



Working Together

Co-Production in West Berkshire: The Essentials

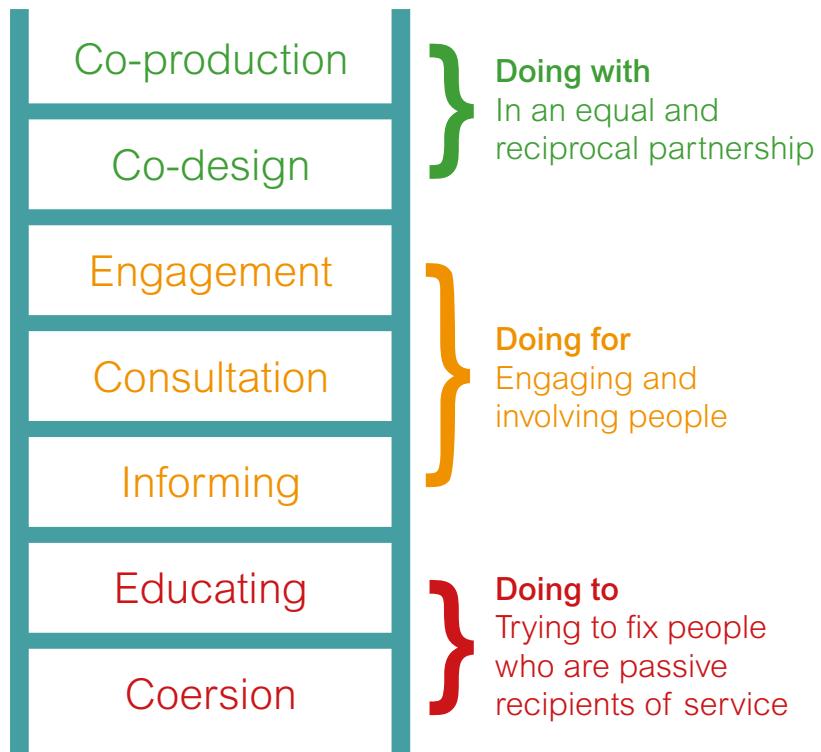


West Berkshire
COUNCIL

About Co-Production

Everyone is talking about co-production but exactly what is it? “Co-production” has become a commonly-used term for describing activities that involve citizens working with and alongside professionals to improve public services.

Co-production builds on and is related to consultation, citizen participation, public engagement, service user involvement and self-advocacy. The below illustrates and describes how Co-production is different:



*Diagram adapted from Think Local Act Personal:
TLAP-Ladder-of-Coproduction-Landscape-Poster-A3.pdf thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk

Consultation and engagement usually encourages people to input by asking for their ideas, experience and opinions. Co-production is different because it also needs people's actions.

In co-production, relationships with professionals mean the people involved play an active role in shaping and implementing their own or community support. Co-production means that power is shared more equally between those who use services and those who provide them. Everyone's skills and personal resources are put to use.



Benefits of co-production

Why co-production?

In West Berkshire a Co-production Steering Group came together to develop the local approach to Co-production. The Group made the following statement about why this way of working matters:

'Co-production matters because working in this way will lead to the creation of better services and stronger communities:

Creating services with people results in better quality decisions and outcomes. Together we will come up with a wider range of ideas and perspectives. Services will be closer to what the community needs and wants. This avoids duplication, encourages learning, and builds networks.'

The benefits of co-production

The following summarises the benefits of co-production and based on a Social Care Institute of Excellence publication (SCIE, 2022). SCIE says that co-production can have a positive impact on people who use services and carers, on staff and results in service improvements.

Benefits for people who draw on services

Members of the public who get involved in co-production are likely to experience the following benefits:

- increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and sense of empowerment
- better health and wellbeing
- increased engagement and trust
- higher levels of satisfaction with, and awareness of, services.

Benefits for staff who work in services

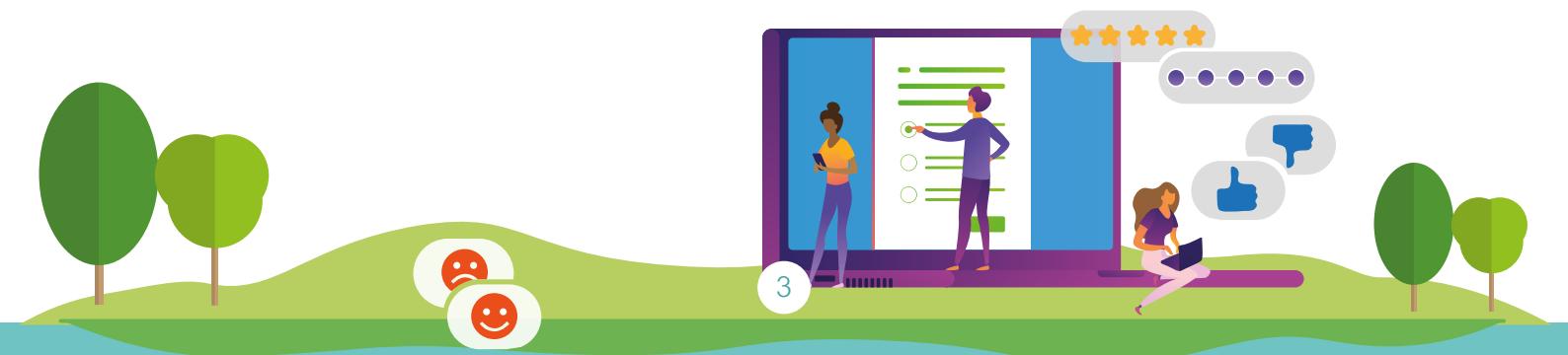
For staff, emerging evidence suggests their involvement results in positive outcomes, including:

- improved job satisfaction, motivation, and practice
- higher levels of trust and engagement, including involvement in future projects and dialogue with people who draw on care and support and carers.

Service improvements

There needs to be more research into the links between co-production and service improvement. However recent studies have shown that co-production can lead to:

- increased uptake of services
- decreased demand on services
- positive changes in service delivery
- improvement in staff practice.



Working Together: A West Berkshire Co-Production Framework

Background

West Berkshire Council like many other local authorities has been working over the years to change the ways it relates to residents and communities. The following summarises the journey over time:



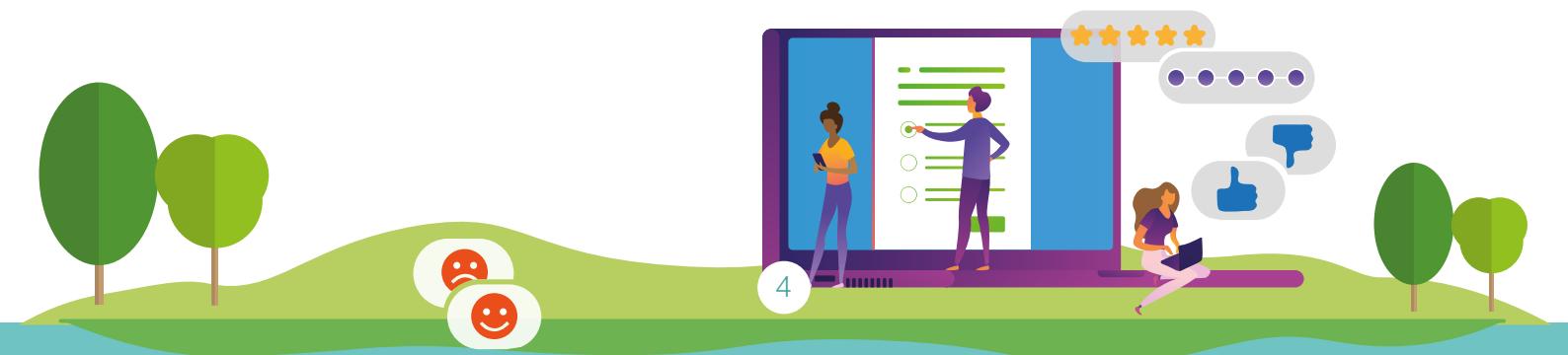
Developing Local Co-Production

To build on a strong history of working to engage communities in West Berkshire, a project to develop a local approach to Co-production was started early in 2022.

The Co-production Framework project was carried out over six-months to lay the foundations for local co-production. The objectives of the work were to:

- Establish a Co-production Steering Group made up of residents, council officers and Councillor representation
- Develop a shared vision through the Steering Group to produce a West Berkshire Co-production Framework
- Produce guidance and practical tools on co-production for staff and communities.
- Develop and deliver a train-the-trainer, co-production training package
- Test out the approach on an aspect of the council's Environment Strategy

The project has co-produced a distinctive West Berkshire approach to co-production. The approach draws on established good practice, local culture and history.



Defining Co-Production in West Berkshire

For West Berkshire, the following definition is used for co-production:

'Co-production is a process that involves residents and communities as equal partners with council officers and Councillors in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.'

Principles of co-production

These principles have been drawn up by the West Berkshire Co-production Steering Group:

Equality

Working together as equals. Appreciating our diversity of experience and expertise.

Making a difference

Creating change and making West Berkshire better for everyone. Being both brave and realistic.

Inclusive

Creating opportunities for everyone to get involved. Being proactive about making everything we do accessible to all.

Co-production aims, outcomes and objectives

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

While every co-produced project will be different, with its own aims, activities and outcomes, the West Berkshire Co-production Steering Group identified some general aims, outcomes and activities that would be common to all co-produced projects or pieces of work. The following would be flexed according to the project they apply to and the improvements being sought:



Aim

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

Outcomes

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

Residents and communities are more engaged in local decisions.

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

Objectives

Set up a steering group or co-production group.

Agree support and expenses for members of the group.

Ensure all members of the group understand what co-production is and how it works.

Agree working principles for the co-production group.

These aims and outcomes are starting points. Each co-production project will then tailor them and make them more specific to the project in question. This includes making clear which specific improvements are being sought. For example, the aim of a test project in environmental services was:

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

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

Making it real

This document has explained the essentials about co-production in West Berkshire; there are a host of materials which have been locally co-produced as part of our 'Working Together', Co-Production Framework. This includes a 'how to' guide, with materials and practical tools, so staff and people with lived experience feel supported to co-produce. There is also trainer's manual, slides and training resources and the information required to conduct training for any co-productive project.

For more information on these tools please contact Rhys.Lewis@westberks.gov.uk

