
- A process that aims to work in the **best interests** of ALL involved: **Needs Driven Initiative**
- Viewing parents and carers as **EXPERTS** of their lives and **valuing** their opinions, thoughts and ideas: **Experience Led Project Creation**
- Development of participant **responsibility** and **ownership** generating a sense of **self-worth** and **purpose**.

