

# Learning and adapting: Reflections on co-designing with people living with dementia

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## Introduction

**People living with dementia have the right to be actively involved in designing the services and projects that affect them.**

Co-design approaches can help, but there are knowledge gaps:

- How do we practice co-design in a way that stays true to key principles?
- How can we adapt processes to ensure meaningful co-design with people living with dementia?

This work aims to share practical learnings and critical reflections from working in a co-design project focused on improving rehabilitation access for people living with dementia.

## Methods

Co-designers, including people living with dementia, care partners, and professionals, engaged in experience-based co-design over three virtual workshops.

These workshops aimed to explore current barriers to accessing rehabilitation, and to identify possible solutions to improve access.

Throughout the co-design process, records were kept of activities, interactions and learnings, including practical adjustments made and insights from co-designers in and outside of workshops. A critical self-reflection process was used to reflect on these records.

## Findings

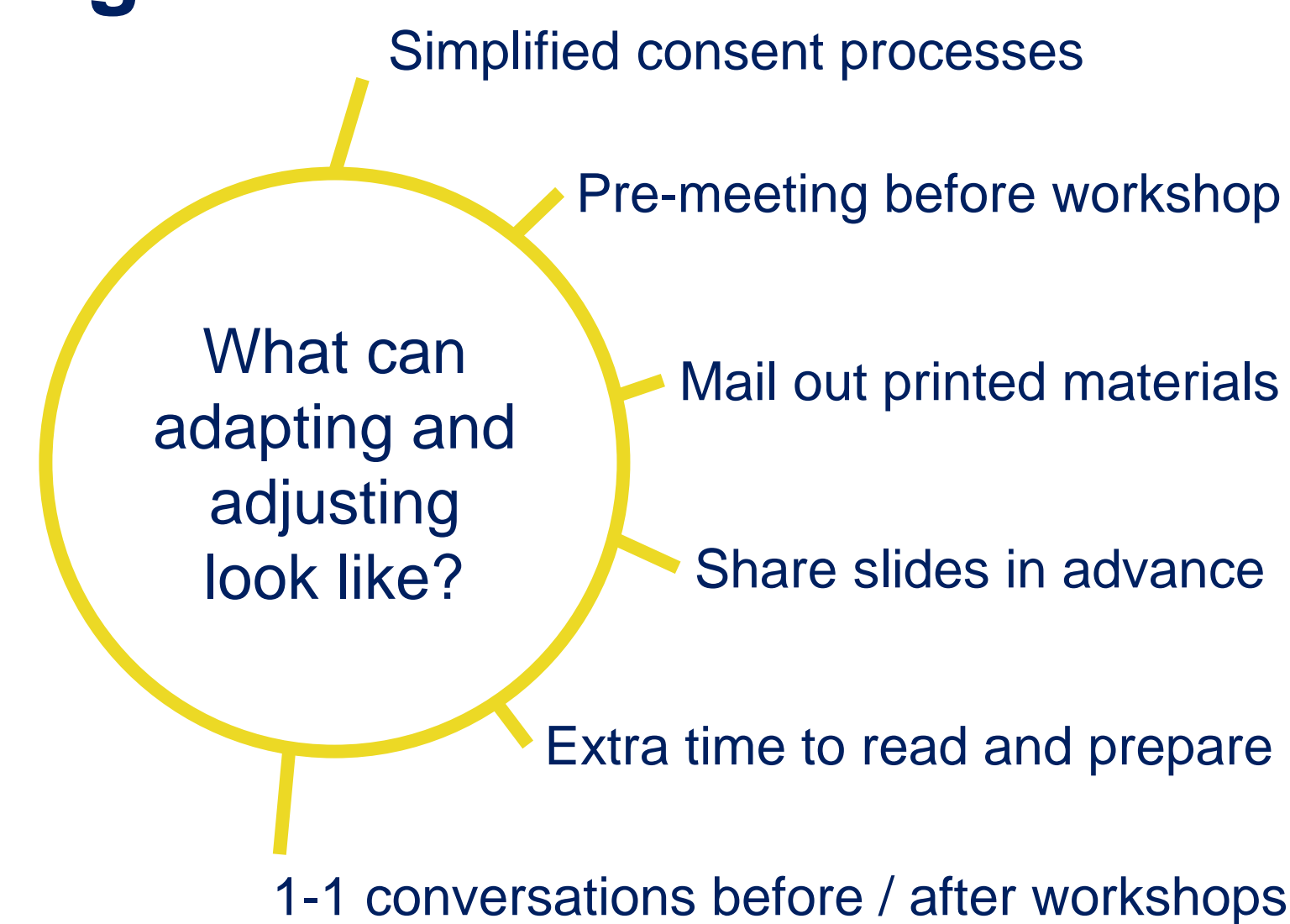
### Theme 1: Adapting and Adjusting

**We need to:**

- adapt our approaches from the start
- keep adjusting as we go
- ask co-designers what works for them

**People living with dementia:**

- are adaptable and resourceful
- are active participants
- often suggest the best adaptations



### Theme 2: Values

**We need to:**

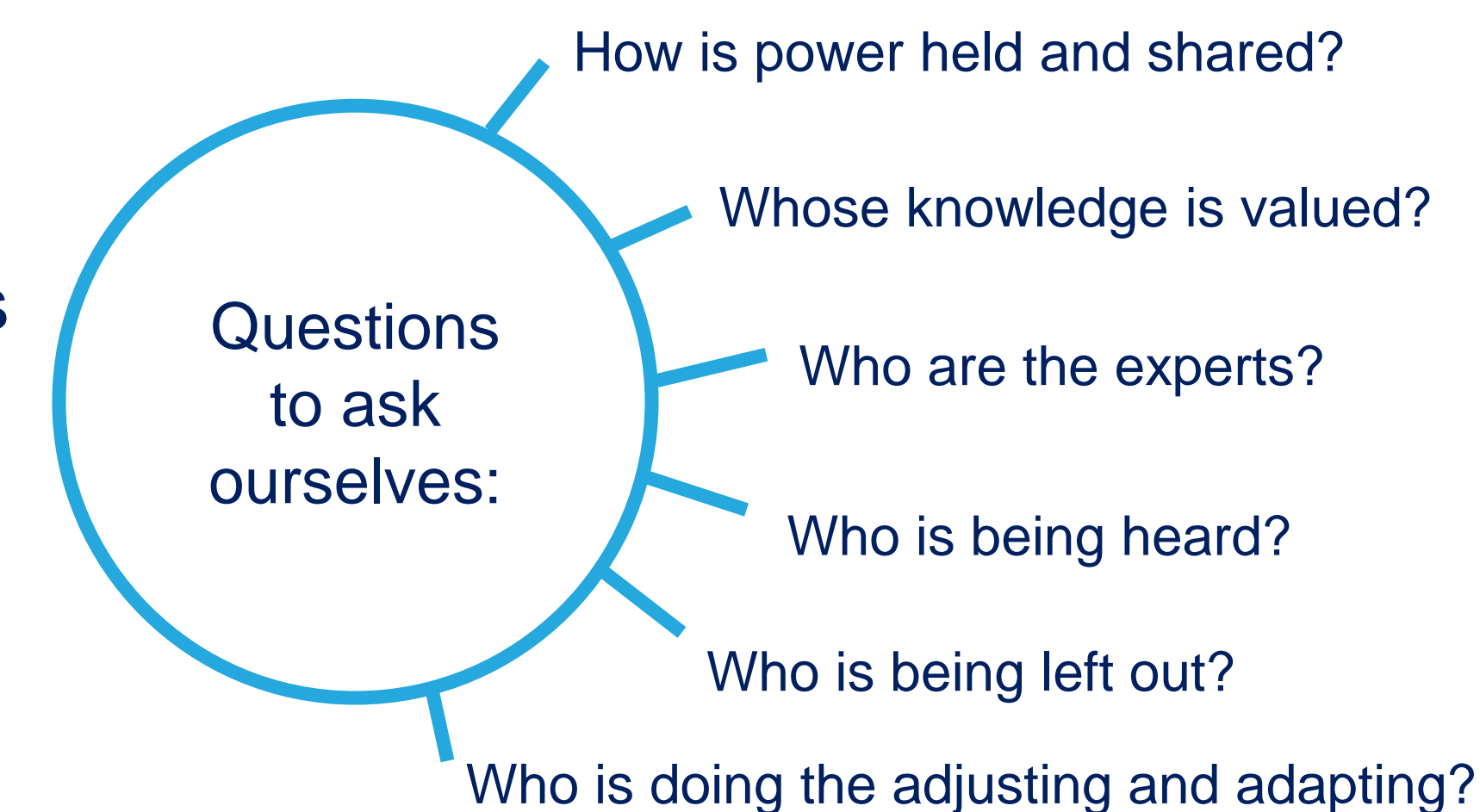
- be explicit about principles
- stick to our stated principles
- spend time getting to know people
- value everyone's time
- value relationships
- value diverse expertise



### Theme 3: Challenging assumptions

**We need to:**

- interrogate our own assumptions
- remain reflective
- learn and adjust as we go



## Conclusion

**Co-design approaches require ongoing reflexivity, to learn from people's living expertise and to learn more about the process of co-design itself.**

Practical adjustments, a values-based approach, and a learning mindset may assist in improving co-design approaches when working with people with dementia.

## What's next?

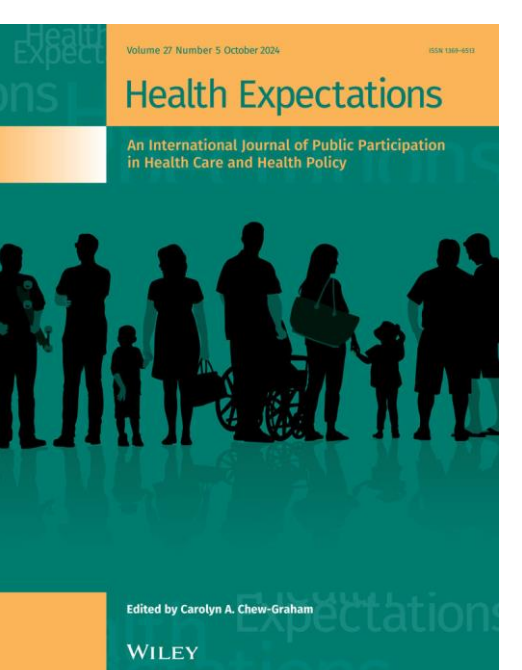
We are piloting and testing some of the strategies identified by co-designers, including training and information resources for health workers and the community.

Next, we will meet with co-designers for a further workshop to discuss progress with strategies, and to explore ideas for the future.

Before this next workshop, we will check with co-designers to identify how to further adapt co-design processes to respond to any changes in their needs.

## Want to learn more?

Scan this QR code to read our newly-published article about co-design findings:



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