

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

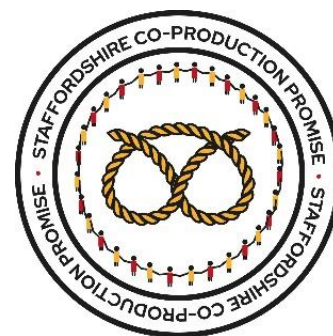


Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Contents

1. An introduction to Co-production	Page 3
2. Local context	Page 4
3. Co-production within an Engagement Context	Page 5
4. Why should we co-produce?	Page 7
5. When to co-produce and when not to?	Page 8
6. 3 Challenges to doing co-production well	Page 9
7. Lessons learned from previous co-production work	Page 10
8. Useful guidance when co-producing	Page 11
9. Practical tools for co-production	Page 11
10. Helpful websites	Page 11
11. Appendix 1 - How to use the Co-production Promise	Page 14
12. Appendix 2 - Using the Staffordshire Co-production Logo	Page 17
13. Appendix 3 - Further context on how we got to this point	Page 18
14. Appendix 4 - Hints & Tips for working with Children & Young People with Additional Needs	Page 20



Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024


An introduction to Co-production

Co-production is not a new term; however, it is a current buzz word. For some reason it is defined slightly differently across national systems and institutions in White Papers and legislation.


Staffordshire wanted a local definition which was easy to read and understand for all and avoided professional language which might risk excluding individuals and families.

Co-production:

- Is never just a tick-box exercise.
- Isn't just partnership working, it must have meaningful "lived experience" involvement.
- Is about sharing of power, ideally as equally as possible.
- Is a long-term relationship that includes and involves from the very beginning of the process to the end.
- Never sees people as passive recipients of support.
- Is a process that celebrates people's hopes and ambitions.
- Sees all individuals as active agents of change who can contribute to society.
- Takes time and resources to do well.
- Intends to change services, ways of working, experiences and outcomes for the better for people.
- Views people as resources, experts and citizens, not as 'patients', 'service users' or a 'drain' on the system.




Staffordshire Co-production Promise




Staffordshire's definition of co-production:
People with responsibility for providing support, sharing their power by working with those receiving that support at every step, so that the help provided is as good as it can be and makes life better.

What does co-production mean for us in Staffordshire?




We will be person-centred

This means:
People really caring and being willing to share any power they may have. It means creating safe spaces for people to get involved and working in a supportive way.
People's experience and contribution are really listened to because they are most important.




We will communicate well with each other

This means:
Our communication is open, honest and timely, and involves listening, conversation, action and feedback.
That all of the systems designed to support people and families will be easy to use for everyone and kept up to date.




We will work together

This means:
We will "work with" not "do to", valuing everyone's strengths and contributions and making decisions together which make life better.
Making sure people know how important co-production is, why they are involved and what they can do to help.



We will be consistently good in our practice

This means:
We all have a role to play, so we accept responsibility, own up to mistakes and put things right quickly.
We all work together to get better help in place early. For example, the right help, at the right time, in the right place, every time!



We will get better at the way we work and what we do

This means:
That applying the principles of this Promise will make things better for people and there is a toolkit to help people co-produce well.
That the voice of people and families will help decide how best to provide the support people most want and need.

This Promise has been co-produced by local children, young people, parents, carers and professionals between November 2021 and July 2023.

CLICK HERE TO GO TO THE TOOLKIT

CLICK HERE TO PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Local context

Staffordshire's co-production promise was itself co-produced with the involvement of children and young people, parents and carers as well as a wide range of professionals from across the children and family's system.

The work was led by Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) at the request of the local SEND and Inclusion Partnership following an OFSTED inspection in 2021.

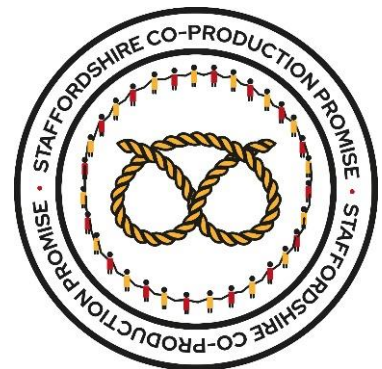
The Promise and toolkit work formed part of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) for Staffordshire resulting from OFSTED inspection findings.

This was initially an ambitious 12-month plan running from April 2022 to April 2023, aiming to transform major elements of the system. Work continues to improve the outcomes and experience of individuals and families requiring additional support.

It is important to note that whilst this work was initiated by the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) for Staffordshire, the intention was to co-produce a promise that was applicable to the whole children and family's support system, and **not** limited to those receiving SEND related support.

In delivering this piece of work, SCVYS sought to align with other pieces of work being undertaken around co-production. By engaging with those involved, there is the potential for the final products to be adopted by Adult Social Care services in Staffordshire, and positive conversations continue with the Children and Young People's system covering the neighbouring local authority of Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Aligning the approach around co-production is particularly important for partners in Health, Police and Fire services who work across both Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent local authority areas.

More information on the journey to date and some wider context can be found later in this toolkit on Page 18.

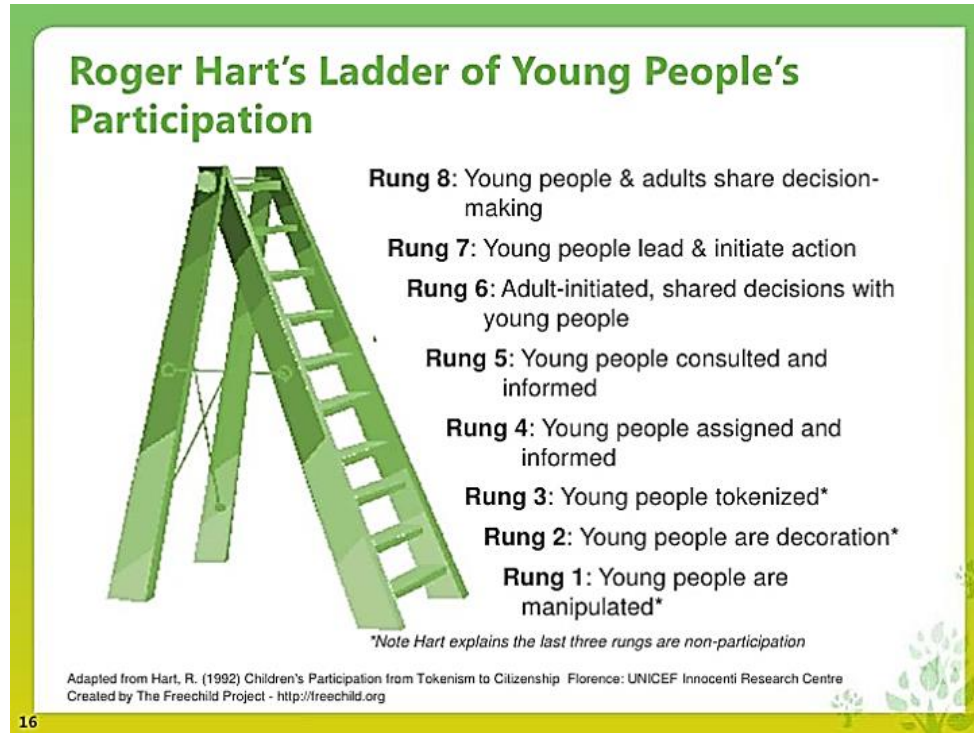


Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

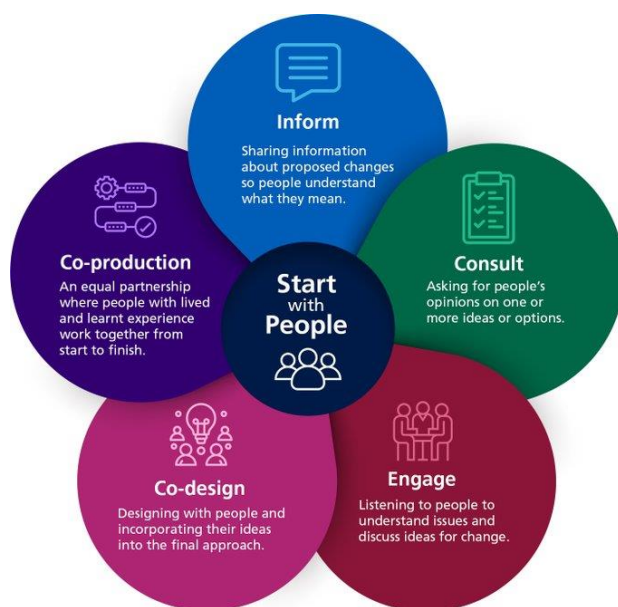
June 2024

Co-production within the wider spectrum of Engagement

Co-production is just one tool in the engagement toolbox as illustrated by the following 3 examples:



In Hart's model, which is one of the dominant models used in youth work practice, co-production equates to Rung 8 of the ladder. It is important to remember that not all the other methods are wrong or bad, and the context for any engagement undertaken is critical in determining the right or best tool. For example, the timescale available, the resources available, the opportunity to truly influence, etc. are all factors that need to be considered in selecting the most appropriate engagement tool.

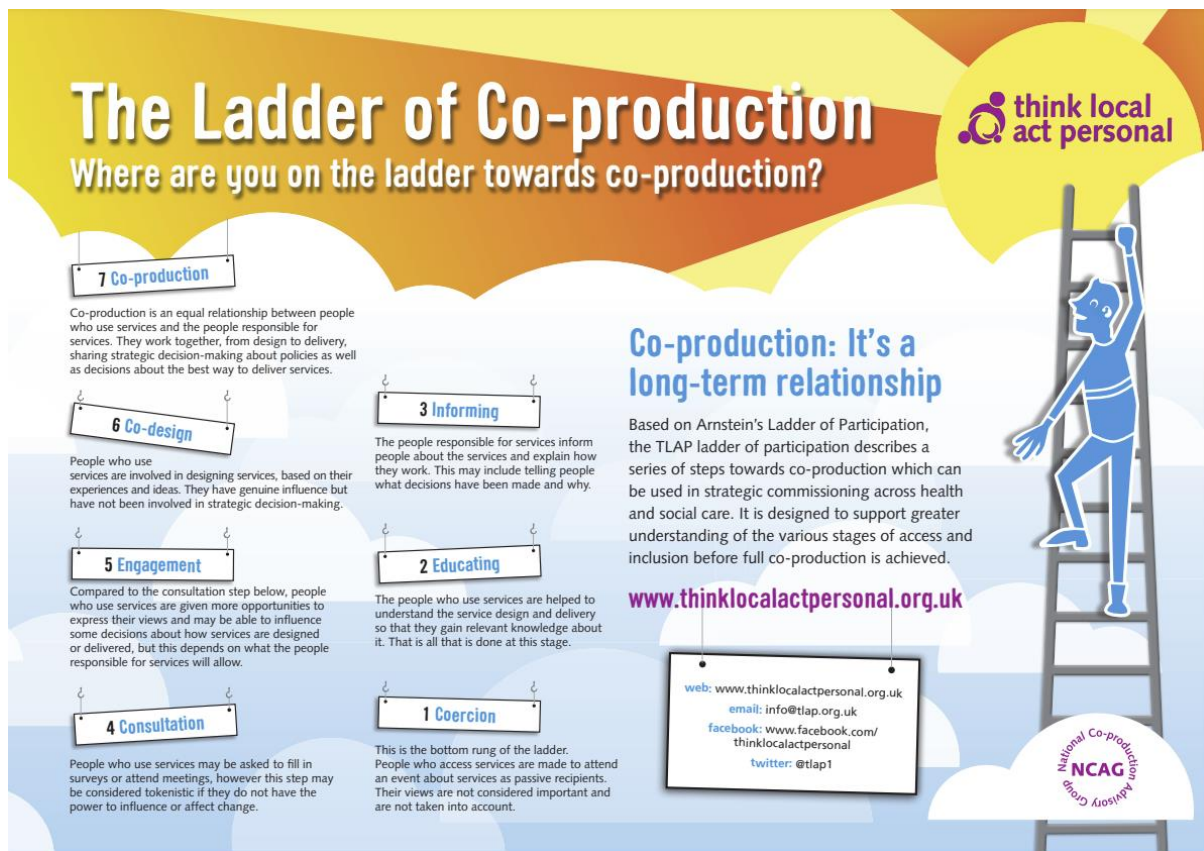


The "Start with People" model is used regularly within the NHS world when undertaking engagement.

With 5 levels rather than 8, it is simpler, and also includes co-production as one option, although the definition used is perhaps less thorough than the definition adopted by us here in Staffordshire.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024



The final model we have included in this tool kit is a more recent addition that builds on Hart's Ladder using more modern terminology.

As we've seen it is important to understand where co-production fits within a wider spectrum on engagement tools. It is also important to understand when co-production is the best and right tool to use, and when another tool is more applicable and useful. We will explore this question and more in the following pages.

This co-production toolkit will also limit its focus to using co-production as a tool. Staffordshire County Council are in the process of developing an Engagement Toolkit covering the wider scope of engagement which will be useful if another tool is selected for any particular piece of work. Contact Pete Barker for more information: peter.barker@staffordshire.gov.uk

Further toolkits may also need to be developed with a specific focus on how best to reach and engage with our more complex or targeted groups. In particular where approaches need to be adapted to take into consideration the complexity of their needs and support individuals and families to engage as fully as possible.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Why should we co-produce?

Most professionals involved in working with people started out with the desire to “make a difference”. Along the way, it can be too easy to become institutionalised in our approach, and in doing so the people can become just another “case” in a very large caseload or just another patient in a queue of patients.

Our Staffordshire Co-production Promise is a strong reminder to all of us that making a positive difference to individuals and families through continuously improving support and services was almost certainly a major reason for joining our chosen profession.

It also reminds us that the people who access support or services have a wealth of knowledge and skills that they have developed because of their lived experience. They have strengths and assets which can be built upon.

For this reason, they are sometimes called ‘Experts by Experience’ or the term we prefer is “people with lived experience.” This expertise can help those whose role is to deliver support or services to get things right for those receiving those support or services.

This can help to save money by reducing ineffective or underused services. It is important to understand that committing to a co-production process is like committing to a long-term relationship or partnership.



Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

When to co-produce?

There are 3 arenas to consider:

1. **Individual level** – Examples might include the development of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or other personalised support plan for an individual or family. Co-production is **always** a good tool to use when an assessment or plan is being created for an individual or a family. To engage those receiving support or services in the development of their direct support plan greatly improves the chances that it will be person-centred, will utilise lived experience and will help to secure buy in. In short it will mean that we are “working with people” rather than “doing to people”.
2. **Collective level** – An example of collective co-production might be where a targeted group of people and/or families are receiving focused support from an agency. There is no need to involve every person/family across Staffordshire in co-producing that change, but it is important that those directly impacted have ongoing meaningful involvement in co-producing the design and delivery of that support.
3. **Strategic level** – Examples of co-production at a strategic level might include the development of a strategy or policy that will impact on people and families. Some individuals may have little interest in engaging in this process as their focus is more immediately on the **Individual level**, however it is important that representative voices are included as co-producers in these strategic developments. This can be done via Parent Carer Forums, Youth Voice Forums, etc. or other similar and relevant groups.

When not to co-produce?

There are at least 3 occasions when co-production is not appropriate or possible.

- When co-production has been undertaken at a national level, resulting in a prescribed approach locally which cannot be further adapted via local co-production.
- When the outcome is largely predetermined, and any engagement is more for information or education than likely to result in any significant change of approach.
- When there isn't the length of time required or the resources to ensure that you can effectively co-produce with quality.

Co-production should always be meaningful to all those involved.

A quick checklist will help you to decide if co-production is the best tool for the task in hand:

1. Is local co-production possible in this circumstance or is the outcome largely predetermined by factors outside of local influence and control?
2. Is there enough time to co-produce the work with all of the relevant experts both professional and those with lived experience?
3. Is there the resource available to support the meaningful involvement of all stakeholders?
4. Is there the interest from stakeholders to co-produce, and if so what level (Individual, Collective or Strategic) of co-production is appropriate?
5. Do I have the skills to facilitate the co-production of this piece of work or do I need support and assistance to do so?

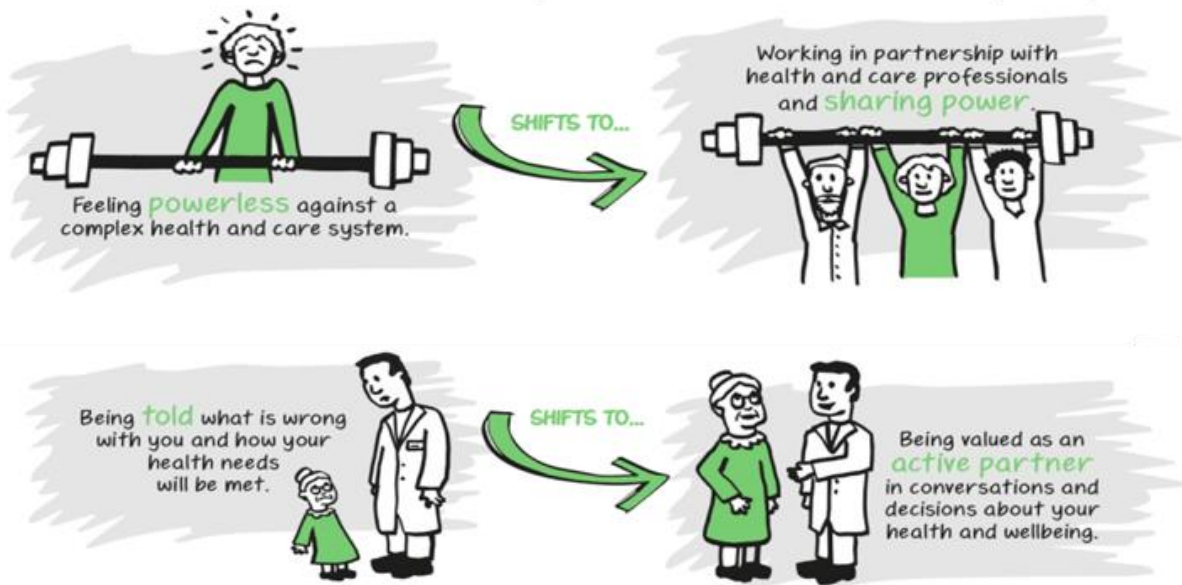
Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

3 Challenges to doing co-production well

1. **Power** - Some highlight equal power sharing as a key component of co-production. This is, of course, the ideal, however it doesn't fully recognise the inbuilt power imbalance between those who benefit from support services and those who design and deliver them.

In Staffordshire, we have agreed to use the term “power sharing” as a more realistic and deliverable element of our culture.



2. **Time** - To meaningfully engage and involve all of the relevant people in a co-production process from start to finish, takes time, energy, enthusiasm, resource and commitment. It is a long-term relationship and commitment from all sides, and therefore requires continual investment of time, energy and resource to keep the process engaging and healthy.
3. **Individual styles** - Co-production is all about people. Therefore, some individuals will be better at delivering it than others. For example, those who are more focused on the needs of the individuals/families and their lived experience may recognise the value of listening to them and adapting support services accordingly, whereas those who are more task focused are more likely to be focused on getting the job done.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Lessons learned from previous co-production work

The following list of lessons learnt below have been taken from previous experiences of trying co-production as an approach, and should be considered prior to attempting to co-produce any piece of work:

- First build relationships with individuals and / or families to establish proactive working relationships; this takes time but is valuable in the long term.
- Sharing information is powerful, it allows people to make decisions together.
- Be honest and transparent about the context; what is possible, what perhaps isn't! What are the challenges and restrictions faced? i.e. budgets, etc.
- Clear, regular communication including open listening and use of plain language.
- Create an environment where differing views can be shared safely.
- Value people's real-life experiences.
- Recognise individuals/families are volunteering their time to be involved.
- Individuals and families want to be listened too and are committed to playing their part in a co-production approach.
- Keep the pace of the process up to maintain interest, but also be aware that families need significant advance notice to be involved and may have times/days that are easier for them.
- Co-production needs to have a genuine impact and this needs to be shared with and understood by everyone involved.



Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Useful guidance when co-producing

Statutory Guidance

[The SEND Code of Practice from 1 September 2014](#) Government guidance on special educational needs and disability (SEND) for children and young people aged 0 to 25 years.

Co-production and the Care Act - <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/co-production-in-commissioning-tool/co-production/in-more-detail/co-production-and-the-Care-Act/>

NHS Statutory Guidance on working with people and communities:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/working-in-partnership-with-people-and-communities-statutory-guidance/>

Practical tools for co-production

1. Whose shoes?

Whose Shoes?[®] is an exciting approach, allowing you to 'walk in other people's shoes'. Through a very wide range of scenarios and topics, Whose Shoes?[®] tools help you explore many of the concerns, challenges and opportunities facing the different groups affected by the transformation of health and social care. More information can be found here:
<https://padlet.com/WhoseShoes/overview>

2. The **NHS** has created a resource toolkit for co-production which has lots of useful information, ideas and tools that can be used.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/co-production-resource-toolkit/>

There is also a short NHS Video on Co-production and Quality Improvement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpoWdyxAvYo>

3. **Staffordshire's Families Strategic Partnership Board** endorsed some local Engagement Standards in 2018. See the one-page document on Page 12 outlining the 9 standards and the expectations that sit within each standard.

Partners also created a Self-Assessment Tool for evaluating how well an organisation undertakes its engagement against these standards. The tool is suitable to assess either a single activity/event or a whole organisational approach. This tool is freely available through Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services for any partner who wishes to use it.

It is currently being used by the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board partners to provide assurance around the hearing and use of children and young people's voice within safeguarding.

Email: office@staffscvys.org.uk or telephone 01785 240378 for more information.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Our Standards:

Clear: We will outline:

- the purpose, scope, duration and parameters of the activity
- how much opportunity is being offered participants to influence decision-making?
- the decision-making process and how views will inform the final decision
- how we will feedback to participants

Coordinated: We will:

- keep elected members informed of engagement activities in their constituency
- ensure that engagement is both part of the annual planning and development cycle and a consistent and regular feature of service planning and evaluation
- check what partners are doing before initiating engagement activities
- promote activities internally and work together when engaging similar groups to avoid duplication
- share findings from engagement activities

Timely: We will:

- involve communities at the earliest opportunity (for example, the design stage) to ensure views can be fed into the decision-making process
- ensure that participants are given enough time and information to make informed decisions

Accessible: We will ensure that:

- information is provided in a way that is accessible, and where necessary tailored to different audiences to support their engagement
- engagement opportunities reach relevant parts of the community - we will be proactive in seeking the views of 'hard to reach' groups and individuals and ensuring that no one group dominates. However, sometimes it will be necessary to conduct targeted consultations because of the remit of the project.
- activities are held in venues that are easy to get to and at times appropriate to those we are engaging with, providing transport options where necessary
- the needs of individuals are met to enable participation (for example, in the provision of translators, signers, crèche, where necessary)
- health and safety guidelines are adhered to
- carry out engagement using internet-based methods where appropriate (but not in a way that excludes those without access to the internet)

Quality: We will ensure that:

- staff are appropriately trained, and have the relevant skills and experience to engage
- the appropriate method of engagement is adopted for the audience that we are trying to reach

Ethical: We will:

- obtain informed consent from participants in engagement activities (and for the use of any photographs that may be taken)
- respect the rights of people to withdraw from engagement activities
- obtain DBS clearance for those running an engagement activity (if appropriate)
- respect the welfare of those involved in engagement activities (particularly where there is a concern about violence or abusive behaviour)
- ensure that all information is held in confidence and follows data protection requirements

Meaningful: We will provide feedback to children, young people and families on:

- the outcomes of the engagement
- how the engagement has contributed to the decision-making process / service delivery

Partnership: We will ensure partnerships are mutually beneficial by:

- Sharing skills / experience
- Best practice examples
- Working to shared priorities around consultation and engagement

Efficient: We will:

- use a proportionate level of resources, taking account of value for money and seek opportunities to realise efficiencies

4. **West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership and West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit** have published some new guidance around using trauma informed language to support conversations across services in West Yorkshire. It is not an exhaustive guide but a tool to move towards trauma informed settings, services and systems. The guide is an invitation to develop deeper awareness around stigmatisation, understanding that when we change the language, we change how we see the world. The guidance can be viewed here: [Trauma Informed Language Guidance](#)

5. **The Point of Care Foundation** have developed a toolkit providing a step-by-step guide to improving patient experience of health care using a technique called [Experience-based co-design](#) (EBCD). As well as the guidance, the toolkit includes videos of people who have taken part in EBCD projects as well as a range of downloadable resources such as template forms, letters, presentations and other materials, to help you plan and carry out this approach.

Helpful Websites

[Social Care Institute for Excellence](#) (SCIE) is a national improvement agency. On their website they outline and explain what co-production is and how to get started. There is a range of co-production resources, including a full co-production process approach.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Think Local Act Personal is a national partnership of more than 50 organisations committed to transforming health and care through personalisation and community-based support. The partnership spans central and local government, social care providers, the NHS and the voluntary and community sector as well as people with lived experience. The organisation has a variety of co-production resources and further reading on its website.

The **Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS)** is a charity that works with people, workers and organisations in social work and social care to help them use knowledge and innovation to make positive change happen. The organisation has a variety of co-production resources available on their website, including a co-production project planner.

The Coalition for Personalised Care is a partnership of people and organisations, including NHS England, who work together to make personalised care a reality. The organisation has created a Co-production Model which outlines the five values and seven steps to making co-production happen.

Involve is a public participation charity which aims to put people at the heart of decision-making. Their website has a range of resources to support co-production and involving people in the decisions that affect their lives.

One of our local workforce colleagues now based here in Staffordshire was involved in a piece of work around co-production commissioned by the Australian government's Department for Health. The resultant toolkit was completed and published by Community West, which sadly no longer exists, but remains available for use and download via the following links.

<https://www.graymatterconsulting.com.au/co-design>

<https://www.cota.org.au/publication/step-forward-together-toolkit-resource-guide/>

See **Appendix 1** for more information on how to use the Staffordshire Co-production Promise, whoever you are and whatever your role.

Appendix 2 outlines the criteria for using the Staffordshire Co-production logo for specific pieces of work or projects.

Appendix 3 provides a little more context on the journey we've undertaken.

Appendix 4 provides some hints and tips for working with children and young people with additional needs.

Final thoughts

If in doubt, Google co-production tools, and you'll be surprised at how much is already out there and available to be used to support your practice.

If you have feedback on this toolkit, would like to suggest additional content that has helped you or would value some additional support, please contact SCVYS via 01785 240378 or email Phil Pusey at phil@staffscvys.org.uk

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Appendix 1 – How to use the Staffordshire Co-production Promise

The first and most obvious thing to state is that for the Co-production Promise to make the difference we all want to see in Staffordshire everyone needs to sign up / pledge their support for the new Promise.

The Promise aims to support the continuous improvement of practice from front line professionals through to strategic leadership and improve the experience of people and families who seek help and support from the children and family's system.



Organisations should ideally be signed up by the most relevant senior official / elected member, however this should also be backed up by other people from the organisation so that the Promise is owned by all of us, and therefore has more chance of being embedded than if there is just one single voice championing co-production in each part of the system.

Therefore, all individuals should also sign up to pledge their personal support and commitment to working in the way that is described in the Promise. This should include children, young people, parents, carers, front line professionals from across the children and family's workforce (paid and voluntary), managers, team leaders and supervisors, commissioners, and strategic leaders.

The link to sign up is embedded in the Staffordshire Co-production Promise document or you can click: www.doingourbit.uk/co-production

People and Families

The design is such that People (including children, young People and adults) and Families will be able to use the Promise in conversations with their support worker(s), not as a stick to beat front line professionals with, but as a conversation starter and continual reminder of the ways the local support system has pledged to work with them and for them.

It is also a reminder that children, young people and families are an important and valued part of the children and family's system and have also pledged to work with professionals in a positive and constructive way aligned to the definition and principles of co-production we have agreed and adopted.

Advocates

In any case where people and families don't feel confident to have what may feel like a difficult conversation with their supporting professionals, their advocates can use the Promise to support and represent them in those conversations.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Front line Professionals

Those working with people and families in whatever capacity can also use the Promise in conversations with those people and families in a similar way to what is described above. Again, the aim is to gently challenge when the aspiration of the Promise is not being experienced recognising that working in this way should create better outcomes and a better experience for all involved.

Professionals can also use it within supervision sessions if they feel that their ability to work as described in the Promise is compromised by the demands of their daily role. This might be about their workload / capacity, or perhaps their capability, in which case some training might be required to help them work according to the Promise definition and principles.

The Toolkit for which this is an appendix has been devised to help front line professionals understand co-production and how to do it well.

If professionals want to use the Staffordshire Co-production logo to illustrate that their work is aligned to the Promise, then please use the criteria described in the final section of this document.

Communications Teams

The Staffordshire Co-production Promise can be used on organisational websites, social media, etc. as a stand-alone electronic image.

Because the links to both the Pledge and Toolkit pages are embedded within it, it can act as a gateway into Co-production.

The Pledge pages will be hosted on the #DoingOurBit webpages overseen by Staffordshire County Council Communications team. This is part of a group of outward facing pages illustrating how the community can work with the Council and other partners to support their own health and wellbeing, others in their communities as well as making pledges to support the environmental agenda.

The Toolkit will be hosted on Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) website, to enable the content to be kept updated with new tools that can help and support the workforce.

Supervisors / Team Leaders / HR

Those in supervisory roles can also use it within supervision sessions to check in with professionals on how they are delivering the aspiration within the Promise.

This can be embedded in documentation to ensure it is something that is regularly discussed.

If team leaders want to use the Staffordshire Co-production logo to illustrate that the work of their team is aligned to the Promise, then please use the criteria described in the final section of this document.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Commissioners

Commissioners can use the Promise to inform realistic yet aspirational contract specifications. Recognising that co-production is not always possible, but that in areas such as 1-2-1 support plans that it is an absolute necessity to get the best outcomes and to reduce barriers / challenges for individuals and families.

If Commissioners want to use the Staffordshire Co-production logo to illustrate that a specific element of their work (i.e. co-produced specification, etc.) is aligned to the Promise, then please use the criteria described in the final section of this document.

Strategic Leaders

The Co-production Promise should be included in all relevant strategic and delivery plans including actions that ensure alignment to and embedding of the co-production principles and showing that as a County we have worked hard to co-produce our definition and the principles that are important in any co-production that is undertaken.

If strategic leaders want to use the Staffordshire Co-production logo to illustrate that a specific element of their work (i.e. co-produced strategy or service) is aligned to the Promise, then please use the criteria described in the final section of this document.

Partnership Boards

Ideally, partnership boards (including but not exclusively, the Health and Well Being Board, Families Strategic Partnership, ICS Children and Young People's Programme Board, Early Years Advisory Board, SEND and Inclusion Partnership, Early Help Operations Group, Safeguarding Scrutiny and Assurance Partnership, Violence Reduction Alliance, Communities Leadership Group, Transition to Adulthood, etc.) will include actions to ensure the alignment and embedding of the co-production promise principles in all relevant strategic delivery and implementation plans.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Appendix 2 – Using the Staffordshire Co-production Logo & Quality Assurance Criteria

For any piece of work to qualify to use the Staffordshire Co-production Kitemark logo it must be able to clearly evidence the following:

- ✓ People with lived experience (personal experience of the service, support or issue) are involved from the very beginning to the very end of the process.
- ✓ People with responsibility for and/or professional know-how of the service, support or issue are involved from the very beginning to the very end of the process.
- ✓ On occasion it is feasible for someone with professional know-how to also bring lived experience from their own family situation. When this occurs, it is important that other people bringing lived experience or professional know-how are also fully involved throughout.
- ✓ People from both categories above can show that they have been working together and sharing power (with ideally an equity to that power sharing) whilst recognising the systems we all operate within.
- ✓ Everyone engaged in the process feels valued, included and involved.
- ✓ Everyone involved has a sense of ownership in terms of the decisions made or the outcomes / results.
- ✓ Everyone's role in the process is clearly understood and expectations are managed.
- ✓ Support has been offered to help people stay involved in the process throughout.
- ✓ The result of the work is positive change. This could be:
 - The development of a new service.
 - Improvement to the accessing of support / services – e.g. Co-produced videos / flyers which promote /explain the support from the point of view of a service user perhaps.
 - Improvement to the delivery of existing support / services – e.g. frontline practice.
 - Improvement in the management of support / services.
 - Improvement to the way families experience support / services.
 - Improvement in performance – e.g. reduced waiting lists, etc.
 - Improvement in commissioning of services – e.g. specifications are more closely aligned to the needs expressed by those who use them.
 - Improvement in overarching strategies and implementation plans.

If these criteria can be evidenced, then partners are free to use the Staffordshire Co-production Logo created by young people as a tool to support the embedding of the Promise and Principles document. Please contact SCVYS if you require the logo in a specific format.



Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Appendix 3 – Further context on how we got to this point

Staffordshire's co-production promise was itself co-produced with the full involvement of children and young people, parents and carers as well as a wide range of professionals from across the children and family's system.

The charter and toolkit work formed part of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) for Staffordshire resulting from OFSTED inspection findings. This was an ambitious 12-month plan running from April 2022 to April 2023, aiming to transform major elements of the system.

It is important to note that SCVYS was given a wider brief of co-producing a promise that was applicable to the whole children and family's support system, and **not** limited to those receiving SEND related support.

How the work has progressed

SCVYS was commissioned to undertake the work in May 2022, and initially given 12 months to complete the task. This was later extended to September 2023 to enable a coordinated launch of the key work streams. There were 9 clear stages identified:

1. To create a multi-agency steering group who would oversee progress, providing assurance and challenge to the proposed direction of travel. This group included representatives from the Staffordshire Parent Carer Forum and The Voice Project, who were crucial in ensuring the voices of children, young people and families were heard throughout. This group determined the scope of the charter / promise and helped make connections across the system to support the months of consultation and engagement that took place in co-producing the final content of the Promise.
2. SCVYS was challenged to align the work we were facilitating with various other pieces of work that were being undertaken across various parts of the system focused on co-production, avoiding duplication wherever possible. SCVYS successfully incorporated and aligned the following work strands:
 - a. Preparation for Adulthood Board
 - b. Communities Leadership Group
 - c. NTAF Co-production Strategy for Children and Young People with Complex Needs
 - d. Cordis Bright Systems Analysis
 - e. Supportive Communities (Adult Social Care) Co-production Principles and Toolkit
 - f. Stoke on Trent's SEND Co-production Charter
 - g. Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Programme Board
 - h. Violence Reduction Alliance
 - i. Families Strategic Partnership Board
 - j. SCC Engagement Toolkit
3. Research what other local areas had published as co-production charters, and to identify the best approaches, whilst ensuring the work was clearly rooted in Staffordshire, building on

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

existing values and principles, and was co-produced with the full involvement of all local stakeholders.

4. Fully engaging and listening to children and young people, parents and carers, and professionals from across the children and family's system, collating their feedback and integrating the findings into the final products.
5. Refine the content of the Promise and the Toolkit, by reflecting back to the various groups and partnership boards what we had heard through the engagement and ensuring we had heard fully and accurately what they had been telling us.
6. Design the Promise in such a way that was easily accessible for all those who had contributed to its development. This involved the use of simple, everyday language, that was visually appealing and understandable and finally that it communicated messages that people wanted to sign up to making a reality. An audio/visual introduction to the Promise was also created to enable access to its content.
7. Promote and launch the Promise at a local event, encouraging sign up to the locally agreed definition, the desired culture and the actions needed to get there.
8. Create a checklist of criteria for partners to be able to evidence in order to use the Staffordshire Co-production logo, created by local young people via an open competition.
9. Support partners to develop a "How to use the Staffordshire Co-production Promise" document to support the longer-term use and embedding of the principles and practice laid out.

There is also a need to monitor the impact of the Promise on practice and performance, and potentially to support its embedding through Co-production champions networks, asset mapping and further targeted toolkits supporting work with targeted groups. i.e. those with complex needs.

Finally, SCVYS would like to place on record our thanks to all the individuals and organisations who contributed to this piece of work. It has the potential to be a game-changer for local people and families, and we are proud to have supported its development as a co-produced piece of work.

If you have any feedback on this toolkit including useful additions or local case study examples, then please contact SCVYS Chief Executive Officer, Phil Pusey via phil@staffscvys.org.uk and we will ensure the document is regularly updated.

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Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

Appendix 4 – Hints & Tips for working with Children & Young People with Additional Needs

1. **Educate Yourself:** Take the time to learn about the specific needs and challenges of each individual you work with. This includes understanding their condition, triggers, communication styles, and any environmental adjustments they may require e.g. a quiet space, low lighting, accessible facilities etc.
2. **Be Patient:** Patience is key in building trust and rapport with children and young people with additional needs. Be patient and allow them the time they need to process information, to express themselves or to complete tasks.
3. **Communicate Clearly:** Be aware of an individual's communication preferences and any language barriers that may exist. Use clear and simple language, visual aids, and other communication tools to facilitate understanding. Examples could include:
 - Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
 - British Sign Language (for individuals who are hard of hearing or completely deaf)
 - Makaton (to help hearing individuals with learning or communication difficulties)
 - Audio information
4. **Be Flexible:** Be willing to adapt your approach to suit the needs and abilities of those you're working with. Flexibility is essential in creating an inclusive and supportive environment.
5. **Be Empathetic:** Try to see things from their perspective and understand their feelings and emotions. Show empathy and offer support when needed.
6. **Encourage Independence:** Provide opportunities for them to make choices and decisions on their own. This can help build confidence and self-esteem.
7. **Provide Positive Reinforcement:** Offer praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements. Positive reinforcement can be a powerful motivator for children and young people with additional needs.
8. **Provide Structure and Routine:** Those with additional needs often thrive in a structured or routine based environment. Establishing clear expectations at the outset can help reduce anxiety and promote a sense of security.
9. **Collaborate with Parents and Carers:** Maintain open lines of communication with parents/carers. They can provide valuable insights that can help in understanding and addressing the needs of the child or young person.
10. **Treat individuals as you would like to be treated.**
11. **Don't Assume One Size Fits All:** Every individual with additional needs is unique, so avoid assuming that what works for one will work for another. Tailor your approach to each individual as their needs, abilities and preferences will vary.

Staffordshire Co-production Toolkit

June 2024

12. **Don't Exclude Them from Decision-Making:** Include individuals in decision-making processes that affect them whenever possible. This helps them feel empowered and valued.
13. **Don't Overlook Sensory Sensitivities:** Be mindful of sensory sensitivities and avoid overwhelming stimuli such as loud noises, bright lights, or crowded spaces without prior assessment and adjustments.
14. **Don't Use Negative Language:** Avoid using negative language or labels that can be stigmatising or hurtful. Focus on abilities rather than limitations.
15. **Don't Ignore Nonverbal Cues:** Pay attention to nonverbal cues and body language and intervene promptly. These can provide valuable insights into how the individual is feeling or if they are struggling with something. Dismissing their signals can lead to increased anxiety and frustration.
16. **Don't Overwhelm with Information:** Avoid overwhelming them with too much information or too many tasks at once. Split elements down into smaller, manageable steps. Allow individuals to have breaks if they need them.
17. **Don't Make Assumptions about Support Needs:** Each individual's support needs are unique. Avoid making assumptions about what they can or cannot do without consulting relevant professionals and caregivers.
18. **Don't Assume a Lack of Understanding:** Just because an individual may have difficulty expressing themselves or understanding verbal exchanges, don't assume they don't understand.
19. **Don't Compare Them to Others:** Avoid comparing them to their peers or siblings, especially in front of others. Focus on individual abilities, progress, and achievements.
20. **Don't disrespect individuals, they are not defined by their needs and/or disability.**
21. **Use the skills and knowledge of others:** If you don't feel confident or don't have the skillset or knowledge to co-produce with children and young people with additional needs, talk to people and groups who do!