How to do Co-production

West Berkshire
COUNCIL

How to do Co-production

Co-production is quite an easy idea to understand. But to make co-production a reality especially within complex organisations is not simple. This part of the resource provides some

step-by-step guidance about how to do co-production.

The Stages of a Co-production project

All co-production projects have three stages

1. Planning
2. Carrying out the plan
3. Reflecting and learning

If possible, residents and people who draw on services should be involved at every stage. This may not always be possible especially at the early part of the planning stage. But it is important to bear in mind that the earlier people are involved the more chance they have of shaping and influencing the project.

In the next section each stage will be briefly described. Also included will be some bespoke resources and links to other useful guidance.

Planning

Planning is a vital part of any project. Good planning can make the difference between a successful project and an unsuccessful one. Good planning in co-production is particularly important for several reasons. Co-production involves bringing together different groups of people who may not have worked together before. This often brings with it some anxiety and uncomfortable feelings. If the project is well planned that can help people feel more comfortable and safer. Doing co-production well can take extra time. Good planning should take account of this factor and help to make sure the project is making as good use of time as is possible.

If the project involves a sequence of meetings, it is helpful to plan all the dates in advance. This will make sure that participants can organise the meetings around their other commitments. And it makes it much more likely that there will be good attendance.

Not all planning activity has to happen before the sequence of meetings starts. Some planning activity can be done in the first few meetings.

For example, an important part of good planning is to develop a clear set of aims.

Aims, outcomes and measures

This section provides a step-by-step guide to understanding how to set aims, outcomes and measures for a West Berkshire co-production project. It explains the concepts of aims, outcomes and objectives, provides some overall aims and outcomes for West Berkshire and explains how they might be measured.

Having clear aims and measuring outcomes

Aims, outcomes and objectives

When setting up any project it is important to have a clear aim, which is really simply a description of what you hope to achieve.
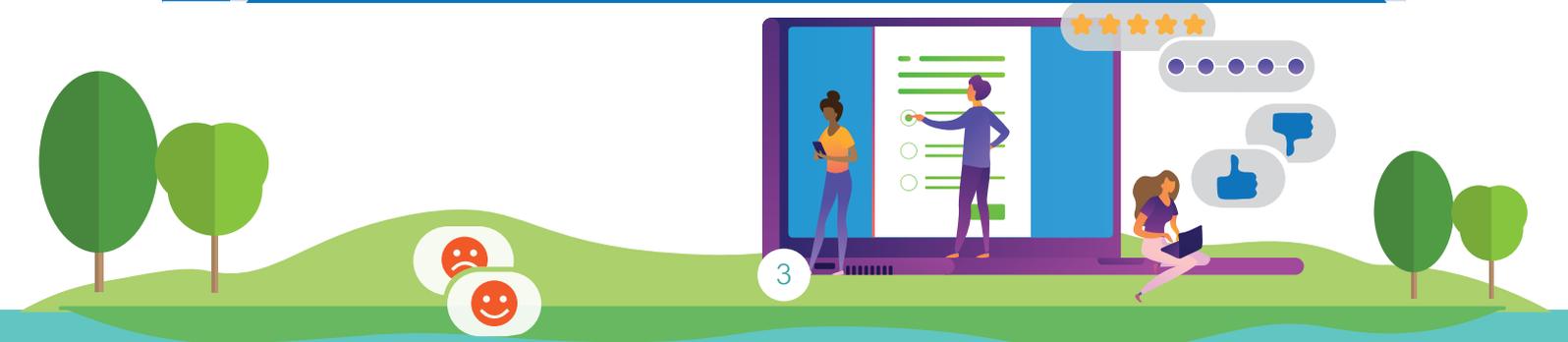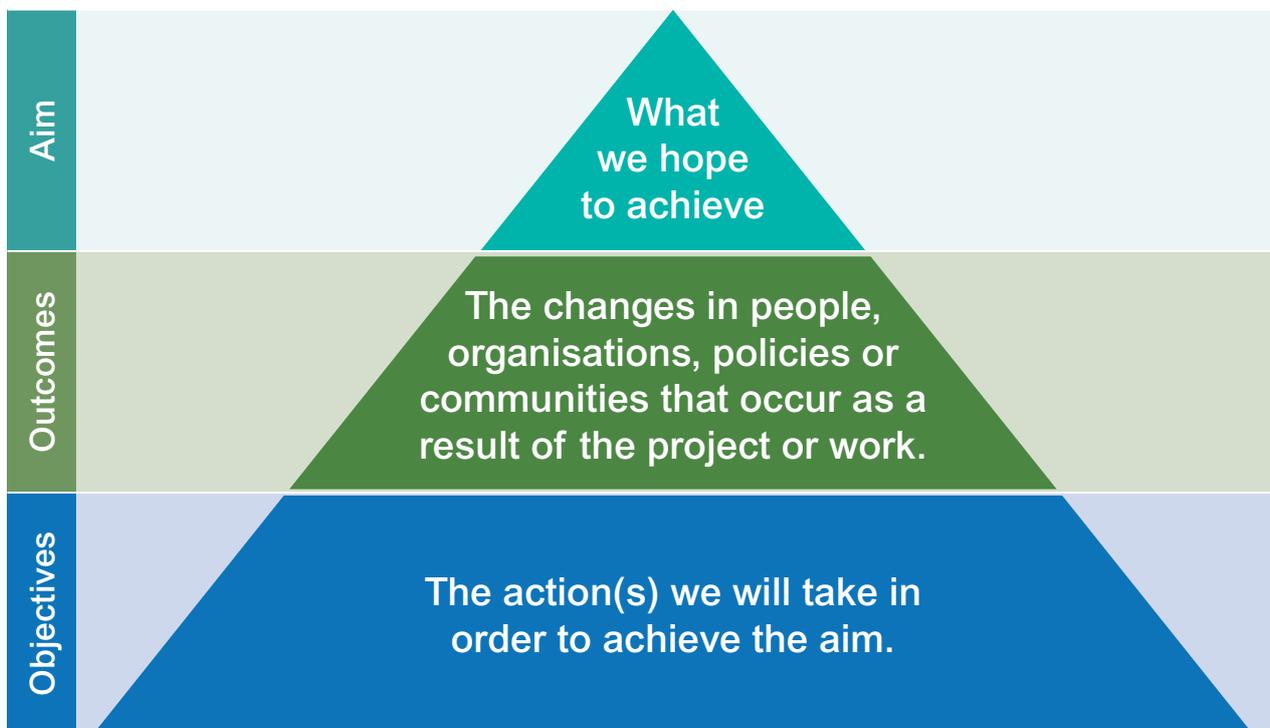
This will help to plan what you will do, i.e. setting your objectives and the activities that you undertake in your project.

It is also important to think about the changes that you expect to see as a result of your objectives and activities, these are sometimes called 'outcomes'.

Aims, outcomes and objectives should be linked. To put it simply, the activities you do as part of the project should lead to changes (i.e. outcomes) that help achieve your aim.

The language of 'objectives' and 'activities' can be confusing. An objective is something specific that you intend to complete as part of a project. Activities are the actions that you will take to achieve that objective.

So, an objective might be 'to set up a steering group'. To achieve that you might need to advertise the group, identify the right people to be part of it, agree on a chair or co-chair, agree terms of reference for the group, and so on.

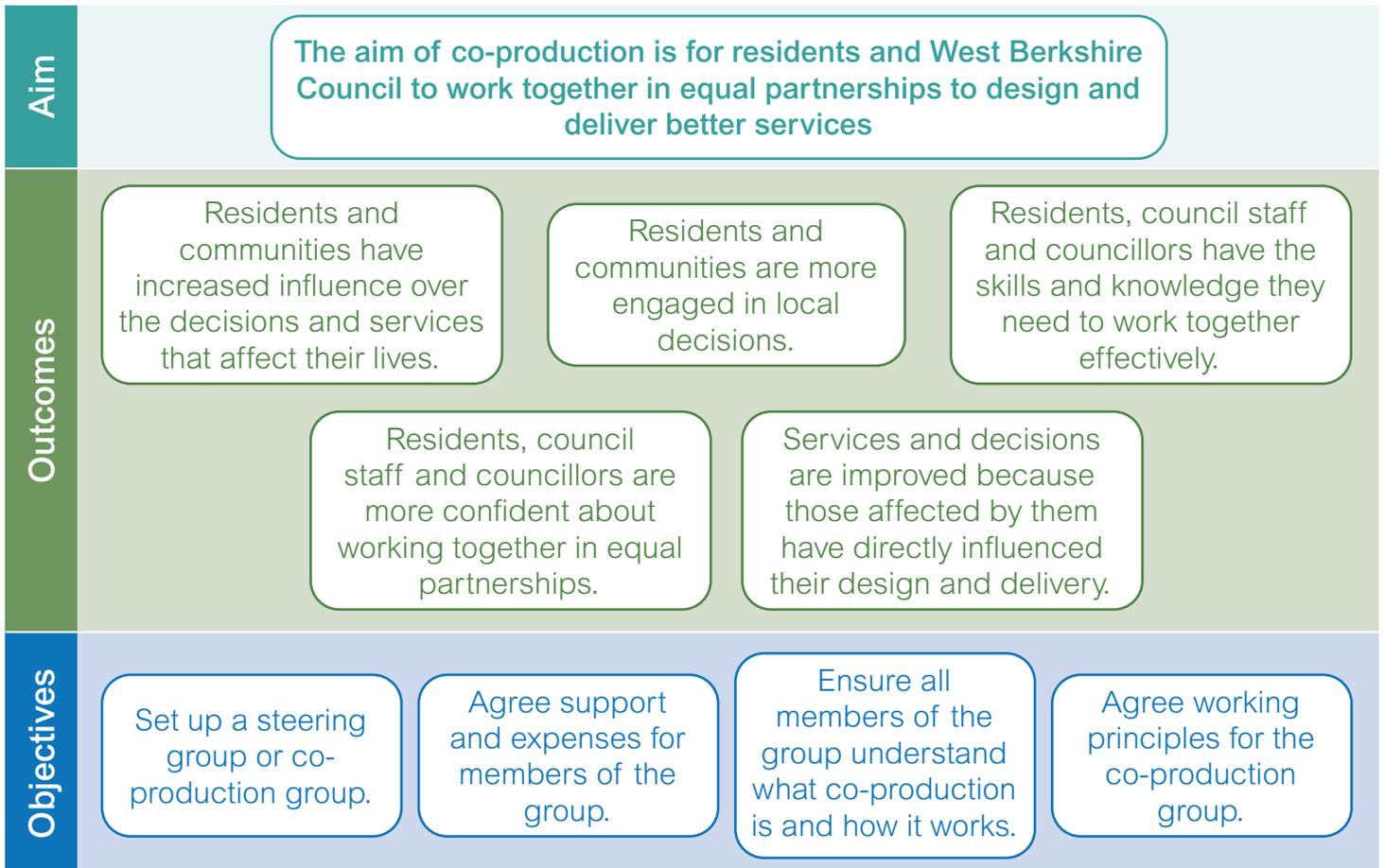| Aim	What we hope to achieve
Outcomes	The changes in people, organisations, policies or communities that occur as a result of the project or work.
Objectives	The action(s) we will take in order to achieve the aim.

Co-production aims and outcomes

Co-production engages residents and gives them greater influence over the design and delivery of services. This should lead to better services for everyone.

While every co-produced project will be different, with its own aims, activities and outcomes, the West Berkshire Co-production Steering Group identified some general aims, outcomes and activities that we expect to be common to all co-produced projects or pieces of work.

Aims, outcomes and objectives for, Co-production in West Berkshire

Aim	The aim of co-production is for residents and West Berkshire Council to work together in equal partnerships to design and deliver better services

Outcomes

- Residents and communities have increased influence over the decisions and services that affect their lives.
- Residents and communities are more engaged in local decisions.
- Residents, council staff and councillors have the skills and knowledge they need to work together effectively.
- Residents, council staff and councillors are more confident about working together in equal partnerships.
- Services and decisions are improved because those affected by them have directly influenced their design and delivery.

Objectives

- Set up a steering group or co-production group.
- Agree support and expenses for members of the group.
- Ensure all members of the group understand what co-production is and how it works.
- Agree working principles for the co-production group.

These aims and outcomes are starting points and each project will then tailor them and make them more specific to the project in question. For example, the aim of our test project in environmental services was:

For residents and West Berkshire Council to work together in equal partnership to develop an introductory guidance note on community energy generation in West Berkshire.

Outcomes one to four above are to do with co-production and these would be relevant to any co-produced project or piece of work.
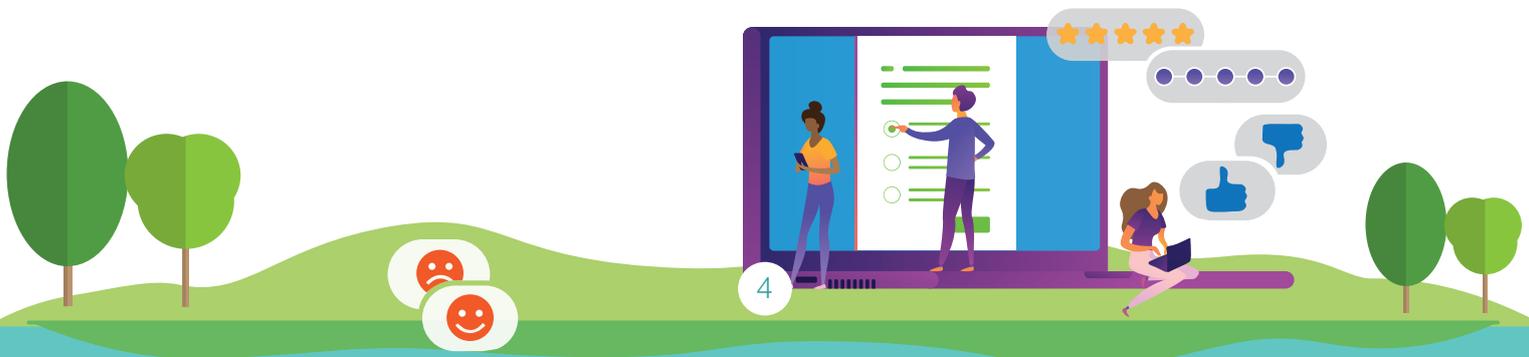
The fifth outcome is to do with designing and delivering better services. These will need to change this to make it specific to the aim of the project they are applied to. It should link closely to the aim of the project.

In our test project we identified the following outcomes:

1. Community groups have clear and accessible information about how to develop a community energy project.
2. There is an increase in the number of community groups in West Berkshire generating their own renewable energy.

There could be more than one outcome that relates to the specific aim of your project.

The objectives in the table above are related to the co-production element of the project. It is likely that you would also have other objectives and activities that relate to directly to your project's main focus and aim.

Measuring outcomes

It is important to measure outcomes to understand whether your project is achieving its aim, and to demonstrate the difference that your project has made (its impact).

There are many ways of measuring outcomes. What you do will depend on your project. The things such as what you are trying to achieve, the size of the project, who is part of it, and how much time you have.

Below are some suggestions for ways that the outcomes we have identified above could be measured.

Outcome 1: Residents and communities have increased influence over the decisions and services that affect their lives.

An important part of co-production is giving people more influence over things that affect their lives.

It is difficult to directly measure whether people have influenced a process or project, because usually that project only happens once, so you have nothing to compare it to. However, you could do things such as looking at how decisions were made to check that all views and all people involved were listened to as part of that decision process. You could also consider whether all members of a co-production project have been able to contribute, and whether their contributions have been taken into account by the group. You could either do this as you go along, by reviewing the process and reflecting on what has worked well and what less well (see the feedback and reflection tool in the Learning and Reflection section of this resource). Or, if you take meeting notes you could review these at the end of the project. If you intend to review your notes or minutes at the end it is worth planning your note taking with this in mind.

And if your project has any democratic mechanisms like votes, then that is also an important way of measuring influence.

It is also very important that people feel they have been able to influence something. If people do not feel they have been listened to, or had their views taken into account it is unlikely they will want to engage in other projects or recommend them to others.

This is easier to measure. You can ask people directly if they feel they have been able to influence the project or process. For example, you could ask something like:

> **Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:**
>
> *I have been able to influence the work of this project.*
>
> Disagree strongly / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / Agree strongly

As well as that it might also be good to ask related questions such as whether people feel they have been listened to and whether they feel being part of the co-production process has been a good use of their time.

> **Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**
>
> *My views and ideas were heard and considered.*
>
> *Being part of this project has been a worthwhile use of my time.*
>
> Disagree strongly / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / Agree strongly

You can adapt these questions if you would like to, or use your own.

Asking these questions might work best retrospectively, i.e. at or near the end of the project. But it would also be helpful to check whether people feel they are being listened to and able to influence the project as you go. See the reflection tool in in the Learning and Reflection section of this resource of this guide for more on this.

All the example questions in this section are brought together in at the end of this section as an example outcomes questionnaire for participants in co-production projects.

Outcome 2: Residents and communities are more engaged in local decisions.

An important goal of co-production is to engage residents in the council's work, and to encourage more residents to work together with the council.

You could measure this by tracking the numbers of people who have taken part in your co-production project. As well as overall numbers it might be important to record the ways in which people have been involved and their length of engagement.

It is also important to think about the diversity of those taking part, and whether engagement comes from all relevant parts of the community.
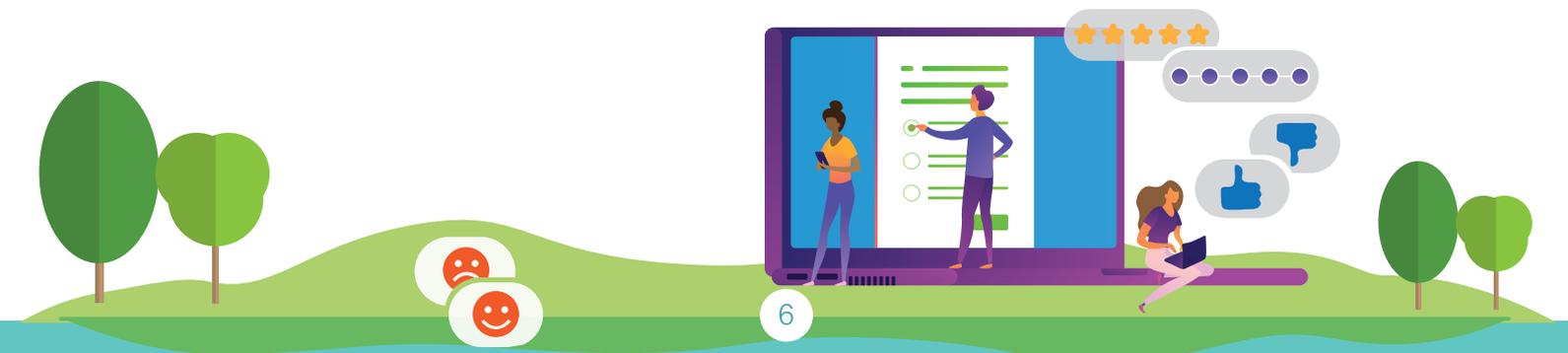
It might also be helpful to count the numbers of people who expressed an interest in taking part but were not able to. Either for their own reasons or because there was not scope to involve everyone.

To get an understanding of the overall levels of engagement, numbers from individual projects could be aggregated to build a bigger picture.

It is also important to measure whether people feel more engaged with local decision making. The questions in outcome one are to do with whether people feel they have been listened to, and whether they feel that taking part in co-production was a worthwhile use of their time indicate how engaged they might be.

You could also ask whether people would take part in future co-production work, or if they think more services in West Berkshire should be co-produced. This would help understand if there is an appetite for spreading co-production as a way of working.

Here are some example questions:

> **Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**
>
> *I would like to be part of more co-produced work with West Berkshire Council.*
>
> *I think more services in West Berkshire should be co-produced.*
>
> Disagree strongly / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / Agree strongly

Outcome 3: Residents, council staff and councillors have the skills and knowledge they need to work together effectively.

Co-production is a new way of working for most people. It is explicitly non-hierarchical; people are treated as equal within the project and the aim is to come to decisions by consensus. By working together in this way residents and council staff will get to know one another and understand more about what is important to residents, and what the council can and can't do. They will also learn and develop skills and techniques for working in this way.

It would be possible to use tests to measure skills and understanding of co-production, but we do not recommend that you do that in your projects. It would be time consuming, and people might feel their understanding was being judged.

Instead, you can track who has had training in co-production, even if that is informal training, and ask people how confident they feel about co-production and taking part in co-production projects (see outcome four below).

If you are doing extensive and/or formal training in co-production, you could gather specific feedback on that training as well (see the evaluation form included in the Train the trainers manual).

Outcome 4: Residents, council staff and councillors are more confident about working together in equal partnerships.

Confidence is an important counterpart to the other outcomes. If people are not confident about something they will be less likely to want to do it. And people are more likely to feel confident if they feel they have the skills and knowledge needed to do something. Therefore, measuring confidence gives an indication of people's willingness to engage in co-production projects, and of whether they think they have the skills and knowledge to be part of them.

Confidence is sometimes measured at the beginning and end of projects to see if there has been an increase in confidence over time. However, sometimes people rate themselves as being highly confident in something even though they haven't done it before, so for those people you might not see large changes over time. Equally, people who have already taken part in co-production projects might already be highly confident at the outset, and again would not show much change. So rather than measuring confidence at the start and end of your project you might choose just to measure it at the end.

Whatever you decide, it is important to measure confidence at least once. If people report that they do not feel confident about co-production even after they have been part of a project, that indicates that something about the project hasn't worked.

Here are example questions that you could use or adapt for your project. There is one for residents and one for West Berkshire Council staff and councillors.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I am confident about working in partnership with West Berkshire Council staff and councillors

Disagree strongly / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / Agree strongly

---

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I am confident about working in partnership with West Berkshire residents

Disagree strongly / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / Agree strongly

---

Outcome 5: Services and decisions are improved because those affected by them have directly influenced their design and delivery.

As noted above, the rationale for using co-production is to design and deliver better services. Therefore, it is important to measure whether services have improved as a result of being co-produced.

For some services, ways of judging service quality may already be in place and these could be used to measure service improvement. Such as:

- Changes in satisfaction with the service.
- Feedback from staff delivering the service.
- Changes in the number or type of complaints.

For some projects there may be objective measures that could be undertaken. For example, in environmental services this might be things such as improvements to pollution levels, reduction in carbon use, or a reduction in landfill.

However, exactly what to measure and how to do that will depend on the nature of the project and service, so you will need to consider what would be appropriate for your project.

It is worth noting that changes may not be apparent until some time after a new or redesigned service has started, so evidence that services have improved may need to be collected after the co-production part of the project.

Summary

Here we have described five outcomes that we would expect to see in all co-produced projects and pieces of work. At the start of your project, you should discuss your aims, outcomes and objectives and identify how you plan to collect evidence about outcomes and what measures you will use.

We have suggested some ways that co-production outcomes could be measured above, and below there are two example questionnaires (one for residents and one for council staff and councillors) that you could use in your project. Whether you use these questionnaires or a different method, it is best to collect responses anonymously. That way people will feel able to be more honest and truthful in their answers.

The reflection tool (see the Learning and reflection section) also asks questions to do with co-production and how that is working in the project. As such it could provide some evidence for some of the outcomes here. But the main purpose of that tool is to generate rapid feedback and it does not cover all of the outcomes, so it should be used alongside other outcome measures such as those suggested above.
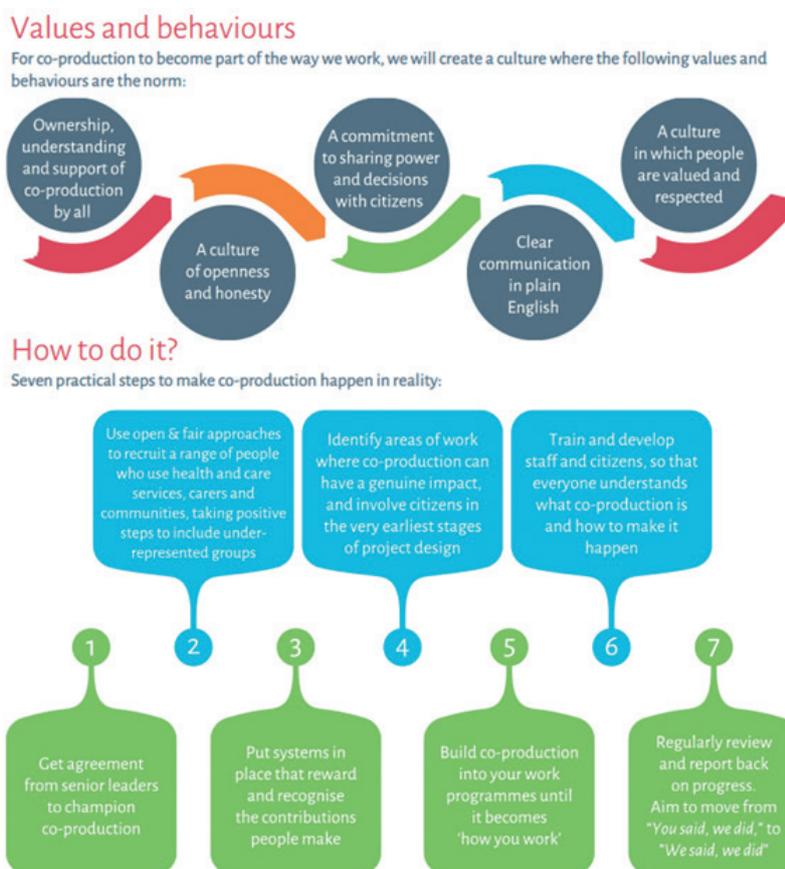
Outcome five is to do with having improved services and decisions. Because this will be different for every project you will need to identify the best ways of measuring this outcome for your project

Planning Co-production other resources

NHS England and NHS Improvement and Coalition for Personalised Care Co-production model

This diagram created by the Coalition for Personalised Care for NHS England is a very concise look at the key ingredients of a co-production project. It can help the planning stage by providing a simple visual representation of a project.

Values and behaviours
For co-production to become part of the way we work, we will create a culture where the following values and behaviours are the norm:

- Ownership, understanding and support of co-production by all
- A culture of openness and honesty
- A commitment to sharing power and decisions with citizens
- Clear communication in plain English
- A culture in which people are valued and respected

How to do it?
Seven practical steps to make co-production happen in reality:

2. Use open & fair approaches to recruit a range of people who use health and care services, carers and communities, taking positive steps to include under-represented groups
4. Identify areas of work where co-production can have a genuine impact, and involve citizens in the very earliest stages of project design
6. Train and develop staff and citizens, so that everyone understands what co-production is and how to make it happen

1. Get agreement from senior leaders to champion co-production
3. Put systems in place that reward and recognise the contributions people make
5. Build co-production into your work programmes until it becomes 'how you work'
7. Regularly review and report back on progress. Aim to move from "You said, we did," to "We said, we did"

The diagram is part of a PDF which includes a little more detail and NHS England also has some other useful resources:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/get-involved/resources/co-production-resources/

IRISS'S Co-production tool kit
IRISS is a charity that works with social work and social care to create positive change in Scotland. IRISS have produced a very good set of tools which is a step-by-step guide to planning a co-production project. The Double Diamond is a particularly useful planning tool which is helpful for thinking about when to involve smaller and bigger groups of people. The resource includes lots of other useful tips and tools.

https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/tools/co-production-project-planner

Hampshire County Council's lets go for Co-production checklist
Hampshire County Council's co-production checklist gives a comprehensive overview of planning a project

https://resources.hants.gov.uk/adultservices/AHC-Co-production-Checklist-A4-resource.pdf

Carrying out the plan

Some key practical considerations

Involve people early
It's really important to involve people at the earliest opportunity before too many decisions have been made. That way citizens have a greater chance of influencing the project.

Be proactive about accessibility
Making sure everyone can participate is obviously really important. For some people if you don't meet their access requitements they simply cannot participate

Develop Ground rules and Terms of References for Groups
Lots of co-production work is done in groups. So, it is really important to make sure that the groups have Ground rules. Groups also need clear terms of reference which include who is on the group and the aims of the group. (A template is included below)

Residents are different from Staff and should be treated differently
All residents are different some will be used to meetings and administration others will need support. For example, some people may need a call before and after meetings, others may need help with transport to and from meetings or with technology. It's a good idea for whoever is leading a group to have a short call before the first meeting with everyone who is coming along. This will encourage participation and attendance.

Plan ahead
Residents often have busy lives and lots of commitments, so it is good practice to plan the sequence of meetings well ahead, so they are in everyone's diaries.

Use the West Berkshire principles to check you are on the right track
The principles are a good checklist to remind yourself of how to do things.

Running good group meetings

Meetings are one of the day-to-day activities of almost all co-production projects. But how can we make sure that our meetings allow everyone to take part, do not exclude anyone, and support project progress effectively? This section explains how to hold truly inclusive, accessible and productive meetings.

The first step is thinking through who should be part of the group. It is best to aim for equal numbers of Council people (staff and councillors) and residents (people who draw on services, carers, community organisations). For the Council people it is usually possible to choose this group informally. This is because people's roles in the council are a key factor in deciding who needs to be on the group.

For residents it is recommended that there is an open and transparent selection process. This ensures that there is fairness and helps to motivate members to be active members of the group. There are different ways of holding a selection process of this kind depending on the client group, timescales and so on. The key advice is to keep it as simple and accessible as possible and ensure it is proportionate to the nature of group.

Before the first meeting of the group, it is good practice to have a short phone call or virtual meetings with each member of the group.

One way of conducting the selection process that worked well in West Berkshire was to use a short flyer to gain initial interest followed up by a more detailed document describing how to apply.

Setting terms of reference

Setting Terms of Reference for co-production groups is important. It makes sure that everyone understands the purpose of the group, what success looks like, how the group will operate and the roles and responsibilities of group membership.

The Terms of Reference should be co-produced with the group in the first two or three meetings of the group. At the first meeting discuss informally how the group will work covering relevant clauses of the Terms of reference. At the second meeting present a draft for discussion. At the third meeting agree a final version. The Terms of Reference should be based on the template which follows. However, it also needs to be accessible and proportionate to the duration, size and nature of the group.

The template Terms of Reference can also be used as a guide to the key ingredients of a well-run meeting.

Ground rules

Ground rules are a useful way of building group safety and trust. Ground rules are a simple guide to the value and behaviours expected of group members. Whereas Terms of Reference are an operating manual for the group and a much more comprehensive document. The ground rules which are include in the Terms of Reference template or a similar set should be agreed at the beginning of the first group meeting.

Agenda and papers

The agenda and information for the Steering Group will normally be emailed or posted to members and those in attendance one week in advance of the meeting by the Secretariat.

The actions to be taken will be recorded in the notes which will be circulated to all members of the Group. *[Sending out the minutes and papers a week in advance gives citizens enough time to read them and helps to ensure that the meetings are productive]*.

Confidentiality

Group meetings and papers are not confidential.

However, members of the group should respect individual and organisational confidentiality.

Decision making

The Group is an advisory body – which will make recommendations to West Berkshire council and if appropriate other relevant organisations.

The Steering Group will aim to reach decisions by consensus.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an essential part of all co-production meetings. For some people if their access requirements are not meet, they simply will not be able to take part. Access maybe about the physical environment for example making sure that wheelchair users can access the room. Access can also be about the formats of meetings' documents, the language that is used, the timing of meetings and having adequate breaks. Planning for and anticipating the access needs of participants can save time and build trust.

It is not only accessibility that needs to be considered it is also the texture of meetings. How does the meeting feel to participants, how welcoming is the meeting, are new members introduced to the group, is there time to get to know each other.

'Making events and meetings accessible', is a useful SCIE guide to ensuring that events and meetings are accessible.

https://www.scie.org.uk/co-production/supporting/making-events-accessible

'Step two: Consider accessibility and practical matters' of Hampshire Council's co-production checklist has a good summary of how to approach access issues. And 'Step three: On the day – setting the tone' is a good guide to how to make the meeting feel welcoming and for it to have a good texture

https://documents.hants.gov.uk/adultservices/AHC-Co-production-Checklist-A4-document.pdf

Trauma informed co-production

In some co-production projects, some participants may have experienced trauma. The guide below from Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership sets out how to engage in co-production using a trauma informed lens.

https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/application/files/6416/5104/5038/West_Yorkshire_Trauma_Informed_Co-Production_Guidance_April_22.pdf

Much of the advice is also good practice for any co-production project. The following table from the publication is a helpful guide to using language sensitively.

Avoid	Consider

Reflecting and learning

Reflecting and learning is an important part of the co-production process. Organisations get better at co-production the more they do it. Organisational development can be speeded up if time for learning and reflection is built into projects. For example, in longer-term co-production projects is good to build in time for all the participants to get to know each other and develop a shared understanding of co-production. Then intermittently through out the project set aside protected meeting time for learning and reflection. It is sometimes helpful to ask a skilled independent facilitator to help with these meetings. Building in this time may help avoid conflicts developing and then spending lots of time resolving these issues.

For shorter term projects it is good to build in time for reflection into the meeting agendas. This can be as simple as having five or ten minutes at the end for people to say how the meeting went for them.

The following tool was developed by the Co-production Steering Group especially for West Berkshire to help groups reflect and learn. It can be used in various ways.

Reflective feedback tool

You can use this tool it in your co-production project to check how things are going and get suggestions for improvement.

1.1. What is the tool for and why would you use it?

The primary purpose of the reflective feedback tool is to help co-production projects run smoothly. By gathering feedback from steering group members and prompting them to reflect on how things are working, you can adjust and improve how the group is working together and keep the group focused on the aims that you have identified.

The tool includes questions relating to the co-production principles (equality, making a difference and inclusiveness). It asks people to reflect on how the group is working, how they are working within the group, and how the group could work better.

Responses to the questions can be collected by those chairing co-production steering groups to get immediate feedback on how things are going and suggestions for improvement. The tool could also be used by groups as a starting point for discussions about what is working well and what might need to be changed.

Although this is not primarily an evaluation questionnaire, the questions do relate to how well the co-production element of projects is working. Therefore, responses collected via this tool could also provide evidence relating to some of the co-production outcomes (specifically outcomes one, three and four).

> ### Principles of co-production
>
> #### Equality
> Working together as equals. Appreciating our diversity of experience and expertise.
>
> #### Making a difference
> Creating change and making West Berkshire better for everyone. Being both brave and realistic.
>
> #### Inclusive
> Creating opportunities for everyone to get involved. Being proactive about making everything we do accessible to all.

1.2. Who is the tool for?

The tool has been designed to be completed by members of co-production project steering groups, residents, council staff and councillors.

If you have other people as part of the steering group, subject area experts for example, they could also use the tool.

1.3. When should you use the tool?

You can decide when and how often you use the tool.

If you are holding regular steering group meetings you could use the tool every meeting to reflect back on how that meeting has gone, and on progress since the last meeting.

If you are meeting very regularly (e.g. weekly or fortnightly) using the tool every meeting might be too often and you might want to use it less frequently, such as once a month.

You do not have to use the tool at regular intervals, another way to use it might be to identify 2 or 3 points in your project where it would make sense to pause and reflect on progress so far and how things are working.

We suggest you do not use the tool in your first steering group meeting as people may still be finding their feet. But in one of the early group meetings, you could discuss this tool and decide how and when you want to use it. Some groups may wish to submit their feedback anonymously and this should be facilitated if needed.

We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call (insert officer's name) on (insert number).

West Berkshire Council
Insert Service area
Market Street
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 5LD

T 01635 551111
www.westberks.gov.uk