SUMMARY
RESEARCH
REPORT

Co-research: The development and delivery of a research course for people with intellectual disability

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Background

Co-research is research carried out “with” or “by” people with disability rather than “to”, “about” or “for” them. Research that involves people with disability as co-researchers has produced important findings across a range of areas such as the health of people with disability, employment, inclusion and advocacy.

Co-research involves all researchers actively and equally participating at every stage of the research process - from choosing the topic and designing the study, to collecting and analysing data, and finally, sharing the findings.

There are not many resources that can be used by disability service providers to build skills and support people with disability to be involved in co-research. There is also little information about the impact of learning about research on people with disability.

What did we do?

Scope researchers developed and delivered a co-research course to eight clients with intellectual disability. After the course was completed, interviews were conducted with some of the participants to learn about the impact of the course and how it could be improved.

The co-research course

- Took place over 10 weeks from March 2024 to May 2024 (one two-hour session per week).
- Covered key topics such as developing a research question, writing a literature review, collecting data via surveys and interviews, analysing data, conducting ethical research, and presenting research findings.
- Included interactive activities such as role playing and mock research interviews.

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Impact of the co-research course

Five participants took part in interviews that looked at if the course helped them learn about research and if they benefited from it. The interviews also explored what worked well in the course and how it could be improved.

How did participants benefit from the course?

Overall positive experience	Gaining a sense of purpose	Feeling more confident	Building new relationships	Learning new skills

What worked well?

- The inclusive and supportive approach
- A positive group dynamic

What was challenging?

- Being nervous before the course
- Feeling tired
- Having lots of information

What could be improved?

- Provide more breaks
- Use more easy read resources
- Increase length of course

What did they say?

“It made me feel empowered… confident to talk up and do presentations and interviews”

“It helped me gain a lot of friendships”

“I would love to do it again…it’s given me something to do apart from going to the day centre”

“The class was very lively and fun”

Where to from here?

After the course, some participants continued to work in Scope as Research Assistants. They have carried out presentations about their experiences of doing the course at national and international conferences.

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https://www.scopeaust.org.au/about-us/research/research-projects

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