

# A guide to getting started in co-production

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# A guide to getting started in co-production

The term 'co-production' describes working in partnership by sharing power between people who draw on care and support, carers, families and citizens (Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)).

Co-production can be used for a short-term, single purpose project or it can be used over time. Every situation will be different. Every individual and every co-production facilitator, every organisation will have a different experience of and approach to co-production.

Co-production is about creating equal value and equal benefit for all stakeholders who are involved in working towards a collective outcome or improvement. Its aim is to produce new products and services which meet the needs of those using them (and those supplying and commissioning them) by ensuring that each individual voice has been heard during the design, production and 'live' stages of product and service creation. It will involve drawing on the lived and learned experience of people who draw on care and support, workforce, local authorities, technology companies and any other stakeholders who the proposed technology affects, directly and indirectly.

## TOP TIP

**Accommodation and flexibility are crucial.**





## Every day we make decisions on how we live and control our lives.

A restaurant booking at a time that suits, a new coat in the size, the colour and delivered to our door at a time that suits us.

Imagine being told by someone who hasn't experienced life in the way you have, that the care and support you need is to be provided in a way that doesn't allow you to live a good life, a life defined in your terms. We wouldn't accept it.

That's why co-production must be integral to health and care, always the starting point, always defined by the individual who will receive the support to live a good life.

We need to learn to look through the lens of the individual, not the professionals, not even a family or friend.

I'm delighted to support this guide to Getting Started in Co-Production. I believe it can help start to make that change.

**Fiona Brown,**  
**ADASS Northeast lead, Non-Executive Director TSA and former Director of Adult social care in Sunderland**



## Why co-produce?

- Better understanding the needs, motivation and goals of your target audience means they are more likely to adopt your proposed change/product/service and to get benefit from it.
- Engaging customers and other stakeholders during the process can inform user interface and experience at an earlier stage avoiding delays later in the process.
- Closer customer and stakeholder engagement can help you scale your product/service as this has been created in collaboration with those with lived experience who can then recommend it to others.
- New insights and unmet needs are often discovered through the co-production process allowing for product/service changes earlier in the process when it's less expensive to make changes.
- Validates your technology priorities and inspires new priorities.



“ The idea of co-production is not new to technologists - every good system design involves thinking carefully about how it will be used and by whom and under which circumstances.

At Microsoft, we have a team focused on ensuring that our technologies are also accessible and - we employ and draw upon the experiences of people with lived experience to do this.

Another important aspect of this co-production is in ensuring that our organisational culture recognises and embraces the unique contribution we can all make, encouraging active allyship and inclusion from all employees.

**Helena Zaum, Social Care Lead,  
Microsoft**

Co-production should start at the research or discovery stage, during product design and development through to product and service delivery - similar to an agile product build and more than simply testing the user interface (UI) or user experience (UX) at later stages of a project. Customers and stakeholders are an integral part of the entire design and delivery process instead of just observers

**TOP TIP**

**Co-production is a journey, not a destination.  
Acknowledge your position on the Co-production Ladder  
Think Local Act Personal**



or “consulted”. Planned co-production cycles, co-producing at specific intervals or even intermittent co-production can help products, service, and markets to grow in a way that is mutually beneficial - meeting peoples’ needs and company targets.

The following principles have been pulled together and can be applied to any project.

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# Preparation

## Intention

Co-production is a mindset more than it is a methodology.

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Are we serious about this?

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Are we prepared to listen to and act upon what we hear?

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Do we have full support from leadership?

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Why are we doing this?

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Are we comfortable with uncertainty?

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Are we prepared to commit a budget to this?

### TOP TIP

**Co-production is creative and untidy, get comfortable with being uncomfortable!**

## Purpose

Clearly outline the purpose of the co-production work!

- What outcome are you hoping to achieve?
- Are you open to unintended outcomes?
- Who is responsible and how are you going to capture this?

Work with the co-production group at the beginning of each session to ensure this is clear.

Revisit this at the end of each session to ensure it's been achieved.

## Value

People are human assets! Value their lived and learned experiences on an equal basis. Look beyond their experience of care and support, consider their professional skills, networking skills, community and voluntary contributions.

Pay them for their time. [Coproduction Collective](#) and [SCIE](#)

### TOP TIP

**This is insightful knowledge transfer at its best. Value this.**



## Language

Pay attention to the language you use. People who draw on care and support are often viewed as beneficiaries, recipients or users. This language is unhelpful. If you don't know, ask people what is appropriate for them. This will be a work in progress but tune in to how others are describing social care in a more human, positive and equal way.

## Accessibility

Consider accessibility in terms of language, time and reasonable adjustments that may need to be made for your co-production work. Allocate time and budget to this where required. Use plain English.

[Check out TLAP Jargon Buster!](#)

## Time

In co-production time is both your friend and your enemy. When you have allowed enough time to build relationships, it is your friend. When you have a deadline to work to, it is your enemy. Use it wisely. Prepare well for your sessions, allow time for people to get to know each other, time to understand the purpose and scope. Stick to your agenda well, work on clear topics, give breaks and revisit at the end. Also allow time for follow up

### TOP TIP

**Time is required, budget for more time than you first think you will need.**



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## Relationships

• This is a reciprocal relationship. It must be respectful.

• Effective relationships require trust. Trust must be earned.

• Identify key stakeholders. Map your stakeholders. Ask yourself and others, is everyone there who needs to be there? Is your group diverse enough? If not, why not?

### TOP TIP

**Is there lived or learned experience within your own team?**

Notice where the power lies, the emphasis in co-production is about empowering and equalising power imbalances. Everyone is here on an equal basis.

Where you are working with people who draw on care and support, be mindful that they have told their story before, perhaps many times, and often without seeing fruits of this sharing. We are seeking insights, ideas born from experience not mining for information.



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# Delivery

## Framework

Have a clear purpose for your session. Communicate this well when recruiting participants.

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Ask for consent to record the session – have whatever paperwork is required in simple and accessible formats.

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If recording is not possible, have a notetaker/extra facilitator to capture insights.

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Have a framework for your session such as introductions, icebreaker, and time to get to know each other before delving right in.

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Build in adequate breaks – this may be more than you normally use. Take the breaks, don't be tempted to work through.

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Clearly explain the purpose of the session and intended outcomes (be prepared for these to turn out differently).

### TOP TIP

**Wrap up, follow up and follow through.**

Have purposeful questions/topics.

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Recap regularly.

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Use breakout rooms or flip charts.

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Facilitate well – make sure everyone has had a chance to voice their opinions.

### TOP TIP

**Make the session as interactive as possible.**

Sense-check your understanding of what has been said. Build time into the meeting to do this thoroughly.

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Pay attention to what has not been said – this is more challenging.

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Wrap up, follow up and follow through.



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## Payment

Pay people for their time. See [Coproduction Collective](#) and [SCIE](#) for advice on paying people with lived experience of drawing on care and supports.

### TOP TIP

**Pay in a timely way with a simple process.**

### TOP TIP

**Don't be tempted to cut corners by multi-tasking, focus on the task in hand.**

## Skilled facilitation for delivery

If you don't have strong facilitation skills and impartial facilitators, consider outsourcing this piece of work. You want to maximise your time with your participants and learn from their skills and experiences.

## Listening and responding

Allow space for people to think, feel comfortable in sharing their opinions and ideas and space for facilitators to pick up on what is unsaid.

Notice who in the group has not either had the opportunity to speak or haven't been willing to speak. Support them to contribute.

### TOP TIP

**Listen with empathy.**

Validate your understanding of what you have heard by sense checking with the group. Pay attention to the detail of your understanding. Make sure that this does not get lost in translation.

# Follow up

Once you are finished, explain next steps to the group and tell them when you will follow up.

Close out the session or the relationship on feedback on how and where their contributions added value.

## TOP TIP

Tell people where they have added value!

## TOP TIP

Amplify the good news stories of co-producing well. Also share learnings of those things that perhaps haven't gone so well.

