

# Co-production and Participation: The basics



## What is co-production

Co-production is a collaborative approach to designing and delivering services in which professionals and the people who use those services work together as equal partners. Instead of viewing individuals as passive recipients, co-production values their lived experience, skills, and insights, ensuring that services are shaped by the people most affected by them. This approach promotes shared decision-making, mutual respect, and a sense of ownership, ultimately leading to more effective, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes.

Co-production is

- A genuine partnership between professionals and people with lived experience.
- Based on shared power, responsibility, and decision-making.
- About valuing everyone's knowledge equally—both professional expertise and lived experience.
- Focused on creating, designing, and delivering services together from the start.
- Built on trust, openness, and mutual respect.

Co-production isn't

- Just consulting or asking for feedback after decisions are made.
- Tokenistic involvement where people's voices are included but not acted upon.
- A one-off event or meeting—it's an ongoing process.
- Professionals "doing to" or "doing for" people instead of "doing with."
- Simply volunteering or participation without real influence over outcomes.

## Why it matters

Co-production leads to:

- Improved services that better meet people's needs.
- Greater trust and stronger relationships.
- Empowered communities who feel heard and valued.

## How to get started

Firstly, consider what are you wanting to change. Is it a policy, service development, workforce development, organisation redesign?

Next, identify who will be effected by the changes? Is there already any participation groups such as Salford Parent Carer Forum or Parents 4 Positive Change?

Both groups are experienced in co-production, get in touch with them to see how we can start meaningful co-production.

## Top tips

- Start with trust – Build genuine relationships and respect everyone's experiences.
- Share power – Make sure decision-making is genuinely collaborative.
- Include people early – Involve lived experience from the very start, not just for feedback.
- Be clear about purpose – Agree on shared goals and outcomes.
- Provide support – Offer training, resources, and fair recognition for contributions.
- Communicate openly – Keep everyone informed, listen actively, and be transparent.
- Be flexible – Adapt processes and plans based on feedback and changing needs.
- Celebrate contributions – Recognise the effort and impact of everyone involved.
- Reflect and improve – Regularly review the process and make changes to strengthen collaboration.

#withnot2

#co-production

#workingtogether

#participation