Self-assessment by
Sophie Taylor

A summary about me:

I spent two years practicing service design methods with public sector consultancy Innovation Unit, before taking a year to qualify as a social worker.

I've spent the past year employing service design methods in freelance projects. I'm now excited to be joining Camden Council as a Senior Design Researcher in the New Year.

I'm passionate about employing service design, user research, participatory and co-creation methods and wider innovation practices to complex social challenges.

My expertise lies in developing impactful solutions within local government and the third sector. My recent projects have centred on resident-led home decarbonisation and social care transformation.

I currently work as a/at:

Senior Design Research at Camden Council
https://www.camden.gov.uk/

My LinkedIn profile:

https://www.linkedin.com/in/sophie-madison-taylor-41161b14b/

My educational background:

UCL / MSc Social and Cultural Anthropology - Distinction
September 2019 - September 2020, London

Christ's College University of Cambridge/ MA (Cantab) Human, Social and Political Sciences - First Class Hons.
October 2015- July 2018, Cambridge

Snook/ Analysing User Research Data
March 2023 - Online

Basis/ Agile Masters for Public Service
March 2023 - Online

The following theories are the key components of my approach to service design:

User-centred design: This is a philosophy that prioritises the needs and experiences of users throughout the design process. It involves understanding user behaviours, preferences and pain points to create solutions that are based on real user needs. This is a key component of my approach to service design as I aim to ensure where possible, there is sufficient evidence about real user needs and experiences informing design decisions, and that those who make decisions have had the opportunity to empathise and immerse themselves in the real experiences of users. I create assets such as personas, storyboards, and other creative representations that vividly capture and communicate these experiences.

Agile mindset: Agile is a methodology that promotes flexibility and adaptability in the design and development process of a service or product. In the context of service design, agile encourages the creation of prototypes or minimum viable products (MVPs), to quickly test ideas and gather feedback from stakeholders. Rather than aiming for immediate perfection by design, agile thinking emphasises the importance of testing things in small iterations and responding to feedback. This is a key component of my approach to service design as I advocate for illustrating emerging service concepts and testing them as soon as possible to get a sense of what service design will really be feasible and impactful.

Participation and co-design: Theories around participation and co-production give priority to the lived experience of users during the design process. Using participatory approaches, such as co-design, aligns with the idea that those who will be affected by a service should have a say in its design. This is particularly important in my work to design public services. Being inclusive and involving people from the beginning of the design process, including gaining their input into research design, often leads to solutions that are more robust, relevant and accepted by users.

These are the most relevant resources I base my work on and I recommend them as a body of knowledge in service design:

This Is Service Design Doing (Marc Stickdorn, Adam Lawrence, Markus Hormess, Jakob Scheider, 2022) - this provides really clear definitions of a huge variety of methods and the relevance in various phases of the service design process. It is also full of case studies which illustrate their application in action. The accompanying online method library is also useful for building service design projects https://www.thisisservicedesigndoing.com/methods.

Good Services (Lou Downe, 2020) This outlines 15 principles for good service design based on Downe's extensive work as a service designer for the UK's government's gov.uk. It also provides helpful context for the development of service design.

I have X years of working experience in service design:

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My working experience in service design includes involvement in:

- Service design projects
- Service design consultancy
- Service design training

I have particular experience in the following service sectors:

Public Sector (Community Language Services, Children's Social Care Services, Social Care Workforce, Housing), Third Sector (Participation)

I have conducted X service design projects that aim at creating improvements or innovations within organisations:

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These are the service design projects I have successfully delivered:

August-September 2022. Co-led user research and co-design of a new youth involvement strategy for Settle, a London-based youth housing charity. Authored and designed a final report including suggested opportunity areas, potential user journey map and implementation plan. Settle subsequently prototyped our suggested strategy.

February-April 2023. Led user research with social care practitioners for Social Care Wales, in order to inform the design of their new Communities of Practice. Presented insights in a short report, which included 'design principle cards' as a tool for Community Facilitators to draw on. My insights have shaped the design of the communities.

April-May 2023. Led 10 usability tests for Kuppa, a digital advice product for residents in Wolverhampton, providing personalized results on how to save money on their energy bills. Presented insights and worked with the tech team to develop improvements in response to user needs. Improvements have been incorporated into Kuppa V2.

July-August 2023. Project Lead for work to redesign Tower Hamlets' Community Language Service. Led rapid user research over 4 weeks, developed a set of visual scenario illustrations to prototype and gain feedback on the emerging service concept and delivered recommendations in a final report, to be prototyped as part of a 'soft launch' this month.

I have provided service design training sessions and/or other educational experiences for X years:

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My philosophy as a trainer is:

To cater to a range of learning styles by offering a range of activities that allow different types of engagement (presentations, space for individual thought, small/whole group activities). Also, to be responsive to the interests of those in the session and be prepared to share additional learning or resources and to adapt the session.

These are the service design training sessions and/or other educational experiences I've facilitated within the last year:

I have facilitate the following training sessions in the past year, all for the Welsh Local Government Association:
8th February 2023 - User Research Basics and Introduction - 10 participants
10th February 2023 - User Research Basics and Introduction - 10 participants
13th February 2023 - User Persona Development - 13 participants
15th February 2023 - User Persona Development - 12 participants

More details:
https://basis.co.uk/welsh-local-government-association-digital-skills-training/

I mostly provide my training offerings in the following language(s):

English

I mostly provide my training offerings in the following countries/cities:

Online

I cover the following topics during my training offerings:

- Definition of service design
- User research/deep customer insights
- Visualisation techniques

My training participants typically have the following level of experience:

- Novice (new to service design)

These are my favourite cases I use to inform participants about the impact and value of service design:

In the user research training I used this case study provided by the consultancy who was my client, Basis:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y3S0S6W41w

The case study illustrates how user research helped them challenge assumptions about what type of service would be impactful for victims of gender-based violence in a London-borough - demonstrating the value of conducting user research (in this case, through interviews).

In the user persona training, I referenced this case study from a senior user researcher at the UK Ministry of Justice.

https://medium.com/uxr-content/your-personas-probably-suck-heres-how-you-can-build-them-better-b2b32a45c93b

I love this article as it demonstrates user personas as a balance between the art of communicating someone's story and the science of accurately representing the experiences of a grouping. This group of user researchers aimed here to take a really rigorous approach to both aspects of this, drawing on academic research on storytelling and employing a rigorous approach to coding and analyzing their research data.

These are the service design methods and tools that I use during my sessions:

I predominantly referenced the following tools during these sessions:

User research
- Qualitative research: interviews, observation, diary studies, usability testing
- Quantitative research: surveys, card sorting, A/B testing
Affinity Mapping
User personas
These are relevant as they are all ways of understanding, analyzing and representing user needs in relation to services.

After successfully attending my training sessions, participants will typically be able to:

Plan ethical user research and use variety of research methods to understand user need.
Use user research to create user personas.

I apply the following evaluation tools to make sure the participants have understood the content of my sessions and gained the expected competencies and skills:

Follow up survey

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