Co-production in social care: What is it and how to do it

Easy read summary

This is an easy read of the short version of the Social Care Institute for Excellence’s (SCIE) guide to co-production.

SCIE has done the summary in partnership with the Think Local Act Personal partnership.

The Think Local, Act Personal partnership was set up to make social care for adults better with person centred and community support.

Co-production means services working together with people who use services and carers. A lot of this summary is about what co-production means.
Co-production is important for all services and can help them with all the big problems they have at the moment.

It can:

- help save money
- make services better for people
- help people work together better in their community
- help services to work together more

There have been problems with some care services in the last few years.
There was a report about problems at Staffordshire Hospital by a judge called Robert Francis. And another report about how people with learning difficulties were hurt and not looked after properly at a home called Winterbourne View.

There are other reports like this. They all say that part of the reason for problems like this is that there is not enough co-production.

**What is co-production?**

Co-production basically means making something together. It is also about people with different views and ideas coming together to make things better for everyone.

Co-production is about people who use services, carers and professionals working together as equals. Being equals means nobody is more important than anyone else.

Sometimes people use the word co-production in different ways. This can mean co-production is not always as good as it should be. It means you don't always get the changes you should get with co-production.
But it is also important for people to be allowed to do co-production in different ways. This will help people find different ways to do things.

The important thing is that co-production is not just a new word for working with people who use services and carers. When people say they are doing co-production it should mean they are working with people who use services and carers in a different way.

There is a group called the National Co-production Critical Friends Group. The members of the group come from lots of different organisations that work with the government and councils to try and get them to do co-production.

They say co-production is about how the people who run services and councils work with the people they support. It is about everyone sharing power to plan and run services. It means everyone needs to see that everyone can do something to help people and communities to have better lives.
There are some other words that are like co-production but don't mean exactly the same thing. Some of the other words that are like co-production are **co-design** and **co-creation**.

**Co-design:** this means people who run services working with people who use services and carers to plan services.

**Co-creation:** this means setting a business or service which makes the customers or users the most important thing

These are the things that are most important about co-production:

- people who use services, carers and professionals all work together to do the same things
- people who use services and carers start to have more power and control
• people who use services and carers are part of everything to do with services

• services understand that people who use services and carers are useful because of what they know and what they can do

• people get something for what they do for services – sometimes they are paid money and sometimes they can do things for free or to learn new things

• the staff who work with people who use services and carers have more say in how things are done instead of the managers
There are also important **principles** about co-production.

**Principles** are the ideas about what are the most important things to do and how to do them.

1. **Equality** - everyone has something to give and nobody is more important than anyone else.

2. **Diversity** – everyone should be able to be part of co-production and it is important for services to include everyone.

3. **Access** - there shouldn’t be anything that makes it difficult for any group of people to take part in co-production.

4. **Reciprocity** – this means everyone getting something for what they do in co-production. Sometimes they get money. Sometimes they get something for free. It is also about making friends with people and feeling good about helping people.
How co-production helps

Co-production can help people get better services that do the things people want them to do.

This can also help save money.

It also helps make communities better because people work together.

The cost of co-production

There are costs for organisations doing co-production. They need to pay for things like training and making sure that everything has easy access.
2. How to do co-production

When an organisation wants to do co-production it is useful to think about the four areas they need to work on as four pieces of a jigsaw:

For co-production to work well organisations will need to make changes in each piece of the jigsaw.

Culture

The culture of an organisation comes from the things it believes and the things that the people who are in charge of the organisation thinks are important.

Organisations that want to do co-production need to make sure:

- co-production is important to everyone who works for the organisation and in everything it does

- make sure everyone knows what co-production means, why they are doing it and what will be done better because of co-production
• be ready to do things that might go wrong. When you do this make plans for what to do if things do go wrong.

Example of co-production

An organisation called Look Ahead Care and Support has made sure that co-production is part of everything it does. They made sure all the top managers supported co-production and this was very helpful.

They already thought it was important to work with people who use services. They had also done a lot about person centred services. This means services that give people what they want and need.

They think co-production is the next step on from these things.

They have helped people see that they have a lot to give to the services that support them,
Structure

The structure of the organisation is about the way the different parts of it work together and the things they do to make sure everything happens the way they want it to.

To do co-production organisations need to:

- work with people who use services and carers from the very start of a project

- make sure people who use services and carers are paid or given something for what they do

- make sure there is enough money and time for co-production

- use things that are already there if they will help co-production
Example of co-production

The part of Birmingham City Council that runs social care services for adults has lots of ways of doing things that help it do co-production with people who use services and carers. They are part of a project called Making it Real. This is run by Think Local Act Personal which supports person centred services and co-production in England.

You can find out more about this on their website: Making it Real

They use structures to:

- make sure people who use services are part of projects as soon as they start
- make sure there is enough time and money for co-production
- make sure everyone doing the work knows what co-production is and to tell other people about the work
Practice

Practice is about the way the people who work for the organisation do their work.

They need to change the way they do things and support co-production by:

- making sure everything is accessible for everyone who is part of co-production
- making sure everyone has all the information they need to be part of co-production and make choices
- give everyone training in co-production and any other skills they need for the work
• think about people who might be able to `help co-production from outside the organisation

• give all staff everything they need to do co-production including time and money and the freedom to make choices

• give support to the community to be part of co-production

• using co-production when they pay other organisations or people to run services
Example of co-production

All Together Now is a project in care homes for old people who have big problems with their memory – this is called dementia.

They use co-production. Because of this some people need to do their work differently. Cooks in the home now work with the people who live in the home when they make meals.

Review

Review means checking on how you are doing something and finding out what can be done better.

It is important for organisations to check how they are doing with co-production and if it is making a difference to people’s lives.
They need to:

- have a set time to do reviews and make sure co-production is working the way it is meant to work

- do the reviews using co-production

- use what they find out with the review to make the way they do co-production better

Example of co-production

There was a project in Argyle and Bute in Scotland to make services better for young people who had been in care. They used a co-production and reviewed the work they had done. They made sure to tell everyone about the reviews and this helped everyone learn how to do things better.