

# CO-PRODUCTION GUIDE.

Working Stronger Together.



Sefton Council



**YOUR SEFTON  
YOUR SAY**



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YOUR SAY**

## Contents.

Introduction .....	4
What is Co-production .....	5
Our Co-production Commitment – ‘I’ statements .....	6
What can help achieve successful co-production? .....	10
The Commissioning cycle and service development .....	11
Who can be involved in co-production? .....	13
Where should co-production take place? .....	15
Measuring the Impact .....	16
Appendix section.....	19
Appendix A - Checklists.....	19
Appendix B - Comment Card for editing .....	21
Appendix C - Case Studies .....	22
Appendix D - Example easy read code of conduct .....	27

## Introduction.

We are committed to developing a culture of understanding and supporting coproduction. We recognise that adults, children, and young people are involved because of what they know, their lived experience and have ideas and solutions to problems / issues and what will make a positive difference to them.

Co-production can help services work well and will benefit the organisations. This includes Sefton Council, partners involved in the Public Engagement and Consultation Panel and staff involved in or interested in becoming involved in coproduction activity.

If we work together, we are more likely to get things right first time round and build equal, trustworthy relationships with our communities. This guide will explain coproduction and how it can be done well. It has been developed with the support of People First Merseyside and the Improving Information Group.

If you would like any further information or need support, please contact either Jayne Vincent, Consultation and Engagement Lead at [Jayne.vincent@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:Jayne.vincent@sefton.gov.uk) or Michelle Anglesea, Strategic Support Officer at [Michelle.anglesea@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:Michelle.anglesea@sefton.gov.uk)



**Councillor Moncur**



**Councillor Dowd**



## What is Co-production?

Co-production means making something happen together.

Co-production is a way of involving people in the development of services, practice, and policy from the start of the process and in a way that is inclusive.

Co-production is:

- People who use services, their families, carers, and professionals coming together as equals.
- All participants are involved in every step of the process.
- No one is left out, everyone involved gets to share their experiences as part of the process.
- Meetings are structured in such a way that everyone understands what is happening.
- Everyone gets the chance to have their say in making real changes.
- People seeing the impact of their contributions.

## Our Co-production Commitment – ‘I’ statements.



Sefton Council and partners want to work together with those who use services, including families, carers, council officers, decision makers and partner organisations.

We agree to come together to decide what those organising co-production activity are hoping to achieve and agree a way of working. Also, how the success of the project and the co-production process will be measured in those taking part being able to reflect on their experiences using ‘I’ statements.

We want everyone involved to be able to agree with the following **8** 'I' statements:

**1. 'I am an equal partner'.**

- All involved understand that everyone has something valuable to contribute and a clear idea of what they want to achieve.
- They should involve skilled and experienced people and staff in shaping and influencing services and support.
- People who lead pieces of work should actively look for ways to co-produce.

**2. 'I can participate in different stages of the process'.**

- As part of any project co-production can be used at any stage. This could be at the start doing research, during the consultation and engagement phase, during development, delivery, and ongoing review.
- The way the co-production happens should also be reviewed with participants and carers taking an active role in quality monitoring and evaluation when appropriate.
- People should be offered opportunities to get involved at all stages, although there may be occasions when this is not possible.

**3. 'My views and experiences are represented and listened to'.**

- The people we serve, and their families are 'experts by experience' and should be seen as assets that can influence and shape service design and development.
- Views should be sought from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those groups who are 'seldom heard'.



#### **4. 'I felt the group used different ways to work to include me'.**

- Those involved should be willing to work flexibly and explore creative ways of doing things. Discuss and change the way things are done to ensure continued involvement from everyone.
- Officers and professionals should consider different ways to engage 'seldom heard' groups, and every effort should be made to involve people and communities in co-produce.

#### **5. 'I receive information, in a way that works for me.'**

- Information will be shared in a range of formats to meet the communication preferences and needs of everyone involved.
- Language used will be explained and agreed.
- Information will be given with enough time to enable people to fully understand.



## **6. 'I can actively participate in meetings and other events.'**

- Meetings and other co-production activities should be held at times and venues that are agreed by everyone involved.
- Appropriate planning should be made to involve most people whenever possible. Don't worry about the numbers of people involved. Make sure you have voices from different perspectives and experiences.

## **7. I am supported to actively and meaningfully participate in co-production.**

- Co-production activity often requires the investment of time, money, and resources and those leading a piece of work should be supported to meet those requirements as far as possible.
- Everyone should be involved in making decisions relating to the work and should have a range of opportunities to fully participate.
- Participants should be able to recognise the impact of their contributions, for example using 'You Said...We Did' responses or other ways to feedback.

## **8. 'My involvement is recognised and valued and contributes to service development, design and delivery.'**

- Everyone feels respected and valued and their contribution recognised. They should feel like they are getting something back as well as putting something in.
- Everyone involved must feel that they are able to make a difference and be confident they can have an impact on the outcome of the activity. If they can't, then this is not true co-production.
- When decisions must be made that, for any reason, do not reflect the views of all parties, there must be an open and transparent process in place to arrive at consensus and provide clear reasons to those involved.

## What can help achieve successful co-production?

**Culture** – An organisational culture of openness and honesty, that accepts that sharing the power is the best way to work. No one's view is more important than others and decisions are made in agreement.

**Planning** - Develop a co-production plan with enough time to do everything you want and need to do. Projects may have restraints through laws and rules that must be followed. Making it clear what can and cannot be changed needs to be highlighted and explained at the beginning of the co-production process.

There may also be information that you can use to help inform your co-production activity. There may be reports from Business Intelligence, previous consultation reports and feedback from partners. Use Your Sefton Your Say to look at previous consultations and links to final reports.

**Time and resources** - Sufficient time should be built into all stages of a project. This includes the idea, planning and review stages.

Early consideration and agreement of the budget needed to provide the appropriate resources to enable successful co-production to happen. Resources could include room hire, travel expenses, refreshments and any one-to-one support or interpreters that maybe needed to support people to be involved.

**Communication** – Be mindful of the communication needs of all involved. This could be about how you engage with people and what information is given to them. You may need to develop the skills to communicate in many ways, including plain English, easy read, or audio. Each co-production activity will be designed around the needs of those involved, there is not only one way.

**Skills** – It is important to understand to make co-production a success you will have to develop new skills and ways of working. There are lots of good examples of how to co-produce – do some research.

**Success** is when the people involved feel they have achieved their objective and can agree to the 8 'I' statements.

## The Commissioning cycle and service development.

Here are some ways that co-production is part of the commissioning cycle and service development.



**Analyse:** Involve people in needs assessments and identify gaps in provision. Find out people's experiences of current services – what is good and what improvements would they like to see?

**Plan:** Involve people in writing policies, service specifications and measures of success to improve outcomes. Remember to include how people's views have informed what you are doing.

**Do:** Involve people in the decisions and procurement of services when we can. This can include evaluating tender submissions, recruitment, and selection process, developing job descriptions, shortlisting, and interviews. This could also include co-designing training and co-delivering workshops.

**Review:** Involve people when a service is up and running, including people being involved with training, quality and contract monitoring and evaluation. This enables ongoing involvement.



To engage people, it maybe that different engagement methods are needed, and you may need to think about collecting ideas in a creative way.

For example:

- **Activity or games** may be a more successful way of engaging children and young people rather than presentations, interviews, or surveys.
- **Focus groups** are great for getting detailed views on a specific issue.

- **Workshops** often where the doing gets done! A chance to bring people together to work on a particular project and see the result.
- **Market testing** to try out an idea and see if it works or can be improved.
- **Shadowing** spending time with customers or providers to get a first-hand sense of the service.
- **Mystery Shoppers** – asking people to be a ‘mystery customer’ to see how services run.
- **Reviewing and editing documents** with a group people.
- **Recruitment, procurement, and evaluation panels** are effective ways of including people.

## Who can be involved in co-production?

Co-production can involve different people who have an interest or may be impacted by the project. This should include different professional stakeholders as well as adults, children and young people who currently access, or have accessed a service and those who might in the future. Family members and carers may also have experiences that they wish to share and can have lots of ideas and solutions for making things better.

### How to find, recruit and involve a range of people at the start of the process.

- Use the knowledge of staff and the voluntary sector, and the internet. There is information about how to contact groups on the on the Council’s Website - [Working Stronger Together pages](#).
- Check with other local groups, forums and meetings that may already exist.
- Ask if discussions have taken place about the area, you are co-producing in.

- There may already be a group of people with an interest in this area.
- Ask them about any barriers they see to getting involved and ideas of other individuals or groups of people who might be interested.
- Ask providers to encourage people who use their service and carers to become involved.
- Providers themselves may also be involved in co-production activity, depending on what the activity is.
- Consider ethnicity, language barriers and disabilities – anything that might make it harder for people to participate and share their voice.



- Not everyone is part of a group but may have an interest in your proposal because they have some lived experience. There will be people who we haven't meet yet and we will need to also think about how we can invite them to be involved in the co-production.
- When starting to invite participants find who is interested from the list you have made. This can be a visit to a group or an email. Then present what you want to achieve.
- Set up a meeting venue that will meet the needs of those who have said they will come along. You may have to have more than one venue to start with. Location, environment, and time should be considered. You can use virtual and in person or a mix of both.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) can then help to identify who you will need to engage and involve. An EIA identifies that there may be a negative or positive impact on groups of people with protected characteristics. This It may be that different methods are needed to involve them. Not everyone will want to engage and that is ok. [\*\*If you want more information about EIA's please look at the Council's Website - Working Stronger Together pages.\*\*](#)

A blend of methods will be needed depending on the people involved and the project. One way does not suit all.

## Where should co-production take place?

Adults, children, and young people are more likely to engage in settings where they feel comfortable. Go to where the people are. They may not want or be able to change their routine to come to you.

Use venues like wellbeing centres, libraries, community buildings or other social and community settings. Some venues may be free to use, but there may be some that you will have to pay for. You should also build in a budget for refreshments.



Offering different ways for people to share their ideas is fundamental to co-production. Ask a person's preference for how they want to get involved. Co-delivering an engagement session with a volunteer who is an expert by experience may help people to feel at ease.

There is an **organisers list** to help you plan and develop successful co-production at the end of this guide (Appendix A).

## Measuring the Impact.

### 1. Evidence.

Those who have taken the time to engage should be able to see their contribution in whatever is produced or the outcome of the activity they have been involved in. The evidence should include details of

- who was involved.
- which engagement methods were used.
- what the purpose of the activity was.
- and the impact of involvement on the outcome.

### 2. Evaluate.

It is important to check that people feel their voices have been heard, and they have felt able to make a difference by contributing to a piece of work or project. A suggested method for gathering feedback is via the use of a comment card, such as this one which is also available in the Appendices section and on the Council's Website - [Working Stronger Together pages](#).

**Sefton Council wants to hear about your experience of being involved.**

Please tell us what project or area of work you have been involved in.

---

Please tick one of the four statements below which best reflects your experience of being involved and how you feel you are making a difference.

I feel my voice has been heard and has influence.

I feel my voice has been heard and may influence.

I feel my voice has been heard but I am not confident it has influence.

I do not feel I have influence.

Please tell us more about your answer or any ideas how we can improve.

Your views are important to us and your involvement will help shape and influence the services we commission.

If you have any queries please contact:  
yourseftonyoursay@sefton.gov.uk

### 3. Audit.

A final measure of whether co-production activity has been carried out in a meaningful and effective way is by using the checklist on the following pages to audit the process following completion but can be used when planning the co-production.

This is different to the pre involvement and involvement checklist that are in the Appendices section.



<b>'I' Statements</b>			
<b>1. I am an equal partner.</b>	Does everyone involved understand that they have something valuable to contribute and a clear idea of what they want to achieve.	Have you actively looked for ways to co-produce?	Have you involved people with lived experience and in shaping and influencing services and support?
<b>2. I can participate in different stages of the process.</b>	Have you identified when co-production can take place for the project?	Have you offered people opportunities to get involved at all stages if they can?	Have you reviewed the way the co-production participants can take an active role in quality monitoring and evaluation when appropriate?
<b>3. My views and experiences are represented and listened to.</b>	Have you involved people who use services, and their families can influence and shape service design and development?	Have you got views from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those groups who are seldom heard?	
<b>4. I felt the group used different ways to work to include me.</b>	Are you flexible and tried new ways of involving participants?	Have you considered innovate ways to engage seldom heard groups, people, and communities to coproduce?	Have dedicated efforts been made to empower individuals to be involved?

<b>'I' Statements</b>			
<b>5. I receive information, in a way that works for me.</b>	Are decisions and information shared and agreed and are the words used explained and agreed?	Is information shared in a range of formats to meet the communication preferences of everyone involved?	Is information is given with enough time to enable people to fully understand?
<b>6. I can actively participate in meetings and other events.</b>	Are meetings and other co-production activities held at times and venues that are agreed by everyone involved?	Are meetings and activities arranged when most people are available?	
<b>7. I am supported to actively and meaningfully participate in co-production.</b>	Have you identified the time, money, and resources for the co-production activity?	Is everyone involved in making decisions relating to the work and should have a range of opportunities to fully participate?	Are participants able to recognise the impact of their contributions, for example using 'You Said...We Did' responses or other ways to feedback?
<b>8. My involvement is recognised and valued and contributes to service development and design?</b>	Does everyone feel respected and valued and has their contribution recognised and feel like they are getting something back as well as putting something in?	Does everyone involved feel that they are able to make a difference and be confident they can have an impact on the outcome of the activity?	When decisions do not reflect the views of all parties, Is there an open and transparent process in place to arrive at 'middle ground' solutions and provide clear reasons to those involved.

If all people are happy that the above 'I' statements have been met, and genuine partnership working can be evidenced in all 8 areas, the project can be considered to have been co-produced and will most likely be successful.

## Appendix section.

### Appendix A – Checklists.

These are organisers checklists to help plan practical activities and develop successful co-production.

#### Pre-involvement checklist.

##### I can identify.

Checklist	
That there is enough time and resources for effective co-production. This includes having a budget for venue hire, refreshments etc.	
Areas where co-production is appropriate. Knowing what can be coproduced and things that are not in our control. (What we can do and what we can't).	
The idea and what we want to achieve.	
What we already know from service users, carers, and the population.	
If similar working is already happening and share this learning to inform this process.	
How to recruit and involve a range of people at the start of the process.	
Already established groups and if there are options to strengthen existing involvements and relationships.	
How to recognise and reward the involvement local people make.	
The best ways of providing clear information in a range of formats.	
Making sure that co-production sessions are accessible for everyone who is taking part.	


**Involvement checklist.**

**There is...**

<b>Checklist</b>	
Consideration about how co-production will happen. Physical space, online or hybrid. Other methods also available like email comments.	
A common purpose that is understood by all.	
A code of conduct for how co-production sessions will run with agreement from everyone taking part.	
Provision to ensure people can be involved.	
A willingness to adapt or change things if they do not work well.	
A commitment to 'Active Listening' so that voices are heard, and ideas influence decisions.	
An accurate record of work and progress. Including an online space for people to be kept up to date.	
A way of reporting on progress and providing honest feedback, i.e. You said, We Did/Not able to do.	
Regular reviews and evaluation about the co-production process with everyone involved. Use the 'I' statements to quality check the success of your co-production.	
A celebration of involvement and the work undertaken and achievements.	
A commitment to maintaining the relationships with members of the group to enable involvement in future projects and be quality checkers.	

**Appendix B** - The Comment Card for editing is available on the Council's Website - [Working Stronger Together pages](#).

**Sefton Council wants to hear about your experience of being involved.**



Please tell us what project or area of work you have been involved in.

---

Please tick one of the four statements below which best reflects your experience of being involved and how you feel you are making a difference.

- I feel my voice has been heard and has influence.
- I feel my voice has been heard and may influence.
- I feel my voice has been heard but I am not confident it has influence.
- I do not feel I have influence.

Please tell us more about your answer or any ideas how we can improve.

Your views are important to us and your involvement will help shape and influence the services we commission.

If you have any queries please contact:

[yourseftonyoursay@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:yourseftonyoursay@sefton.gov.uk)

## Appendix C - Case Studies.

### The Sandbrook Co-production Group.

The Sandbrook Co-production Group helped the Council with developing a new short-term assessment unit. It started so that Sefton Council can work with people with expertise through lived experience.

This facility will help people with autism or learning difficulties who need extra support. It will give them a place to stay for a short period of time. Staff can also assess their needs and come up with a support plan.



The co-production group is made up of people with lived experience of complex care needs. This includes parents, carers and service users. People First Merseyside worked with Sefton Council to create the group.

The group helped to design different areas of the unit, including the gardens and sensory room. In later meetings, they worked together to pick the colour of furniture in the unit, and the individual apartments.

The group will continue to meet to share their ideas around how the service will be run.

The co-production group will also help Sefton Council to watch the service once it is open. This will give us the expertise needed to continually improve. If you would like to find out more, visit <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/stau>.

## Sefton's Improving Information Group.



Sefton Council, people who have different communication needs and other partners are working together to change the way information is provided to residents. The project is driven by the passion and drive of all those involved, and they are spreading the word across the whole of Sefton that making information accessible is everyone's responsibility.

In 2017 the Council looked at customer experiences of financial benefits and identified the need to improve how it communicated with people who had different communication needs. This review included the lived experience of people receiving Council information, who told us that they didn't always understand the information they received which caused them stress and uncertainty.

Following the review, the people with lived experience and representatives from wider groups, including People First Merseyside, Merseyside Society for Deaf People, Healthwatch Sefton, Crisis Café (for mental health), Sefton Advocacy, Sefton Partnership of Older Citizens and Southport Access for Everyone wanted to work together to help the Council improve the way it communicates with people and to make sure that everybody can understand the information they receive in a way that suits them.

The Group meets regularly and has agreed its own objectives and identified areas where improvements were needed. This is the work that the group has developed so far: -

- A top tips guide for communicating in an accessible way
- A contact list sharing the details of organisations that support people who use different ways to communicate in Sefton.
- A short film made by the group sharing their experiences of receiving communication from the Council in a format they cannot use.
- An accessible information e-learning training session for the Council and partners.
- The development of an Accessible Information Advocate programme and council wide training and skill development.

The Group has successfully engaged with Council departments and regularly act as a critical friend by reviewing and guiding on things such as new policies, consultations, and service redesign. This has led to real improvements for people in Sefton.

*“Being part of the Improving Information Group is important to all the members of People First Merseyside. We have campaigned for a long time for information in a way we can understand, and this group has shown that if we all work together, we can make a difference.”*

Phil, People First Merseyside





## Cared For and Care Experienced Councils.



Members of our Cared-For and Care Experienced Councils work with the Sefton Youth service team at the Council to support the improvement & development of services for all our children and young people. Our Youth Ambassadors are a group of cared for young people aged 11-15yrs.

Our Making a Difference group is for Cared for and Care Experienced young People aged 16+.

The groups help Officers to improve services for children and young people by sharing their own experiences of being cared for. The groups meet regularly with managers and members of the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure their views are recognised at a senior level and have also met with the Commissioner and Chair of the Improvement Board.



## Children and Young People told us...

“

There was limited information for children and young people about what support they can expect when being cared for.

”

### What we have done...

Sefton Council worked alongside young people to create children's guides with information for children and young people.

“

There should be a place where young people can go for all the information, they need so they do not need to rely on staff to bring paper copies of information which can get misplaced or lost when they move home.

”

### What we have done...

Participation Officers and Communications Officers from Sefton Council worked with young people to develop a webpage specifically for children and young people which we continue to work on to ensure information is easily accessible, up to date and relevant.

“

There needs to be more clarity around post graduate funding, travel and clothing allowances and independent living support.

”

### What we have done...

Young people working alongside managers to review and update current finance policies as well as designing a new finance policy for young people ages 16+.

**Appendix D – Example** easy read code of conduct in **font size 16**. An editable version is available on the Council’s Website - [Working Stronger Together pages](#). This can be used as a start point for you to Co-produce your own.

## Co-production Group Code of Conduct.



This is the code of conduct for the **Sandbrook Co-production Group**.

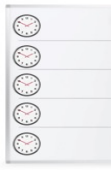
A code of conduct is an agreement about how members of the group will behave at the meetings. It tells us what is ok and what is not ok.

### Agreements for meetings.



- Everyone is equal in the meeting.
- Don’t talk over each other, let one person talk at a time.
- Respect each other’s views and listen to other people’s opinions.
- Use your hand to tell us you want to join in, so everyone gets a turn to speak.
- The chairperson will ask you to speak one at a time.
- Everyone will be given a chance to share their ideas in the meeting or after if you prefer.
- Information shared at the meeting must be kept confidential.
- Speak clearly and use simple language.
- If you need to take a phone call please step out of the meeting.





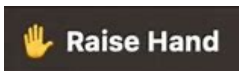
- Stay to the times on the agenda.
- Keep to the point.
- People meeting in person need to remember that there may be people in the meeting but on the computer.



**If you are in the meetings on the computer.**



- Don't include personal information if you leave messages in the chat.
- Please switch the microphone off when you are not speaking.
- Use the hand up function if you want to say something.
- If you need to have your phone with you, please put it on silent or vibrate.
- If you need to take a call switch the microphone and camera off.



**Please follow the code of conduct.**



**Those arranging the project will lead the meetings and make sure everyone can take part.**

**You may be asked to leave the meeting if you do not follow the rules.**

