

Co-production framework in adult social care

Setting out how we will co-produce across
our services in Manchester

2025-2026

#WeAreCommunity



Introduction

In Adult Social Care, we aspire to have citizens at the heart of all we do.

Part of this is ensuring that our care and support services are effective and person-centred. One way to ensure we are truly achieving this, rather than speculating, is to identify and respond to solutions collaboratively with the community through co-production.

It is important to embed co-production as a central part of our work and approach to what we do, rather than the exception. By doing so we ensure that the value of lived experience is utilised in shaping how we work and our priorities.

To ensure we are able to maximise every opportunity we have developed this framework. The purpose of this framework is to add structure to our approach to co-production which includes defining co-production as well as articulating our approach, goals and ambition.

The Care Act (2014) specifically includes the concept of co-production in its statutory guidance.

As stated on the Social Care Institute for Excellence's website, **"The guidance defines co-production and suggests that it should be a key part of implementing the Care Act. In particular, co-production should be used to develop preventative, strength-based services, support assessment, shape the local care market, and plan information and advice services."**

There are strong links between this framework and other key documents such as the adult social care commissioning plan, therefore this framework should not be read in isolation.

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What is co-production?

It's important to be able to define co-production as a shared understanding makes embedding co-production into practice easier and allows us to more accurately benchmark our progress.

Co-production is defined by Social Care Institute for Excellence (2022) as:

“Working in partnership by sharing power between people who draw on care and support, carers, families and citizens.”

Due to the research into the area there is raft of definitions that centre around; shared solutions, building relationships, being values driven and meaningful change.

It must also be stated that there are many levels of involvement people can have in their care and support. There is a clear distinction between consultation, engagement, co-design and co-production in terms of level of involvement and how much power is shared. Co-production is our aspiration, where we are truly co-creating solutions to problems together.

Co-production recognises that everyone has a meaningful contribution to offer, and everyone's input is valued equally.

To be able to maximise this opportunity requires the ability to have a positive shared culture across the adult social care directorate as well as across the organisation and system, where everybody feels safe and has confidence that their contributions and experience will be respected.



Our objective

We recognise that our communities have incredibly valuable context and experience around how services are functioning. Therefore we want to ensure that the views and perspectives of residents' shape and influence our service planning and delivery.

Our objective is to empower colleagues, citizens and communities by ensuring they can have accessible opportunities, a true say, and a key part in creating services that truly meet their needs.

Co-production engages communities - both professionals and citizens - in creating an environment that harnesses individual and collective input into service and process improvement. This approach makes sure that services meet local needs more effectively and helps people feel a sense of empowerment and belonging.

Co-production improves the quality of services and encourages teamwork and inclusive decision-making which ultimately helps both the council and the community.

Through true co-production, we can ensure the council truly understands the live issues impacting people's health and responds accordingly by creating solutions that pool together everybody's collective insights and skills.



Our vision

Our co-production programme has seen us invest in both a Co-production Lead and two Co-production Coordinators to help us climb the co-production ladder.

The aim of this programme is twofold:

- 1** To identify more opportunities for shared decision making between those with service experience and system leaders/custodians
- 2** To create the system conditions to facilitate genuine co-production and embed the resulting innovation within the system effectively.

This is recognised as a long-term vision that will require both commitment and consistency to achieve, as it will require a culture shift and greater equity of power between the council, and the people we serve, than we have historically demonstrated.

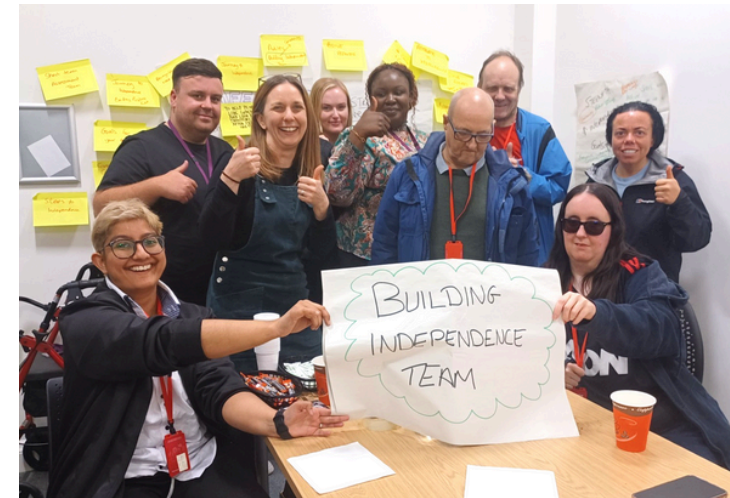
The term 'co-production programme' is used to describe our intended gradual shift from consultation to more meaningful 'engagement', or moving from 'engagement' to 'co-design' opportunities, etc. We also recognise that we cannot co-produce everything, as in some circumstances there will be statutory non-negotiables that prevent dialogue from starting on a blank slate.



Our intentions

A non-exhaustive list of the programme's intentions are:

- To create a consistent, shared definition of co-production across our directorate
- To support staff across all levels of Adult Social Care to understand and increase confidence in what best practice co-production looks like (through both dialogue and the creation of accessible resources)
- To identify opportunities within Adult Social Care services to climb the co-production ladder
- To establish and embed the new Co-production Coordinator roles as a supportive point of contact to unpick barriers to co-production
- To create a clear directorate-wide commitment and offer to our volunteers (people with lived experience that give up their time to work with us)
- To create and refine policy around co-production practice (e.g. developing robust remuneration policy)
- To improve the feedback loop between the council and people with lived experience
- To improve the accessibility of council resources and communications.



Culture

Culture is a key factor in determining the success of co-production; a collaborative approach in which people work together from design through to delivery.

Having a supportive and inclusive culture promotes transparency and increases openness to change, as people will feel safe to be their authentic selves and have confidence that their input will be valued.

This framework is to help further enhance the positive culture we have in adult social care by standardising key messages surrounding co-production.

Our leadership provides us with direction, ensuring alignment and commitment. We are very fortunate that we have very strong inclusive leadership that advocates and supports co-production as this plays a crucial role in having a positive learning and development culture and mindset across the adult social care directorate.

Leadership having a strong understanding and appreciation of co-production also means they can support the right system conditions to allow co-production to thrive, by setting reasonable timescales that allow for truly meaningful discussions, and that ensures the feedback loop is always completed.

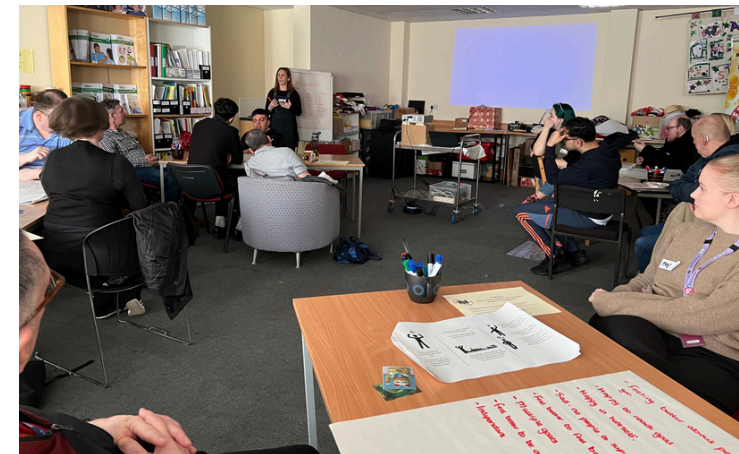


Principles

The four main principles of co-production, according to the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), are equality, diversity, accessibility, and reciprocity.

These values underpin effective and meaningful interactions and ensure everybody can participate to their full potential in collaborative spaces:

- **Equality:** Everyone involved, regardless of their role or experience, is considered equal and has something valuable to contribute. This means recognising the assets and expertise that all individuals bring to the co-production process.
- **Diversity:** Co-production should be inclusive and actively seek to engage a wide range of people from different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This ensures that a diverse range of voices and ideas are considered.
- **Accessibility:** The co-production process should be accessible to everyone involved, both physically and in terms of information and communication. This means ensuring that all participants can fully engage and participate.
- **Reciprocity:** Co-production is about giving and receiving. Everyone involved should feel valued and that their contributions are appreciated. This can involve a sense of mutual benefit, where people feel they are getting something back for their input.



The ladder of co-production

The ladder of co-production describes a series of steps towards full co-production in health and social care.

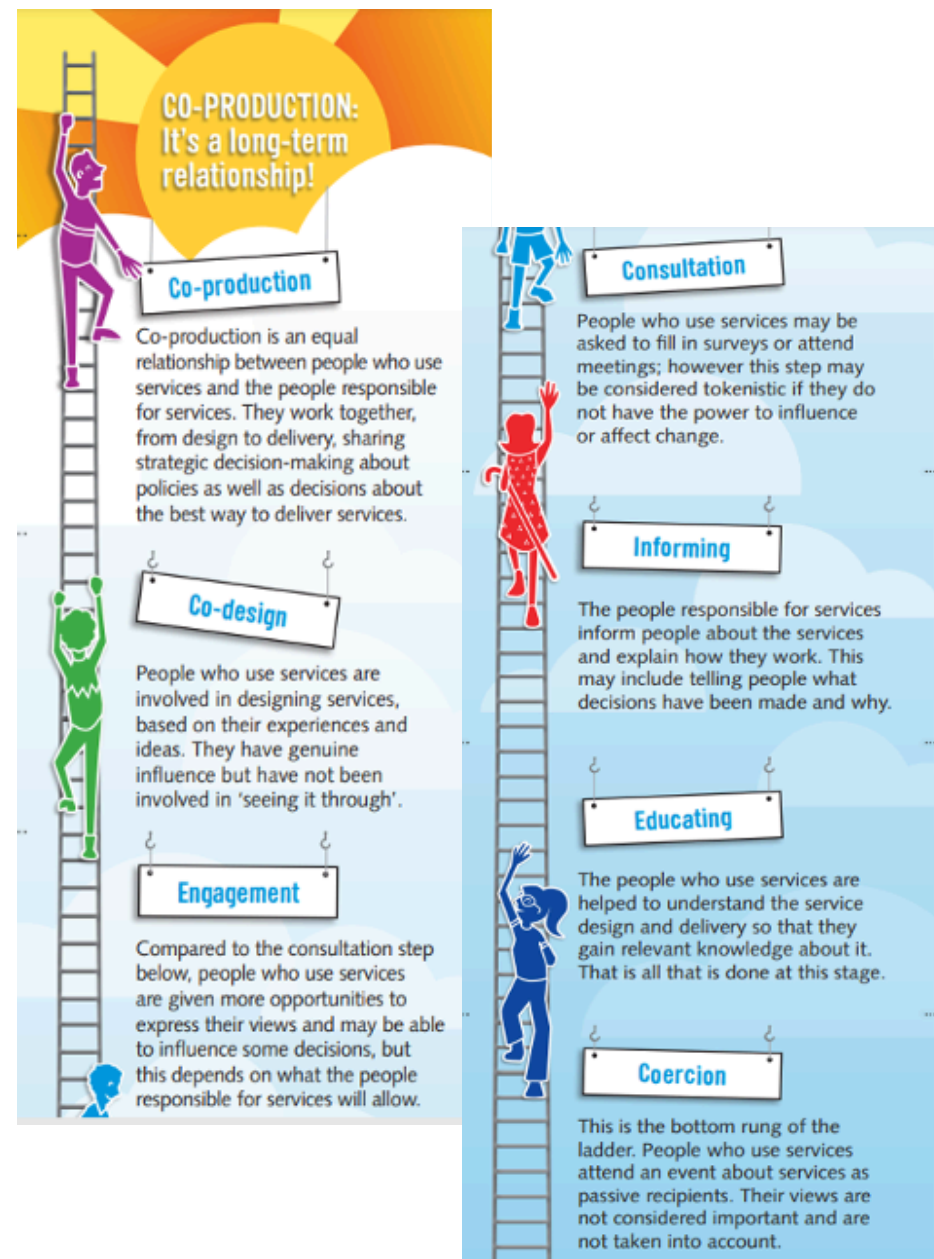
It supports greater understanding of the various steps such as access, inclusion and consultation.

A robust understanding of the co-production ladder will ensure that we benchmark our progress on this learning journey accurately, as well as ensure that we never unintentionally oversell and underdeliver regarding how much influence people have over a particular piece of work.

What makes co-production different?

Co-production stands out because it emphasises a collaborative, equal partnership between those who use services, their families, and professionals - unlike approaches that involve consultation or simply participation.

It shifts the focus from "doing for" or "doing to" to **"doing with"**, valuing the combined expertise and experiences of all involved to design, implement, and improve services.



Tiers of co-production

It's also important to describe the three tiers of co-production which are individual, operational and strategic.

1

At an **individual level**, co-production ensures that support is co-produced with individuals, families, friends, carers, the community and statutory services. It uses a person-centred approach and recognises people's strengths and values. For example, co-producing care plans.

2

Operational co-production involves a service or a team working with those who use their services, to design, develop and monitor processes and delivery. The service needs to hear from more than one voice, and it is important that information is shared with the wider community. This might include group participation activities and capturing individual experiences. For example, co-producing Principles of Best Practice.

3

Strategic co-production is about a system working with a community that relies on the services it delivers or funds. It can mean working with multiple organisations who together make a system. At a strategic level hearing from the wider community is key to ensuring the community voice influences and informs system wide planning, including agreeing priorities and budgetary management. For example, co-producing a Prevention Strategy.

As a department we use all three tiers to ensure that we maximise every opportunity to co-produce.



How can co-production make a difference?

Co-production can significantly impact individuals, services, and organizations by promoting empowerment, improving outcomes, and fostering more effective, person-centred care.

Benefits for individuals

- Empowerment and increased self-confidence: co-production gives people with lived experience a voice and a sense of agency, fostering self-confidence and empowerment.
- Improved health and well-being: by tailoring services to individual needs, co-production can lead to better health outcomes and overall wellbeing by becoming more effective at meeting those needs.
- Greater engagement and trust: when people feel heard and involved, they are more likely to engage with services and build trust with providers.
- Higher levels of satisfaction: co-produced services are often more relevant and effective, leading to higher satisfaction levels among users.

Benefits for services

- More effective and targeted services: by involving users in the design and delivery process, services can be better aligned with actual needs and preferences.
- Reduced costs: by focusing on effective prevention and tailored services, co-production can help reduce overall costs by taking a minimally invasive approach that is more responsive, and prevention focused.
- Increased capacity for change and innovation: co-production encourages innovation and can help organizations adapt to changing needs.
- Better use of resources: co-production can help identify and utilise available resources more effectively, leading to better outcomes.

Benefits for organisations

- Increased staff motivation: co-production can help staff feel more valued and motivated when they are involved in shaping services.
- Improved public image: organisations that embrace co-production often demonstrate a commitment to improving services and can enhance their public image by showing that they value the voice of their communities.
- Enhanced learning and knowledge: co-production can create opportunities for organizations to learn from users and build a more diverse understanding of service needs by having a more diverse range of expertise in the room.
- More sustainable solutions: by involving users in the process, organizations can develop solutions that are more likely to be sustainable and effective in the long term as they are more accurately connected to the live system context.

Co-production in commissioning

We will use co-production as part of the commissioning process by:

- Ensuring the co-production process is accessible
- Allowing enough lead in time to co-produce as part of the procurement timetable
- Ensuring training is available to commissioners
- Providing support and resources in the form of a Co-production 'Toolkit'

How we will co-produce

1. Building Meaningful Relationships

We want to co-produce with a wide range of lived experience partners that represent the incredible diversity of Manchester. To support this, the co-production team and colleagues are connecting with MACC and other key third sector partners to build stronger community links that can help platform co-production opportunities and nurture existing relationships with citizens further.

We want to ensure we are producing content and offering spaces ahead of co-production opportunities for people to ask questions so they can make a fully informed decision about being involved, and confident around what their input will be contributing to.

We will always prioritise closing the 'feedback loop' so that people can understand what their contributions have led to, including clearly explaining in the event any feedback could not be implemented. This will be crucial to building and maintaining trust and ensuring any sessions around feedback feel truly meaningful.



2. Developing dedicated collaborative spaces

We want to build more recurring, business-as-usual spaces where people with lived experience can co-design and co-produce solutions to challenges with the council. One area we have begun this work is within safeguarding; the Our Safeguarding Voices Action Group meets monthly and is working through an 'Insights Log' that builds on a strengths-based approach to safeguarding concerns which:

- keeps the person at the centre
- respects an adult's wishes and autonomy,
- builds on existing support networks
- ensures advocacy is available when needed.

Working together, the group created an inclusive poster to raise awareness about safeguarding. They are now building on this success in a wider campaign designed to empower and inform those at risk of harm or abuse - and those with lived experience of harm and abuse and their carers.



3. Key Principles

We are planning to co-produce key principles of best practice with citizens to underpin all our practice in Adult Social Care. These will include the 4 key principles of co-production outlined earlier in this framework but will also be shaped by what the community tells us during these sessions. The principles will form the basis of a wider co-production toolkit and be continuously developed and reviewed by the community.



4. Language, Accessibility, and Support

We want to ensure people can feel comfortable co-producing with the council. We are committed to improving our approach to language and accessibility by ensuring we are using everyday language and that written communication follows accessibility principles around font types and sizes.

We are committed to ensuring barriers to engagement are removed and will ensure nobody is ever out of pocket when co-producing with the council. We are aiming to develop a robust remuneration policy that means we can go further than our current practice



5.Resources, Policies and Guidance

A core priority for the co-production programme is the development of accessible resources, tools, policy and guidance to support both understanding and implementation of co-production practice so it becomes our 'go-to' way of working and business as usual. These resources will include (but are not limited to):



- A dedicated page for co-production that colleagues and community partners can access containing a co-production 'toolkit'
- Improved training that is ideally co-produced and co-facilitated by people with lived experience of the subject matter (e.g., conditions such as Autism, or circumstances such as Safeguarding)
- Webinars that colleagues can access without needing to book onto training
- New or refined policies (volunteer commitment, policy for paying / reimbursing volunteers, process for supporting volunteers, etc.).

In the spirit of the co-production programme, we want to co-produce the above wherever possible.

