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institute for excellence



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Oxfordshire County Council Co-production in adult social care: Evaluation report



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- offer a range of flexible and tailored input (training, consultancy, topic expertise, research, evaluation, facilitation, coaching)
- work in highly collaborative ways, including leveraging in others where this might lead to better solutions and outcomes.

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Contents

1. Forewords	1
2. Executive summary	4
3. Introduction	6
4. Methodology	12
5. Findings	14
6. Discussion: seven strategic priorities	41
7. Recommendations	58
Appendix: Projects list	66

Forewords

Joanna Barnicoat, parent carer and co-chair of Oxfordshire's Team-Up Co-production Board

When I first got involved in the Co-production Board, I wasn't sure I believed real change would happen. I thought the change was too big, but I'm not a quitter ... you have to be strong as a parent carer ... so I kept coming along in case there was a chance something might happen. My motivation is to make sure people don't go through the same experiences I went through when I first had contact with social care.

I started co-chairing the board because members agreed it was more co-productive for the job to be shared between someone senior in the council and someone who uses services or cares for someone. In the board we use tools and language to role model the principal behaviours of co-production – even our visitors comment on how positive our meetings are and how they are truly 'co-production in action'.

Board members have grown in confidence. The relationships between us have developed so we are at a place where nobody is afraid to ask if they don't understand, and everyone feels safe to challenge. We all have more of an understanding of how the council works too (I'm not saying I agree with it), but we understand the challenges they face, and how council staff are working hard and only doing their best most of the time. Knowledge is power in any system, and now we have the power to challenge, to change and push things forward. When something is right and going well, we celebrate and try to accelerate it if necessary – it's important to focus on the positives too, and that's why we have a festival each year.

What I would say to someone just joining the board is: you have to be committed, and able to give up some time to actively contribute. You also need to be able to challenge when you think something's not right, but you have to know how to do that with kindness and understanding. It is not about shouting the loudest any more, and telling professionals 'you're doing it wrong', it is about listening to each other, understanding each other, and figuring out what we can do better, together.

In the future, I would really like to see a councillor at each meeting, and see members getting stuck in, making a bigger impact across Oxfordshire. We've started something great, the ideas are beginning to flow outwards, because we have commissioners and operational staff on board. We're beginning to encompass people and there are lightbulb moments happening within teams. It does feel like we are influencing the way the council works. Co-production is not just a buzzword or a gimmick any more, we have persevered and we are here to stay.

I had the idea that this is like turning a tanker with a teaspoon. We are trying to make big change happen. We are like the crew of a big ship, we steer it, but the people decide where we are going. We have gained momentum now, and the bow is starting to spin around. We just need to steer things to keep us going in the right direction, so we don't fall off, go in the wrong direction, or end up back where we started. Ships are

affected by the wind and elements which is why constant attention to the course is imperative.

Determining the course is fundamental and over time that course is likely to change – staying on course requires persistence and tenacity.

Karen Fuller, Deputy Director Adult Social Care and co-chair of Oxfordshire's Team-Up Co-production Board

As a senior leader with Oxfordshire County Council and co-chair of the Co-production Board for the past year, professional curiosity and challenging the “art of the possible” are priorities for me in Oxfordshire's co-production journey.

What does the term co-production mean for those people working on the front line? What difference does co-production make for people accessing services? These were constant questions asked initially by staff and board members alike. It is essential to define what is meant by co-production. Not doing so runs the risk of limiting the opportunities for innovative transformation of services. Simply put, co-production is informing, consulting, involving and empowering to achieve equal partnership and collaboration between people who use services, carers, professionals and organisations to find shared solutions.

Oxfordshire is on a journey. The board provides a safe space to constructively challenge and look at the organisation through another lens. A lens that really does quite rightly challenge our professional approach. I have been challenged about co-production just being the latest “buzz word” and informed by staff that this is how they work anyway. The board has given me the opportunity to hear first-hand how culture has previously hindered change and how we have missed some vital opportunities to really make a difference to the way services are organised and delivered, despite thinking we are working in a co-produced way. The board can challenge our perception of reality, sometimes highlighting that the way we have worked as an organisation has not translated as staff had intended. This has been key to changing the culture within Adult Social Care.

Working in a local authority can be complex to navigate if you are not used to it. Process must be followed to ensure that the council are legally compliant. Good communication is key but is quite often overlooked. A real turning point for the board has been ensuring that there is both an operational and a commissioning representative in attendance, which enables transparent oversight of co-production projects. The board have been integral to the planning stage of projects, constructively giving feedback and providing a different view prior to the consulting and involving stage. Power is truly shared.

As a senior leader, one of my key roles has been to ensure staff are afforded time to truly co-produce. Local authorities are notoriously busy with time not always being a luxury staff have. This has been the biggest shift for staff understanding. Time invested initially on getting things right is time saved later. This is quite often now referenced as invest to save. Who can be better placed to advise on service development than those who have experience of using those services? We need to go to the next stage now and

really question how we measure the value of doing things differently and evaluate our success.

Co-chair, Jo Barnicoat references in her foreword how the board has grown in confidence, relationships have developed, and everyone feels safe to challenge. This is so true. It's good to now be in this place as with constant time demands you can inadvertently slip back into "office mode". This was very apparent when health partners joined the board where if you are not careful, you can easily slip back into "health and social care speak" with acronyms galore!

We are definitely learning as we go, but the real positive work that has been evidenced through good practice and true co-production is just the start. This is the future of Social Care and Health. There are exciting transformational opportunities ahead which will really illustrate the true "art of the possible" through working together.

Executive summary

This document presents an evaluation of Oxfordshire County Council's programme to embed co-production into Adult Social Care in Oxfordshire.

The programme is made up of three core components:

- **The Team-Up Co-production Board.** Made up of people who use services and family carers, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group staff. The board meets every month to check, challenge, support and advise on co-production work in Oxfordshire.
- **The Co-production team.** Three members of Oxfordshire County Council staff responsible for overall delivery of the programme, including training, supporting, providing advice, guidance, and mentoring to Oxfordshire County Council staff, board members and champions; as well as administering and facilitating the board and champions.
- **The Co-production Champions.** A wider network of role models for co-production made up of Oxfordshire County Council staff, community and voluntary sector staff, people who use services, and carers. Champions provide advice and support to others, take part in training, raise awareness, support and lead co-production projects.

The programme was supported by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) who provided advice, support, and guidance, co-designed and delivered training, and led the evaluation.

This evaluation covers the first two-years of the programme. It took a co-production approach; two peer researchers undertook the bulk of the fieldwork and added their insights as experienced co-production experts. SCIE co-ordinated the evaluation, working closely with the peer researchers, Oxfordshire staff and board members.

One of the first activities in the programme was to co-produce the programme aims and outcomes. SCIE worked with the co-production board, team and senior leaders to identify and agree a set of aims and outcomes against which progress was evaluated. As the result of a co-produced process they acted as a statement of shared understanding of what the programme set out to achieve which helped guide the programme.

The primary aim of the programme was to embed co-production as the default way of working within Oxfordshire County Council's Adult Services.

Further aims for the programme were to build better relationships between Oxfordshire and people who use services, carers, families, service providers, and the voluntary sector; improve services in Adult Social Care; and spread the co-production approach beyond Oxfordshire Adult Social Care.

The evaluation found that good progress had been made against all aims:

- Significant progress has been made embedding co-production as a way of working in Adult Social Care. There is broad awareness and understanding of co-production amongst staff, and it is increasingly being put into practice in council processes and projects.
- The programme has had a positive impact on relationships between Oxfordshire County Council and people who use services, their families, carers and the voluntary sector.
- There have been over 20 co-produced projects and initiatives under the programme. Interviewees were confident that the programme was positively impacting on services in Oxfordshire, and would continue to do so.
- Outside Adult Social Care, the programme has influenced work in community transport and children's services, there is strong and growing collaboration on health with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. Staff from Essex, Kirklees and Slough councils have all visited Oxfordshire to learn from Oxfordshire's experience.

It feels like we are in a different place now and people are starting to embed it more in their practice now.

(Focus group)

Becoming a board member and getting involved in the co-production work has been really important to me because of the enjoyment and satisfaction it gives me knowing that we are making a difference to people's lives and helping them plan for their future

(User of services / carer)

Improving services is the main thing, services will be now what people want, rather than what they think we want. So often services have not been what people want, if the people have been asked.

(User of services / carer)

A number of co-produced documents support the programme and have facilitated the embedding of co-production; including the 'Co-production handbook' which sets out tools and advice for council staff and others wishing to co-produce projects and services.

Ten key learnings and associated recommendations emerged from the two-year evaluation. These included the recognition that culture shift takes time and needs to happen at all levels; the value of co-production for having difficult discussions, including managing the tension between the council's statutory duties and co-production's ethos of power-sharing; the importance of relationships and co-production's role in developing mutual understanding; the importance of administrative support for the board and champions; the champions' role in relation to the board; having diversity in both the champions and board; the importance of user-led organisations for facilitating co-production; the benefits of Oxfordshire staff undertaking outreach work; the induction of new board members; and continuing to evaluate and monitor progress.

Introduction

I know it's working when it feels sticky and awkward and uncomfortable, so there's something to me about if you want to really share power if you are chucking the seats over to a carer or service user to sit alongside you and running a business, if you're doing it right you will frequently come into contact with things that are really difficult.

(Senior leaders)

Background to the programme

Co-production means designing, delivering and reviewing public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services and their families. When activities are co-produced in this way, both services and the public become effective agents of change.

This quote from one of the people who uses services involved in the programme captures what co-production is.

Co-production means to me that service users play a part in running services together with the people who provide services... it's not just an idea either it actually is an important process where services are not just presented to people so they can take it or leave it.... They play a part in constructing it.

(User of services / carer)

Co-production is seen across the country as a new way of thinking about public services and has the potential to deliver a major shift in the way social care, health, education, policing and other services are provided, in ways that make them much more effective, more efficient, and so more sustainable.

Co-produced services can form one element of a broader shift within Oxfordshire towards a model that builds on the strengths, abilities and capabilities of the person or community, so that they can achieve the outcomes they want. This approach enables people and communities to improve their wellbeing, whilst valuing and recognising the contribution that all of us make to our own care.

Co-production can't be a bolt-on innovation, as it fundamentally changes the way public services are delivered, with the objective of reducing need, rebuilding the social infrastructure and shifting the balance of power.

SCIE identifies four principles of co-production, and notes that it may be useful to approach co-production as a set of values, critical for putting into action.

Principles of co-production

Equality – everyone has assets

Co-production starts from the idea that no one group or person is more important than anyone else and everyone has skills, abilities and time to contribute.

Diversity

Co-production should be as inclusive and diverse as possible. Particular efforts may be needed to ensure that seldom-heard groups are included.

Accessibility

Making everything accessible is the way to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate fully in an activity in the way that suits them best.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity means people get something back for putting something in.

There are formal ways of doing this, but sometimes the reciprocity comes from the more equal relationships that develop between people and organisations.

At the outset, Oxfordshire recognised five themes around co-production which relate to the principles and were key to the design of the programme:

- Building relationships that bring individuals together as equal partners
- Recognising each individual as an asset, not just a consumer
- Potential to mobilise the vast resource that is the Oxfordshire population
- Placing all participants on an equal decision-making level
- Requiring professionals to become ‘facilitators’ rather than ‘fixers’.

Oxfordshire has a history of engagement with users of adult and children’s social care, including supporting user-led groups, service user input in commissioning and procurement, developing quality standards and contract monitoring, alongside consultation concerning service change. Prior to the start of this programme Oxfordshire had used elements of co-production for many years. For example, co-producing services and policies alongside the Children in Care Council, involving people who use the service in recruitment of staff, and people with learning disabilities and carers in checking the quality of services.

In 2015 Oxfordshire stopped supporting the Partnership Boards financially. This followed an evaluation which found that people felt that officers came to them to sign off pieces of work rather than properly involve them in partnership. They felt that at the point they were consulted they had no influence and were disempowered. Relationships between Oxfordshire and people who use services, their families and carers had become strained. As a result of this Oxfordshire decided to stop funding the current structure while they looked at a new structure.

Oxfordshire shifted focus and carried out a number of co-production projects at a small and large scale in order to develop understanding and test approaches. These included a review of daytime support, developed with 600 people who use services and their

carers. This was an attempt at co-production on a large-scale. It had mixed results and many lessons were learned, but was a step towards the council trying to work in a co-produced way.

Following this project, Oxfordshire commissioned SCIE to deliver five days of training to all adult commissioners, the engagement team, two Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group members and one children's social care commissioner. The training was delivered alongside seven people who represent service users' groups across older people, learning disability, physical disability, carers and children. During this training the group identified seven strategic co-production priorities for Oxfordshire County Council:

- Senior level commitment to co-production
- A targeted training programme in co-production for staff, people who use services and family carers
- Establishing a co-production group made up of a mix of people who use services, family carers and officers who would drive and monitor progress
- Resourcing co-production properly, acknowledging an up-front cost
- A concordat (a written agreement setting out the terms of engagement for co-production)
- Piloting the co-production of services to show early success
- Evaluation of the programme to inform its development and show progress.

These seven priorities form the basis of the programme that SCIE was subsequently commissioned to support, and which is evaluated in this report. They, and their role in delivering the programme aims, are covered in more detail in the discussion section of the report.

Oxfordshire recognised that successful implementation of co-production would require a cultural and systemic change that would fundamentally challenge the relationship the council had with individuals and their communities. Oxfordshire hoped to change the balance of power between the local authority, the community and the individual so that it is shared more equally. Oxfordshire also hoped that by being directly involved in the co-production of public services, citizens would be able to enhance the quality of their own lives as well as their sense of wellbeing. Working with service users and carers to design and purchase services was a key part of Oxfordshire's 2018-2021 Corporate Plan.

The ultimate aim is to embed co-production so that it can stand alone without dedicated support.

We could draw a line under specific investment in this and dedicated staff and a dedicated focus on it as a project and it would just become in the DNA of our organisation and how we work. The goal was always to make it absolutely embedded in Adult Social Care, and to start influencing across health and the council

(Senior leaders)

Outline of the programme

The co-production programme at Oxfordshire was funded for two years in the first instance, from September 2017 to September 2019.

The programme sits within Adult Social Care and consists of the following key components:

- The Co-production Team, consisting of three members of Oxfordshire County Council staff.
- The Team-Up Co-production Board, made up of people who use services, family carers, and Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group staff, and co-chaired by a family carer and a senior officer from Oxfordshire adult services.
- The Co-production Champions, made up of people who use services, carers, family members, council staff, and community and voluntary sector staff.

The programme was supported by SCIE which has provided advice, support and guidance throughout, co-designed and delivered training, and co-produced this evaluation.

The Co-production Team is responsible for the overall delivery of the programme, including supporting the board and champions, and enabling staff to develop their understanding of co-production and put it into practice. The team undertakes a wide range of activities, including, but not limited to:

- enabling Oxfordshire County Council staff to take a co-production approach by:
 - running advice clinics
 - providing ongoing support for projects
 - co-facilitating meetings
 - encouraging and role-modelling co-production
 - co-designing and delivering training
 - navigating challenges and handling conflict
 - setting up conditions for working differently
- facilitation and administration for the board and champions
- recruiting board members and champions
- supporting the evaluation of the programme
- designing, setting up and delivering Oxfordshire's co-production festival.

The Team-Up Co-production Board meet on a monthly basis. Their role is to check, challenge, support and advise on co-production work in Oxfordshire.

At the monthly meetings the board offer advice to council officers (and others) on starting new co-production projects and hear updates on existing co-produced projects.

The board's role here is both to offer advice and support, and act as a critical friend to check and challenge.

As well as the regular meetings board members also co-run face-to-face training (with the team and champions) on co-production, create written guidance, support events like co-production week and Oxfordshire's co-production festival, and create links between people interested in co-production work.

The role of the champions is to work with people to help them learn about, use and embed co-production, so that it becomes the usual way of working across Oxfordshire. champions aim to role-model co-production within the group and outside it. They meet on a monthly basis and take part in, or contribute to, a number of activities, including, but not limited to:

- running training, workshops and advice clinics on co-production, and helping to update training materials
- raising awareness (through events, presentations, learning lunches, discussion groups, etc.)
- sharing ideas and resources, and networking to put co-production on the agenda
- supporting co-production project groups and advising on setting up co-produced projects
- working in whatever way possible to embed co-production in policy and strategy; recruitment and induction; performance; training and development in Oxfordshire County Council and their own communities and organisations.

The board and the champions group are linked. Each month a representative from the champions attends the board meeting and a representative from the board attends the champions meeting, to update each group on the activity of the other.

Aims and outcomes

One highly innovative aspect of the programme is that while the overarching direction was clear from the outset, it was part of the work to co-produce the detailed aims and outcomes.

I would really like people on our co-production board to describe what success looks like

(Senior leaders)

As such, the aims and outcomes can be considered an important early product of the programme, since they not only define a set of outcomes against which progress can be evaluated, but act as a statement of shared understanding of what the programme sets out to achieve.

To co-productively develop the aims and outcomes a SCIE researcher first undertook scoping interviews to identify what key stakeholders (including a person who uses services and a carer) thought the programme was trying to achieve, and the changes it would make. The researcher then worked with the Co-production Board, Co-production

Team and senior management to produce a draft set of aims and outcomes. These were presented to the co-production board in April 2018. Further amendments were made following feedback and then presented at a meeting of the Co-production Team, SCIE, and Oxfordshire County Council senior management in April.

The outcomes were amended further to ensure a fit with the timescale and ambitions of the two-year programme. In particular it was noted that while one of the primary aims of the co-production programme is to improve the quality and experience of services, within the timeframe the focus should be on involving stakeholders as an enabler for longer term change. Direct measurement of changes to services was out of scope.

Similarly, the aim to extend co-production beyond Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care is a longer-term goal, with this programme focused on building the base for expanding co-production further.

Four main aims for the programme were identified:

- Aim 1:** Embedding co-production in Oxfordshire County Council ('co-production is the way that Oxfordshire County Council does things')
- Aim 2:** Building better relationships between Oxfordshire County Council, service providers, people who use services, carers and families
- Aim 3:** Improving services in Adult Social Care
- Aim 4:** Influence and impact beyond Oxfordshire Adult Social Care

Structure of this report

This report evaluates the two-year programme, progress against those four aims and the importance of the seven strategic priorities in delivering the aims.

The next chapter briefly sets out the evaluation methodology used.

The findings chapter draws on evidence gathered through the evaluation to assess how the programme has met the four aims.

The discussion chapter focuses on the seven strategic priorities and their role in delivering the programme.

The final chapter draws on the findings and discussion to make a number of recommendations for the future of co-production within Oxfordshire.

Methodology

Evaluation approach

The evaluation itself has been co-produced through a sub group of the Co-production Board. The evaluation sub-group consists of a SCIE researcher, two peer researchers recruited from the SCIE co-production network, a carer member of the Co-production Board, and a member of the Co-production Team. The peer researchers conducted the bulk of the field work including interviews, focus groups and observations. The SCIE researcher oversaw the evaluation and attended board meetings to give regular updates.

Evaluation questions

As discussed in the previous chapter, the programme aims were developed co-productively. The evaluation sub-group then worked together to translate the four programme aims into the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways has co-production become more embedded in Oxfordshire County Council?
2. To what extent and in what ways have relationships in Oxfordshire improved as a result of the co-production programme?
3. How has the co-production programme contributed to improving services in Adult Social Care?
4. How has the influence of the co-production programme extended beyond Adult Social Care in Oxfordshire?

These questions have been used to guide the evaluation and to design the evaluation activities.

Evaluation activities

In the first year of the programme a number of evaluation activities were undertaken:

- scoping interviews with eight key stakeholders
- focus group with five members of the co-production board who use services or are carers
- end-of-year interviews with two members of the Co-production Team and two members of the SCIE team
- survey of 166 Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care staff

These first-year activities were primarily formative. Findings were fed back to the Co-production Team and senior leaders and used to shape the development of the programme. Outputs included developing guidelines, information sheets, a logic model for the programme, and an end of year interim report.

In the second year of the programme, further evaluation activities were undertaken:

- 19 interviews with the Co-production Team, Oxfordshire County Council staff and senior leaders, Co-production Board members and champions, people who use services, family carers and staff from community and voluntary organisations.
- two observations of champions and board meetings
- a focus group with a mixed group of ten champions and board members
- a survey of 144 council Adult Social Care staff
- a review of key documents
- gathering case studies from individuals and projects within the programme

These activities were primarily aimed at identifying how the programme has met the aims outlined above, but also with an eye to how co-production could continue to develop within the council, to meet the aim of fully embedding co-production.

As such this report is based primarily on data gathered in the second year of the programme, but does draw on earlier data to show progress and distance travelled.

Throughout the report quotes have not been attributed to individuals to preserve their anonymity. Individual interviewees have been placed into one of the following groups:

- **Senior leaders**, including the former Director of Adult Social Care (who initiated the programme), both current Deputy Directors of Adult Social Care, the Director of Children's Social Care, and the Oxfordshire councillor with responsibility for adult social care and public health.
- **Oxfordshire County Council staff**, six council employees, including the Co-production Team.
- **People who use services and carers**, who are all also board members or champions
- **Community and voluntary sector Staff**, some of whom are also champions.
- **SCIE staff** involved in supporting or overseeing the project
- **Focus group**, made up of 10 board members and champions who were a mix of people who use services, carers and council staff

Findings

This chapter will address each of the evaluation questions in turn.

How has co-production become more embedded in Oxfordshire County Council?

The first aim of the programme was to embed co-production within Oxfordshire County Council, and specifically within Adult Social Care, i.e. for co-production to become the way that Oxfordshire County Council does things. Working with service users and carers to design and purchase services was a key part of Oxfordshire's 2018-2021 Corporate Plan.

As described in the introduction, Oxfordshire has a long history of engaging with residents and more recently of co-producing some projects, as well as work with the Children in Care Council and Voice of Oxfordshire Youth. Oxfordshire hoped to build on and learn from services and organisations such as Shared Lives, My Life My Choice and the Oxfordshire Recovery College which place co-production at the centre of their work. Nevertheless, it was recognised that for co-production to become the norm or default, it would mean a significant shift in culture within the council.

To assess how far co-production has become the norm we looked at examples of co-production such as changes to processes and policies, the awareness and confidence of staff in co-production and involvement of people in the co-production programme. We also looked at where co-production has worked well, where less well and at barriers and facilitators to co-production.

The overall view of interviewees was that significant progress has been made with embedding co-production as a way of working within Adult Social Care, but that there is a way to go before it becomes 'business as usual'.

Yes, we are embedding [co-production] across all of social adult care.

(Senior leaders)

Interviewees saw broad awareness and understanding of what co-production is, particularly within Adult Social Care.

More people know about it. Understanding of co-production is growing, and people are realising that what they were doing was involvement, rather than co-production. There is commitment to work together, to do things differently and be brave.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

I do feel it is making progress in making co-production a reality.

(User of services / carer)

In Adult Social Care I think people are very aware now I'd be surprised if anyone didn't know about the programme. This is an example of a definite change.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Interviewees noted that embedding of co-production had gained momentum in the second year of the programme.

In the past six months, a ripple effect has led to more and more managers taking co-production on board.

(Oxfordshire County Council Staff)

When reflecting back on how things have changed since the first year of the programme interviewees noted a change in both awareness and understanding of co-production and saw more evidence of it in practice. Interviewees noted a progression from co-production being evidenced in the internal working of the board, to more direct work on council programmes.

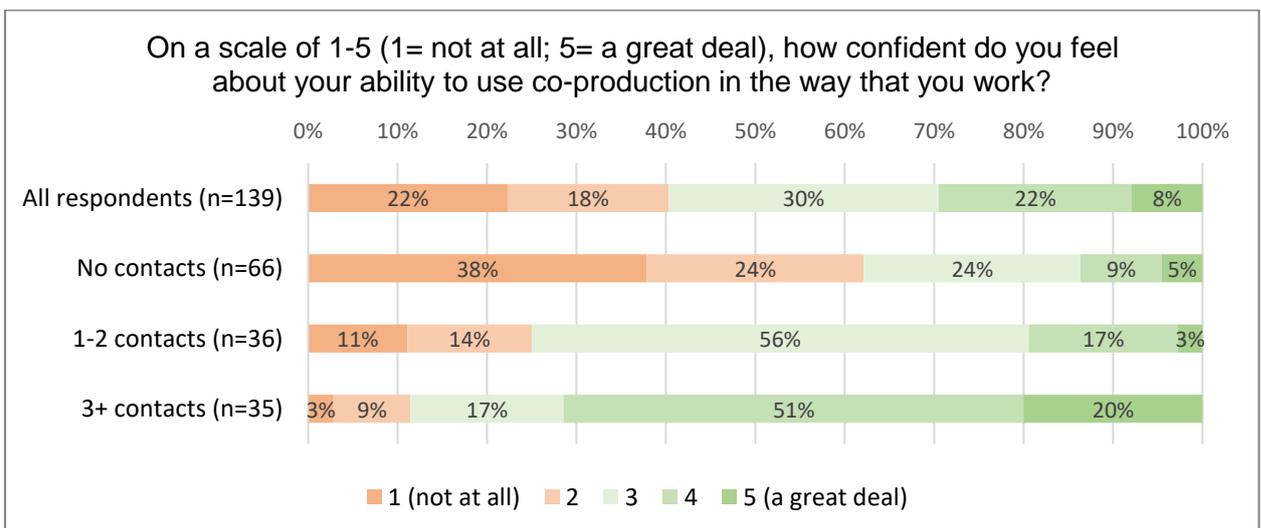
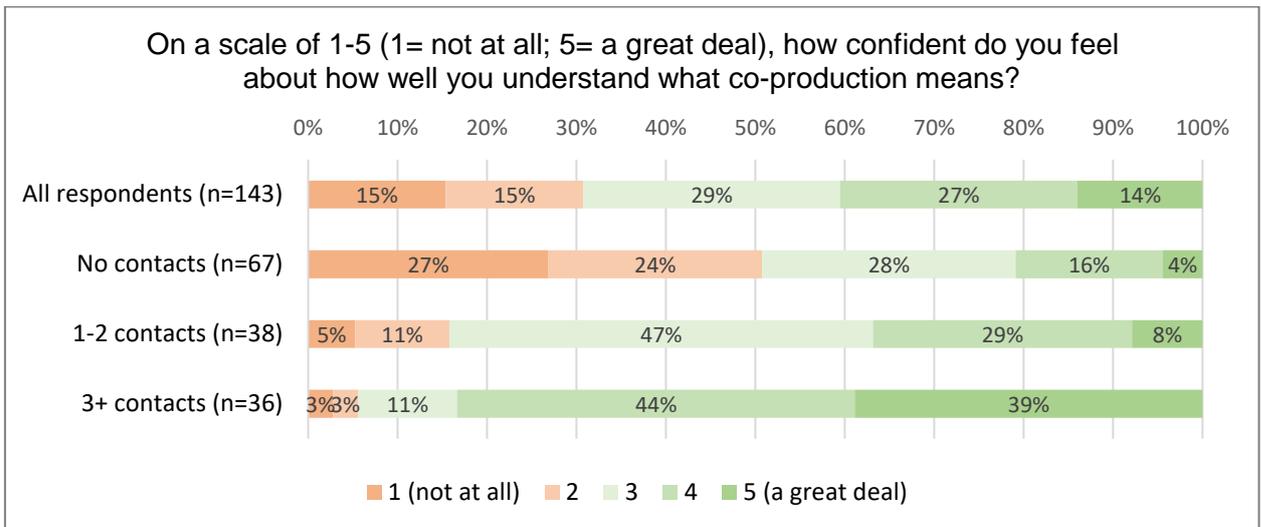
It feels like we are in a different place now and people are starting to embed it more in their practice now.

(Focus group)

Changes in staff confidence and understanding are supported by evidence from the Adult Social Care staff survey. Staff were asked about their understanding of co-production and how able they felt to apply it in their work. For both questions the majority of staff who responded indicated that they were confident in their understanding of co-production (70 per cent) and their ability to use it in their work (60 per cent)¹. This is an overall increase of approximately 5 per cent from the first year of the programme for both questions.

More importantly perhaps, there is a strong relationship between the level of engagement staff have had with the programme, and their levels of confidence. Respondents were asked how much contact they had had with the Co-production Team and whether they had attended any of the training or events run under the programme. Those individuals who had no contact with the Team or programme had significantly lower levels of confidence in understanding co-production (48 per cent), and ability to use co-production (38 per cent), than people who engaged with the team directly and/or had taken part in training or other co-production programme activities. Conversely, people who had one or two contacts had confidence of 84 per cent and 75 per cent, and people with three or more contacts had confidence levels of 94 per cent and 88 per cent.

¹ Note that the scale is from no confidence to a great deal of confidence, so answers of two and three indicate that the respondent has some degree of confidence, and answers four and five indicate they have relatively high levels of confidence. Here we have taken a response of three or higher to indicate reasonable to very high confidence.



This indicates that the programme has directly affected staff confidence in their knowledge of co-production and the ability to put it into practice.

It is of course possible that people who had more confidence and interest in co-production to start with were more likely to engage with the programme, and that this has had some effect on the differences between these groups. Nevertheless, the large differences in confidence between those with no engagement and those with high levels of engagement strongly suggests that the programme itself has improved staff understanding and confidence in co-production.

This is reinforced by comments from interviewees who noted that it is the direct involvement in the co-production programme and/or in co-production projects that has increased their and other people’s understanding and awareness of co-production.

[It has] Made me more aware. More confident. People on board are all treated the same.

(User of services / carer)

I came into this because I've wanted to give people a voice in all the things I've done. I've worked with all kinds of different vulnerable groups and been passionate about their right to be involved and heard. As a by-product of that, I've found my own voice. Developed confidence through networks that have been developed and personal experience.

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

Staff were also asked whether they thought the co-production programme has made a difference to training and staff recruitment in Oxfordshire County Council². The majority of staff think it has made a difference to both, though there is a notable difference between views on training and on staff recruitment.



Again, even a score of two means that they think the programme has made some difference, but if we take a score of three to mean that the respondent thinks it has made a notable difference, then 65 per cent of respondents thought that the programme had made a notable difference to how staff are recruited, and 78 per cent thought it had made a notable difference to the development and delivery of training.

Embedding co-production: examples and what has worked

Over the course of the programme a number of co-produced projects have been undertaken or initiated. The Co-production Team and Board have actively tracked approximately 20 projects as well as changes in policy or practice, but acknowledge that

² On both statements here, more than 50 per cent of respondents stated that they didn't know. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that the question asks people about something which for many people is likely to be outside their direct experience. For this analysis we have removed the 'don't knows' so that we can focus on the opinions of those who felt qualified to give one.

since co-production has begun to take off, and in keeping with the ethos of empowering people to undertake co-production themselves, it has been harder to track all the relevant projects, so it is certain that there are more projects underway which are at least being partially co-produced.

A full list of the projects tracked by the board is provided in the appendix, but here are some of the more significant projects and initiatives that interviewees referred to:

- **The Joint Older People’s Strategy** – an Oxfordshire-wide initiative involving Oxfordshire County Council the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the City and District councils to co-produce a new strategy for older people in Oxfordshire. A case study is provided on page 37.
- **The Adults’ Strategy** – co-producing the Adults’ (of working age) Strategy, and its delivery.
- **Supported Transport and the Oxfordshire County Council fleet** – as a result of questions raised by one of the board members Oxfordshire is moving forward to address some of the issues residents identified with supported transport. See page 35 for more details.
- **Grants panels** – with support from the programme, representatives from daytime support services (including people who use services, carers and support workers) sat alongside councillors on the panels which assessed applications for Oxfordshire’s innovation and sustainability funds (see below).
- **Moving into Adulthood** – a co-produced project to improve the transition from children’s to adult services in Oxfordshire. For more details see the case study on page 32.
- **People who use services and carers being involved in recruitment** – for example setting up a panel of people who use services and carers for the recruitment of the incoming director for adult social services (see page 27).
- **People with experience being involved in tenders** – for example, sitting on the panel and being part of the decision process for a new advocacy contract.
- **Board members presenting to the Performance Scrutiny Committee** – this was the first time people who use services and carers have ever presented to the committee.
- **Expectations of co-production in tenders** – an expectation that service providers will undertake co-production being written in as part of some tenders and contracts.
- **Co-production as a regular discussion item in team meetings** – staff have begun to make co-production a standard agenda item in their team meetings, briefings and presentations.
- **Care Homes Strategy** – Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group working with people using services, their families, and

providers to join up everybody's ideas and make sure people get the best care at the right time.

- **Carers' Pathway Review** – working with carers to co-design a new offer of information, guidance and support for carers in Oxfordshire.

One example which demonstrates how citizens can share power with the council is the involvement of people who use services and carers in grants panel decisions.

Grants panel case study

Since 2017, Oxfordshire County Council has had two funds for voluntary and community groups supporting Adults in Oxfordshire.

The Innovation Fund

£100,000 per year, to provide one-off grant funding to support the establishment of self-sustaining projects, delivering new opportunities for people in Oxfordshire.

The Sustainability Fund

£250,000 per year, to provide grant funding for the continuation and development of daytime support opportunities whilst supporting all to increase self-sustainability.

With support and advice from the Co-production Team and board, representatives from daytime support services - including people who use services, carers and support workers - joined councillors at the Innovation and Sustainability Funds cross-party panel meetings. The panel assessed each application before making a recommendation to award or not award to the charities and community groups applying for grants. This was the first time that the cross-party panel meetings included members of the public, as part of Oxfordshire County Council's commitment to co-produce the grants process. Final decisions on awarding the grants are made by Oxfordshire's cabinet.

Information shared and used at the panel meetings must be kept confidential, but also offer enough depth for an informed decision to be made when considering recommendations for awarding funds. The information was produced at a level that was understandable to all involved in the panel meeting. Councillors, officers and applicants were informed of the co-produced aspect to the grants, which meant that they could consider their choice of language and communication, prior to and during the meetings, to ensure that it was effective and enabled equality, inclusion and meaningful engagement for all panel members.

Councillors found having community representation from people with lived experience as part of the cross-party panel, both informative and helpful. People representing the community felt that their participation had been inclusive and had helped to shape the final recommendations.

In-between the grants re-opening, Oxfordshire County Council reviewed the application forms and processes for the Innovation and Sustainability Funds, holding a workshop for applicants, providers, people expressing an interest in grants and people using services or supporting people to use a service (carers/support workers) to come along and help the council to re-design and improve the whole process.

The council then revised the application forms and process to reflect the outcomes of the grants review, with emphasis on simplifying the process for applicants and all involved. Two subsequent workshops were held, in partnership with Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action to look at 3-year business plans and the grant criteria.

This year's Innovation and Sustainability Funds opened in August 2019 and the council have since held two cross party panel days, with people representing the community being involved at both meetings. The success of these has enabled colleagues to work with a similar process when dealing with funding.

Oxfordshire County Council have also developed a Youth Opportunities Fund of £1 million over two years. Young people will be encouraged to participate in the cross-party panel days and assess each application before making recommendations to award grant funding.

Interviewees noted that involving service users in the grant giving process was challenging. There was resistance to having members of the public directly involved in spending decisions, but...

...it was a real success. Councillors and people from the public making decisions about how to spend money for the first time ever, that was a big thing.

(Senior leaders)

Culture change

One theme that emerged in almost all of the interviews was the recognition that a move to working in a co-productive way is a culture change.

Co-production needs to be weaved into everything we do.

(Senior leaders)

Interviews highlighted the differences between co-production and 'traditional' ways of working. People coming from a voluntary sector or education background noted the more hierarchical nature of local government.

Interviewees noted that as board members and others involved in the programme understood the way the council works, and started to work with the system, even as they tried to change it, things began to get done.

To make something happen, someone very senior says it has to happen, they'll tell a middle manager and then it's passed down and gets done.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Interviewees noted that co-production doesn't work unless you have people at all levels of an organisation signed up to it. It is important that more than just senior staff are signed up and committed. You need to have middle managers engaged as well, and people as close to 'the ground' as possible.

It's no good thinking that the junior staff can do it without the top ones being supportive...

(User of services / carer)

Interviewees recognised that this cultural shift is a fundamental change to the way the council does things, and so it will take time.

Like an oil tanker that takes a long time to turn around.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

But interviewees also noted that while they felt this culture change was still in its infancy, they saw a notable shift in attitude and culture within Adult Social Care towards real co-production, such as the involvement of the board in operational matters and commissioning.

We've engaged we've listened, and people are really starting to believe we are working in a different way.

(Senior leaders)

There's a real thirst for what [the programme is] doing.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Sharing power and authority

Co-production is ultimately about sharing power, and a part of the cultural change is a shift in power relationships. Interviewees noted that there was, and still may be, some scepticism about the council sharing power. Though they also felt that the council had come a long way.

...there is some scepticism about how much the council will share power, because they still hold the purse strings, and make the final decision, but having everything co-produced up to that point is pretty impressive, and further than it has gone before.

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

Interviewees also noted that there can be reluctance to sharing power within the council.

Still learning all the time, issues re. people relinquishing power – still feels like an early stage in the journey.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

And that sharing of power can be particularly challenging in the current social care context of austerity, where there is significant pressure on local government.

Fundamentally [it is] about aligning work with principles whilst working in a hierarchical local government structure and a system that is fairly broken and has many problems.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Nevertheless, individuals directly involved in the programme did see themselves as equal with the council.

I don't work for the council I feel on an equal footing with all of them.

(User of services / carer)

And saw scope for further power sharing by greater involvement of user-led organisations (i.e. organisations which are run and controlled by people who use services).

...the service users are mainly based within the Council and the ideal for me is the Council working with user-led organisations and for these users led organisations to be in the lead of this process. This creates real power sharing.

(User of services / carer)

Although it wasn't discussed explicitly by interviewees, there is evidence that people involved in the programme are aware of a friction between the desire to share power, and the fact that legal responsibility for providing services, and for making decisions about how to spend public money, sits with the council and councillors. Interviewees noted that although it can be challenging, co-production provides a way of dealing with potentially contentious or sensitive issues.

Additionally, local authorities (and almost all large organisations) are hierarchical in structure, with those in more senior roles having the power to direct (or allow) those in more junior roles to take certain actions.

Neither of these facts are likely to change so there will likely continue to be a tension between the intention to share power equally and the reality that ultimate accountability will remain with the council.

It may be that this is better thought of as a tension which should be acknowledged and managed collectively by Oxfordshire County Council, people who use services and carers, rather than a problem which can be solved. As interviewees noted, the programme has had most success when it has worked with the existing system and culture, while still trying to change it.

Barriers to co-production

The most significant obstacle to co-production working well has been time and /or capacity pressures. Time pressures were mentioned as a factor by almost all interviewees. Interviewees noted that time pressure can mean people don't do 'quality

co-production' – they may take a 'tick box' approach – for example, running a one-off workshop rather than fully involving people throughout a project.

One project was not run as co-productively as some interviewees felt it could have been because the view was taken that it was too complicated to involve people who use services and families fully from the outset. Similarly, there was evidence in some cases that family members and people who use services felt unsure about whether they had been heard or listened to because there were delays providing feedback and updates on projects. This seemed to be more due to the time pressures that people working on projects were under, rather than a lack of desire to involve people who use services and families.

This was also reflected in the staff survey. A number of responses supported co-production as a good way to design services but recognised that it takes time and felt that it was additional work for them, which needed to be properly reflected in senior managers' expectations, timetables and resources provided to support the work.

It was acknowledged that this difficulty is unlikely to go away.

Co-production takes time and people sometimes don't have the time to do it well – that's a reality that's not going to change and that we have to deal with.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Senior leaders were also aware that co-production of commissioning can take longer, though did reiterate their belief that it leads to better outcomes.

Co-production takes longer, it has better outcomes but as a commissioner ironically ... my job is to make people slow down a bit and listen to people in the process of thinking about designing services, [it] does generally result in a better outcome.

(Senior leaders)

However, although it was widely recognised that co-production can take more time, this wasn't seen as a reason not to do it.

Even if it's difficult, it doesn't mean you shouldn't try – Everybody deserves a chance to be involved and we need to find a way to make it happen.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

In the discussion and recommendation chapters we discuss some ways that time and resource pressures might be reduced – for example, by building the capacity and diversity of the board and champions, and facilitating the development of local user-led groups.

Summary

All interviewees – those involved in running the programme, people who use services, family carers, senior leaders within the council – felt that very good progress has been

made towards embedding co-production, and all have started to see real changes in how Oxfordshire County Council works and the impact co-production is having.

It feels like we are in a different place now and people are starting to embed it more in their practice now.

(Focus group)

People are not so protective of their little area ... it was a struggle to get things done whereas now I feel things are progressing and you're being able to get things done quicker and to a higher standard.

(User of services / carer)

Interviewees recognised that as co-production becomes more embedded it is quicker and easier to do because the skills are more widely shared, processes are in place and there are better avenues by which to involve people.

However, there was also general agreement that co-production is still some way from it being fully embedded.

Still at a stage where a lot of it could be lost. Still a long way from it being properly embedded where it can stand for itself.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Co-production [is] just starting to march. As a child starts to walk its steps get faster.

(User of services / carer)

It should be [embedded] but I am hesitant because of the constant changing nature of the local authority, with a few changes of people in certain positions at this stage a lot of it could still be lost.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

I think it's a journey and it's getting there, there is really positive work and there is a lot of really good co-production happening I think it's not at 100 per cent but I don't think it's at 100 per cent anywhere.

(User of services / carer)

Below, one of the board members reflects on their experience, and what they have learnt from being part of the journey that Oxfordshire County Council has embarked on.

Reflections from a board member

I had always been a fan of co-production as the optimum way to achieve the best possible for people. After all it makes sense to talk to those who are going to be using services about what would be most helpful. And I had been involved in various co-production activities to do with mental health.

At a meeting of our local Rethink Mental Illness group we had had a session on Oxfordshire County Council's vision of co-production and shortly after this I found out about their co-production board, which I joined. It has given me an increasing sense of the importance of seeing people first and building an environment around them which will enable them to flourish. And joining up the dots in the community so that people's lives are seen as a whole.

As part of my involvement with the board I went to an "asset-based community development" training session, which is all about seeing what is there in the community already by speaking to people and building upon this. This is in line with other developments such as the NHS Long Term Plan which will hopefully seek to work from the individual outwards into what is necessary for them to thrive. There are still lots of dots to be joined but I have learnt that this is a process to which we all can contribute.

It is a process however, and my impression is that there are a number of projects which have been set up as starting points – in fact so many it is quite difficult for me as a new member to get my head around them. In my own area of mental health the Oxfordshire Recovery College has been an outstanding example of co-production, but it is at the moment the only area where there is any co-production, so there is much to be done.

What I find really heartening however is seeing decision-makers coming along to the board and connecting with people with real lived experience, which must be positive for them and for us.

How have relationships in Oxfordshire improved as a result of the co-production programme?

As described in the introduction, in 2015 Oxfordshire County Council withdrew funding from the partnership boards. A number of interviewees commented that prior to the programme relationships between the council and people who use services, families and carers were quite strained. Interviewees also noted that there were difficulties in the relationships between (and within) service providers and various professional and voluntary groups.

Communication was really broken between services – social services, health professionals and ourselves, even amongst different providers.

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

Therefore, a key aim of the programme was for it to help build better relationships between the council and people who use services, their families and carers, and secondarily with service providers and voluntary sector organisations.

Overall, interviewees were confident that the programme has had a positive impact on relationships between Oxfordshire County Council and people who use services, families, carers and members of the voluntary sector or service providers who have engaged directly in the programme. People who use services and family carers spoke of the positive impact that being involved as board members, champions or in one of the co-production projects had on them.

At this point in the programme it is harder to be certain of the impact that the programme has had on relationships with people who have not been *directly* affected by it, or *directly* involved in it. The programme has been running for a relatively short time, and the impact on services is just beginning to be seen. Directly measuring outcomes in services was outside the scope of this evaluation. Nevertheless, interviewees reported examples where they had seen improvements and adult services staff felt that the programme has significantly improved relationships.

Impact on people directly involved

People who use services and family members directly involved as board members or champions spoke about the difference it had made to them. They felt listened to and valued. Involvement has boosted people's confidence and empowered them.

As a family member I never thought I would be able to challenge someone like [the director of adult services].

(Focus group)

The programme has positively impacted on individuals' ability and confidence to influence and challenge when co-production isn't done, or isn't done as well as it could be. Within the council, interviewees noted that they had observed board members growing in confidence to give advice and offer constructive challenge. Board members and champions reflected this themselves, for example noting that they felt more confident to challenge external colleagues to work together for the benefit of people they support.

Personally, I have gained a feeling that this is an area that I can be involved with and I feel it is necessary that disabled people can get involved in services and how they are implemented... I would like to be involved and consulted in the other services in the county as well.

(User of services / carer)

People spoke about 'finding their own voice' as a consequence of being involved, even when their aim had been to advocate for others. One board member gave the example of attending a lecture from a very senior Doctor.

*...at the end of the lecture I said to the senior doctor –
“You’ve talked about all this happening etc but it’s all
about the patient, but you’ve not once mentioned the
patient.” He wrote a very nice letter back apologising.*

(User of services / carer)

A number of interviewees identified the *process* of working together as key to changing and improving relationships.

*Good relationships have developed through joint working
... It has changed relationships and expectations.*

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

By working together people also develop a mutual understanding. When members of the board began to understand what the council does and how it works there was a 'lightbulb moment'. The development of mutual understanding is a key aspect of co-production, but mutual understanding is also key to having good relationships. It is hard to have a good relationship with someone or something that you don't understand.

In the focus group it was noted that the board understands much more now about why the Council makes the decisions it does, it understands that there is a system that has to be adhered to.

The confidence that the board has to challenge and suggest ways of working is illustrated by its response when the outgoing director of adult services announced their resignation to them. The board requested that the incoming director of adult services interviews should include people who use services. As a result, board members were invited to take part in a day-long panel interviewing potential candidates. Facilitated by the Co-production Team, seven board members designed a set of interview questions, and sat alongside the director of children's services who chaired the panel. The panel then convened to discuss their views, and as a result the final decision was influenced by the panel.

This was the first time in Oxfordshire that a senior member of staff in social care was interviewed by people who are end users of the services which the director of adult services has a statutory responsibility to provide.

Some comments from the panel and Oxfordshire County Council staff were:

*Who would have though two mums like us would be going
to interview the new director of social care?*

This felt like a really important day.

It was very interesting to be involved in.

*I'm really glad we did this, it's good that we made it
possible.*

One of the board members has provided a short account of the impact the programme has had on him.

Tony O'Connell

Reflections on being part of the co-production programme

My name is Tony O'Connell. I have dementia and I attend the Forget-Me-Not club in Bicester. I am also a Team-Up Co-production Board member.

I was asked if I would be interested in joining the board by the Co-production Team after they heard me give a talk about my experience of living with dementia.

It took me a long time to really understand what the board was about and what co-production meant. I thought from the word we were going to be making a film... It's not a word people understand. Some time after joining the group, I questioned this and said we should make it language people can understand; that tells people what we're doing and what co-production is...working together. The board really liked this and now we say, 'Working together through co-production'.

On the board, we respect and listen to one another, we learn from each other, we value what we all have to bring and we treat each other as equals. Sometimes in meetings the language can be hard to follow, but I am able to say this and remind people to talk in a clearer way. Sometimes I feel bad doing this, but people respond really positively to it and thank me for the reminder; they say it can also help other people who may not have had the confidence to say they didn't understand. It means a lot to me that my ideas and contributions are valued by the group, and that they're acted on. When we were planning for the co-production festival in July, I said we should have something to do with dementia; so we got the dementia bus. I also suggested we have something on the wall where people could put up examples of co-production they are working on or know about in Oxfordshire; so we had a 'Co-production Tree'. Sometimes I forget all the contributions I have made to the group, but the others remind me what they are and what an important difference they have made.

Becoming a board member and getting involved in the co-production work has been really important to me because of the enjoyment and satisfaction it gives me knowing that we are making a difference to people's lives and helping them plan for their future; we did not have this help when we were young, so helping now gives me a sense of satisfaction. Being a board member is also keeping my brain occupied. Having dementia is a terrible disease and what the brain needs is stimulation; one of the ways I get this is attending the co-production meetings, so not only are we helping others, I am helping myself as well.



Relationships with service providers and the voluntary sector

Those members or staff of voluntary sector organisations who have been directly involved in the programme as champions or in projects have valued their involvement and said it's led to greater understanding of how the council operates.

There are really good examples [from] the voluntary sector at the table now.

(Senior leaders)

Interviewees from voluntary sector organisations commented that they had been able to bring what they had learned from their involvement in the co-production programme to their day-to-day work and set-up co-produced projects of their own or challenge when things weren't as co-productive as they felt they could have been.

There are champions in the voluntary sector to get that reach and understanding ... it is filtering out now ... they are taking the programme back to their organisation.

(Senior leaders)

Many of the voluntary sector organisations are also service providers, so there is some impact on those relationships there. However, interviewees noted that it may take more time to see evidence of impact on the relationships with service providers more generally, noting that Oxfordshire County Council works with many providers, and service providers themselves are not on the board.

Some interviewees felt that they were seeing some evidence of improved relationships with providers, and between providers.

Service providers are collaborating – working together on contracts, sharing resources, sharing ideas and good practice, making the most of each other's skills and experiences

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

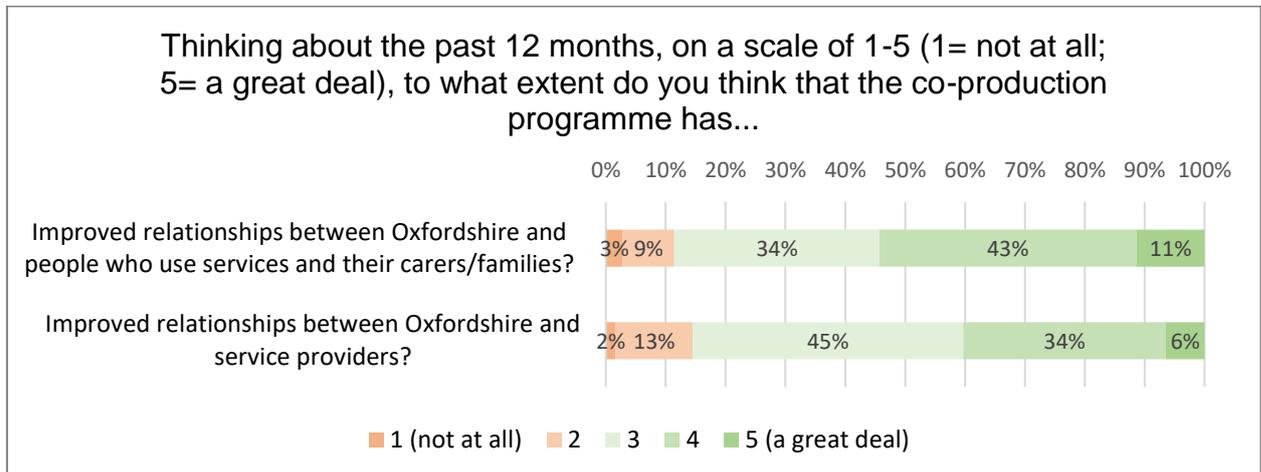
It is harder to measure the impact on people and organisations who have not been directly involved in the programme, not least because we have no direct way of contacting/gathering evidence from these people. It was noted by a couple of interviewees that a way to measure this might be through a survey which captures the views and experiences of a wider group of people and organisations than those who have been directly involved in the programme. Using pre-existing regular surveys to widen the reach and understand the wider impact of the programme is currently being explored.

Nevertheless, events such as the co-production festival can showcase and publicise the work that the council is doing.

We got good feedback on the festival, changing perceptions of the council, demonstrating we're working in a different way, open to change - shows council is listening, two-way conversation.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Oxfordshire County Council staff also felt the programme had improved relationships. 88 per cent of staff thought that the programme has made a notable improvement to relationships between Oxfordshire County Council and people who use services and their families / carers, and 75 per cent thought the programme had notably improved relationships with service providers³.



Summary

In summary, the programme has improved relationships and changed the perception of the council.

By involving people directly, the programme has widened understanding of the council among people who use services and carers. In so doing it has changed perceptions of the council. A number of interviewees mentioned their surprise and pleasure at seeing that the council have been genuinely willing and committed to in taking on co-production.

In fairness it has given us a much better insight into what the council does. The people of Oxfordshire don't always see that. They are dealing with the problems, there is a misconception about what the council does.

(Focus group)

Overall, interviewees – whether they worked for the council, were users of services, family members, carers, or worked for other organisations – were confident that the programme had positively impacted on relationships and improved perceptions of the council.

People have been really pleased to see that the council has committed to doing things differently and that they really do value people's input and opinion – it's not tokenistic, it's really, really important and it actually does shape and change services

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

³ Again 'don't know' responses have been removed for this analysis.

It is admittedly hard to disentangle cause and effect here. You do co-production by developing relationships, it is inherent to the process. So inevitably, the more you do good co-production the better relationships will become. The Joint Older People's Strategy and Moving into Adulthood projects (see below) are two examples where relationships have improved as a result of the co-production approach. But developing those relationships was integral to the projects, and emphasis and effort needed to be put into rebuilding relationships for the co-production to occur.

In a sense though it does not matter which comes first: the process of good co-production, where people work together to achieve a mutual goal, breaks down barriers and leads to greater understanding between those involved, and therefore to better relationships.

How has the co-production programme contributed to improving services in Adult Social Care?

As noted above, two years is a relatively short time, and direct evaluation of services was outside the scope of this evaluation, this is an evaluation of the programme itself. Equally, projects happened as part of the programme, but did not necessarily come to fruition within the two-year time frame of the programme. Nevertheless, there have been examples of successful projects and initiatives, and some indirect evidence of impact on services. Interviewees expressed their expectation that co-production would improve services, and gave some examples where they think it has.

One example of how co-production has impacted on services is the use of family carers and people who use services on decision panels for new providers. Officers said that having family carers and people who use services involved in decisions about providers led to a different emphasis:

...family carers were really interested in the transition of the incoming provider and the outgoing one and they really wanted to know how they would treat service users and informed every step of that process to ensure a smooth transition ... there was an absolute added value to the slightly different lens that they were looking at when they were interviewing providers for appointing them for new services.

(Senior leaders)

This, and below, are examples of how the co-production approach is becoming embedded in the commissioning cycle of adult services, and why it is a useful and valid approach.

A board member and service user / family carer clearly articulated how co-production can both improve services and save money, and how even at this stage the work of the board and the programme is doing this:

Improving services is the main thing, services will be now what people want rather than what they think we want. So often services have not been what people want if the

people have been asked. Some of the things we come up with are far cheaper than have been suggested and are not wanted.

There's more honesty and integrity.

(User of services / carer)

The biggest plus I get as an elected member is when people say, well you did listen and understand my problems, that confidence where they say yes you listened.

(Senior leaders)

One of the projects many interviewees mentioned as an early example of a successful co-production approach is the 'Moving into adulthood' reworking of Oxfordshire's transition services. Although it had its roots before the formal start of the co-production programme, all interviewees saw it as a prime example of co-production working well to respond to the needs of citizens.

For me has been one of the best examples of co-production because it started right from the beginning it was a blank agenda. The lady who's leading it absolutely got it, we've made a video about it, the number of people that were involved in it.

It really is a great example of good co-production and the relationship of people on that level was probably improved, in the sense that they feel that the Council's finally listening to them and their despair about the Transition service.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Moving into Adulthood case study

On the basis of feedback from young people and their families, as well as from staff in children's and adult services, Oxfordshire County Council wanted to improve the transition of young people from children's to adults' services.

Oxfordshire County Council wanted to work with young people and their families to develop a proposal for a model of support that would provide better experiences for young people and their families as they move into adulthood, whilst continuing to ensure that the local authority meets its statutory responsibilities within the resources available.

The project has taken a co-production approach. A *Moving into Adulthood – Working Together* group was set up which includes young people, family members, and front-line staff from children’s and adult services. Group members have been highly committed and contributed openly and creatively to discussions, welcoming contributions from all members and developing supportive working relationships. The group also adapted to people’s preferences, for example recognising that young people may not want to come to a formal meeting at the council, and so finding other ways to engage them.

Our ideas came from young people, family members, and staff who got to know each other in the group and talked openly about their different experiences. We all wanted to make services for young people better, so there was a strong sense of shared motivation, and learning from each other.

(Moving into Adulthood project lead)

Over the course of the project, the group met and ran regular workshops with a cross-section of people with an interest in this area. A subgroup visited Kent to meet staff and managers from their Lifetime Pathway service for people with disabilities, and the project lead met with young people at My Life My Choice young people’s group, staff at the County Council, Oxford Health, Oxford University Hospitals Trust, a special school, and with individual parents. In total 108 people have been involved in the project, a mix of people using services, carers, providers and staff.

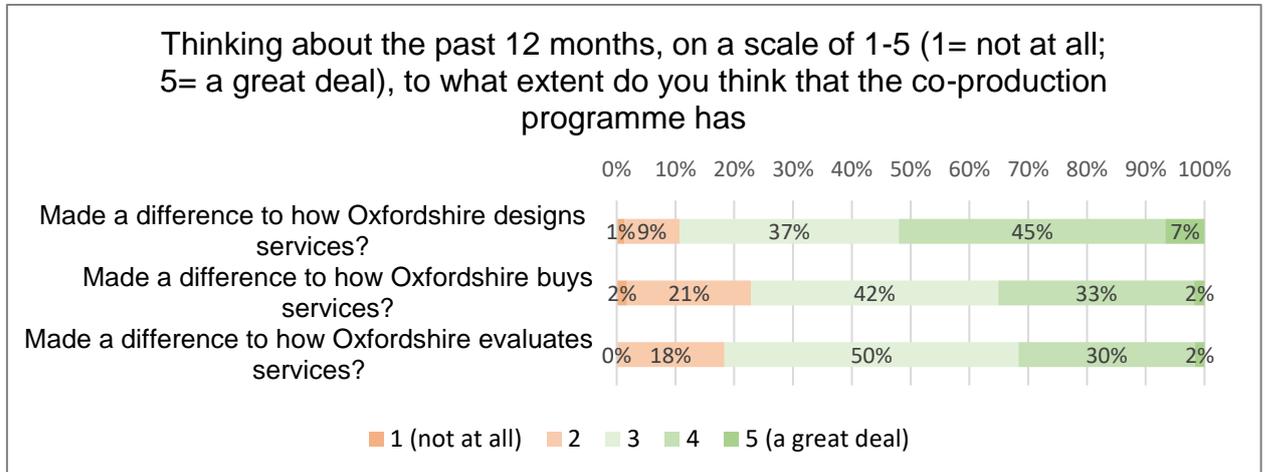
The group made a recommendation to Oxfordshire County Council leaders to make a single transition team. Two different ways of delivering this recommendation have been developed and are in the process of being considered by directors and senior managers:

- a) Transitions team to support 15-25 year olds with special educational needs to work as part of a pathway: Children’s services (0-14 year olds) and then Adult services (25+ year olds)
- b) All age single disability team

The Moving into Adulthood Working Together group will act as a reference group for the next part of the project.

Overall interviewees felt that the co-production programme was positively impacting on services in Oxfordshire, and that it would continue to do so. This was complemented by the staff survey. Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care staff also felt that the programme has had an impact on how Oxfordshire County Council designs, buys and evaluates services. Staff see the most difference as having been made to how services are designed (89 per cent), but were still very positive about the impact on how services

are bought (77 per cent), and evaluated (82 per cent)⁴. Under 2 per cent of respondents thought that the programme has had no impact.



Summary

Despite it not being the role of this evaluation to gather direct evidence, the prevailing view of participants is that where co-production has been part of service design or development it has improved the services themselves, and improved how recipients of the services (and family carers) feel about them.

How has the influence of the co-production programme extended beyond Adult Social Care in Oxfordshire?

The final aim of the programme was to influence the take up of co-production beyond Adult Social Care in Oxfordshire, not just within other parts of the council, but further afield as well.

We collected evidence of numerous cases where the programme has positively influenced and impacted beyond Adult Social Care. Some of these have been mentioned above, such as the impact on the community and voluntary sector. Here we divide influence outside of Adult Social Care into three categories: within Oxfordshire County Council but outside of Adult Social Care, within Oxfordshire but outside Oxfordshire County Council, and outside Oxfordshire entirely.

Influence within Oxfordshire County Council, but outside Adult Social Care

There are numerous examples of where the programme has influenced work in Oxfordshire County Council, but outside of Adult Social Care. Some of them have been mentioned above, and more examples are contained in the full project list (see appendix). Here we focus on two examples to illustrate the impact of the programme, the influence on supported transport and on children's services.

⁴ Again, 'Don't know' responses have been excluded from this analysis.

Supported transport

One of the board members raised the issue of supported transport in Oxfordshire, asking whether the services providing transport in Oxfordshire could be co-produced, because there are a lot of problems for people.

The director responsible for supported transport visited the co-production board and met with individual board members to discuss the problems and possible ways forward. They have continued to engage with the board to co-productively develop and improve the services.

The board member who originally raised the issue describes their experience:

As a family carer, I often get to hear about issues that other family carers who have a family member with a learning disability are experiencing first hand. One of the recurring problems was around specialist transport and how it was not delivering the right level of service. This was something I could identify with, as my own daughter had previously had a bad experience.

Being on the co-production board gave me the opportunity of suggesting that this was an area that could be looked at in a co-produced way. I collated evidence from a number of different sources which I presented to the Director of Community Operations at Oxfordshire County Council. It was a very productive meeting. He listened to the concerns that had been raised and promised to get back with some thoughts.

Less than two weeks later he had put together a detailed list of the issues, breaking them down into potential quick fixes and those that would take a longer period of time. He will be attending the next co-production board meeting to talk about the next steps.

This is exactly how I feel co-production should work. This was a service identified as having problems by people using the services. The local authority listened and are now putting in steps to bring everyone involved around the table to talk about what the services need to look like. For me this is real progress and represents a real change in the way the county council want to develop services together rather than just consult.

Being a member of the co-production board has given me the opportunity as a family carer to question and challenge and ensure that the voices of people using services are heard.

(Board member and family carer)

This case was cited by numerous interviewees as an example where the existence of the co-production board created an avenue for people directly affected by a service to productively engage with the council and work together to find a way forward.

How we move forward with the transport discussion impacts on so many people's lives and opportunity to take bull by

the horns That is something which could be a measure of how well co-pro works and it impacts a lot of people.

(Focus group)

This was echoed by officers who presented at the board:

It was a new experience for me. This was a group / meeting of likeminded and enthusiastic people that really want to influence our direction and help to achieve better outcomes for communities across Oxfordshire

(Director of infrastructure and transport, after attending Board)

Children's services

A senior leader from Oxfordshire County Council's children's services discussed the impact of being involved in the Adult Social Care programme on children's services.

It's made us think really differently so we've started a new programme which is going to start next June... it's about how we get parents involved ... helping us set up that service

I think it will change the way we commission services and we may commission different services

(Senior leaders)

They provided the example of working with parents to design and commission parental support around mental health needs. They noted that they would like to include parents in the tendering process and on procurement panels and that consequently the type of service commissioned, and who provides it, would depend on what parents say.

They also noted that children's services work in a very partnership-oriented way, for example, with health, schools and the police. They thought that it is hard to see how the emphasis on co-production would not extend to that joint working, and therefore influence those areas as well.

Interest across the council

These examples are backed up by evidence of a growing interest in co-production across Oxfordshire County Council. Staff directly involved in the programme noted a shift across the council, with growing numbers of people approaching the team and asking for advice and guidance on starting a co-productive piece of work.

There's interest in co-production throughout the whole council – looking at co-production in different contexts

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

However, interviewees did sound a note of caution about expanding too quickly and emphasised the importance of maintaining quality.

Expanding into other areas needs to be grounded in realism and the need to do things well

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Influence within Oxfordshire, but outside Oxfordshire County Council

Here we highlight two examples where the programme has influenced work within Oxfordshire, but not directly under the remit of the council. The first is collaboration and influencing on health services, the second is the impact on voluntary sector organisations.

Health

Interviewees noted that the Council has good relations with the local Health Trust and Clinical Commissioning Group. One of the clearest examples of this is the Joint Older People's Strategy. The strategy was a collaboration between Oxfordshire County

Co-producing the Joint Older People's Strategy

The Older People's Strategy sets out Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's and Oxfordshire County Council's priorities in working with older people. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxfordshire County Council, and the City and District Councils made a commitment to include and be guided by the principles of co-production in the development of the strategy, to ensure a shared ownership of the future vision and strategic priorities.

The strategy was co-produced with nearly 600 people. A three-month period of engagement was undertaken to check that the messages from previous consultations were still relevant and to understand what is important to people as they grow older. Members of the public, people who use services, their families and carers, voluntary organisations and local councillors, all gave their views at events throughout the summer of 2018. An online survey received over 300 responses, staff met with voluntary groups, the Clinical Commissioning Group Locality Clinical Groups and a number of acute and community clinicians.

The key findings from these engagement activities were brought together in a co-production event which collaboratively agreed the strategy's vision, strategic priorities and structure. The Co-production Team and champions supported planning and running the event. Over 40 people participated including members of the public, black and ethnic minority representatives, members of voluntary organisations, city and district councillors and managers, health and care managers and clinicians. This co-production event helped to shape the design and key themes of the four strategic priorities:

- Being physically and emotionally healthy
- Being part of a strong and dynamic community
- Housing, homes and the environment
- Access to information and care

The delivery plan of the strategy around these four priorities is now also being co-produced.

Reflections on co-producing the Older People's Strategy from the Head of Planning and Transformation, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

I was asked to do a piece of work on behalf of the Oxfordshire system (The County Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, and City and District Councils) on the older people's strategy. The Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board had committed to using a co-production approach, but we were on a very tight timescale to develop a strategy.

To be fair I knew absolutely nothing about co-production apart from what the average person in the street might know, so I connected with the county council co-production lead who provided tremendous support to help me understand what co-production is about.

I attended one of the Co-production Board meetings, and then worked with the co-production champions. I was supported by three of them and the Co-production Team in the development of the co-production event. They helped with the planning, the selection of people who should come to it and the delivery of the day. The event was really successful, we got some really good information out of it that has gone into the final draft of the strategy for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Developing the strategy has been very much about how we work together, it took a systems approach under the auspices of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It's been acknowledged across the system that it was a good piece of work. I don't think we'd have had such a good result if I had not worked closely with the Co-production Team, and learnt what I know about co-production from them.

For me, co-production is about not going into something with a fixed idea about what you're going to get out of it. Co-production is very much about working with the people for whom the strategy would have an impact and affect.

It's no good me writing a strategy if it sits on the shelf, we really need to be clear about what's important to people, and how the strategy can help us develop services.

It's what best meets their needs, that delivers a benefit for them, rather than

Council and the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, but the co-production programme facilitated a co-productive approach to developing the strategy.

This is an example of co-production impacting positively on the integration of health and social care. Co-production enabled these services to work together more effectively. It shows that when people who use services and carers are involved equally, systems can work together better.

In their local system review progress report of Oxfordshire in November 2018 the Care Quality Commission mentioned the co-production of the Older People's Strategy in recognising the improvements made in Oxfordshire:

There was a stronger strategic approach emerging that embodied the principles of co-production. This was evident in the development of the Older People's and Health and Wellbeing Board strategies.

(CQC local system review: Oxfordshire (progress report))

As well as direct collaboration on the Joint Older People's Strategy, interviewees noted that the Clinical Commissioning Group in particular has become more involved in the co-production programme, with both groups sharing experiences and considering things they hadn't thought of. This wouldn't have happened previously and there is now Clinical Commissioning Group representation on the co-production board. Interviewees felt that the Clinical Commissioning Group was tapping into the co-production ethos for their place-based planning work, particularly the importance of working closely with people to determine their local needs and being honest in discussions about what services it is possible to provide.

Voluntary sector

The influence of the programme on relationships with the voluntary sector was discussed above. It was noted there that many of the champions are voluntary sector staff, and that this has been a productive two-way street for spreading the reach of the programme and sharing learning. As well as people "taking the program back to their organisations", they are bringing their skills into the programme, sharing as much as they take away.

This cross fertilisation goes further than spreading the word of co-production, in some cases the programme has led to voluntary sector organisations taking a more co-productive approach themselves. While voluntary sector staff often thought that their organisations had strong set ups for engaging with the people they supported or represented, some noted that co-production is a step further than engagement and they took the co-production approach back to their organisations.

champions are taking work back to their different areas – Oxford Influencers Group ... OT doing co-production in her area – spreading across all different areas in Oxfordshire – interest and acknowledgement growing.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

As a member of Carers Voice, I have been passing on the co-production approach to them.

(User of services / carer)

Interviewees noted a wider influence of the programme on the understanding of co-production within Oxfordshire.

If you talk to people from Oxfordshire not directly connected with the programme, or related in other ways, they talk about co-production very articulately

(SCIE)

Influence outside Oxfordshire

It is clear that the programme is having an influence outside Oxfordshire as well. It has attracted interest from other councils. Essex, Kirklees and Slough have all visited Oxfordshire to meet with the team and the board. They wished to understand more about the programme, learn from Oxfordshire's experiences, and take that back to their areas to inform their approach to co-production. For example, Essex visited the board at the beginning of setting up a programme similar to the Oxfordshire County Council programme. The two authorities remain in touch and continue sharing experiences and peer learning around what works and what doesn't.

Interviewees noted that the programme now has a national presence, in part due to SCIE's marketing and web presence, and also due to involvement in the National Co-production Week, Oxfordshire's own co-production festival, and the co-production programme's social media presence, and national networking by members of the programme.

People who use services who attended said the festival really changed their opinion of the council because of the co-production it's doing and the support given on the day by senior management

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

A service user involved with the programme noted that what is happening in Oxfordshire is positive and co-production in many councils 'is not even on the agenda, it is non-existent'. Nevertheless, those involved in the programme were keen to emphasise that as well as inspiring other councils and sharing their learning, they are learning from what other councils are doing. They see Oxfordshire as one of a small, but growing, group of councils who are trying to embed co-production in the way they work. All of whom are learning from each other, while taking their own paths.

Summary

The programme has had a notable influence on work outside Oxfordshire Adult Social Care. Unsurprisingly this is most apparent within other parts of Oxfordshire County Council, particularly in the closely related fields of health and children's services. The collaborative work with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and others in the health arena is a prime example of how co-production is spreading in Oxfordshire, and how other organisations are engaging with the programme and learning from Oxfordshire County Council's experience. Through the work of the programme, and from exposure via the co-production festival, co-production week and other avenues, Oxfordshire is beginning to be seen as a role model for co-production and people continue to approach Oxfordshire to learn from experiences there.

Discussion: seven strategic priorities

Introduction

Prior to the programme a group made up of SCIE, Oxfordshire County Council commissioning and engagement officers, people who use services and carers, came together to think about co-production in Oxfordshire. The group identified seven priorities that it was felt would be key to the successful implementation of co-production within Oxfordshire County Council:

1. Senior-level commitment
2. Targeted training programme
3. Establishing a co-production group
4. Resourcing
5. Concordat
6. Piloting
7. Evaluation

This chapter discusses each of these in turn, and their importance for delivering the aims discussed in the previous chapter.

Senior-level commitment

It was recognised that for the programme to be successful it would be absolutely vital to have leaders at the highest level who understand and commit to co-production from the outset.

The programme was initiated by the then Director of Adult Social Care who was highly involved and engaged from the outset. Although they moved to a new role half-way through the programme, this level of commitment and involvement was continued by the two Deputy Directors of Adult Social Care.

Many interviewees expressed their surprise and pleasure at the level of commitment to co-production from the council. One interviewee noted that having the director and deputy directors commit to co-production while under multiple pressures and other commitments, sent a signal through the organisation about the importance of co-production.

What the leader says resonates throughout the organisation.

(SCIE)

However, as noted in the previous chapter, as well as being engaged and providing a model for behaviour, senior leaders needed to be directive and instruct others to take a co-production approach. Interviewees felt that you need to have commitment and involvement in co-production throughout an organisation for it to work. But for middle and more junior roles to be involved they need to be directed or explicitly given

permission to work co-productively because of the hierarchical nature of power and the distribution of work in most organisations.

As noted above, this is part of the tension between the ideal of sharing power in co-production and the much more hierarchical power structures in local authorities (and most organisations).

Interviewees also noted the importance of councillors supporting co-production and the programme. 'You want councillors championing it' but 'have to think about why co-production would be important to councillors' (SCIE). A part of this might be that they see co-production as a right way to do things, a good way of engaging with and involving the people they represent, "*with*, rather than done to" (Senior leader). Interviewees also noted the importance to senior leaders and councillors of being able to demonstrate the impact and value of co-production, of it being able to stand up to scrutiny.

Councillors have been directly involved in the programme, most notably through the grants panels, but in other ways as well. Two members of the board, a deputy director and SCIE presented on the programme to the performance scrutiny committee. The committee is made up of councillors with responsibility for scrutinising spend of public money. The importance and impact of people who use services presenting to the committee should not be underestimated, it was the first time this has happened. Councillors on the committee were very positive and supportive of the programme.

...they were absolutely onboard with it all and really positive, that has been quite a shift in the last six months

(Senior leaders)

Senior leaders commented on the relationship between councillors and board members, noting that councillors listened to and engaged with the board and saw its value.

All interviewees saw the support of councillors as important. As one interviewee noted,

if you haven't got the councillors on board, they can veto any money

(User of services / carer)

Targeted training programme

In order to develop a consistent approach to co-production across Oxfordshire County Council it was felt it would be important to provide training to people who use services, carers and staff at all levels, tailored to their needs and ideally co-produced.

Training within the programme was co-produced between SCIE and the Co-production Team and tailored to Oxfordshire County Council. Board members and champions were involved in its design and delivery.

The advanced training delivered by SCIE and the Co-production Team was singled out for praise by attendees in focus groups and interviews. This was co-designed with the Co-production Team on the basis of what Oxfordshire County Council staff and champions said they wanted.

It was really useful having concrete examples ... we got an example and worked out how to co-produce it. Best thing I have attended, it gave me an idea of what co-production is all about, and think about people who we don't always consider.

(Focus group)

Interviewees noted that the co-production training has been useful for spreading understanding of co-production to parts of Oxfordshire County Council which might be somewhat resistant or not able to see how it might apply to their roles.

There is a plan to develop co-production e-learning for new staff and offer face-to-face 'how to do co-production' training, which will be designed and delivered with the champions and board. There are plans for all Adult Social Care staff to have co-production training as a mandatory part of their development which will further embed co-production, it is a key part of the champions programme.

Other councils are also interested in the training that has been part of the programme. One of the outputs of the programme are these tailored training sessions, not just the course content but a training model which can be taken forward and adapted as necessary to further embed co-production.

Establishing a co-production group

At the outset of the programme the importance of having a 'co-production group' was identified. The group's principal function would be to drive and monitor progress, and it was felt it should be a mix of people who use services, carers and officers.

Once the programme began, this group was initiated in the form of the co-production board. The board and their role is central to the programme. In part this is through its 'check and challenge' function on actual pieces of work. But the board is also a very visible sign that the council is divesting some power or authority to people who use services and family carers.

The effectiveness of the co-production board

Interviewees noted that the board has been a key mechanism for both supporting co-production, and for checking and challenging progress with co-production and how projects are co-produced within Oxfordshire County Council. Teams and departments go to the board to discuss how they can better embed co-production in their work. They get a chance to consider what they are doing and how to proceed, and report back to the board later. This was seen as evidence that co-production is being taken seriously by the council.

Commissioners giving updates at board shows they're taking it seriously

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

As envisaged at the start, the co-production board is co-chaired by a family carer and a senior Oxfordshire County Council officer (currently one of the Deputy Directors for Adult Social Care). The board is made up of people who use services and family carers,

as well as Oxfordshire County Council officers. A representative from Oxfordshire's Clinical Commissioning Group attends, which shows that the board is being taken seriously outside of the Council. Senior leaders from other departments also regularly attend to present updates on their work.

In the set-up phase of the board there was some tension between the board having its own voice and being able to set its own terms, and members needing or desiring some direction or guidance. One interviewee felt that it was hard for the board to 'start from a blank piece of paper'.

Board members who were people who use services or family carers noted that there was quite a steep learning curve involved in understanding how the council works, the various processes and 'sign offs' that things have to go through, and how some core business of the council, such as commissioning, works.

An interviewee identified an example where the board had been waiting for feedback on progress with a specific policy, and had become frustrated that it was taking longer than expected to hear back. This led to a discussion of the various processes that the council had to go through to change a policy like this. This was a revelation in the board's understanding of complex organisations and the processes they go through.

When the board began to better understand the workings and complexity of the council, it was able to operate and engage more effectively. It is now generally acknowledged that the board is working well,

It has its own strong identity, board members are clear about their roles – when they're representing the board, when they're acting as an individual ... Board members have developed growing confidence to give advice and offer constructive challenge

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Interviewees noted that the board has grown and matured

people have really bought into it – people from Oxfordshire County Council very impressed by inclusive and participatory way of working when they've been involved

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Interviewees felt that the check and challenge function of the board is working well and impacting on Oxfordshire County Council.

the impact of the board has been significant in the way that people work, I can see that the board has an impact on people's thinking and then on the way that people are working so just having that group in place ... where people are asked to provide updates on what they're doing, when they're invited to the board to present, and then be supportively challenged.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Diversity and representation in the board

Some interviewees did express a concern about the diversity of the board and how representative it is. There was a desire for the board to be as diverse and representative as possible, which reflects the principle of diversity underpinning co-production. It was noted that while representation of different groups had increased, single individuals still felt responsible for representing their group. Some expressed concern that it might become a 'bubble', i.e. reflecting a limited number of views. It was also noted that ethnic minority groups are not well represented by the board, although it was also acknowledged that attempts have been made to address this.

Interviewees noted that the relatively small number of people who use services and family carers on the board (six or seven), meant these individuals 'currently bear a lot of responsibility and it only takes one or two to be unwell [for things to become difficult]' (user of services / carer).

A related point made by a number of interviewees was that membership of the board does take a level of commitment. People who use services and family carers are likely to have other commitments and may not always be able to attend or take part in board activities.

These are issues that all those involved in the programme are aware of, and have been trying to address

the board needs to be bigger and more diverse - they are aware of this but it is difficult to achieve it. They remain aware of this and keep working on it, and understand it will take time.

Is in some ways an organic process, it will grow over time as people hear about it, but it is fragile and needs support

(User of services / carer)

The make-up of the board, plans for keeping membership refreshed and ensuring as much diversity as possible, are all being considered for the future of the programme.

The Champions group

Although the champions were not explicitly part of the seven strategic priorities, they have formed an important part of the programme.

Champions act as role models, get involved in training, running events, providing advice and support, and, as noted above, have been directly involved in supporting and delivering a number of co-production projects, including the Joint Older People's Strategy.

The aim at the outset of the programme was for the champions group members to co-design their own roles, and those roles were flexible, in keeping with a co-productive approach. Nevertheless, some interviewees noted that they felt some uncertainty about their role as champions and how they worked with and complemented the board.

You have the board and the champions it is unclear what the overlap is. I am not sure where I can contribute

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

I think for the champions network there is a bit of a challenge between formality and informality and we haven't got that right yet

(Focus group)

We are not clear about what our role is and what our identity is, a network is always more intangible

(Focus group)

Although it is important to note that this wasn't a universal view, some champions didn't express any concerns about their role, and even those who did, wanted to be more involved in the programme and were looking for ways to address the issues identified.

Steps have been taken to make sure that champions are clearer about their role in the programme and the relationship between the champions and other parts of the programme.

Now that we're a year in, we're all a bit clearer, we were all stabbing in the dark in the beginning, so [now we're] making sure that the role of the champion is a lot clearer. That the level of commitment is made a lot clearer, because it wasn't at the beginning, and [we are doing] something about being able to substantiate the champions role, the evidence and impact that champions have, because that's quite useful for managers.

(Oxfordshire County Council Staff)

As the programme continues, and the number of champions increases, it will be important to ensure that their role is clear and that they are motivated.

Because champions include a mix of Oxfordshire County Council staff and community and voluntary sector staff they can make links between the council and other services, and are a route for spreading understanding of co-production.

...through the champions network we've got a lot of people working in different organisations which means that they can then involve people so that has been really important

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Champions praised the support they received from the Co-production Team.

The team is responsive and enthusiastic, committed, dedicated, understanding ... They're good at keeping champions engaged

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

Champions, and others, felt that support from the Co-production Team had been crucial and expressed concern about how the champions would continue without some kind of support and facilitation

For the champions to continue, they would need to be co-ordinated and facilitated by the Co-production Team or someone else.

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

Support from [the] team is definitely necessary for champions to continue at this time to keep momentum and ensure that things carry on along the right path

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Currently champions are primarily Oxfordshire County Council staff or members of staff from community and voluntary organisations in Oxfordshire. There are some family carers in the champions, but interviewees felt there was scope for increasing the number of service user and family carer champions, and making the champions group more representative of the community. If increased in this way it may be that the champions could help allay some of the concerns regarding the diversity and representativeness of the (necessarily) smaller number of board members, and if well managed champions could supplement the board, taking some of the pressure off individual board members to take part in all board activities.

Observations of board and champions meetings

To understand more about how the champions and board work, and to assess how co-production is working in practice, the peer researchers observed both board and champions meetings.

At the board meeting, the peer researcher observed that service user and carer board members participated fully, spoke freely and openly, made challenges and suggestions which were received without defensiveness and enacted immediately when this was possible and appropriate. Different perspectives were valued and a strong team ethos was apparent throughout the proceedings. Conversations were fluid and lively. There was some use of jargon, but this did not seem to be problematic.

The observer noted that the meeting was good-humoured and concerted efforts were made to ensure that everyone present was happy before the meeting commenced. The meeting concluded with a quick round, asking people how they felt about how the meeting had gone and comments were universally and strongly positive.

The peer researcher felt that the meeting worked well to achieve the aims of the board:

On the evidence of this meeting, the board is focused on taking or encouraging meaningful actions that relate to the aims of embedding co-production in Oxfordshire County Council; improving relationships between Oxfordshire County Council, service providers, service users and

families/carers; improving adult services; and extending impact.

The board is productive and acts in accordance with the co-production principles of equality, diversity, accessibility and reciprocity.

(Peer researcher observation notes)

Similarly, the Champions meeting was run in a co-productive manner. Champions were sharing power, working together, and openly discussing some of the complexities to do with putting co-production into practice. The fact that people involved in the programme were taking on and interested in the complexities themselves is evidence of co-production in action. They were not expecting any difficult issues to be dealt with only by a 'leader' in a hierarchy, they saw it as their role to deal with and address issues as much as anyone within the hierarchy.

Resourcing

It was recognised at the outset that implementing a co-production approach would have cost implications, some upfront, and some ongoing. However, it was felt these could be justified on the basis that better solutions will emerge which will result in savings.

Interviewees noted that the resourcing for the programme has been important to it being taken seriously, and has complemented the commitment by Oxfordshire County Council.

There is a visible injection of a lot of money that is what's made the significant difference, commitment is important, but the money has made that happen

(Focus group)

As outlined in the previous section, interviewees felt that continued support for facilitating the board and champions would be necessary. Many interviewees felt that the programme is at a delicate point, it has achieved a lot and has good momentum, but there is a way to go before big projects are delivered. They felt that continued support is needed to 'turn the tanker' and embed co-production.

As mentioned earlier, one of the issues that interviewees and survey respondents identified as a barrier to people being more engaged in the programme, and in co-production more generally, was the time pressures that staff feel they are under. This was also recognised by senior leaders of the programme.

It's not [just] about money it could be about available people.

(Senior leaders)

While acknowledging that there is a time and monetary cost to co-production, interviewees felt that co-production would be cost effective and deliver services for less money, or better services for the same money. Senior leaders saw co-production as a way of delivering quality services in a difficult financial environment.

... co-production ... having a really serious way of trying to target meagre resources and meet expectations.

(Senior leaders)

A little money can go a long way if people are working together.

(User of services / carer)

Although most co-produced projects are not yet at the stage where cost savings can be assessed, there were some examples where savings and/or better services were evident. One interviewee provided the example of home school transport for older children with special educational needs or disability, and how they worked with schools and parents to deliver the service without passing costs onto parents.

We were going to change the policy and then we reversed the decision when working with parents.

The intention had been to ask the parents for contributions for post-16 in transport, to reduce our costs.

They said "don't do it!" This had a big impact on us. They said "please don't do it, we will work with you to think about different ways to make it better" so we looked at routes and different ways of offering these routes.

They said we can help find the money in a different way and so did schools and we worked together to find the money in a different way.

This was a direct result of co-production, rather than imposing something on parents we got to a much better place.

(Senior leaders)

Two senior leaders provided the example of Oxfordshire's reworking of day services as an example of where a co-production approach had been attempted, and saved money while delivering services that people want. Oxfordshire needed to significantly reduce spending on day centres, but there was some anxiety about involving people who use services.

there was anxiety .. that if you ask people who use these services what to do they wouldn't be able to rise to the challenge about redesigning something for a smaller [financial] envelope

(Senior leaders)

However, after consulting directly with people who use day centres, Oxfordshire went towards multigenerational centres. This saved significant sums,

we ended up delivering between three and four million pounds worth of savings on those services, so there was a kind of pitch where I said I can't prove this, but we are

likely to get better services and we are also likely to be able to make changes that land less noisily in the public because we've involved them at every step of the way.

(Senior leaders)

Although there was some resistance or scepticism to the changes...

The feedback we have now is really positive about it ... most day centres are for older people and learning disability centres... [we] brought the two together and it's actually worked well

(Senior leaders)

Although the reworking of day services took place before this programme formally started, it was a key part of the context and move towards working to embed co-production in Oxfordshire.

Concordat

It was felt that as part of the programme there needed to be a 'concordat', i.e. a written agreement which sets out the terms of engagement for co-production in Oxfordshire County Council.

There are a number of documents which fulfil this function, i.e. describe what co-production is in this context, and the roles and responsibilities for the various parties involved. In keeping with the principles of co-production the board, champions and Team have all been involved in producing and agreeing these documents.

The most important are three working documents: The 'Board terms of reference', the 'Board work plan', and the 'Champions working agreement'. Collectively, these documents set out the overall mission and purpose of the board and champions, reiterate the aims of the programme and set out how the groups will support delivery of those aims. For both board and champions they set out membership, governance, remit, scope, meeting arrangements, the kinds of activities that members will undertake, roles and responsibilities and the relationship between the two groups including how they will check and challenge each other.

Alongside these is the 'What is good co-production?' document which sets out Oxfordshire's principles for working co-productively, and is referenced in terms of reference and working agreements for the board and champions. It has been developed iteratively by the team, board and champions, and underpins Oxfordshire's approach to co-production.



Co-production means working together as equals and making best use of our resources and strengths to find ways of doing things that benefit our community.

What is good co-production?

- Involving the people that matter, at the right time, and in a meaningful way
- Listening to each other, and communicating well, feeling understood
- Respecting each other's opinions, however different they are to our own
- Working together and developing trust and respect to form good working relationships
- Working as equal partners, from start to finish (where possible)
- Making decisions and solving problems together
- Developing ideas or solutions to problems together
- Everyone working in a way that gets results
- Everyone working in a positive way to make things better for all
- Understanding that everyone has something to contribute
- Understanding that everyone has different challenges and needs
- Everyone is recognised and celebrated for the contributions they make

Working as equal partners means that everyone who has relevant experience and skills to contribute can, but that people will have specific roles and jobs to do to make things work smoothly.

It is also important to understand that not everyone can be involved in every single aspect, or nothing would ever get done because progress would be too slow.

Another important document is the 'Agreements for co-production meetings'. This is read out at the start of every board and champions meeting and sets the tone for the meeting by reminding people how to treat others and themselves.



Agreements for Co-production meetings

- **It's okay to ask questions**
No question is a stupid question- if you don't know, that's okay.
- **It's okay to make mistakes**
Getting things wrong is an opportunity to learn.
- **Confidentiality**
Help people to share openly in the meeting - don't talk about other people's personal information outside of the meeting.
- **Creating a safe space**
Help keep everyone safe by making sure we take care (bags, hot drinks, wires, anything else that could cause a hazard being out of the way or stored safely).
- **It's okay to leave the room if you need**
Take care of your own personal needs, and use the toilet or answer emergency calls, but try to stay focused on the meeting otherwise.
- **Respect each other**
Be kind and respectful. We can challenge each other's ideas, but in a friendly and supportive way. We never judge each other for our differences or ideas.
- **Everyone is equal**
Remember that everyone needs to feel equally valued so they can take part. Everyone's ideas, and contributions are equally valid. Nobody is better.
- **Speak one at a time and listen well**
Take turns to speak, and give the person speaking your focus and attention. If you don't understand, it's okay to ask people to repeat what they say.
- **Plain speaking**
Try to avoid acronyms or jargon. Explain them if you need to. Explain what you mean, and check people understand.
- **Speak clearly, slowly, and loud enough**
Make sure that people can understand you when you speak.
- **Have a break**
We make sure people can concentrate and are comfortable by taking a break.

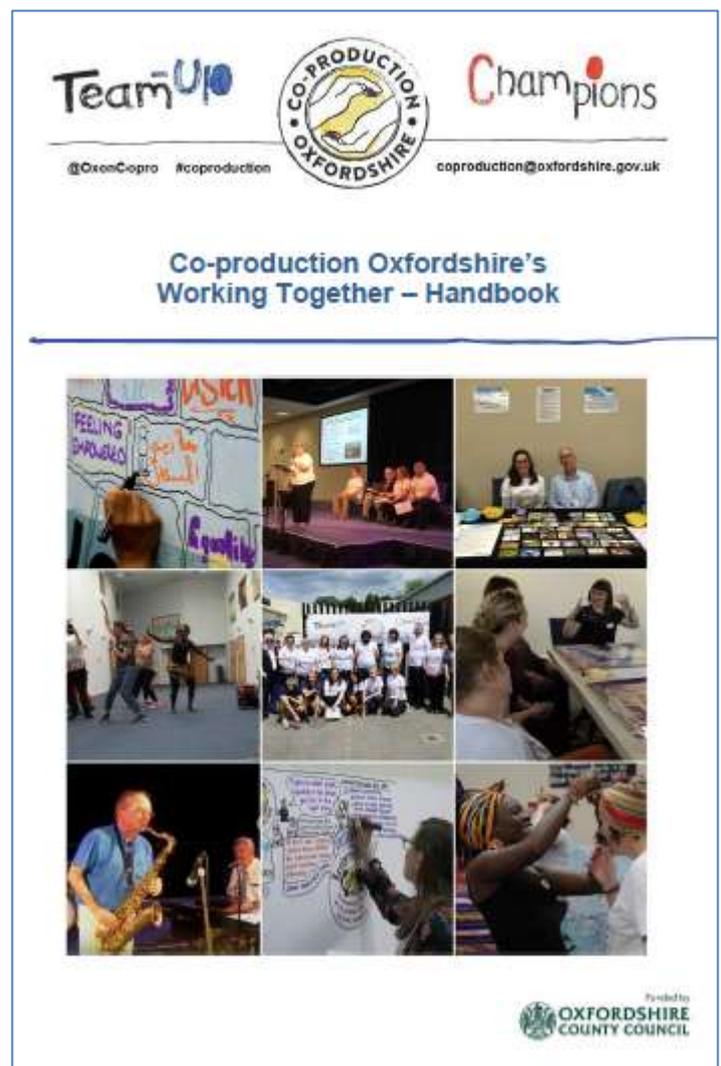
Although originally developed for the board and champions meetings, the 'Agreements for co-production meetings' has been used more widely. Board members noted that when they had used the agreement at the outset of other meetings and workshops it had set the right tone. By reminding people that this was co-production it had helped break down the often more hierarchical approach to work involving the council, and had directly led to better co-production.

Another significant project has been the development of the 'Co-production handbook' for Oxfordshire. The handbook has been co-designed by the co-production board, the co-production champions and the Co-production Team. It was developed based on what people involved in a number of different scoping sessions said they would want from this kind of resource, and contains tools to support effective co-production.

At the time of writing this report the Handbook has only just been released publicly, so it is too soon to assess the impact it may have on co-production. But the intention is that it is a guide that helps people start to do co-production, with the very important point that there is no single right way to do co-production, and co-production looks different every time that you do it.

The intention is that the handbook will help embed co-production within Oxfordshire County Council, and more widely. In keeping with the ethos of sharing it is publicly available and Oxfordshire produced it with a wide audience in mind⁵.

... the handbook, if they use it properly and if they actually take the time to use it and make the best of the resource



⁵ The hand book and associated resources are available here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/co-production-programme#paragraph-3634>

that it is, then that will help co-production become embedded absolutely.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Piloting

It was recognised at the outset that early examples of success and early evidence of the new approach working well would be important to create a positive momentum.

In this and the previous chapter, numerous examples of successful projects have been given, some of these have been large scale and/or cut across organisational or departmental boundaries (The Joint Older People Strategy, Moving into Adulthood, Supported Transport), others are smaller, but none the less important such as the grants panels. There are also many projects which have not been mentioned above, for reasons of space or because they are currently in their early stages, such as the Adult Strategy, a Carer's pathway review, and more. A summary of the projects tracked by the Co-production Team and Board is provided in the appendix.

The number and diversity of projects have contributed to the sense of momentum with co-production that interviewees have identified.

It started off slow it's speeding up now and we have positive projects

(Focus group)

In terms of change more momentum has been gathered, there's a way to go before big heavyweight projects come out that have been co-produced, but some of the smaller ones, where they are able to build a consensus during the co-production process, seem to be quite effective

(Community and voluntary sector staff)

Board members noted that the work of the Co-production Team to track projects allowed the board to check up and push for updates.

...list of projects that are in the pipeline at the moment. If we haven't heard back on this I am able to ask how's it going?

(User of services / carer)

When asked about activities going on under the programme, the number and range of projects was something that interviewees spontaneously identified, often specific co-production projects which have gone well (e.g. Older People's strategy, Moving into Adulthood etc.). These examples of successful projects appear to be well known, and interviewees praised the use of examples in the advanced co-production training.

In summary, there have been examples of successful projects, and these examples have contributed to the momentum of the programme.

Evaluation

It was agreed that clear measures for progress needed to be set at the beginning of the programme, and that these should be co-produced so that everyone had a shared understanding of what good progress looked like.

One of the early activities of the evaluation was to support the co-production of aims and outcomes for the programme. These not only defined a set of outcomes against which progress could be evaluated, but also acted as a statement of shared understanding of what the programme set out to achieve.

The scoping stage of the evaluation and the development of outcomes and objectives really helped the programme have quite a lot of clarity about what its aims and objectives were – for something as nebulous as co-production can be, that was really, really helpful, because they were co-produced and everyone had a shared understanding – the programme team knew what they were going to be measured on and other stakeholders knew what the expectations were.

(SCIE)

The aims are reflected in the work plans and working agreements of the board and champions, and so set the direction for their work.

The evaluation has also fed back into the programme, at key points such as the interim report and the staff surveys, and in an ongoing dialogue with the board and the team through the evaluation sub-group. In this way the evaluation has been able to provide those involved in delivering and overseeing the programme reassurance that progress is being made (such as the positive observation of the board meeting discussed above), and identify where there may be potential issues so that they can be addressed before they become too problematic (such as early identification of some uncertainty among champions about their role and relationship with the board).

Perhaps most importantly, the evaluation itself has been co-produced. Peer researchers have taken a lead role in the evaluation and in producing this report. This is rare and has definitely improved the evaluation because they were able to bring their experience as people who use services and their expertise in co-production to bear on the evaluation and the programme generally. It also helped to develop trust with people who use services, family members, carers and staff involved in the programme, because it is very much a *done with* approach to evaluation, rather than a *done to* approach.

[Having] two service user researchers involved in doing the interviews showed an example of taking co-production to a bit of another level – I don't think there are many other examples of where people who use services are involved in the actual delivery of the project and the design as well; there's much more getting involved in the design of things

rather than delivery. I think that should be counted as a success of the project.

(SCIE)

The two peer researchers here provide their own reflections on being part of the evaluation.

Peer researcher reflections – Patrick Wood

I've been actively involved in co-production for a long time. Through working with SCIE, my commitment to the principles of co-production and the core elements of the process has grown wider and deeper. I was interested in learning about how these underpinning values could be embodied in a programme that was run by a large statutory sector organisation and how this work compared with the projects run by the user-controlled groups that I am more familiar with.

Involving peer researchers in the evaluation contributed to it being co-produced, like the other elements of the programme. Peer researchers bring an understanding based on personal experience that differs in emphasis from the experience of professionals and can offer insights that might not otherwise be registered.

It was a pleasure to work alongside the people I encountered in this project, including the deeply committed individuals involved in the board, whose work bodes well for the future of co-production in the county. It was good to work alongside Laura as a fellow peer researcher; our styles complemented each other very well and we were able to offer each other mutual support as our work progressed.

Overall, I learned that despite the challenges involved in operating in a large organisation with competing interests and priorities, when the will to affect change is strong enough it is possible to develop new and more inclusive ways of working that improve the lives of citizens and create improved relationships between people who use services, carers and workers, for the benefit of all.

A peer researcher – the optimistic position – Laura Able

To take a co-productive approach to an evaluation about the Oxfordshire County Council Coproduction Programme was clearly apt. On a personal level, I consolidated existing skills, earned money, felt the feel good factor of working together and remain intrigued by the borders that lie between theory and practice. The critical Oxfordshire County Council challenge was whether the convoluted mechanisms of a large hierarchical structure can be adapted and/or radically change to facilitate coproduction. I have definitely gained greater insight into how it works or not. This is a non-cynical position.

As peer researchers we gave different ideas/viewpoints to the research design and grounded the process in the principles of equality, diversity, access and the sharing of power. We maintained the focus on these key factors. Our employment indicated the priority of these values and we added complementary skills – Patrick provided a methodical overview with clarity whereas I gathered in-depth rich data. What people said and how they said it is important. Our approach encouraged all and particularly service users/carers to be open and honest. Witnessing the tensions and frustrations of those involved at all levels was difficult, I was not in a position to offer advice even if I had it, regurgitating (in transcription) most of what I heard.

For me the coproduction process is about striving for the ideal of democratic citizenship and this was recognised throughout the evaluation through our mixed methodology and also the opinions of our research participants; but these were not static they oscillated depending on what they were talking about. The underpinning values, beliefs and understandings were not always developed due to factors such as restraints in time, resources and changes in staff in our research team and Oxfordshire County Council, because this is the real unpredictable world. Essentially, for me, we have examples of inspirational change progressing positively in a fluctuating uncertain context.

I hope that this evaluation contributes to the growing body of evidence that validates the co-production approach. To be meaningful and have an impact there have to be accountable, identifiable outcomes that are attributable to this process. My bias is towards democratic principles and sticking true to the data. In the fullness of time, if the council are brave enough to continue co-productively all their services will improve. It is not easy, as so eloquently put by both the professionals and services users. Why should it be?

Recommendations

The future of the programme

In adult social care we've got one of the trickiest agendas: increase in complexity, no long-term funding solutions. I've always believed that you're more likely to come up with a solution through a collaborative approach, whether with people with lived experience, or possibly collaborating with providers

(Senior leaders)

As outlined above, interviewees and focus group participants thought that the programme had made significant progress in embedding co-production as a way of working in Adult Social Care, and that there were strong signs of influencing other parts of Oxfordshire County Council, and Oxfordshire more widely.

Participants also noted that although the programme had momentum, there was still further to go. They did not think that taking a co-productive approach was yet at a point where it was self-sustaining, or would necessarily continue to grow or become embedded without continued support.

We've grown momentum and achieved good things and stopping would be like falling off a cliff.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

There was very strong support for the programme and what it had achieved among the interviewees, and a strong desire for it to continue.

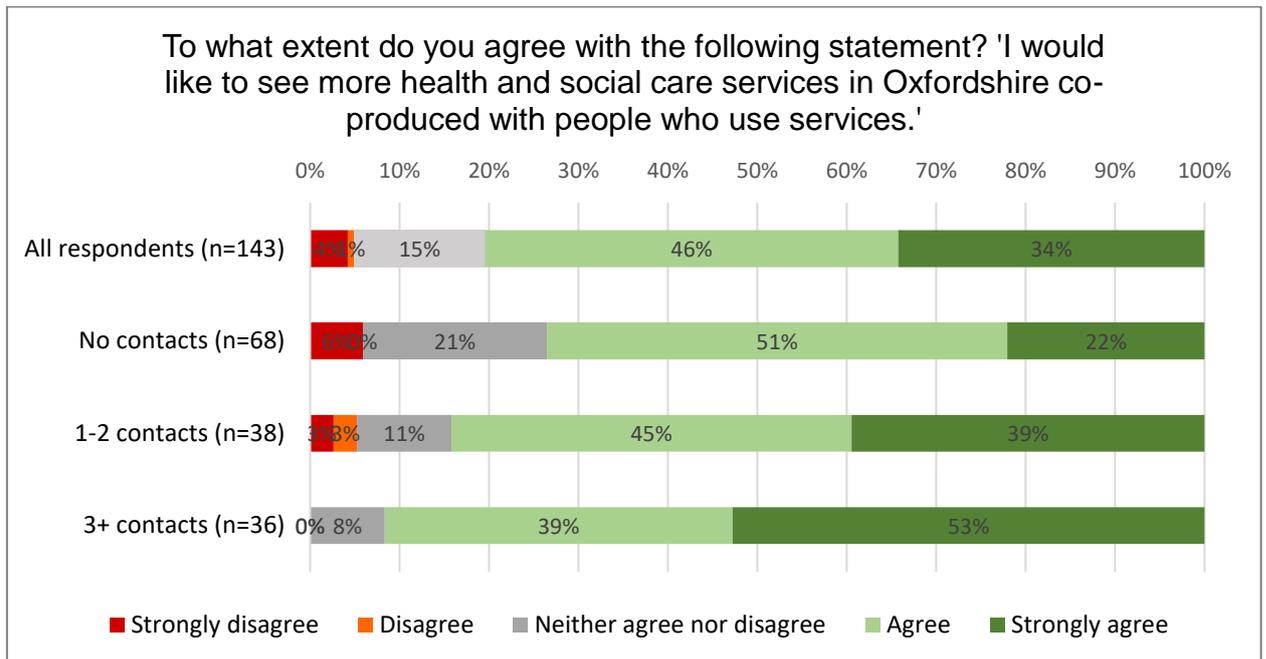
[I hope] that we just continue and there's no reason that we wouldn't. I think we committed to doing it so we've already made that decision.

(Senior leaders)

As an elected member I'd like to see co-production not seen as a project with a start or finish. I'd like to see it embedded into what we do. We have locality meetings where we have to try engaging local people about local issues, could be fixing the traffic lights, down there we have local members tried to be the voice of people locally I'd like to think co-production becomes embedded and it's second nature to all of our services.

(Senior leaders)

This desire to continue to embed co-production was supported by the survey of Oxfordshire County Council Adult Social Care staff. Overall 80 per cent of Adult Social Care staff supported more co-production of health and social care services, and only 5 per cent did not.



Even those who have had no direct contact with the programme to date strongly support more co-production, with 73 per cent agreeing that they would like to see more health and social care services co-produced and just 6 per cent disagreeing.

We now draw on the evidence collected throughout the evaluation to make recommendations for the future of co-production in Oxfordshire County Council.

Recommendations

Recognise that culture shift takes time and needs to happen at all levels, but continue to be a leading council in co-production.

Interviewees overwhelmingly felt that significant progress had been made in moving forward with co-production in Oxfordshire adult services and more widely within Oxfordshire. But equally they recognised that there was further to go and felt that co-production was not yet embedded or able to stand on its own two feet.

A number of interviewees made the comparison with 'turning a tanker', noting that it takes time to deliver what is a significant change in practice in an organisation of the size and complexity of a local authority, even when that change is well supported.

It was also evident that for co-production to work it needs to be embedded and understood across all levels within Oxfordshire, not just in senior management, but middle management and in more junior roles as well. Similarly, co-production needs to be supported across partner organisations. There is evident progress with both of these, but full embedding will take time.

Nevertheless, the progress made so far, in what is a relatively short period of time, should be recognised and celebrated. At the outset of the programme it was recognised that early success would be important for developing momentum, and this has been the case.

Oxfordshire is one of a relatively small number of councils who are making progress embedding co-production as a way of working. There is a growing emphasis on co-production in both the health and social care spheres and Oxfordshire has the opportunity to be one of the councils at the head of this and act as a role model for other authorities.

Acknowledge a tension between Oxfordshire County Council's legal responsibilities and public accountability, and the co-production ethos of sharing power and equality. Use co-production to collectively manage this tension.

As discussed above, moving to co-production as the default way of working is a cultural shift for Oxfordshire. Interviewees commented on the hierarchical nature of local authorities where power is concentrated towards the top. Additionally, legal accountability for spending and for providing services sits with the council and councillors. On the other hand, co-production emphasises equality, with no one person being more important than anyone else.

There is then an apparent tension between the ethos of equality and sharing power in co-production, and the legal duties and responsibilities of authorities and their hierarchical structures.

This is not something that can, or indeed needs to be, resolved. But if it is not acknowledged and actively managed it could lead to difficulties when expectations are not clear, or are not met. As interviewees noted, co-production provides a mechanism for managing tensions like these collectively, and having those somewhat challenging discussions.

Co-production can be a bit cosy. I think it's important that people feel comfortable with it being a challenging relationship at times. The board has done this at times.

(User of services / carer)

People aren't necessarily going to agree, but co-production is about having those difficult discussions, and it's one of the big benefits about coming into a local council, is the democratic accountability that sits over that makes co-production work

(Senior leaders)

Reassure staff that they will be given time to do co-production

Time pressure was a notable concern in the survey, and mentioned as one of the main barriers to good co-production in the interviews. Senior leaders and staff involved in the programme are aware that co-production does take time to do well, but it was still clearly a concern for staff. Therefore, senior and mid-managers may need to place more emphasis on reassuring staff, and ensuring that they will be given the time to undertake co-production, and do not have (or feel that they have) unrealistic expectations placed upon them. This is likely to be something that needs to be clear and communicated at all levels.

Continue to provide administration and facilitation support for the board and champions

Interviewees felt there was a need for continued support for the board and champions. While many interviewees identified that there was commitment within the board and champions, and that members would want to continue their roles even without the support of a dedicated team, it is apparent that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to keep these groups going, and interviewees found it hard to see how the groups would continue without some central support for administration. Equally, the facilitation skills involved in nurturing and enabling the groups are essential, and facilitation is not a simple task.

[The Team] have gelled it all together.

They have put in so much hard work, preparing papers and so on. We can do a little bit but without somebody to book the room and all the rest of it as a lay person I wouldn't know how to book rooms in the council. I wouldn't know what the budget was for things like that. And I wouldn't expect to.

They are paid professionals.

(User of services / carer)

You need people with experience to take changes like this forward. It really needs a belt and braces approach. That may be difficult when money is tight but that's the best to get as near to 100 per cent as possible, and avoid the trousers falling down.

(User of services / carer)

Similarly, some support or central organisation is likely to be necessary for continued recruitment to the board and champions, and training and inducting new members of the board and champions.

Ensure that the role of champions is clear and complements the board

As noted above, some champions felt at times that their role, and how they complemented the board, was not clear. Steps are being taken to address this, but it is recommended that the role of the champions and clarity about their role continues to be monitored.

As discussed in the previous chapter, and echoed in other recommendations, the champions can provide a network that extends the reach of the programme. This can work in both directions, champions spreading the work of the programme, but also bringing a diversity of experience and expertise into the programme. They can complement the board and be a resource to take part in and support projects and future work of the programme. But care will need to be taken to ensure that champions feel engaged and know how and when they can contribute to the programme.

This recommendation goes hand in hand with increasing the diversity of the board and champions.

Increase diversity within the board and champions

Many interviewees noted a desire to increase the diversity of the board and champions, and this is something which has featured in discussions by the board, champions and team as well.

One of the key principles of co-production is diversity, particularly the inclusion of those who are seldom heard. A diverse group brings with it a diversity of experiences and expertise which can be brought to bear on work in Oxfordshire. Equally, a diverse set of board members and champions will be more representative of Oxfordshire. Having a more diverse group of board members and champions may also make it easier for Oxfordshire County Council to engage with some communities within the county, who may otherwise be underrepresented.

The champions in particular have a limited number of people who use services. Having more people who use services amongst the champions would make it easier to involve people who use services with experience and understanding of co-production in projects and other programme activities. It would also take some of the weight off board members who use services, who it was noted sometimes felt responsible for representing the whole of a 'group', which in reality will contain a diversity of views and experiences.

Increasing diversity and representation could be something that the board and champions in particular take on themselves as part of ensuring the role of the champions is clear and complementary to the board.

For both the board and champions particular attention might be given to ensuring representation from people who use mental health services, and to ensuring a diversity of ethnic groups are involved in the programme.

Support and facilitate the growth of local user-led organisations

A number of interviewees noted that co-production was easier (and therefore less time-consuming and costly) when there are pre-existing groups to engage with.

Where there aren't the ready groups of people and/or representatives to speak to in my job I find that a challenge too.

If you have to create [groups] that's a big job.

(Community and voluntary sector Staff)

Interviewees suggested that Oxfordshire County Council should look at how to increase the number of user-led organisations in Oxfordshire, or support and facilitate their growth. They noted the importance of having local user-led organisations from their experience of co-production elsewhere.

For coproduction to work well there needs to be a service user-led organisation in the area and I think it would be

good if they could look at how this is going to happen or perhaps an umbrella for service user-led organisations.

(User of services / carer)

Interviewees pointed to examples of projects involving people with a learning difficulty or disability, where pre-existing groups and a history of self-advocacy mean there are people and structures in place to readily engage in co-production.

My impression is that there's more people with learning difficulties involved and carers and family members. I think that's because there's a strong infrastructure – strong service user and carer groups and advocacy organisations in that area – [this] provides a pool of people with learning difficulties to get involved in things and a support network and a way to contact them, which makes it a lot easier; there isn't a similar situation in physical disabilities or mental health; maybe to a certain extent with older people, there is.

(SCIE)

Although they recognised that the financial context is difficult, interviewees suggested that Oxfordshire County Council could think about investing in these types of organisations. They thought having a strong community is important for continued co-production, and the investment may not be significant.

You do need a wider infrastructure, doesn't need to be a massive investment necessarily.

Those sorts of organisations can also bring money into the county – they could be independent charities and apply for grants; they could be providing services

(SCIE)

Invest time and resources in going out to engage with people

As well as supporting the development of user-led organisations, interviewees felt that there needed to be time and investment put into commissioners and project leads physically going out to people, rather than relying on people coming to the council.

People aren't given time to do this to the extent they should be. Go out to people, go and find people, talk to community leaders, there's a lot that can be done to bring more people in who aren't traditionally involved, or haven't historically been involved, in the work that we're doing. When people are under pressure, they resort to the old modes of doing things, contacting people in all the databases that we already have.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Interviewees noted the importance of *physically* going to see people, to make it convenient for them.

...at the beginning of one project, I gave some contacts and places where the project lead could actually go and visit...they were able to go and hold those project groups where people were. It makes a huge difference; you get more people, it's better for people.

(Oxfordshire County Council staff)

Interviewees acknowledged that this takes time and that there is a cost to it. However, they felt it was important for reaching those people who wouldn't necessarily come to the council.

This is likely to be particularly important for some seldom-heard-from groups who might not traditionally engage directly with the council or other authorities.

Induct new board members and champions to give them experience of the council

When co-production is done well it increases mutual understanding. The board really started to work effectively when it began to understand how the council functions. It was also noted, that for those coming from outside the council there is quite a culture shock.

Accordingly, we recommend considering how new board members and champions from outside the council are inducted into their roles and given an understanding of how the council functions and its responsibilities. At a minimum, new members should attend training sessions on the council structure and working in a political environment, which are already available during the induction process. In addition to any meetings with key council officers, new members could possibly shadow council officers for a day or half day, and/ or attend meetings of the council, both team meetings and those involved with deciding council business. New members should also be encouraged to take part in co-production projects early in their role, to give them the hands-on experience of co-production involving Oxfordshire County Council.

Continue to monitor progress and evaluate the programme

The evaluation has been an important part of the first two years of the programme. As well as helping to shape the aims of the programme it has fed back on successes and identified emerging issues allowing them to be addressed in a timely fashion.

We recommend that there is continued evaluation and monitoring of the programme, so that progress towards fully embedding co-production can be tracked. This might include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Tracking understanding of co-production and confidence with putting it into practice among Adult Social Care staff, and as it spreads, staff in other departments.
- Continuing to monitor the number of people involved as board members and champions, with a particular focus on growing diversity.
- Building a repository of case studies or examples of good practice which can be used in training and promoting co-production.

- Some work on the impact being a board member or champion has on people who use services and carers.
- Tracking the impact of the programme on relationships between the council and people who use services, family members, carers, the community and voluntary sector and service providers, and on perceptions of the council.

The model of a co-produced evaluation could continue. A sub-group of people who use services and carers from the board and champions could take the lead and/ or oversee the continued monitoring and evaluation, holding Oxfordshire County Council to account for co-production as they have successfully done for projects within the programme.

Appendix: Projects list



This report shows projects in Oxfordshire where the people involved are trying to do co-production. In other words, people who deliver services have worked together with people who use them, their carers and communities to design, deliver and review services.

We update this report each month by asking those involved with the projects. This is so we can see what is happening with each project, and then we can check, challenge, and help projects in the right way, at the right time.

Acronyms used in this document

OCC – Oxfordshire County Council

OCCG – Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

CQC – Care Quality Commission

SCIE – Social Care Institute of Excellence

Current Oxfordshire County Council/Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Projects

1. Older People strategy

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care and OCCG

Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) needed a new Older People's Strategy to guide their priorities as the old one was out of date. We wanted to co-produce it with members of the public, patients and people who use services and their families and carers, voluntary organisations and local councillors.

Around 600 people were involved from a mix of areas and backgrounds. It was a different model of co-production, because of the scale of the project. It was a good example of partnership-working with our health colleagues. CCG and OCC Engagement teams worked together for the first time on this scale. Trust and working relationships were built between the two organisations, and with the many organisations and people involved.

The strategy has four priorities and says that the next steps will be co-produced. Working groups have been set up on each of the four priorities so that people can continue to work together. Each one is led by a different organisation and the project manager has worked with the four leads to co-design the approach.

2. Adults strategy

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care and OCCG

Following the Older People's Strategy process, OCC and OCCG planned to co-produce the Adults (of working age) Strategy. People were invited to be involved in a reference group that decided the questions people would be asked in a survey. The survey received over 400 responses, which fed into the draft strategy. The reference group then looked at the first draft of the strategy and we are reflecting on their feedback.

3. Support for Self-funders

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care

'Self-funders' pay for their own care. In 2017 the CQC found that people funding their own care faced barriers to getting advice, information and guidance about services. They were not always at the centre of their care and support when moving through the health and social care system. CQC asked us to improve our support for self-funders. This project aims to work with self-funders to identify and make improvements.

4. Review of customer standards for home care**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care

People receiving care in their homes (and their relatives) told us what they expect from providers of that care in 2014. These customer 'standards' now need to be reviewed. We will work with people who use services and carers again to ask what is most important to them, so we can tell OCC providers of care in the home. The review will be conducted alongside the Homecare 2020 Review. The Home Care Standards were commented on at the Homecare 2020 event and we asked people receiving care/carers at the workshop whether they would like to be involved in the completion of these later on in the process.

5. Carers' Pathway Review**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care

OCC is co-designing the new 'offer' to carers (offer means what we do to provide information, guidance and support). A carers' listening event was held in May 2019, which 38 people attended. Participants were asked if they would like to be involved in re-designing the support for carers and a small co-design group of seven is taking this work forward. The group has met four times so far and looked at a variety of issues including assessments and support planning.

6. Moving into Adulthood**Lead Area:** OCC Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care

This project was co-produced with young people with disabilities, their families, front line staff and other stakeholders. It was a good example of co-production. The project was to look at problems faced by young people with disabilities who are moving from children's to adult services. The group made a recommendation to OCC leaders to make a single transition team. The project management team at OCC have been looking at what this service might look like, and what it would cost (a business model).

Two different ways of delivering this project have been developed:

- a) Transitions team to support 15–25 year olds with special educational needs to work as part of a pathway: Children's services (0–14 year olds) and then Adult services (25+ year olds)
- b) All age single disability team

The joint Children's and Adults Directors' Team looked at these options in summer and suggested changes. The business case was subsequently updated in the autumn. Resources required to implement the proposed changes are being considered as part of the council's budget setting process that runs from September to February 2020

7. Supported Transport and the OCC 'Fleet'**Lead Area:** OCC Communities and Children's Social Care

This project was suggested by a board member to look at whether we can co-produce the changes to services providing transport in Oxfordshire, because people were experiencing problems. The Director of Infrastructure and Transport visited the board and met with two board members to discuss issues.

OCC also recognised the need for change. Earlier this year Children Education Families engaged consultants to write a Strategic Business Case for Change in SEN Home to School Transport. One element of the business case was to look at the end-to-end SEN Transport process. Two workshops were arranged, one looking at the current process and a later one looking at the future process. From the workshops there is now a number of service improvements that are being worked on.

8. Grants Panels**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care

People who use services and carers are sitting along-side County Councillors on panels that make recommendations about grants to voluntary organisations across the county. The Innovation and Sustainability Funds open yearly, subject to the budgets being available, to enable community and voluntary services to bid for grant funding. As part of our co-production commitment, we invite people who use services, support workers and carers to work with councillors and participate in the cross-party panel days, where all applications are assessed, and recommendations made to award or not award. These recommendations are then presented at 5 meetings, prior to being presented at Cabinet for a final decision. Councillors reported finding service users on the panel very helpful. People with experience of using services and carers involved have also given positive feedback from the experience.

9. Foster Carers' Review**Lead Area:** OCC Children's Social Care

The aim of this project is to improve our offer to OCC foster carers and recruit more of them. Foster Carers, fostering staff and social workers have worked together to identify and suggest improvements that needed to be made. Funding was agreed for a new online portal to make self-service possible for foster carers. The decision was taken at the fostering forum event in the Summer to co-produce a refreshed Fostering Charter, so that is what foster carers and OCC staff are currently working on together.

10. Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Contract**Lead Area:** OCC Policy

OCC, voluntary / community organisations, district councils and health partners are working together to think about how support for the voluntary sector might look in

future. With the current contract coming to an end in March 2020, there was an opportunity for the voluntary sector and public sector to work together to think about how this money might be used differently. A series of workshops involving the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) partners took place from August 2018.

In addition to meeting and holding workshops, those involved have also engaged with their networks and the people they work with. This has included surveys, meetings, forum events and informal conversations. The feedback from this has been drawn together and fed back to all parties and will help future discussion on the content of OCC's new support contract.

As a separate outcome of the work so far, voluntary sector groups decided to formally establish an alliance to develop a shared voice for the voluntary and community sector. This also has the potential for the public sector to use as a mechanism for partnering across the county with community groups. It is early stages in its development, and some funding has been provided to support this.

11. Champions' Co-production Handbook (formerly 'toolkit')

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care

The co-production handbook has been co-designed by the Co-production Team, Champions, Board members and a participant in the Moving into Adulthood project. It pulls together learning and knowledge about how to support people to do co-production from our work. The co-design group met several times in 2018. The handbook was launched with an event on 16 October 2019 and is now on the OCC public website. It includes lots of guidance, resources, useful links, case studies, and videos to help people do co-production.

12. Care Homes Strategy

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care and OCCG

OCC and OCCG are working with people using services and their families, and the people who work in the services (providers) or use them in their working life to make a new plan for joining up everybody's ideas and make sure people get the best care at the right time.

We visited seven care homes and spoke to a total of 63 people (38 residents in the care homes, 19 of their relatives and six staff). We conducted an online survey and received 174 responses. We met with 34 providers across three events around Oxfordshire and then met with some again to get their views about the priorities we have observed in all the information we received. All of this information fed into a first draft of the Care Home Strategy, which we will be put out for consultation.

13. Community Outreach Support - Learning Disabilities**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care and OCCG

This project was to review the community outreach support service, which is currently supporting around 70 individuals with a learning disability. The lead worked with the co-production team closely and workshops were held in December 2018 and January 2019, but not many people came. The lead worked with the providers to find out why and reach people in other ways. The project is currently on hold and will begin again in the new year as part of a wider piece of co-production work.

14. Personal Budgets**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care and OCCG

This has been a joint piece of work between OCC, OCCG, community groups and the voluntary sector, looking at people's experience of using social care personal budgets, personal health budgets, and how that experience can be made better. 45 people who use services, carers, staff and volunteers were involved in the process. The outcomes from this project are being linked with outcomes from similar projects happening within the commissioning team, before next steps are decided. The co-production aspect relating to the project has been extensive and it has been great to see so many people offering their time, knowledge and experiences to make a difference to the choices available for people eligible for or in receipt of a personal budget.

15. Ageing Well Campaign**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care

The former Director of Adult Social Care and Head of Communications identified the need for a new campaign, to help tackle some of the problems that older people face, and to respond to the gap, identified by CQC, in the way we support older people.

There was a kick-off workshop with older people in July 2018 co-producing what the key themes of the campaign should be. The group decided they should focus on younger people to help people think about preparing for ageing, and to help older people. An event was held in January 2019 and a Board established in October. A focus group is planned for November.

16. OCC Quality Framework**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care

This is to look at a framework (agreed plan) for how OCC Quality & Contracts staff work with our providers on checking quality of service and reviewing contracts.

The co-production team and My Life My Choice ran a workshop with the Quality and Contracts team on 15 October 2018 to support them to come up with ideas changing the way they work. Some of these ideas will be taken forward and co-produced.

Some managers and staff from the Quality team came on the advanced co-production training in May 2019. We are looking into how we can make sure that co-production is written into all contracts and paperwork with providers, and are discussing with one provider how we may collaborate on some best practice work: guidance and monitoring tools, and a self-assessment tool. There is a plan to do a feasibility study to see if the Quality Checkers model to be used in Care Homes.

17. OCC Commissioning Framework

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care

This is to look at a framework (agreed plan) for how OCC Commissioning staff work when designing, buying, and renewing services. The co-production team are working with the commissioning team to support staff to learn how to do co-production. We are now looking at how we can get co-production into the commissioning cycle, and all project paperwork.

18. Homecare 2020

Lead Area: OCC Adult Social Care and OCCG

Home Care is a vital service, that keeps people living in their homes for as long as possible. OCC and OCCG are reviewing Home Care Services (for example, washing, dressing, medication prompting service) they buy from providers in Oxfordshire. We want to co-design a new home care model and a different contract offer. We have completed the intensive co-design with providers and have presented the commissioning intentions to internal managers. We are currently engaging with and meeting people who receive care to ensure that we are able to get feedback from as many people receiving care as possible. We will also be holding a final provider engagement event in December to get final suggestions and feedback on the proposed model as a whole.

19. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy

Lead Area: OCC Children's Social Care

The aim of the strategy is to set out how Oxfordshire County Council, along with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and partners (including education and health providers) will work together to provide services and support for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), and their families. The Children's Directorate are co-producing the new strategy with young people and parent carers. Workshops were held in June and October. We intend to consult widely, sharing the thoughts and outcomes of the workshop with a range of focus groups, particularly young people themselves.

20. Community Transport**Lead Area:** OCC Transport Hub

We are currently working with the following parishes and their local district\county councillors in order to find a solution to their transport problems.

- Great Bourton
- Wheatley\Horsepath
- Ashbury
- Freeland\Long Hanborough

We are also developing evidence on which communities are worse off in terms of transport provision. This is based on a mapping exercise measuring the distance from residential addresses to the nearest bus stop.

Over the last year or so in the tendering of *mainstream school transport*, we have co-produced solutions to offset the consequences of the 'nearest school policy change' with the Astons, Berinsfield, Yarnton and Bletchingdon.

20. Strengths-based practice**Lead Area:** OCC Adult Social Care

We set out to introduce and develop the skills needed for social workers, occupational therapists and care coordinators working in Adult Social Care to take a strengths-based approach. This entails really getting to know the person being supported and starting with what matters to them rather than what's the matter with them.

We are delivering a comprehensive learning and development programme for our leadership team, social workers, occupational therapists and care co-ordinators so that the council can adopt a conversational approach to assessment.

In addition, we are changing our paperwork, how people contact us and how we measure our own performance. Strengths-based practice is rolling out gradually as practitioners progress through the learning and development programme. In October we reached the half way milestone where over half of our practitioners have graduated from the programme. The learning and development programme will finish in March 2020. How we follow through will depend on how well the change is sticking.

We continually improve what we do with the people participating in the learning and development through plan-do-check-act cycles. Their input is listened to and rapidly acted on resulting in quick improvements and additions to the content and method of delivery. Whilst we had a lot of things to change quickly at the beginning, things have settled down now and we have something that participants have shaped for future groups.

Other Oxfordshire Co-production work

There are many other examples of co-production happening all over the county. We want to celebrate this work. If you have other examples of Oxfordshire co-production, we would love to hear from you. Please email the team with information about your project or organisation. We are keen to learn from other projects and welcome guest speakers at our Team Up Co-production Board or Champions meetings.

A. My Life My Choice

My Life My Choice is a user-led Oxfordshire based self-advocacy organisation. We raise the self-esteem, confidence and quality of life for people with learning disabilities by providing training, employment, volunteering and social opportunities for our members.

The organisation is run by people with learning disabilities, for people with learning disabilities, who are involved in all decisions at all levels.

B. The Leading Together Programme

The Leading Together Programme, which is run by Oxford Academic Health Science Network (OAHSN) was developed to make sure that people are involved in creating healthcare systems that meet their needs – and professionals listen and learn from the people who use services.

The aim is to create equal conversations, learn skills to lead together, build solutions together, learn from the experience of people who use services to drive change and recognise the value that people's personal experiences have in helping to create a better system together.

C. Quality Checkers

Quality Checkers is a project where **Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)**, **My Life My Choice (MLMC)** and **Oxfordshire Family Support Network (OxFSN)** are working together to improve quality, lives and services for people with learning disabilities and their families in Oxfordshire.

The **Quality Checkers** are a team of **Experts by Experience** – family carers and people with learning disabilities – who check how good the lives of people who use services in Oxfordshire are, by visiting people in their own homes and spending time with people who use services and finding out what is like for them. More information: <https://www.oxfsn.org.uk/quality-checkers/>

D. Oxford Influence Group

The Oxford Influence Group are 10 service users of advice agencies in Oxford who have come forward to influence decisions about policies and services that affect their lives. Our independent group is supported by the organisations of the Big Lottery funded Stronger Together partnership*. Our members have experience of using these services and we all have our own story to share which we want to use positively to help influence change that benefits everyone. Our members are a range of ages, from about 35 to 82, and a range of backgrounds and abilities.

The group has been active since November 2018, and achievements include:

- Speaking at the Oxford City Council Housing Scrutiny Panel and convincing Councillors to work more collaboratively with housing association tenants and private rented tenants.
- Attending the Oxford and District Action on Child Poverty meeting; one of our members stood up and spoke about their experience of being a single parent on a low income in front of local Councillors and decision makers.
- Influenced decisions about the way Citizens Advice Oxford is run, such as plans for the redesign of the reception area and organisational review.

*The organisations supporting our group are: Agnes Smith Advice Centre, Asylum Welcome, Barton Advice Centre/Oxfordshire Welfare Rights, Citizens Advice Oxford, Oxfordshire Mind, Refugee Resource, Rose Hill and Donnington Advice Centre and Shelter.

At the beginning, the Influence Group agreed a group charter and a statement of purpose, as well as a mechanism for making group decisions so that everyone's voice is heard. The group members decide together on important issues to work on, and decides who we should be talking to in order to make an impact. We have sent invitations to decision makers to work with us collaboratively so that we can share the idea of organisations taking on the idea of a co-productive approach.

E. Oxfordshire Recovery College

Oxfordshire Recovery College delivers courses on topics around managing mental health and wellbeing for people experiencing mental health challenges, carers, staff and volunteers. They believe there's real value in all of these different people learning together and sharing their experiences. The college is led by Oxfordshire mental health charity Restore on behalf of the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership and work started in 2015. Courses, suggested by students, are regularly run from venues all over the county. For more information visit <https://www.oxfordshirerecoverycollege.org.uk/> .

Like other recovery colleges around the country, it is co-produced. Everything they do, from designing and delivering the courses to strategic decisions, is done together. They have two types of Tutors: Experts by Experience and Experts by Training, who

deliver courses together to provide a rounded and thorough perspective. This draws on both professional expertise and lived experience, as both are equally important.

F. Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is a group of children and young people with experience of being in care. They help improve how children are cared for in Oxfordshire. There are Chairs, Deputies and Ambassadors who drive forward the agenda.

The CiCC helps make sure Oxfordshire County Council lives up to the promises it made to look after children and young people in care, as best as they can. This is called 'Corporate Parenting', and there is a Corporate Parenting Panel which works with the Children in Care Council to make sure adults hear what children and young people are saying and do something about it.

Several CiCC members met the Peer Review officers (members of other local authorities reviewing the County Council) recently. The peer review praised the CiCC saying it was 'inspirational and should be rolled out in other authorities'. They said that members felt listened to and changes they asked for were responded to. CiCC members have come up with a new name for Corporate Parenting Panel 'Guardians for Us' with a strap line of 'There for you, there for us'. It will be used in publicity and communications, where the Corporate Parenting Panel name will still be used in official and legal documents. The CiCC has four main meetings a year with Senior Officers so major issues can be discussed. CiCC members also participate in a number of events and conferences to promote their cause. CiCC members hold bi-monthly sessions for new members, so they don't feel anxious about coming to main meetings or about being involved. There is also a proposal to hold sub groups in Children and Family Centres, children's homes and other settings, to make sure everyone has a voice.

- Planned and run celebration events for children in care and leaving care
- Helped to improve housing, education, health services and support for children in care and leaving care
- Co-produced a new action plan for children in care and those leaving care
- Created this **Good Communication Guidance for Professionals who work with Children and Young People in Care and those Leaving Care**
- Young people sat on panels interviewing people for jobs relevant to care: Director of Education, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Chair, two managers of children's homes, Virtual School Headteacher, Leaving Care Personal Advisor, Housing Project Manager and Key Workers for the housing project)

July 2020

Oxfordshire County Council Co-production in adult social care: Evaluation report

This document presents an evaluation of Oxfordshire County Council's programme to embed co-production into Adult Social Care in Oxfordshire.

The programme was supported by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) who provided advice, support, and guidance, co-designed and delivered training, and led the evaluation.

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