



social care
institute for excellence

Shaping change **together:** co-producing innovation in social care

Easy-read version
November 2025



About our survey

- The survey ran for three weeks in May and June 2025.
- It was shared online through social care networks, community groups and social media.
- **832** people took part.

The survey included three main groups:

1. People with lived experience of using care and support.
2. Family and friends who provide unpaid care.
3. Social care professionals (for example, care workers, managers, commissioners).

Some people answered more than once if they had more than one role.

People took part in the survey from across the UK.

Other things we asked about:

- People's job roles (like care workers, social workers, managers, therapists).
- Organisations (like councils, care providers, NHS).
- Personal details (like age, gender, ethnicity).

This helps us see what people are saying that is the same and what is different for each group.

Definitions

Co-production: co-production is about working together with people receiving social care, carers and families, so that they can help change the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered. It offers the chance to change health and social care to a model that offers people real choice and control.

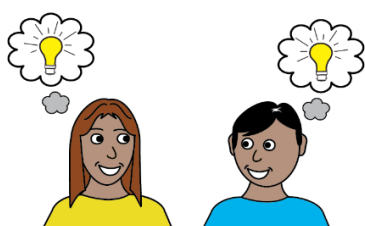
Innovation: innovation in social care is about introducing, developing and applying new ideas, practices, models, or technologies that improve the quality, accessibility, efficiency, and outcomes of social care.

Innovation through co-production: innovation through co-production means creating new ways of doing things together. People with lived experience, families, carers and professionals work as equal partners. They help find problems, share ideas, test what works, and make changes based on feedback. This makes sure new solutions are real, useful, and can be shared more widely.

What we found out about co-production and innovation from our survey

1. Co-production brings fresh ideas and keeps things people-focused

share ideas



Everyone agreed that co-production helps create better ideas and keeps the focus on what matters to real people.

used their real-life knowledge



People with lived experience said it felt like they were listened to when their knowledge is used to change how things are done.

getting good outcomes



Family and friends cared most about getting good outcomes.

working in a person-centred way and as a team



Professionals liked that it helped them put people who draw on care and support at the centre of planning and decision-making.

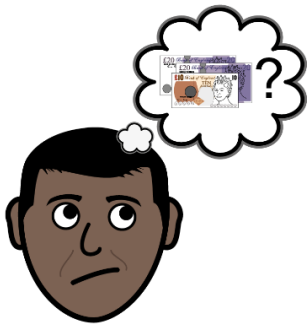
They also felt they worked better as a team.

2. Shared problems make co-production harder

there were common problems to co-production



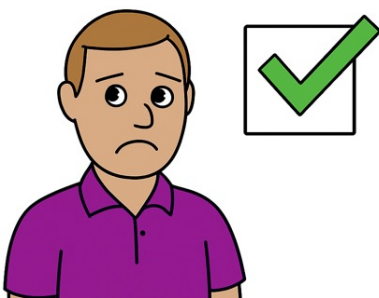
All groups said there were common problems, including:



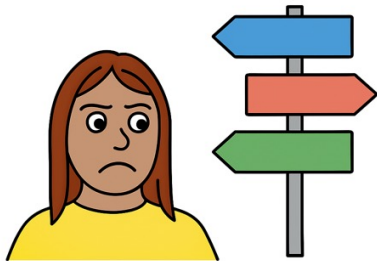
Not enough money or time for co-production.



People in power not sharing control



Co-production sometimes being done just for show and not for real change.



People with lived experience said services were confusing and had too many rules.



Family and friends felt left out and said they didn't get enough support (like breaks or payment).



Professionals said rules and delays made it harder to do proper co-production.

3. Everyone agreed on what helps co-production work



All groups said there were common problems, including:

respect



Trust and respect. Everyone should feel listened to and valued.



Leaders who take co-production seriously and involve people from the start.

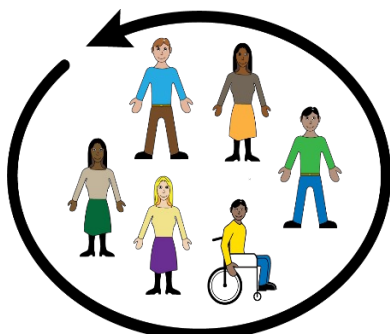


Clear actions – people’s ideas and contributions should lead to real changes.

thank you

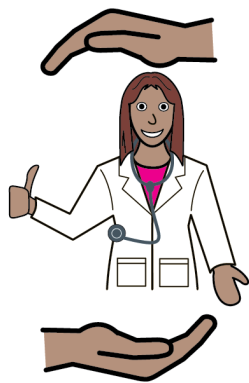


Fair recognition – for example, saying thank you, paying people, and showing their ideas matter.



Inclusion – co-production should welcome everyone and support them to take part.

4. People had mixed views about whether co-production makes a difference



Most professionals (about 72%) said co-production had improved services.

But only half of people with lived experience agreed and only 1 in 4 family or friends agreed.

Their input didn't lead to real change



Many people with lived experience and family and friends said it felt like their input didn't lead to real change.

Some felt ignored or disappointed



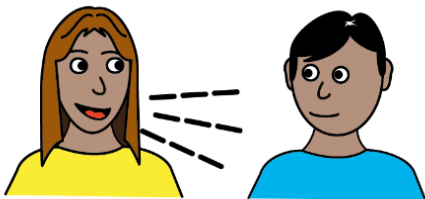
Some felt ignored or disappointed when no one told them what happened next.

This made them feel their time was wasted.

5. Everyone wants co-production to be done properly

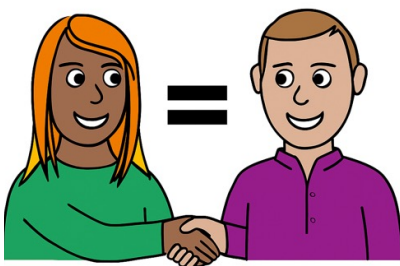


People want enough money, resources, time, and support to do co-production.



They want leaders to listen and act on what people say.

people with lived experience to be treated as equal partners



They want people with lived experience to be treated as equal partners.

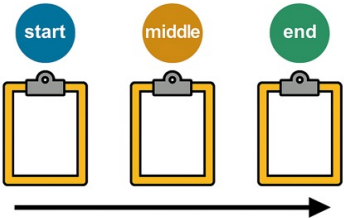
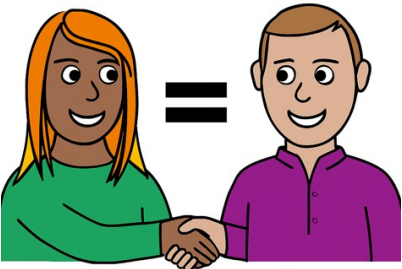
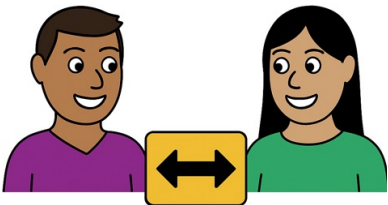


what's changed

A strong message was “Don’t just talk – show what’s changed because of us.”

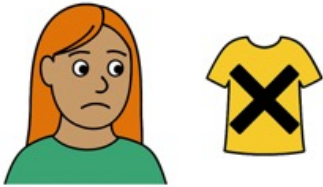
How to make co-production in social care better

These ideas come from people who took part in the survey. They are for people who work in social care, including leaders and staff.

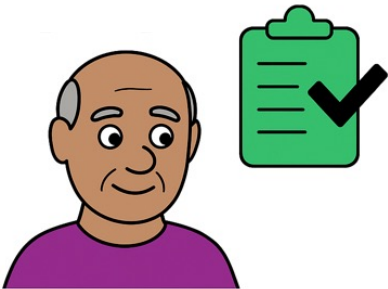
1. Involve people with lived experience from the very beginning	
start early and continue through a project 	Co-production should start early and carry on all the way through a project. It should be based on:
	equal and fair involvement
shared decision-making 	shared decision-making
	respect for people with lived experience being experts.

2. Make co-production flexible and person-centred

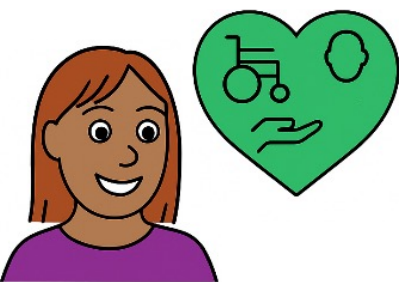
**co-production
isn't
'one size fits all'**



Co-production isn't 'one size fits all' - there isn't only one way to come to a solution that suits everyone's needs and preferences.

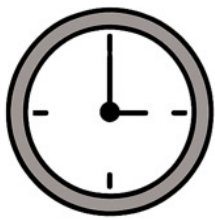


Co-production needs to fit different people's needs so people are not excluded.



Co-production needs to be shaped around people who use care and support.

3. Give staff the time, support and leadership they need



Make sure staff have time to do co-production properly.



Provide the right resources for co-production.

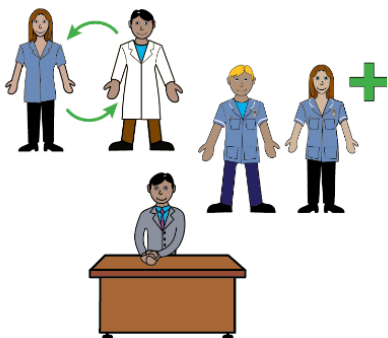


Leaders should show clear support for co-production.

4. Offer training that is easy to understand and role-specific



Training should be designed with people with lived experience.



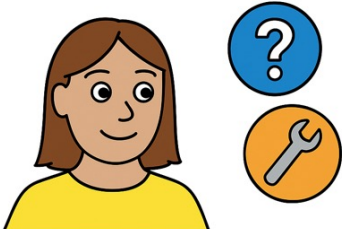
Training should fit the needs of each job role.

training



Training should be done by experts with lived experience when possible.

5. Support frontline staff to lead co-production



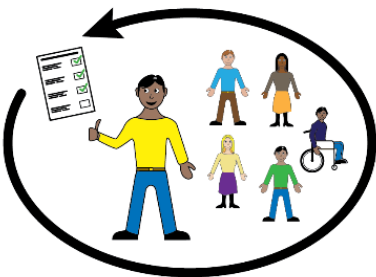
Staff need support to make decisions and tools that work in real-world.

6. Communicate clearly and make everything accessible



Co-production should be open to everyone.

Use plain language, and provide definitions when needed.



Offer different ways to take part.



Make sure meetings and processes are well organised and do not exclude people.

7. Involve a wider range of people

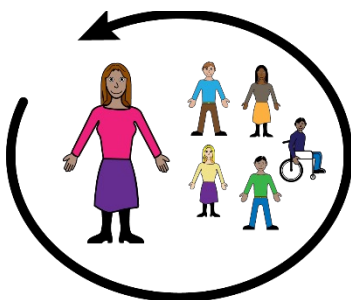


Make co-production fair and reflective of everyone's experiences.

make space for new voices



Make space for new voices.



Make sure people from minoritised and underrepresented groups are included.

8. Show what has changed because of co-production

tell people how their ideas made a difference



Make co-production fair and reflective of everyone's experiences.

give regular updates in clear, simple ways



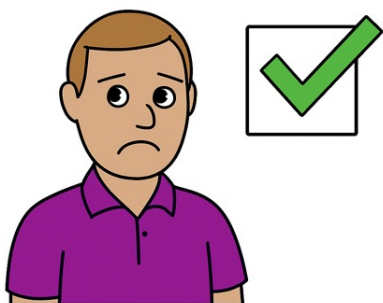
Make space for new voices.

celebrate successes and share examples

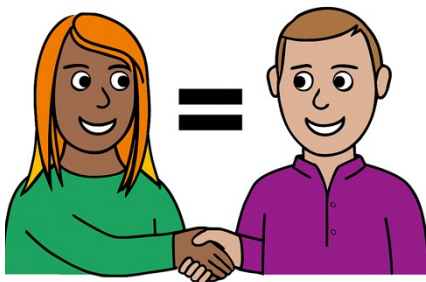


Celebrate successes and share examples.

9. Be serious about acting on people's input

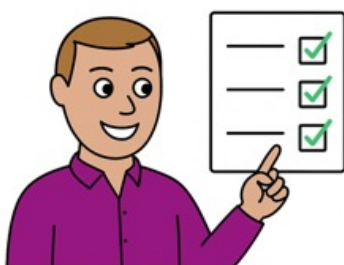


Don't do co-production just for show.



Share power and be open to challenge.

follow through on co-produced ideas



Follow through on co-produced ideas.

10. Learn more through research



Look at what is working well locally and nationally.

check whether co-production is being supported properly



Check whether co-production is being supported properly.

use research to improve future practice and learning



Use research to improve future practice and learning.

About this report

Written by Dr. Matthew Ford, Tasnim Rahman, Patrick Wood, Deborah Rozansky and George Appleton

Department of Policy, Research and Information, Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

Images were checked by SCIE's co-production week planning group.

Contact info [@scie.org.uk](https://scie.org.uk)

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Social Care Institute for Excellence
Isosceles Head Office
One, High Street
Egham TW20 9HJ

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sciebusdevelopmentteam@scie.org.uk



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