



FACT SHEET: Co-Production

1. What is Co-Production?

ENIL defines co-production as inclusive working practices between experts by experience (disabled people) and organisations. It is about equal partnership and collaboration between parties passionate about improving service provision. Every person involved in the process of co-production is valued, respected and listened to, with everyone involved in designing, developing and delivering. Co-production improves services, improves communities and can help make Independent Living a reality for all.

2. What are the origins of Co-Production?

The term co-production originated from the University of Indiana to explain relationships between neighbourhood communities and local police services; it was then transferred to a health context to highlight the importance of professionals working in collaboration with people who use services, in order to ensure people's health needs were met. Edgar Cahn, a civil rights lawyer, developed the term to demonstrate the importance of community level support systems, ultimately alluding to co-production as a key factor for improving an economy. Whilst there has been evidence of co-productive processes being used in different systems and environments, it is important to recognise that the core principles of co-production can be embedded within any service, with positive outcomes if done correctly.

3. Why is Co-Production needed?

The current situation facing many people who use services is one of exclusion, isolation and reduced life chances. Whilst we acknowledge there have been small pockets of positive progress, we also need to be honest and recognise that more has to be done; it has become all too familiar to see 'centralised decision-making' (i.e. target driven processes with minimal involvement of people at community level being involved in shaping design or setting outcomes) and 'negative relationships' (i.e. professionals and people who use services become divided and consider each other to be a barrier to the outcome – 'them and us' culture). Most people who use services want the same opportunities as their peers, but the majority are denied their rights from the first moment. It can be argued that co-production can help to address some of the inequalities that exist within service design and delivery, leading to reducing barriers created by society. Nevertheless, co-production must not be seen or relied upon as the





only process for creating positive change. With reductions in service resources, as well as strained relationships between people in decision-making positions and people who use or require services, now is the time to ensure the principles of co-production are embedded within a holistic support framework and the lack of empowered participation is addressed.

4. What are the core principles of Co-Production?

The core principles of co-production are:

- Recognising that every individual is a valued and respected member of the service, each has a role and responsibility to ensure the service being provided is effective. It requires all of us to accept that people who use services are, in the majority of circumstances, marginalised resources, which need to be fully included and involved.
- Co-production is about innovation. This means rethinking how our processes currently operate and rediscovering the importance of shared dialogue, agreed outcomes and fully-inclusive environments. We, as a society need to change how we think about service provision and stop viewing people just as 'recipients' of services.
- Co-production promotes the idea of shifting the balance of power and responsibility solely from professionals, and recognising that everyone is an individual and is integral to the service, working together in equal partnership.
- There is an argument to suggest that co-production results in cost-effective measures, as they produce effective outcomes for the service and therefore are less likely to fail or require re-design.

The diagram below shows the outcomes when different partnerships are created:



Taken from a report for the Carnegie Trust, Commission for Rural Community Development – Beyond Engagement and participation, user and community co-production of services, by Tony Bovaird.

	Professionals as sole service planner	Service users/ community & professionals as co-planners	No professional input into service planning
Professionals as sole service delivers	Traditional professional service provision	Professional service provision - users and communities involved in planning and design	Bespoke services commissioned by users and delivered by professionals
Professionals/ users/ communities as co-deliverers	User co-delivery of professionally designed services	Full user/ professional/ community co-production	User/ community delivery of services with little formal/ professional planning or design
Users/ communities as sole deliverers	User/ community delivery of professionally planned services	User/ community delivery of co-planned or co-designed services	Self-organised community provision

5. What can be mistaken for Co-Production?

In order to achieve successful co-production between service providers and people who use services, it is vital that all parties involved have equal collaboration. With that being said, co-production needs careful planning and consideration. People who use services or experts by experience often face the dilemma of being involved in a perceived 'co-productive process' which appears to be positive and engaging; however, they often have limited collaboration and very little responsibility. This example highlights how people who use services are often marginalised and disengaged once their view has been heard. Individuals who are involved in co-production on a voluntary basis are often not rewarded for their time and effort, as opposed to paid employees and consultants, again making it apparent that the core principles of co-production do not always exist.

Furthermore, consultation can often be mistaken and regarded as co-production. As part of consultation, hard to reach groups may be approached and engaged with during the initial stages of co-production, but are subsequently not informed of the process and end result of their input. They are also not told how their knowledge affected the outcomes. Professionals/paid employees who design and deliver services with little input from people who use services cannot be said to be using methods of co-



production. For co-production to be true it requires equal co-planning and co-design at all stages.

6. What does Co-Production look like in practice?

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

NESTA, The Challenge of Co-production

“Co-Production is not just a word, it is not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find shared solutions...When co-production works best, people who use services and carers are valued by organisations as equal partners, can share power and have influence over decisions made.”

National Co-production Advisory Group, Think Local Act Personal

Case Study 1:

Caledonia Housing Association published a case study on Co-production in relation to their Home Help Service. Caledonia realised that in order to build and develop vibrant communities, they should engage with tenants alongside the wider community to enhance their quality of life and sustainability using Co-production. How Caledonia Housing Association achieved Co-production was mainly through a change in the management culture, recognising there was a need to include all members and ensure that there was continual engagement. They achieved this by regular meetings, surveys and questionnaires and focus groups via the Tenants Association. Furthermore, after one area was completed and all parties were satisfied with the outcome, all individuals involved would then co-plan the next focal point. For more information, please see: <http://www.reshapingcaredundee.org.uk/documents/casestudy-volunteers-caledoniahousingassociation.pdf>

Case Study 2:

A supported living network called **KeyRing** provides a unique example of Co-production between people who use services, volunteers and paid employees. Each tenant living within the supported living network automatically becomes a member of the KeyRing Network, which gives the responsibility back to the people who use services. This enables them to ‘share their skills and talents with each other and with





their communities'. KeyRing encourages individuals to be a part of their community. Each member liaises with support workers and 'Supported Living' managers in order to apply for funding and to run neighbourhood improvement campaigns. Furthermore, members are included within the decision process of KeyRing services and are valued for their input. For more information, please see: <<http://www.keyring.org/Home>>

When Co-production is being implemented, it is important that the key principles should apply in all cases: all people within society should be recognised and be seen as an integral part of society; people should be treated equally and have an equal input; social networks must be built, strengthened and maintained. If co-production is done correctly, then people involved in the process will be considered as assets, with values, skills and knowledge that can improve the delivery and design of services. This will also allow organisations and services to evaluate their 'working culture' and ensure they reflect the needs of the people who use their services.

References and further reading:

Nesta, The Challenge of Co-production

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_challenge_of_co-production.pdf>

Think Local Act Personal, Co-production

<[http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/Co-production/National Co-production Advisory Group/](http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/Co-production/National_Co-production_Advisory_Group/)>

Clenton Farquharson, Blogger on Co-production

<<http://clentonfarquharson.co.uk/2012/04/03/the-insight-in-to-true-co-production/>>

