

APRIL 2018

Help Through Crisis

Co-production workshops



Delivered by



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Introduction

Help Through Crisis is a £33 million National Lottery funded programme set up by the Big Lottery Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It supports 69 partnerships across England which help people who are experiencing or at risk of hardship crisis to overcome the difficulties they are facing to plan for their futures.

The partnerships receiving National Lottery funding through the Help Through Crisis programme bring together small voluntary groups and established charities to work together locally. Working together, they offer people advice, advocacy and support which matches their personal circumstances. The aim is to look at the issues people face, and the underlying causes, from their basic needs, to their physical and mental health, to skills and employment. People are supported to draw on their personal experiences to build on their skills and strengths so they are ready to seize the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Six Co-production workshops were delivered to senior staff and Beneficiary Voice leads from Help through Crisis partnerships during January 2018. Andy Williams from Revolving Doors facilitated each session. The purpose of this report is to highlight the main themes, ideas and insights discussed at the workshops, reflecting the conversations and notes from the sessions. This should help support Senior Staff and Beneficiary Voice Leads at both 'getting started' and developing their approach to co-production.

Workshop Objectives

- An in-depth understanding of co-production and related concepts (involvement, consultation, etc).
- Insight into the core principles and steps required to start developing an organisational/partnership approach to co-production.

- Participants should then have more knowledge, confidence and materials to share learning about co-production across their partnership.
- **Text in quotes is from flipchart notes (with small amendments for clarity and grammar).**

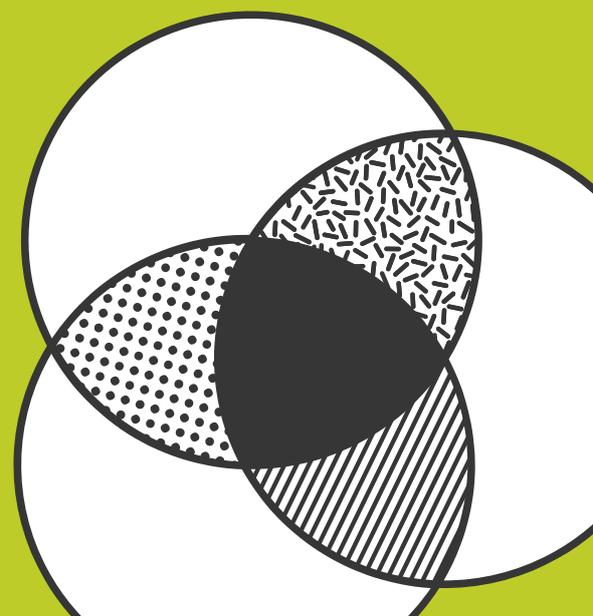
Why co-production?

- We explored why participants thought a co-production approach should be used by Help through Crisis partnerships:
- 'People with lived experience of crisis are best placed to help shape project delivery and development'
- 'Experts by experience'
- 'Professionals only have a partial view of the issues'
- 'Projects are more successful when they have buy in from people using the service'
- 'Time and energy are required but there will be more rewards overtime'
- 'People with lived experience see problems and solutions we cannot spot'
- 'Co-production helps us to address longer term change - not just focus on short term crisis'
- 'It creates services that are more in tune with their community, more innovative, more sustainable'

Professionals +

Lived Experience +

= co-production



How is co-production different?

Co-production is the core principle that underpins the Beneficiary Voice work within the Help Through Crisis Programme. Co-production is distinct from traditional 'user involvement'. It goes beyond consultation and requires involvement in the design and delivery of a service. Co-production necessitates more active roles and encompasses volunteering and peer support.

- 'Involvement can be light touch, a bolt on, surveys and window dressing. Co-production means the service is designed and delivered together'
- 'Involvement in design, planning from the beginning and involved at every stage'
- 'Co-production has a different power dynamic it aims to empower beneficiaries'
- 'Involvement from the outset. This includes planning stages and every stage after as opposed to being consulted after decisions have been made'
- 'Initially co-production can be more labour intense, but long term it brings more benefits, and makes things more efficient. Essentially it's about culture change'
- 'Happens from the very start'
- 'It's more than consultation, it's meaningful, it's active'
- 'Involve at every level. Create accessible options that are easy for the majority to get involved with. A pathway to structured opportunities - volunteering/employment - with greater responsibilities and appropriate support training'.

Tips for getting started.

A strong theme was the willingness to 'give things a go' without fear of failure.

Discussions explored how to get started:

- *'Tap into existing groups - be curious and ask the right questions'*
- *'Utilise the excited people, get quick wins, and be noisy about it!'*
- *'Find champions, support, inspire and empower them'*
- *'Don't worry about expectations, give things time'*
- *'Being tuned in to where people are at, start there'*
- *'It's OK to start small, focus on one project, build good habits and spread from there'*

The principles of co-production.

We discussed the principles, attitudes and beliefs that inform co-production and enable its practical application. From the discussions, there were seven principles that seemed relevant to Help through Crisis partnerships. These are outlined below. The next round of workshops will explore in greater detail how these principles should shape co-production strategies and practice in organisations and partnerships.

1. Change in mindset

Participants talked of the shift in mind-set required to embed co-production.

Staff and organisations need to be:

- 'Doing 'with' and not 'to' the client'
- 'Not a fixer but a facilitator'
- 'Stepping back to enable a Beneficiary Led approach'
- 'Responsive, flexible, receptive and open minded - willing to give it a go'
- 'Challenge their own assumptions'

2. Involving everyone

People using services are sometimes described as 'hard to engage'.

Participants showed a commitment to an inclusive approach that enables everyone to have opportunities and be involved. **If an individual doesn't 'engage' it is the responsibility of the service to be pro-active, try something different, be creative and remove barriers.** Discussions explored informal, fun and creative approaches, with an emphasis on making the first step easy for people.

3. Focus on strengths, interests and motivations

Traditionally services focused on people's problems and deficiencies. Co-production requires an approach that develops skills and views people as assets with capabilities. Participants talked of embedding a strength-based approach in their systems (assessments, welcomes, inductions, and so on).

- 'Focusing on strengths not defining people by their problems. Finding opportunities to express skills'
- 'It's about having different conversations - talking to people about their strengths'
- 'We have to find opportunities to match people's skills'
- 'The baseline is - what are the existing skills and assets?'

4. Collaboration, equality and partnership

Co-production is essentially services that are designed and delivered as an equal partnership between people using services and professionals.

- 'We need an awareness of power imbalances and an approach to resolving this'
- 'A commitment to quality and approaching the project in a spirit of collaboration'
- 'Projects have to adapt and be flexible'
- 'Co-production equally values professional and lived experience - best service blends the two'
- 'From the beginning - before any decisions are made'

5. Training and support

Co-production requires empowered staff to work in creative and flexible ways. Likewise, co-production changes the traditional role of the 'service user' with potential new responsibilities. Appropriate training and support is required to achieve this.

- 'All staff need to be trained to understand co-production. It needs to inform how we recruit people'
- '(Staff need) open mindedness, flexibility and the ability to try something new'.
- 'We need to empower staff to facilitate and have the ability to step back'
- 'Listen to the team and allay their fears'
- 'Empowerment of colleagues; embed values from the start, everyone has to reflect and demonstrate, challenge fears, reflective practice'
- 'Address where fear comes from'

6. Consider incentives and rewards for participants

Why would someone get involved? What is their motivation? Everyone who is involved in co-producing a service should benefit. Benefits can include: personal development, improving self-esteem, a sense of purpose, gaining new skills and developing a social network. Sometimes payments are appropriate. Yet, there are risks to payments, they can create dependencies and hinder the person to moving on.

- *'People can gain a lot; references, volunteering ops, training, feeling valued, personal development'*
- *'It should be a stepping stone - we don't want people to get stuck'*
- *'Payment when appropriate - but consider risks and dependencies'*
- *'Time credits - social currencies - can enable involvement'*

7. Senior staff must be on board

Co-production poses questions for senior staff in terms of organisational culture, strategies, structures and systems. The wide ranging debates covered:

Leadership...

- 'We need to be honest about our motivations'
- 'Letting go, trusting the process, we should not try to define what the outcomes will be'
- 'We can't be afraid to rock the boat'
- 'Trustees are key players'
- 'Lead from the top - demonstrate our commitment'
- 'We need commitment at senior level, strategy and a plan'.

Strategic challenges...

- 'There needs to be a 'shift in structure' to integrate the beneficiary voice in decision making - shift has to be meaningful'
- 'Staff need time and space to implement this approach'
- 'We need to understand the benefits and challenges and communicate this to funders, policy makers, partners. We need to influence them to think differently too'
- 'Think about scope of Beneficiary Voice strategy. It should influence; service delivery and operational approach, senior management, governance, the wider sector, local policy makers, the national agenda'.



Change and risk...

- 'Need to be more comfortable taking risks. Embrace not knowing what will happen'
- 'Identify barriers and develop strategies to overcome them'
- 'It's a cultural shift, we do not have all the answers - need to be OK with that'
- 'As an organisation we need a willingness to change, be challenged and get out of our comfort zone'

Systems, processes and embedding...

- 'We need to include co-production in all our processes, a standing agenda item in meetings, away days, in job descriptions and interviews. It needs to become the norm'
- 'Embedding Co-production - it should be in our: values, training, recruitment, induction, policies'

Beneficiary Voice at senior level....

- 'Integration of the 'user' into an equal decision maker'
- 'Previously involvement work focused on service level, not board level'
- 'We need forums to communicate directly with people using our services. The Beneficiary Voice must shape our strategy'
- 'Find out what we don't know. Our perspective is only part of the picture'

What should be included in a co-production strategy?

This section explores questions and themes, from the workshops, that should be considered when developing co-production strategies.

A) Who are we going to involve?

- 'It doesn't need to be just from our service - think across partnerships'
- 'What could be the role for people who've moved on? Could they volunteer and their lived experience empower people currently using the service?' (i.e. how can people who've gone through crisis help those in crisis).

B) Ensure the Beneficiary Voice has impact and influence

Consider the forums and approaches to ensure the Beneficiary Voice is heard and has impact.

- 'Get people to talk to people at all levels from local to national to begin to influence change - micro and macro!'

C) Developing opportunities, volunteering and peer support

Co-production goes beyond consultation. It requires a more active roles encompassing volunteering and peer support. These roles range from simple, informal and accessible opportunities, such as welcoming people, to more structured roles, including peer facilitators/ trainers/mentors. This will involve training and support as appropriate.

What opportunities could we create?

- 'Flexible short term opportunities, as well as longer term sustained opportunities'
- 'It's about longevity so people can continue to develop after the immediate crisis has ended. This can prevent future crisis'
- 'Identify the skills and knowledge available. When someone starts using your service begin conversations that explore the person's skills, interests, motivations, ambitions – what makes them tick? What's their story? Build on their capabilities – create opportunities'
- 'Create an environment where people can flourish'
- 'Involve people in the recruitment process – designing JDs, writing questions and being on the panel'
- 'Develop peer-to-peer learning, sharing and education opportunities'
- 'Peer led training'
- 'Possible volunteer roles: meet and greet/welcome role, peer inductions, peer trainers/facilitators'

How can we best support people?

- 'Develop good quality training – including accredited training'
- 'Train and support people as with good practice for volunteers'

Peer support should form part of a co-production strategy. There are many ways to deliver peer support; from informal to more structured methods.

- 'Create peer support groups. Identify other services that have peer support groups – learn from them and collaborate'.
- 'We need to facilitate opportunities for people to come together and share experience. Ideas and opportunities will come from that'.
- 'Peer support volunteers can help engage people at early stages'
- 'By definition we are working with people in crisis, can't underestimate that, but how can we become more holistic and help people see beyond the crisis. Could peer support help with this?'

What could peer support look like within local Citizens Advice organisations?

- 'Peer support (could provide) community outreach to compliment the professional advice service'
- 'We can collaborate with partners' (i.e. use their venues, access people at early stages or recruit with lived experience)
- 'Beneficiaries could become volunteers, with training, and deliver simple workshops - debt, benefits, wellbeing and so on'
- 'Peer support volunteers could signpost'

What happens next?

We will be holding further Beneficiary Voice Regional Workshops in May and June. The aim of these will be to share successes, develop creative solutions to any challenges and support each other to develop Co-produced Beneficiary Voice Strategies. The sessions will be creative, interactive and explore good practice case studies from across the programme.

Before those workshops continue the Beneficiary Voice discussion across your partnerships.

If you have good practice you would like to share or require ongoing support please get in touch.

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