

# Viewpoint on Co-Production, Personalisation and Housing: Improving Outcomes for Individuals and Communities

Prepared for the Housing Learning & Improvement Network by  
**Merron Simpson**, New Realities Limited

## Summary

Localising community services at the same time as reducing budgets is testing the public sector. Having more responsibility and less resource is an undesirable state of affairs and is very demanding on professionals who are facing uncertain times.

This paper takes an optimistic view of what could be achieved. It looks at ways in which housing, social care and other professionals might reorientate and reorganise their programmes in the light of localism and the expectation of a 'bigger society'. It supports the opinion that co-production, which shares many of the principles of personalisation, is a credible model for public service reform across many sectors. Better value for money can be achieved by focusing on 'doing the right things' in the eyes of individuals and communities. Involving people in designing services and making them available, and recognising their capacity for participation in using services, can also deliver significant social benefits which help to build resilience and long-term sustainability. Success with co-production has been demonstrated on a small scale many times.

Some building blocks are already in place within the social care, housing and planning sectors. Personal budgets, local offers, community consultation in planning to name just a few. The Localism Bill will introduce some new duties, but the general power of competence is a signal for local authorities to work creatively with their communities to shape their particular service-set.

Making the best of all this requires a change in thinking about how services are made available within and used by communities and about the roles of citizens and professionals in making that happen. Co-production that really changes people's lives and delivers more for less is possible and desirable. This paper puts forward some pointers and suggestions for steps to take to embrace a transformative model of co-production.

## Introduction

The subject of planning for and building new homes has featured significantly in recent discussions about localism. Most of them have focused on whether communities can be trusted to act for the greater good and concern themselves sufficiently with the difficulties others have accessing suitable housing, once they have the Community Right to Build<sup>1</sup>.

Hotly contested issues like these expose some of the difficulties with localism, but they also provide a meagre and distorted picture. They do not leave space for discussion about the different ways in which individuals and communities might be empowered and engaged, or the variety of benefits that could be created. Neither do they help professionals grappling with a high level of uncertainty in the current moment to understand how they might redesign their service models around their service users, tenants and citizens, and involve communities to provide better services, a better environment, and to realise additional gains, all at lower cost.

These are important issues. Where the previous Government dabbled in localism, this Government is making it happen in a much bigger way. It is taking the stabilisers off – in three senses.

*First*, it has hugely reduced the amount of guidance, national targets and regulation and has ‘set free’ local authorities and communities in different ways to organise and regulate themselves. They are now expected to pedal, steer and balance the bike themselves.

*Second*, the level of resources available will be significantly lower, although some places will be affected more than others. This is having the effect of ‘unfreezing’ the current model of service provision and demanding new approaches. On this point in particular, Lord Richard Bichard, then Director of the Institute for Government said “*Those who run public services can do one of two things: carry on trying to run services as they do now and wait for the fallout from the budget, knowing that current flaws in their services will only become more obvious and more entrenched. Alternatively, ask serious questions about how a service is functioning and radically rethink its design. It will take imagination and innovation and it won't be pain-free, but doing it could help people get even better services than before and cut waste.*”<sup>2</sup>

*Third*, it has taken away many of the checks and balances that have, until now, tempered the inequalities between different places. National housing targets have gone, the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system that redistributed resources between authorities will be replaced by a localised self-financing system, and the regional level of planning that made the case for infrastructure across many localities is being abolished.

Professionals in all spheres will have to adjust quickly, adopt some new attitudes and learn some new tricks. The Coalition Government sees communities increasingly meeting their own needs and driving their own aspirations, and this includes taking care of their own vulnerable people. Professionals now need to get behind their communities, respond to their ambitions and support their ability to engage, in order to stay relevant. For providers and commissioners of care, support and housing services, this means turning their attention to

---

<sup>1</sup> Leaflet on Community Right to Build, DCLG, 2010

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/newsroom/pdf/1647749.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Budget 2010: Cut – but be smart about it, says thinktank*. Guardian Tuesday 22 June 2010

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jun/22/budget-2010-cut-smart-thinktank>

the supply-side of service provision, and considering how best they can help to engage, organise and invest in communities to carry out this task.

## **Converging agendas – personalisation and co-production**

The Putting People First programme, now the Personalisation Programme<sup>3</sup>, has been the main driver of personalisation so far. It has provided a framework for adult social care professionals, together with health and housing partners, to give individuals more control and choice between service options, to help them to live independently and achieve their personal ambitions.

New visions for health<sup>4</sup> and for adult social care<sup>5</sup> are up front about their intention to continue with personalisation. Their aim is to put patients at the heart of the NHS so that shared decision-making becomes the norm ... *'no decision about me without me'*. Similarly, the first of three values for social care, *'Freedom'*, describes *'the ability of the individual to choose services from a plural market'*.

Echoing recent statements about the Big Society (and small government), the adult social care vision also describes a bigger role for the communities to create that plural market in its third value, *'Responsibility'* ... *'the role of wider civil society to run innovative schemes and build social networks of support'*. The anticipated large reductions in Supporting People budgets in some places leave no option for professionals but to work with communities to fill gaps that will inevitably emerge.

While this is a whole new dimension to the task of personalisation, it may not be as onerous as it at first appears. It requires professionals to appreciate, identify and tap into existing resources within communities, and to be prepared to 'co-produce' their services with those communities. It requires an understanding of communities' existing appetite for taking responsibility, and of the different ways in which people engage and use services, and a willingness to develop their capacity over time. Those that have embraced Putting People First will be familiar with some of these principles. Their work to personalise services, shape markets and give services users more control and choice will have given them a head start. They have already started to learn the language of empowerment.

## **Co-production: a model for reforming public services?**

The desire for a new approach to public services is not only coming from Government. The current welfare state, based on William Beveridge's vision, was revolutionary in its time, and made huge improvements to people's lives. But many now believe that its *delivery-focus*, in which the state is in control and provides services for citizens, allowed a culture of dependency and of a degree of complacency to develop<sup>6</sup>. It encouraged people to expect too much from the state and to offer too little of their own effort in return. It also resulted in what is sometimes referred to as a 'deficit model' that focuses on people's or communities' needs rather than on what they have to offer.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Think Local, Act Personal: next steps for transforming social care*. A proposed sector-wide commitment to moving forward with personalisation and community-based support. November 2010

<sup>4</sup> *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS*, Dept of Health, July 2010

<sup>5</sup> *The Vision for Adult Social Care: capable communities and active citizens*, November 2010

<sup>6</sup> *Co-production: a manifesto for growing the core economy*. New Economics Foundation, 2008.

Prior to the new administration, there was a growing appetite to create something new that recognises citizens as 'capable', communities as having resources, and between them as having a range of assets to offer. Such a 'community-asset model' builds upon what people can do instead of seeking to make up for what they can't do, and achieves outcomes that build confidence and that are more valued by citizens<sup>7</sup>.

Co-production is seen by many as the way forward.

Like personalisation, co-production requires a close relationship between commissioners, service providers and citizens, so that plans and services are moulded around and intertwined with the people affected by them. And like personalisation, the benefits are realised in two ways. First, co-production is a means of designing and providing services that are most valued by communities. Second, the activity involved in co-producing can help to strengthen individuals and communities – by inviting engagement, understanding the kind of effort people are prepared to make in using services, supporting the development of social networks, growing leadership skills and increasing the influence that people have over their lives.

**Co-production – a definition**

“Delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.”

*The challenge of co-production* NESTA/nef 2009.

## Getting behind people and communities

The Coalition Government's framework for localism creates the space for communities to have more direct influence in many spheres of public life. New duties and powers in the Localism Bill<sup>8</sup> will make many of the new freedoms for local authorities conditional on sharing power with their communities and to work with a range of partners in doing so. More local decisions will be taken by referendum and measures such as the Right to Challenge provide mechanisms for communities to take more direct control of services. More money will go direct to communities to act apart from their political representatives and other powers, such as planning decisions, will also be made by communities where there is sufficient support.

Those organisations that have a stronger link to a place and its people will have greater legitimacy, responsibility and scope to work on behalf of the community. Resource levels are also important. Neighbourhood and community groups could find themselves with more money from a variety of sources – such as the Community Infrastructure Levy, a portion of which is to be devolved to neighbourhoods, and the Community Budget to be spent on tackling social problems around families with complex needs – and therefore more influence. Under self-financing, some local authorities and Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) could find themselves with new resources to draw on to support community-facing activities and this could maintain, or even increase, their strength as commissioners for their locality.

---

<sup>7</sup> *Glass half full: how an asset approach can improve community health and wellbeing*, IDeA 2010

<sup>8</sup> *Localism Bill*, introduced to Parliament 13 December 2010

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill>

Whatever the local dynamics between organisations, housing professionals will be expected to work together with a range of local partners – tenants, commissioners, service providers and service users – to agree and work towards shared goals for a locality. How they do it, which organisations will have the upper hand, and how they use that influence – for example to ensure that citizens views are heard – will vary depending on the local circumstances. There will be much less guidance, more scope for innovation and greater incentives for residents to have a seat at the table.

For example, local authorities will soon have new duties to draw up a strategic policy that makes intelligent use of new flexible tenancies in consultation with registered providers, and probably with tenants and community-based organisations too<sup>9</sup>. Tenant panels, where they exist, will provide a useful consultation group on this and other matters, although the perspectives of other residents are important too. Some professionals will find it difficult to see tenants and other citizens as capable of being involved in generating policies on this sort of sensitive issue.

The Commission for Co-operative and Mutual Housing recently set an ambition for each town, village and community to be able to offer co-operative and mutual housing options to potential residents, by 2030<sup>10</sup>. Discussions are now being held with banks that could provide a loan fund of £250m to support development of new co-operative and mutual housing, borrowed against assets held by mainstream housing providers. A number of housing associations have agreed to provide security for co-operative and mutual organisations, enabling more citizens to choose models that provide greater scope for involvement, for mutual ownership and interest, and for social networks to develop.

The process of drawing up neighbourhood plans offers a new opportunity for citizens to shape the places they live in. Planning officers' role will be to create the conditions for wide and genuine engagement, to develop consensus within the community and to interpret and translate ambitions into plans for the physical environment. They would ideally start with conversations about how citizens want to live their lives and how they would like their neighbourhood to operate. This offers a significant opportunity to raise the profile of Lifetime Neighbourhoods and for older and vulnerable people to shape their environment in a bigger way.

It is in professionals' interest to take up the challenge of co-production, to work with, respond to and support their communities. Organisations that can demonstrate that they are:

- (i) Co-producing – designing services, making them available, understanding the way people use them and assessing the appropriateness as well as the quality of services in partnership with citizens
- (ii) supporting grass-roots organisations to thrive
- (iii) successfully co-ordinating their work with other partners in places where they operate stand to gain most. They will enjoy a more positive dynamic between citizens, providers and commissioners and will be able to put forward a better case for resources as a result. They will also be able to make the most of what little resources they have by organising themselves well to reduce gaps and overlaps.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Local decisions: A fairer future for social housing consultation*. DCLG, November 2010

<sup>10</sup> *Bringing democracy home: The Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing*, Nov 2010  
<http://www.ccmh.coop/sites/default/files/Commission%20Report.pdf>

## Transformative co-production

Not all activities that could be described as co-production have the same degree of positive impact on individuals' or communities' lives.

A recent Department of Health report *Practical Approaches to Co-production*<sup>11</sup> identifies three levels of co-production – compliance, recognition and support, transformation – the first two levels already being an everyday part of British life. For example, most people clean their teeth twice a day, and are therefore co-producing in preventative dental health care – an example of 'compliance'. Tenants are frequently invited to provide feedback on their experiences of their landlord and to make suggestions for improving the existing service, through a variety of means such as surveys, focus groups etc – an example in which services users are 'recognised and supported' in order to shape the service.

The report suggests that it is the third level – the transformative level – that needs to take place as part of personalisation. The difference between the second and third levels could be likened to the difference between tenant involvement and tenant scrutiny panels through which tenants can hold their landlord to account. It involves a shift in power between provider and receiver of services.

There are many examples in which people's lives have been transformed when professionals have been prepared to support non-traditional service models<sup>12</sup>. All of these have an element of co-production. The most transformative experiences come when individuals and communities empower themselves – when they grab opportunities available to make things happen. However, this takes considerable know-how and confidence, and many communities are not in a position to do this unassisted. They need guidance to help them to achieve a shift in power – to raise aspirations, to develop capacity and leadership, to provide good opportunities and incentives and to assist them in spotting and taking opportunities.

**Transformative co-production** ... involves challenging existing cultures and forming new structures of delivery to embed co-production, rather than occasional consultation and involvement which doesn't necessarily result in fundamental change. In this way co-production is the whole process rather than a 'bolt-on' solution'.

*Practical Approaches to Coproduction*

### Castle Vale

The largest post-war housing estate in the Midlands, housing 20,000 people, underwent a massive regeneration programme over the 12 year period between 1993 and 2005. During this time it was transformed from an estate blighted with social exclusion, unemployment and crime to an attractive residential area with new and refurbished homes and high quality facilities that is one of the safest places to live in Birmingham. In 2005, unemployment was down to 5% (from 26% in 1993), educational attainment had increased and life expectancy had increased by 7 years.

<sup>11</sup> *Practical Approaches to Co-production: Building effective partnerships with people using services, carers, families and citizens*. Dept of Health, November 2010

<sup>12</sup> Some examples relating to support and social care:

<http://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.uk/BCC/caseStudy/BuildingTheBigSociety>

Work continues to improve life for people living in the area under the direction of a resident-led Neighbourhood Partnership Board. Some key success factors in this transformation are cited as:

- Resident role in governance – majority of board members are local residents
- Responsiveness of professionals to the community agenda
- The reinvestment of surpluses in Castle Vale
- The co-ordinated approach to services, including neighbourhood tasking
- Holistic nature of regeneration
- Evidence-based nature of the work

### **Southwark Circle**

Southwark Circle is a social enterprise and membership organisation that helps people to 'stay sorted and stay connected'. It employs Neighbourhood Helpers that Members can employ on an hourly basis to help with a wide variety of tasks and learning opportunities – like DIY, gardening, internet tuition. Helpers can choose whether they give their time on a voluntary or a paid basis for which they receive the London living wage. It also provides social activities and enables people to enjoy activities and hobbies together.

Southwark Council provided financial support to set up the Circle but it was co-designed and tested with over 250 older people and their families, and continues to be shaped by its members. Its development was also supported by Participle Limited, which creates future services with and for the public.

The Big Society has focused much more on citizen involvement in *running* services than in *designing* them, the implication being that the route to having an influence over them is to invest time and energy in doing them. There is also a third element that is often overlooked and this relates to how citizens *use* the services provided.

In reality, relatively few people will ever be persuaded to attend meetings to co-design services. More may be persuaded to play a role in co-running services formally or informally, and shaping them as they carry them out. However, many more people will be involved in co-using community services. One of the key elements in co-production is to understand behaviours around how services are or might be used, and to feed this information into the design process to optimise their value. This is relatively easy where individual service-users are concerned, as it requires conversations with the person who will be using the services. It is a bigger challenge to gather this information from communities, but it is doable through dialogue with community representatives and a variety of activities that could be loosely termed market research.

### **Some features of transformative co-production<sup>13</sup>**

Transformative co-production places an emphasis on 'doing the right things', not just on 'doing things right' – and by doing so, achieves better value for money\*.

---

<sup>13</sup> Starred features\* are derived from PRUB-thinking, the core element of OpenStrategies Limited's approach [www.openstrategies.com](http://www.openstrategies.com). OpenStrategies provides a platform that can support co-production of strategies and action plans in a multiple-stakeholder strategic planning environment.

Strategies and action plans that are focused on achieving outcomes that local people want – as opposed to those focused on spending a budget, reducing costs or achieving efficiencies – will result in outcomes that are much more valued. This is the best way to optimise value for money. The point is made in a report by the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group<sup>14</sup> that projects that are adding little value are not necessarily the ones that are being cut. This mismatch between provision and value will continue until organisations commit to seeking out, through a process of dialogue with their communities, what ‘the right thing’ is and making this integral to the process of service design.

The list below unpacks some other features of transformative co-production:

- People are recognised as capable

Rather than being passive recipients of services derived from national or local policies, people’s skills, abilities, energy, passions and capacity for giving and receiving are recognised. Their contribution to ensuring their own well-being and that of others is encouraged, enabled and incentivised. Getting a clearer picture of what individuals and communities are able and willing to do in order to use services for their own benefit will provide insights into how highly valued services might be designed. Also understanding their ability and willingness to be involved in designing and running services – whether paid or unpaid – can inform the engagement and design processes. People’s capabilities are not static, they can be developed over time to increase confidence, create more value and provide greater opportunities.

- Citizens and partners are involved throughout the whole process\*

Traditionally, professionals have prepared an outline or draft strategy that meets national requirements and targets and then proceeded to shape it through a process of consultation. The removal of national indicators and an absence of guidance provide a rare opportunity for individuals and communities to be involved in shaping their services from the very start – for defining the outcomes they want and to shape services that they will use to create benefits.

- It is understood that people and communities (not professionals) create benefits\*

A default to the ‘deficit model’ means that it is quite common for actions to be agreed by professionals and commenced without consideration of how people will engage with the results of those actions to create benefits for themselves or for their neighbourhoods. It is quite common for a youth club to be set up – a professional’s view of a community’s need – but not well used by the young people it is intended for. Citizens have to participate in the process of creating benefits by using services and/or playing a more integral part in running them – an asset approach. Professionals on their own cannot do this. Personal support plans allow individuals to set their own goals; co-production will work best where professionals adopt an asset approach to service design by providing the space and means for citizens to articulate the benefits they themselves could create for the place.

- Communities are enabled to design services that they will use to create benefits\*

Once citizens have articulated the benefits they would like to create (outcomes), they should then be encouraged to consider what it is they need to enable them to create those benefits. Commissioners have a responsibility to allow themselves to be steered by their citizens, and to make sure that the ‘services’ available not only meet needs but also enable people to

---

<sup>14</sup> *Pain without Gain: how the voluntary sector can help deliver the social care agenda for people with disabilities*. Voluntary Organisations Disability Group, 2010.



create benefits from them. This does not mean that communities' behaviours cannot change, but services designed to change behaviours need to be tested before being adopted wholesale.

- Co-produced actions are embedded in partners' action plans\*

Co-production brings clients and providers much closer together, requiring a different type of market-shaping activity. Ensuring that providers respond appropriately, and embed co-produced actions into their action plans, becomes part of the commissioning process especially where budgets have been devolved to individuals or communities, or where the commissioner has limited resources to commission in more traditional ways.

- Relevant models of governance that support co-production are established

In locally based initiatives, it can be helpful to have an appropriate governance structure that is able to co-ordinate action and enjoy support and credibility from local residents and key stakeholders. However, it is also helpful to establish a menu of engagement opportunities for local residents so that all offers of engagement can find a place, whether or not there is a formal board in place.

- There is a principle of reinvestment

Service providers that employ and develop local people and that reinvest their surpluses back into communities – such as social enterprises, co-operatives and community investment companies – are favoured over profit-driven private companies offering equal quality. Citizens become co-beneficiaries of their productive effort.

- Informal giving-and-receiving as well as formal services are supported

Commissioning activities, including those relating to market-shaping, tend to be based around spending. However, citizens also need to be supported where they are involved in running services with a range of types of support, such as help making contacts, mediating or developing skills.

- Ongoing feedback is invited

Co-produced actions and services should be subject to continual review and shaping based on feedback from customers, with bigger changes being agreed through the appropriate governance arrangements. This enables continuous improvement and development to meet changing customer requirements and contributions.

- People develop skills and networks and communities become strong

A consequence of transformative co-production is that people develop new skills – leadership skills, practical skills, social skills – and become part of a network that is active in their locality. As well as helping to overcome isolation and enabling people to look out for each other, this provides much more scope for people to become positively engaged in the life of their community at different levels and in different ways.

### ***Features of transformative co-production – summary***

- Achieves value for money by 'doing the right things'\*
- People are recognised as capable
- Citizens and partners are involved throughout the whole process\*
- It is understood that people and communities create benefits\*
- Communities are enabled to design services that they will use to create benefits\*

- Co-produced actions are embedded in partners' action plans\*
- Relevant models of governance that support co-production are established
- There is a principle of reinvestment
- Informal giving-and-receiving as well as formal services are supported
- Ongoing feedback is invited
- People develop skills and networks and communities become strong

## **Making it happen – co-producing in an era of austerity**

The principles behind co-production, and the experience of many people who have been involved in co-producing services, are essentially good. Co-production is a credible and desirable route to transforming public services in a sustainable way, and it could also save money. However, resources to support such a transition are lacking. Certain changes in approach would support a transition to co-production without necessarily costing a significant amount. Some of these are identified and explored below.

- *Changing the public service framework to overcome barriers*

A number of difficulties with mainstreaming co-production have been identified. A report from NESTA/nef identifies four areas that present barriers to mainstreaming: (i) commissioning co-production activity, (ii) generating evidence of value (iii) taking successful co-production approaches to scale and (iv) developing professionals' skills<sup>15</sup>.

Many of the barriers that fall under these headings are a consequence of the present public service framework that prevents change. For example, co-produced services frequently incur costs in one service area, such as housing, and create benefits in a different service area, such as health, but there is no well-established mechanism for tracking cost-benefit impacts between service areas. Professionals, whose performance is assessed in a more linear fashion, are therefore reluctant to adopt co-production practices.

The current shake-up of public services could allow for a different framework to be shaped. Localised performance frameworks could be moulded around the outcomes that co-produced services are anticipated to achieve. Adopting targets and performance measures with individuals and communities who stand to benefit would provide a much more natural and meaningful assessment process. Cross-silo impacts could be more easily identified, tracked and captured.

'Professionalism' could be redefined to give recognition to those who adopt co-production values and practice. This means placing a higher value on the type of facilitation activities that make things happen through others, rather than on managing processes, being in control or fixing problems.

- *Prioritise based on value to and impact on individuals and communities*

It will be necessary, over the next few years, to discontinue some services. Identifying those services that are either not creating benefits or are costing a lot but only having a small impact, and stopping those, is better than 'salami-slicing' which is less discriminating<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Right here right now: taking co-production into the mainstream*, NESTA/nef, July 2010 identifies 4 barriers to mainstreaming: (i) commissioning co-production activity, (ii) generating evidence of value (iii) taking successful co-production approaches to scale and (iv) developing professionals' skills

<sup>16</sup> OpenStrategies paper on PRUB-Validate – indentifying services that are not creating benefits  
<http://openstrategies.com/service/prub-validate>

Some activities cost very little but can create significant benefits. The principle of prioritising on the basis of value to and impact on people is also appropriate for the design of services, whether or not funding is tight.

- *Maximise the use of assets and resources, including by reinvesting*

Communities hold significant resources in the form of land, buildings and financial resources. Considering all of these together, mapping them to see whether and how they are currently being employed, and looking at how good the 'fit' is with co-designed services, will enable those with control or influence over the various resources to see how they could best be used. Co-production should involve discussions about what assets and resources are available and how they might best be employed.

Providing a range of services for a range of income groups – rather than only providing services to people who are eligible for benefits – can be a means of raising surpluses that can be reinvested. Business growth for social enterprises comes through partnership with the community and responding to new community requests for assistance to creating benefits. Where service contracts are used in commissioning, they can be a vehicle for raising the profile of co-production and reinvestment principles, and making reinvestment demands of service providers.

- *Draw out and build on people's experience, knowledge and capabilities*

Co-producing professionals will need to have a much greater focus on the roles that citizens can play. Individuals and communities are capable of participating in various ways on behalf of themselves and others, and they should be encouraged to put that to use.

Citizens' experience of their own circumstances and of issues in their locality offers a huge degree of knowledge that provides the background and the backbone to co-production. Their views and perspectives are important and should be respected, even though they are often different from those of professionals.

Professionals can help them to develop their capacity for positive engagement through creating conditions for them to strengthen relationships and networks between individuals in communities. Co-producing with people who pay for services together with those who receive state funds – and with tenants as well as other residents – supports the development of social networks across different income-groups.

- *Build consensus wherever possible*

While it is not necessary to achieve 100% agreement, the principle of building consensus runs through co-production. Referendums should not be the default, and could create problems within communities. Instead, citizens should be encouraged to work towards common aims for a locality and encouraged to co-ordinate activities and resources in line with community-generated and agreed goals.

- *Changing the roles of commissioners*

The pivotal position of commissioners, between service users, communities and providers, means they hold the key to bring in a new culture of transformative co-production. It is necessary for them to change their market-shaping roles in order to establish a new dynamic. Some specific pointers for commissioners of care, support and housing are provided:

1. Create a space and the mechanisms to bring services-users, communities and service providers together to co-design services. Also, bring together intelligence about the aspirations of individual service users with those designing services more generally. This has the effect of condensing the market facilitation process. It allows for a better understanding of what individuals and communities are capable of and it allows them to see requirements and shape services more directly.
2. Actively organise and co-ordinate partners to fill service gaps and reduce overlaps, and bring new partners that are committed to co-production, reinvestment and community development to the table.
3. Involve relevant community and service-user led boards in the process of commissioning and procuring housing services. This ensures that the particular housing requirements of vulnerable people – whether it is for new housing or investment in existing housing – are not overlooked.
4. Commission/procure to support positive outcomes for individuals and communities. Where service-users or carers have identified a particular action or service that they could use to create benefits, commissioners can choose ways of making this service available that have added benefits to communities – for example by incorporating a requirement for ‘reinvestment in communities’ within contract specifications.
5. Include co-design principles in market research – to provide fine-grained information about the outcomes services users and communities consider important and ways in which they would like to be supported to create benefits.
6. Undertake community audits – to identify skill levels, social networks and development possibilities within communities. This baseline information can be used to develop an ‘asset approach’ to services with updates being used to measure the impact on communities.
7. Help people to match themselves with appropriate services, and to shape services – including helping people to connect with relevant community groups and working with service providers to adjust and improve services in line with feedback.
8. Understand and support informal relationships and associations – develop suitable support mechanisms and always provide an avenue for people to raise any difficulties they may be experiencing
9. Be diligent about safeguarding – facilitate and co-ordinate the safeguarding activities of a range of parties, to build a picture of where problems might be arising.

## Conclusion

The traditional model for public services, in which professionals 'deliver' services to people who consume them, is coming to the end of its useful life. The Personalisation programme for adult social care has already paved the way for a different approach – one that recognises that people aren't all the same, but that they want different things, are capable of different things and can participate in meeting their own needs aspirations.

Co-production is not that different. It is used in a more general way to describe a partnership between citizens and professional in provision of public services. Elements of co-production have been built into projects for many years, but it has not always been transformative and have not yet found its way into the mainstream. Changes currently taking place in the name of localism provide greater opportunity by removing some barriers, and co-production offers the possibility of better-designed services – including housing and related health, care and support services.

Like personalisation, co-production requires whole-service transformation. In some ways, this is more feasible at a time when public services are already being shaken up. The starting point for remodelling services on the principles of co-production is to recognise that people have skills, capabilities, aspirations and energy, and that when they participate in designing, running and using services, they create benefits for themselves and for society. Changes currently taking place in the name of localism provide greater opportunity for housing professionals to embrace co-production practises leading to better designed services.

Merron Simpson is Director of New Realities [www.newrealities.co.uk](http://www.newrealities.co.uk) . She specialises in 'housing in the context of place' and is a thought leader in the field of housing and communities.

Thanks also to Shahana Ramsden, Co-production, engagement and equalities advisor at the Department of Health for her comments and Jeremy Porteus from the Housing Learning and Improvement Network for his editorial contribution.

For further information about the Housing LIN and to access its comprehensive list of on-line resources, visit [www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/housing](http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/housing)

The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to Extra Care housing. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

Published by:

Housing Learning & Improvement Network

C/o EAC

3rd Floor, 89 Albert Embankment

London SE1 7TP

Tel: 020 7820 8077

Email: [info@housinglin.org.uk](mailto:info@housinglin.org.uk)

Web: [www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/housing](http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/housing)