



FULFILLING LIVES
South East Partnership

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Fulfilling Lives
Action Groups

FLAG Magazine

Spotlight on co-production



Co-Production in Fulfilling Lives

This edition of FLAG magazine has a special focus on co-production.

“For me, co-production is about recognising the added value and input that voices of lived experience can bring to a discussion or to inform a decision. Bringing together a range of people with different perspectives and experiences enables a greater depth of understanding of an issue, and hopefully a more informed decision as a result. It also helps to break down barriers and dispel the myth that there is a binary distinction between ‘professional’ and ‘service user’.

There are several ways in which we are trying to do this within Fulfilling Lives:

Firstly, volunteers take part in all staff recruitment interview panels. They are either representatives on a single panel or form a separate Service User Panel with equal decision-making power. This has led to some amazing insights into the suitability of people to work on the project, which simply would not have emerged by just having a single competency panel. It works because we are committed to sharing power, so if the Service User Panel does not agree with a recruitment decision, it does not go ahead.

Secondly, volunteer peer researchers conduct surveys and interviews with the clients we support, so that they can provide feedback about the services they receive. This information is analysed and then fed back to the delivery organisations. This allows clients to give honest feedback and allows us to adapt and improve the support we provide accordingly, as well as providing direct evidence of current gaps and barriers to other services.

Thirdly, volunteers with lived experience are represented at various levels within the project, offering Service User perspectives, which can sometimes get overlooked and which add real value to decision making. There are volunteer representatives on the Core Group (the project’s strategic steering group), as well as in our Systems Change working groups. Volunteers also attend team meetings and are invited, encouraged and supported to attend all project design and decision-making events.

I think it is important to say that we are on a journey and don’t profess to have all the answers. However, recognising people as individuals, and lived experience as an asset, feels like an important step on the way to achieving real improvements to the way services are designed and delivered for people with multiple complex needs.”

Jo Rogers, Senior Manager, BHT

Co-production: the new buzzword?

During the 1990s, the concept of Service User Involvement gained popularity; numerous user-led groups were created, and most organisations incorporated involving their service users into their aims. Service User Involvement roles were introduced, involvement protocols were devised, and policies in statutory services were adapted.

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 was the first piece of UK legislation to establish a requirement for user involvement in service planning, and by 2011 the government had launched its vision of ‘Making shared decision-making a reality: No decision about me, without me’.

A lot has been achieved since the Service User Involvement movements began but now a new concept has emerged: co-production.

What is co-production? Is it the same as Service User Involvement or something different? Definitions offered by the Social Care Institute for Excellence include the following:

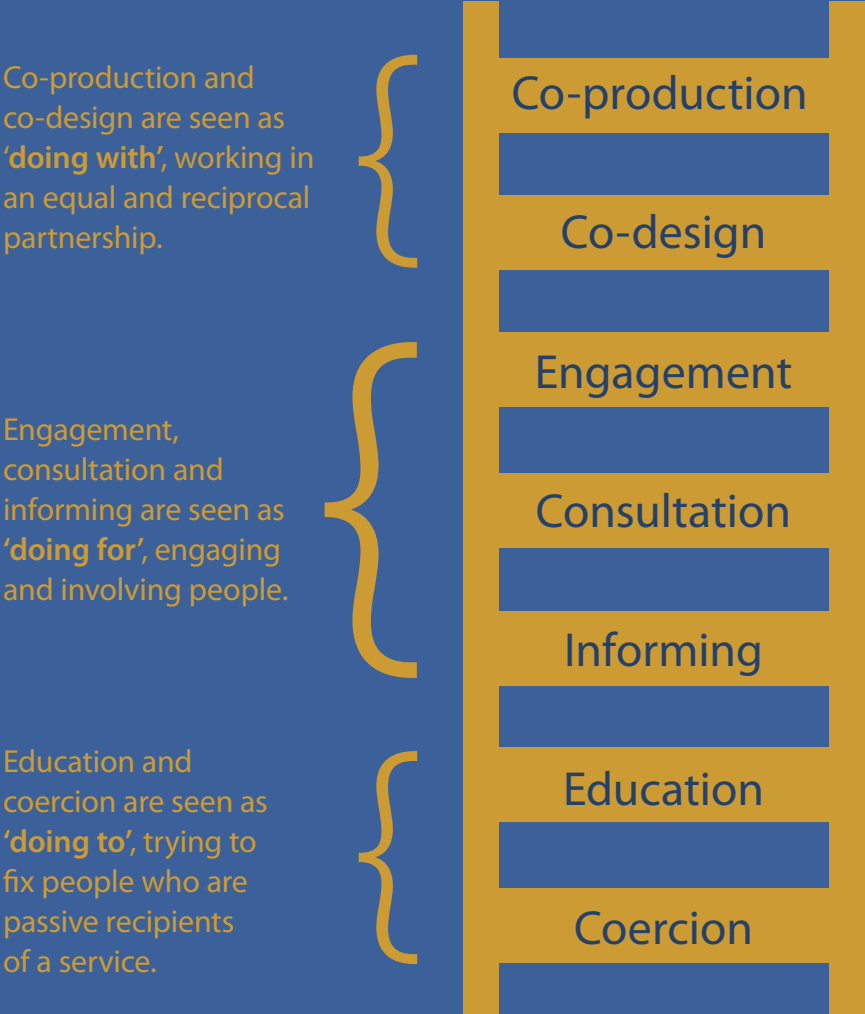
‘In its simplest essence, to co-produce is to make something together. Co-production is not just

a word, it’s not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find shared solutions.’¹

‘Co-production is a relationship where professionals and citizens share power to plan and deliver support together, recognising that both have vital contributions to make in order to improve quality of life for people and communities.’²

A good tool to better understand co-production and its relationship with Service User Involvement is the “Ladder of Participation”, reimagined by the New Economics Foundation in 2013, as shown in Figure 1 below.³ In this sense, we get to co-production when we achieve the maximum level of involvement or participation.

Figure 1 - The Ladder of Participation



Some argue that co-production must necessarily involve service users from the outset, and that for true co-production there must be partnership between professionals and service users in all aspects of a service. This is illustrated in the diagram from Roper, Grey and Cadogan shown overleaf in Figure 2.⁴

This is the aim that we have at Fulfilling Lives and what we are all working towards.

We believe that co-production is the best approach, and that the knowledge and expertise of current and past service users are essential for creating quality services. When people get together relationships are built, knowledge is shared, and skills are developed. The benefits of this often go beyond the initial purpose of the partnership, for example people develop new

support networks and their wellbeing improves. Co-production also values and utilises people's strengths, which very much fits within a Recovery framework.

*"The most important part of co-production is shifting mindsets and establishing a culture that embraces exploration and learning, and genuinely values consumer knowledge and expertise."*⁵

Setting such a goal can be daunting, so a good starting point can be creating specific co-produced activities. Some of the activities we are doing at Fulfilling Lives include co-produced service evaluation, decision making that involves everybody equally, recruitment panels with staff and volunteers, co-designed and co-delivered training, and setting up goals and strategic aims in a co-produced way.

Our top tips for co-production:

1. Start small and then build up to bigger projects; gaining experience and learning from co-producing.
2. Reflective practice and ongoing learning are needed, nobody gets it right the first time. Be flexible and open to changing the approach.
3. Accept that sharing powers means taking risks. Take a chance and learn to share power. Acknowledge and value what people using services have to say.

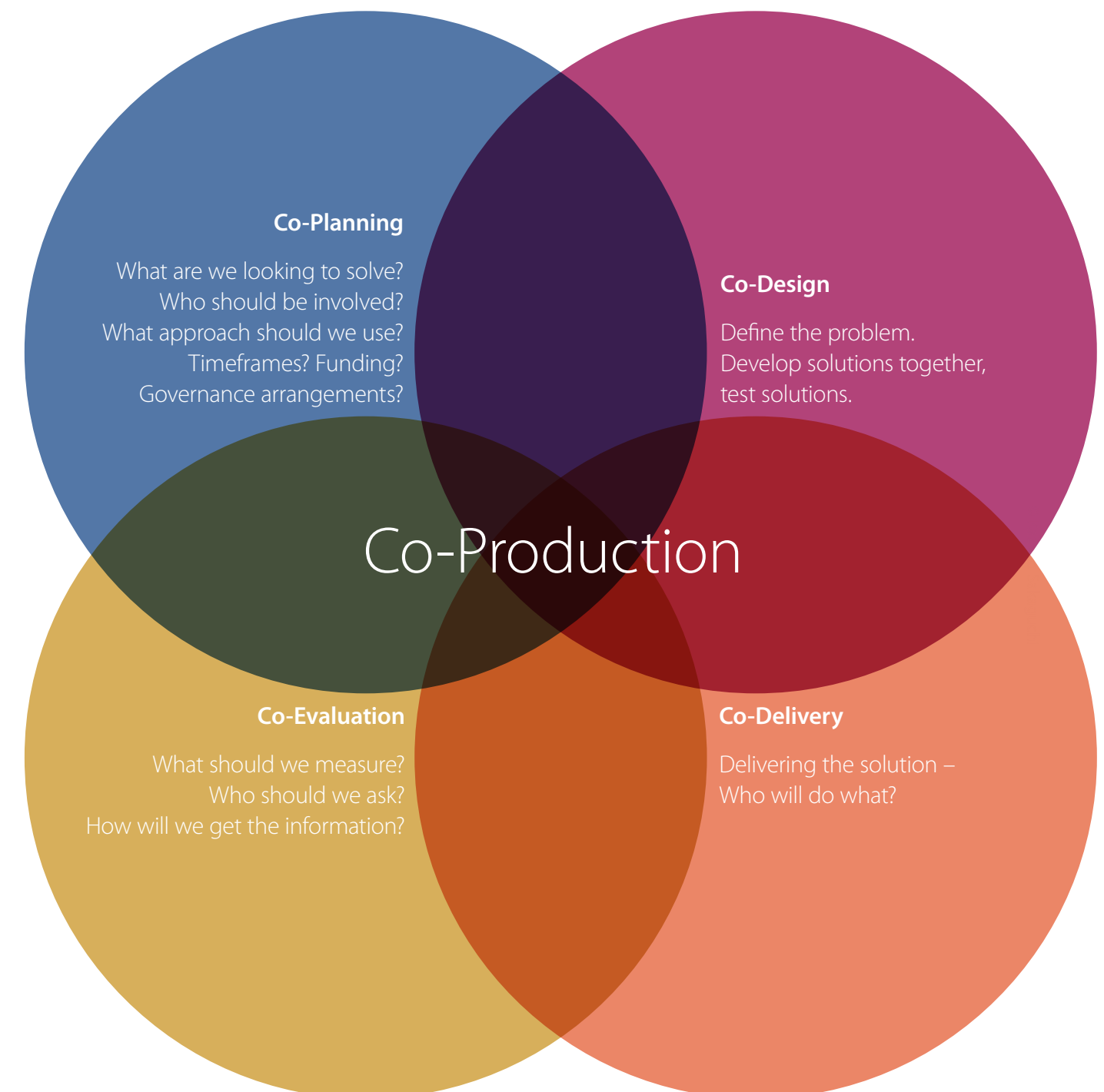
It really is worth it, we are already seeing the benefits!

1. [Co-production in social care: what it is and how to do it](#), SCIE At a glance 64, October 2015.
2. Definition agreed by the National Co-production Critical Friends Group, cited by SCIE as detailed above in footnote 1.
3. [Co-production in mental health: a literature review](#), New Economics Foundation, 2013 (commissioned by Mind). Diagram adapted by Interlink Rhondda Cynon Taf for their online [Outcomes Toolkit](#).
4. [Co-production: Putting principles into practice in mental health contexts](#), Roper, Grey & Cadogan, 2018, p2.
5. [Co-production: Putting principles into practice in mental health contexts](#), Roper, Grey & Cadogan, 2018, p2.

There are also numerous guides to co-production online with great practical advice:

- [Co-production: putting principles into practice in mental health contexts](#), Roper, Grey and Cadogan, 2018
- [Ten Top Tips for Co-production](#), Think Local Act Personal, 2014
- [Co-production in Social Care: what it is and how to do it](#), Social Care Institute for Excellence, SCIE Guide 51, 2015
- [A Guide to Service User Involvement and Co-production](#), CLINKS, 2016

Figure 2 – What does co-production involve?



Co-production in changing services – Temporary Accommodation

Fulfilling Lives are currently collaborating with Brighton and Hove City Council Housing Options Team, to review their engagement with and service offer to clients with complex needs. We are supporting the council to better identify clients with complex needs during the initial assessment stages for temporary accommodation, to ensure that they are prioritised to be placed in Brighton.

Given the housing crisis, it is not always possible for clients with complex needs to be housed in Brighton & Hove if there is no accommodation available. In these instances, the individual will be placed out of area.

We are working to develop a robust screening process for identifying complex needs at presentation, so people can be targeted and prioritised at

the earliest opportunity to be brought back into Brighton and Hove and housed in the city. Keeping individuals with multiple complex needs in the city where possible – and when the client wants to stay in the area – minimises risk and isolation from personal networks and maintains vital engagement with professional support.



Brighton Action Group member Neil Jones has been working on this alongside Fulfilling Lives staff members. Being involved in pieces of work from the start has several benefits for both the volunteer and the project. For example, the development opportunity for the volunteer is much deeper and more meaningful. In this case Neil is as up to date and informed about the work as anyone else involved, which means he feels

well positioned to contribute to meetings with purpose as he sees fit. He is valued as a team member and brings his own skills set to meetings.

Now that this work has progressed, a project planning group has been created, whose membership consists of volunteers and paid staff. Again, this group operates on a co-production model. People around the table are bringing individual skills and abilities. If you have the skill, you get assigned the task; regardless of whether you take a monthly pay cheque.

This is a good example of the co-production approach meaningfully and genuinely incorporating people with lived experience into service design, development and monitoring.

Co-production in the commissioning cycle

In October 2018 we were contacted by a member of the commissioning team for 'Single Homeless & Rough sleeping' for Brighton and Hove City Council, Emily Ashmore. She requested to attend our Action Group concerning the upcoming contract review of the street homeless services, St Mungo's street outreach team and BHT's First Base Day Centre.

Emily attended the Action Group in November 2018 and requested the help of the Fulfilling Lives volunteers to connect with the street homeless. She wanted to gain feedback about how supportive, knowledgeable and flexible

the services are, as well as about what could be improved. This was discussed at a meeting where volunteers, Fulfilling Lives staff (Project Consultants) and Emily all had a say, and it was agreed that the findings of this consultation would feed into the next contract for homelessness and rough sleeping. We decided to have these conversations with homeless people in January and agreed that we would do it in an informal way, through having a chat, rather than approaching people with a written questionnaire.

During this time, we were also contacted by Brighton and Hove City Council's Commissioning & Performance Manager. She asked us to include areas of interest for any female homeless engagements, around what services were available, whether they used them and what services they felt were missing.

Although it was difficult consulting people on the streets and in bad weather, the Action Group members managed to consult with thirteen members of the street homeless community, on the streets and in the day centre. The findings were sent to Emily in February 2019. We all worked as a team, regardless of whether we were workers or volunteers because we all had the same goal.



Emily said that the Action Group input was invaluable to the contract monitoring process and requested our support with future monitoring.

If we think in terms of true co-production, after the consultations and feedback, volunteers and the commissioners would have met and agreed together how this information would inform the new contract. This would ensure that the recommendations being made as a result of

feedback did address the points raised by clients, and would involve them in decision making about solutions or improvements too.

We need to admit therefore, that we are still in the early stages of achieving co-production. However, we also need to recognise that this is a massive step in beginning to shape services based on the real needs and wants of those using them. We have a strong relationship with these commissioners and are confident that we will continue working with them in the future.

This is thanks to those dedicated volunteers and Project Consultants that turn their lived experiences into useful expertise, and those commissioners that are willing to trust us and are courageous enough to break the mould and shift the power balances.

Great work by all of them!

Figure 3 – The Basic Cycle of Commissioning



Peer Research Network

The Peer Research Network is a dynamic group of volunteers and staff with lived experience of multiple and complex needs who conduct research within our project. The group are supported by the Research and Evaluation Officer. They are trained to develop skills in interview techniques, group data analysis and survey design, to allow them to carry out various types of research and evaluations. Some of the work done so far is outlined below.

Equalities snapshot

We asked people who work and volunteer at Fulfilling Lives if they could share some information about themselves, so we could check how representative we are as a project. We then analysed the findings together and wrote a set of questions for the Equality and Diversity Working Group to answer. Because of this, there is now an action plan to make our project as accessible and supportive as possible.

The client survey

We regularly ask our clients for feedback about the support that they receive from the project and they are interviewed by peer researchers. Being



interviewed by someone who also has experienced complex needs helps break down the barrier between interviewer and interviewee and people often open up more. Being able to share personal experiences and have their voice heard is very powerful and it can contribute towards recovery.

The peer researchers then analyse the surveys, which inform us of any approaches that are particularly useful and valued by people. Their opinions enable us to learn and continue to improve the support offered by our specialist workers.

Improving the volunteer experience

Every 6 months we run a survey for volunteers. This survey is updated each time we release it depending on what the group feels is important to ask about. We analyse the findings together and make recommendations for the

project on how to improve the volunteer experience at Fulfilling Lives. This enables the volunteering programme to be shaped by the volunteers themselves.

The next big project for us is to make a video version of the training we have created on

interview techniques and survey design, to make the training more accessible for any staff or volunteers that would like to learn more.



FULFILLING LIVES

South East Partnership

The Fulfilling Lives South East Partnership, working in East Sussex, is one of 12 projects across England where National Lottery Community Fund investment is supporting people with complex needs.

As well as supporting people, the funding will evidence more effective and efficient ways for designing, commissioning and delivering support services for this group in the future.

The purpose of this initiative is to bring about lasting change in how services work with people with multiple and complex needs.

The project is funded by the the National Lottery Community Fund and led by Brighton Housing Trust (BHT), who are the overall accountable agency. It is made up of local delivery teams from different partner agencies (currently Equinox and Oasis Project), as well as a team of Project Consultants employed by BHT who work across Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings.

