



**Stronger Together**

**A co-production toolkit  
from Ageing Better**

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# **How to grow sustainable groups**



# Welcome to our learning guide on growing sustainable groups.

## This guide is for anyone wanting to support a community group to grow and develop in a way that is sustainable and not reliant on external funding.\*

This guide will be particularly useful if you are:

- working for an organisation in a service delivery or development role
- part of your local community, a person with lived experience

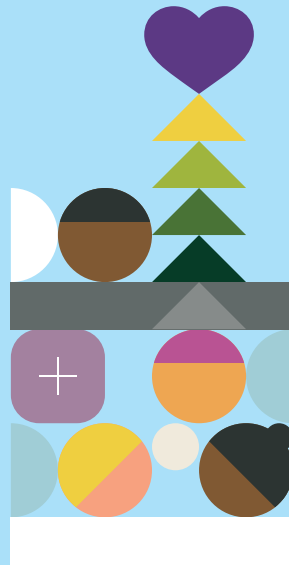
\*While the Ageing Better programme focuses on reducing isolation and loneliness among people aged 50 and over, all of the co-production learning and resources featured in the learning guides and toolkit are transferable across all community groups and areas of working.



Our comprehensive co-production toolkit, **Stronger Together**, contains the information mentioned in this guide, plus many more resources.



In our **webinar recordings**, topics and themes surrounding co-production are discussed in more detail.



## Recap: what is co-production?

Co-production is people working together to design and deliver services with meaningful and sustainable impact. It is a meeting of minds and hearts to reach a shared solution.

For an overview of co-production and the benefits of this approach, take a look at our [\*\*What is co-production? learning guide\*\*](#)





## **Bereavement Peer Support: Using an ABCD approach – Bristol STAR**

The STAR groups in Bristol have been set up using an ABCD approach. They are run by the community, for the community, and are self-sustaining.

These presentation slides provide an introductory overview to the approach and the success of applying it to grow sustainable groups.



**This peer support resource** can be found in the Theme 8 Resources folder of the Stronger Together toolkit resource library.

### **A resource for service deliverers and community grassroots audiences**

You may find this resource helpful as a community development worker, a member of a delivery team, a leader of, or an individual within a community group, and someone with lived experience.

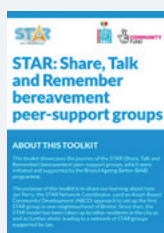
## Building strong foundations – Bristol STAR

In order for a group to continue to be strong, consistent and not reliant on applying for funding, it is vital for the group to be built on strong foundations.

### For the STAR group, these foundations included:

- Making a 'wish list' of what the peer-support sessions would look like.
- Deciding what resources would be needed in order to achieve the 'wish list'.
- Developing a structure for the peer-support sessions which built in lots of time for people to share stories and listen to others.
- Coming up with contingency plans, planning ahead to how the group would respond to any issues that arose and thinking of ways to create discussion within the group.
- Establishing roles and responsibilities within the facilitation team.
- Identifying any training or support needed, including looking at theories and models of bereavement and grief.
- Creating a welcome pack of resources for everyone who attended the group.
- Creating a Group Agreement, including terms of references, work ethic, code of conduct and standards. This is important to make sure everyone has the same understanding of the group and knows how to respond to different scenarios.
- Deciding on the aims and objectives of the group.
- Deciding on the name of the group and developing publicity materials.

These foundations take time, and are an important way of making sure everyone feels fully confident before the group opens to the public.



### **The Building strong foundations resource**

can be found in the Theme 8 Resources folder of the Stronger Together toolkit resource library.

### **A resource for service deliverers and community grassroots audiences**

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## Growing Sustainable Groups – Ageing Better in Birmingham

The Age of Experience group is a group of 20–25 individuals that help shape important elements of the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme. In the document **Growing Sustainable Groups**, they share their top tips for starting and sustaining a community group.

### Top tips for starting a community group:

- Be helpful towards others.
- Have the ability to listen and not just hear.
- A group will be successful if members are engaged and interested.
- Make sure you work together as a group towards the same goal.
- Support and be fair to all, and welcome people from all faiths, backgrounds and cultures.
- Develop activities that are inclusive of all faiths and cultures.
- Members should have the opportunity to gain and share knowledge and skills and the opportunity to develop new skills.
- All members should feel valued and have the opportunity to contribute.
- Ensure timings of meetings and the venue/location are accessible to members.
- It helps to have support from statutory organisations and the council.
- Be patient, it takes time to gain trust.
- Remember the group belongs to the members and not to one individual.
- Be flexible and prepared to modify in light of changing circumstances.
- 'The whole is often greater than the sum of its parts.'

### Ways to support groups to be sustainable:

- Proactive members
- Good community links
- Relationship building
- Knowledge of different types of funding streams
- Not relying on one person – building a network, team work
- Research other successful groups
- Contribution from participants

**Growing Sustainable Groups** goes hand-in-hand with **this video on how to grow sustainable groups**.



These resources can be found in the Theme 8 Resources and stories folders of the Stronger Together toolkit resource library.

### A resource for service deliverers and community grassroots audiences

You may find this resource helpful as a service lead, setting up or developing a community-focused service, a community development worker, a member of a delivery team, a leader of, or an individual within a community group, and a community activist.





## **Involving older people in creating services and activities – Ageing Better in Birmingham**

This briefing explores the different ways in which older people have been involved in co-production as part of the Ageing Better in Birmingham programme, and highlights some key learning from the experience.

### **It provides practical tips on topics including:**

- Getting people involved and setting the right tone
- Taking steps to reduce power imbalances
- Allowing sufficient time and resource to do co-production well



**This creating services and activities resource** can be found in the Theme 8 Resources folder of the Stronger Together toolkit resource library.

### **A resource for service deliverers and community grassroots audiences**

You may find this resource helpful as a service lead, setting up or developing a community-focused service, a community development worker, a member of a delivery team, a leader of, or an individual within a community group, and a community activist.

## Contact information

If you have further questions about co-production or the Stronger Together toolkit, feel free to get in touch with [customercollaboration@syha.co.uk](mailto:customercollaboration@syha.co.uk)

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## Take a look at our other learning guides in this Stronger Together co-production series:



[1 Toolkit user guide](#)



[2 What is co-production?](#)



[3 Principles and values of co-production](#)



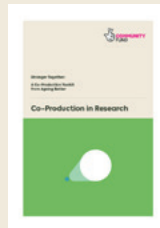
[4 Creating a co-production culture](#)



[5 Asset-based community development](#)



[7 Increasing diversity of inclusion](#)



[8 Co-production in research](#)



[9 Developing a co-commissioning model](#)