



Our Voice Matters

Phase 2 Report

April 2020 - September 2021

Co-Production In a Crisis

Valuing the Voices of Cwm Taf Morgannwg
through the Covid-19 Pandemic

Report written and compiled by
Jenny Mushiringani Monjero

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Section 1:

The
Thinking
Behind the
Practice



Co-production: Principles, Values and Behaviours

Co-production is a working model that allows for the re-balancing of power structures. It creates a level playing field that opens opportunity for diverse and uniquely qualified minds to come together, discuss and identify shared solutions to overcome any issues, problems or barriers that may exist, whilst driving improvement across all areas of the Health and Social Care sector.

In practice, co-production involves people with lived experiences (users of services) working alongside other key stakeholders as equals to make collective decisions and inform positive change that benefits all in a meaningful and purposeful way.

Co-production can sometimes be hard to get our heads around because it isn't necessarily a thing that works in a rigid, linear or predictable manner.

Instead it is a mindset, a culture, a way of being that often unlocks unimaginable potential that can lead to unthinkable emergent practice; and that's also the reason why it scares people a little. Co-production isn't a one off, tick box exercise that can be completed overnight. It takes time. It takes patience. Good co-production creates a transformative platform upon which people can not only have their voice heard, but their voice accepted,

valued and accordingly actioned to make a real difference to the future of the projects and services they access. It should be a supportive and safe environment that promotes honesty and transparency, providing access to relevant support when needed, and empowering all involved to be effective change makers and pioneers into the new and unknown.

What co-production isn't is just good community led action or effective collaboration. Whilst neither of these things are bad, and both are valued assets across the Health and Social Care sector, co-production takes joined up or partnership working to the next level by marrying the two. This then produces a richly diverse pot of innovation and creativity, tasked with finding solutions to present issues or improving capacity for meeting need.

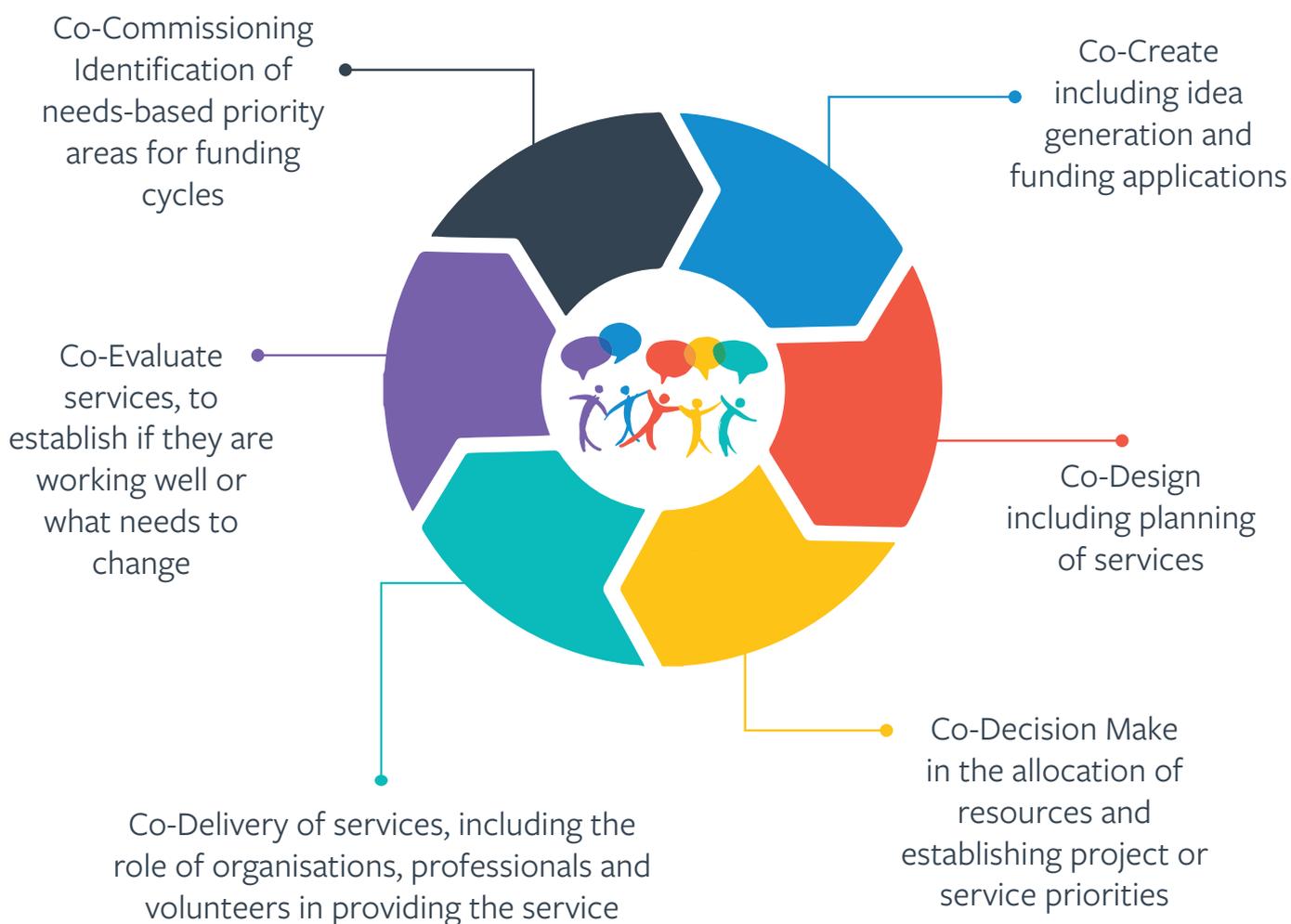
Diagram 1



There are many elements that make up a full co-production process, and just because a service or project wasn't co-produced from its conception doesn't mean that it can't be started at the point where the project or service is at. Equally, not every part of every project or service is suitable for co-production. That is not an excuse to not do it, but rather a check in for individuals to assess if the environment can be a transformative platform that will allow good co-production to take place, or not. If not, then it raises the opportunity for us to

question why it isn't and look to make positive modifications that ensure that it can be in the future. When we think about the nature of co-production as being a mindset or way of working, it also suggests that the process is circular and fluid, therefore, if a project or service hasn't been fully co-produced since its conception, it is likely that its embraced co-productive approach may carry it over into a new cycle of co-production until a fully co-produced project or service becomes a reality.

Diagram 2



In order to develop and enhance a co-productive mindset and culture across the Health and Social Care sector, the Co-Production Network for Wales offer 5 key guiding values to consider as a starting or reference point for co-productive practice implementation and engagement activities:

1.



Value everyone and build on their strengths

2.



Develop networks of mutual support that expand across silos

3.



Focus on outcomes and people's lives, not systems

4.



Work on the basis of great relationships built on trust, that share power and responsibility

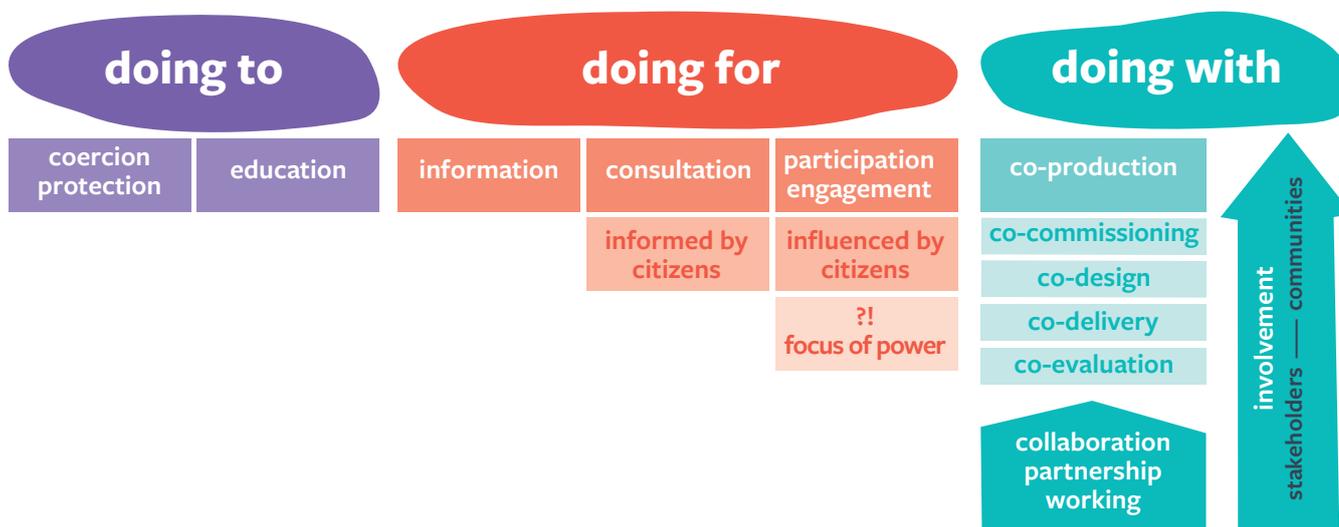
5.



Enable people to be change makers

A Spectrum of Interactions

Diagram 3



Previously, when thinking about co-productive practice and how individuals are engaged and involved, consideration has been given to the ideas of ‘doing to’, ‘doing for’ and ‘doing with’ as a ladder of participation (Sherry Arnstein, 1969). The translation of this by Think Local Act Personal’s National Co-production Advisory Group as applied to co-design and co-production featured co-production at the top with the notion of it being the most superior or idealistic model of working. After some reflection on this concept the Co-production Network for Wales tipped the ladder on its side to create a spectrum of interactions. This spectrum opens the opportunity for the way in which engagement and involvement takes place to be much more flexible. It acknowledges that whilst ‘doing with’ and co-production are still aspirational models of working in the right/appropriate circumstances, that the other categories within the spectrum are also relevant and necessary, again in the right/appropriate circumstances. Therefore, whilst some categories may be considered more relevant or appropriate than others, none of them are inherently bad and all should be considered when trying to figure out the best approach to use for the piece of work, project or service it is going to influence.

This is particularly important when considering the accessibility of engagement and involvement practices. In some instances, people, groups, organisations and services may simply not be ready, equipped or skilled enough to undertake a fully co-productive process in a non-tokenistic, meaningful manner. Instead it is important to reflect on the capacity of the people involved and to meet them where they are at. This may include having to do some activities categorised as ‘doing to’ or ‘doing for’ as a foundation for co-production. This then will allow individuals to join the journey and be empowered and equipped through necessary support, training and trial/pilot/experimental learning activities that prepares them to engage in effective co-production in the future. It is about having the insight to do the right thing at the right time, as a proportionate and appropriate response. As it is said, practice makes perfect, and embarking on this process takes a certain level of willingness, resilience and determination to not be afraid of failing (although is it truly failing if it is properly encompassed in a process of learning) and to keep on adapting and trying, even when you think it is working well!

The Complex Nature of Social Systems

At any one time a system of any makeup can be classified as being in one of the following states: **Simple**, **Complicated**, **Complex** or **Chaotic**.

This classification state can be determined by the number and severity of impact of a wide range of system variables that define the level of difficulty or predictability in achieving the systems desired outcomes.

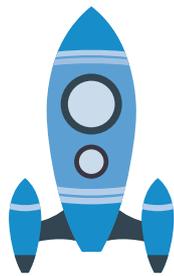
Diagram 4a

Simple



Making a Cake

Complicated



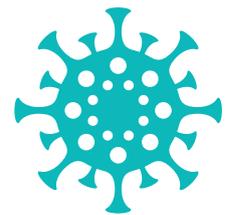
Building a Rocket

Complex



Raising a Child

Chaos



Dealing with a pandemic

We often find confusion in defining the difference between complicated and complex system states, and this is because they are words that can be used interchangeably within society, or categorised as different levels of the same thing, i.e. complex is something really complicated. However, in systems thinking this is not the case, and there is a very real difference between the two states that requires two very different responses. To help explain this in more detail, complexity enthusiast Mark Foden (2018), has developed the analogy of the Clock and the Cat to explain the phenomenon of complexity by examining the difference in the makeup of and our engagement with complicated (the clock) and complex (the cat) system states.

Imagine you had never seen a clock before. If you were to open up the case, look at the parts, count the teeth, see what is connected to what, and do a bit of head scratching you would probably be able to work out how the clock might behave. This is because despite the clock parts being many and intricate, they interact in a predetermined and constrained way. They are machines, and as such they have little scope for deviation. Therefore, to understand their system makeup and predict its reactions to certain stimuli there is a need to call in the clock specialists who understand and have experience of all the technical details of the clock as a complicated system.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately depending on your perspective and desired outcome, you cannot do the same thing with a cat. If you were to open up a cat, look at its parts, count its teeth, see what is connected to what, and scratch your head for a bit you wouldn't be able to absolutely predict the cat's behaviour to certain stimuli or situations. Cats are organisms, and their makeup comes from lots of different things going on both inside and around them. Different interactions between the various internal parts of the cat and the interactions between those internal parts and the cat's environment (external factors) all play a role or may influence how a cat might react, or what a cat might do in a particular situation or in response to a specific stimulus in that moment of time. Monitoring the cat's reaction and noting its past behaviours may be able to provide us some indication of what the cat may do in the future when presented with a similar set of circumstances. However, this is not 100% guaranteed and is largely susceptible to both internal and external factors and their interactions that may be in play the next time those circumstances are presented.

This unpredictability makes the cat a complex system which requires a diverse range of experts by experience, in this case a variety of cats and cat owners, to come together and bring all of their individual past experiences, reactions, thoughts, feelings, ideas and concerns. This then helps generate understanding and increase the level of which a future outcome can potentially be predicted by mapping and analysing past trends, patterns, and experiences whilst maintaining appreciation that this may not be accurate or absolute.

By their nature, social systems are extremely dynamic and susceptible to change based on the impact and influence of emerging needs, trends, circumstances and situations. This means that they are usually classified as Complex because they are made up of and involve organisms: in this case people not cats. To help further our understanding of complex systems, Tom Bosschaert, Except Integrated Sustainability, outlines the below 12 rules or characteristics that may be applied to them (Symbiosis in Development (SiD): Making New Futures Possible, 2019)

1. Complex systems are **numerous** (uncountable) in their components in which all components influence each other. They exhibit non-linear behaviour emergent from their interactions beyond each component's mechanical (linear) behaviour
2. Complex systems can be **understood but not predicted**. Any action upon them may have unpredictable (side-)effects. Don't make decisions based on prediction; instead, prepare for resilience, adaptability and flexibility
3. Complex systems **grow like organisms** and, like them perish. No complex system is meant to exist for eternity. Understand and accept the natural cycle of things and aim for self-reproductivity and longevity rather than eternality
4. Complex systems **require an increasing number of resources per added unit of complexity**. This means there are always limits to their growth. Systems respond differently at different scales but may exhibit similar patterns at different scales
5. Complex systems **change rapidly in revolutionary-like jumps, as well as in slow evolutionary progression**, and both together. These events can be triggered by anything. Patterns in details are just as important as large-scale variables
6. Complex systems **do not necessarily behave the same way given the same conditions**, nor is historical behaviour always an indication of future behaviour

7. Complex systems are **always dynamic, never sit still, and are never entirely in balance**, even if they seem to be
8. Complex systems are not aware or alive per se but **may exhibit survival or seemingly cognitive behaviour**. It makes sense to mentally construct a complex system as a biological entity with a character to increase your understanding of its dynamics
9. Complex systems **require incubation periods for changes to be registered, processed, and acted upon**. Be patient. Measure in the full spectrum for any changes lest you miss a rebound effect or changed state somewhere
10. Complex systems, at the moment, **can best be understood by human brains**, as they are also organic complex systems in themselves. Immersing oneself in a complex system and fully interacting with it is the best way to learn its behaviour. In other words, try to get out from behind your desk and connect
11. Complex systems **interact beyond their chosen system boundary**, which needs to be taken into account at all times. Maximize the beneficial properties of these externalisations and minimise the system's dependency on them for increased sustainability
12. Complex systems **always offer hidden dynamic processes** that can have beneficial as well as destructive effects. Find these patterns to boost capacity for change and prevent harmful externalities



“When you chose to contend with complexity you start to realise how professionalised structures help to keep troubling questions [of uncertainty and the fear of the unknown] at bay.

SYSTEM



Projects, programmes, hierarchies, funding cycles, milestones, service level agreements, budgets, key performance indicators all feed our need for certainty and order. The messy unboundaried web of interdependencies recedes behind a dense framework of process and structure, and with it our feelings of anxiety and helplessness.

Except, of course, the complex reality remains undiminished, and containing it with our structures proves as slippery as clambering onto an unruly lilo in a choppy sea. Worse still, our need for orderly structure can make a bad situation worse. It obscures our appreciation of the issues we need to address, leading us to act as if the situation weren't in fact complex, and so denying the lived experience of people caught up in the web.

[In a bid to rectify this, appreciation needs to be given to the notion] that the outcomes we seek can only happen through the actions of a whole system. Although there are many parts of a system – projects, workers, organisations, rules, funding, communities, institutions – that have a bearing on a particular disadvantage or harm, they are all continually affecting each other. No individual part exists or has an effect in isolation of the others. This leads us to think that sustainable change depends on the way all parts interact.”

Lankelly Chase's Approach to Working with Complexity, 2018

... opening the need and opportunity for true co-production to take place!

Co-production in Complex Systems

Diagram 4b



Due to the dynamic and unpredictable tendencies of complex systems we can see them as the optimal space for good co-production to take place. This is because complex issues require a level of innovation, creativity and out of the box thinking that generate solutions to emerging and changeable system problems. When attempting to apply the same to the other system states, we often find that these can be stifled by the familiarity of the simple state; the level of technical expertise of the complicated state; and the fire fight survival instincts of the chaotic state. To achieve the out of the box problem solving required within the complex state, it is important to reflect on past individual and collective experiences, patterns and trends, to identify not only what worked and the lessons learnt previously, but to gain insight from the thoughts, opinions and ideas of a diverse range of individuals: decision makers, service providers and users of services alike. Gathering people for this purpose helps to bring unique levels

of understanding and compassion that allows for the examination of a system problem or issue from multiple angles or perspectives. This in turn, will help to bring about sustainable, needs driven and experience informed actions. In essence, a fully co-designed project, service, response.

As we contemplate such opportunities to co-produce and all the factors that are needed to ensure it is done well, we often stumble upon two fundamental questions: who to gather? and how to gather them? In an attempt to answer these, this next section will explore the 5 key values of co-production as outlined by the Co-production Network for Wales to provide a level of clarity and understanding that can help move practices of engagement and involvement from tokenistic compliance-led activities to something meaningful and powerful.

Voices that Matter: Who To Gather

1. Value everyone and build on their strengths: - who do we already have?

As a starting point it is useful to identify who we are already working with, who we already have in our existing networks, and what those individuals, groups and organisations can bring to the process. Knowing and understanding this then helps us to consider who our key audience or stakeholders are in relation to the topic, issue or problem we are aiming to work through. This then allows us to attribute value to the most relevant voices based on their lived experiences as a mechanism for generating understanding and compassion, rather than just their opinions of a situation in which they have little connection or previous encounters of. Once we know who is already around the table, or who we have relatively easy access to, the next question to consider is who is missing.

Purposefully identifying the gaps or missing voices in our co-production team can help us to develop some targeted engagement strategies to increase representation and ensure that all key audiences and stakeholder members are included. This won't always be successful, or in some cases even possible, and that's ok! It shouldn't be a barrier that stops us starting our co-production journey, we just need to be mindful of any under representation that exists and keep looking for new ways to bring those voices on board.

It's not about who shouts the loudest but whose voice has the most value in that particular situation



2. Develop networks of mutual support and expand across silos – plugging the gaps, quality over quantity!

This may seem odd or strange to those who have had to work towards meeting hard outcomes in the past but when we embark on a journey of engagement and co-production, numbers are not the most important thing. Put simply, it is less about how many people are engaged, or proportionality to the population, but instead about recognising the importance of having the right people in the conversation or process at the right time: quality over quantity. It is about remembering that everyone has a contribution to offer and that all voices are valued voices, even if they are low in number. They are still relevant, and what they offer through the engagement process still has power. When we spend time building relationships and journeying with a small number of people we are able to obtain new depths and detail about their lived experiences, rather than receiving lots of surface level data from a broad spectrum of people that can at best, only give a small insight into the needs and issues that they face. In practice it would be extremely difficult, and non-cost effective to try and engage everyone, or a direct proportion of everyone, all of the time, or even some of the time. Therefore, it is important to be realistic in our endeavour to co-produce and aim to maximise diversity and representation as much as reasonably possible within the journey.

There will also be some individuals and groups who may choose not to engage, and again, that's ok! Engagement and co-production are not practices to be forced upon someone, falling into the realms of the 'doing to' mentality, but instead should be flourishing places of empowerment which can only happen when someone chooses to be part of them. In addition, it is also important to allow people to choose (as far as possible) how they wish to engage and for what period of time they engage for. This might mean that the voices within the journey may change along the way but making our processes accessible and purposeful will help to generate longer-term retention. Remember, people need to feel valued and feel like they are making a difference!

When we design for the margins, we build for everyone – there is value in over representing underrepresented voices



3. focus on outcomes and people's lives, not systems – do what's right not what's expected

It is important to remember that you can't do it all at once. Co-production takes time. Therefore, keep it simple. Due to the complexity of the systems and issues we are trying to work within and overcome, it is unlikely that a perfect, one size fits all, solution can be found. Experimentation, or trial and error practices may seem risky as their outcome is unknown and unpredictable, but with their risk they also bring fertile ground for creativity and innovation to grow. Albert Einstein said it best when he suggested that “creativity is intelligence having fun”, and fun is something that can really help boost the effectiveness of a co-productive journey. To get the best out of people it is important to break out of our usual patterns of doing things and to give ourselves permission to explore the new and unknown. This can help people to view the task, issue, or problem in front of them through a new lens, identifying wider impacts and developing individuals' imaginations to allow them to see different solutions. Running lots of small-scale experimentation or co-design projects allow us to constantly obtain feedback and adjust

our forward projection, meaning we can actually start to mitigate elements of the original perceived risk as we adapt and prepare for future larger-scale investment. Through early involvement of people with lived experiences within this small-scale experimentation phase there is opportunity to add value and develop robust solutions that work.

Therefore, as we consider who to gather it is important to keep reviewing, adding and changing the membership of our co-production team throughout the journey. Bringing in fresh minds can re-energise the co-production process. New experiences, thoughts, ideas and imaginations can add value to the experimental nature of the work and mature developing themes and concepts as well as helping the team to uncover additional options and solutions and/or modify existing ones to make them fit for a new purpose. It's not always about inventing something new but finding what works best for the new (or in some cases, long standing) need, issue or problem that is being worked through.

Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world
– Albert Einstein



4. work on the basis of great relationships built on trust, that share power and responsibility – In this together mentality

Relationships, relationships, relationships... when we dig down into it, we find that the foundation of co-production is good relationships. So, as we consider who to gather it is important to once again reflect on who and what we already know; chances are you probably forgot or missed a few people the first-time round! Once we are certain we know who those people are, it is good to reflect on the type of existing relationship we have with them as a way of figuring out the potential for us to grow that relationship in a meaningful way for co-production to blossom organically. As we review the types of relationships we have with our current networks, it is also important to take a step back and ensure that those we have invited to the table or are excited to gather, are not just the usual suspects, or yes people who we can almost guarantee will go along with anything we say and do anything we want them to do. This might be hard to hear, or might even fill you with a little dread, but choosing to work and engage with some people who have the potential, or even past history, to rub you up the wrong way can be really refreshing for the co-production journey. Yes, it might be hard work, but building on the points raised in the first 3 values, diversity is key and having a range of voices and opinions is what is needed to analyse a need, issue or problem from a range of different angles or perspectives.

Of course, this needs to be done in a healthy way and to manage conflict well there is a need to drop the defensiveness and instead ramp up curiosity and openness. Easier said than done, but completely liberating if achieved. There is no denying that co-production is likely to evoke a variety of emotions, good and bad, as previous practices, experiences, patterns and trends are pulled apart and examined. The thing to remember here is that this isn't done as part of a blame game but rather as a springboard for improvement. Yes, it is important to keep one eye fixed on the past as a source of information and knowledge for understanding, but that should be kept in tension with one eye firmly focused on the future and the excitement of the what if. Getting caught up and dwelling in negative emotions crushes

Listening to people grows understanding, respect and trust, not necessarily agreement



curiosity and creates a blockage for co-production to take place. In such situations it is useful to recognise these emotions as their presence has meaning and power in themselves, but then it is even more useful to unpack the unmet needs or feelings of worthlessness and under value that sit behind those emotions. Doing this provides opportunity on both an individual and collective basis to process the root issues behind the emotions in a safe and supportive environment that allows for relationships of trust to be built and the co-production team to continue to work together in a healthy manner. Once this processing and exploring has been completed it will allow the co-production team to become future and solutions focused, and to keep on questioning, imagining, trying and moving until a new practice or way of doing things emerges that meets the current needs of the individuals involved as well as the overall system.

Therefore, when we think about who to gather, we need to ensure that they have the ability to be future and solutions focused. This is something that doesn't come naturally to everybody, and just because someone doesn't display this from the offset shouldn't be a reason to exclude them from the co-production process. Essentially, co-production should be a process accessible and open to all, in which they can grow and develop new skills and abilities with the right support, opportunity and safety net whereby they can keep on trying until they succeed.

5. enable people to be change makers - creating a safe and empowering space for people to grow

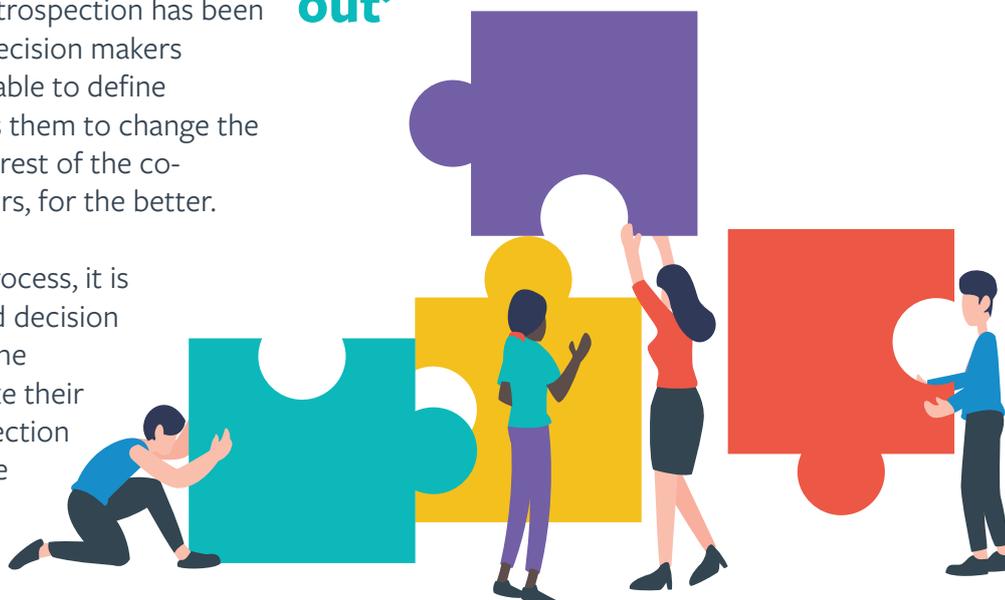
To help individuals grow and develop into their full potential as change makers and valued voices within the co-production process, elements of pre-engagement work may need to be undertaken to ensure that all those involved: decision makers, services providers and users of services alike understand the purpose of the process, and their role within it. In addition, wider pre-engagement work, as well as ongoing development work, may be needed to ensure that everyone involved is not only running the same race, but that they are all starting that race from the same starting line of opportunity.

To do this effectively, the professionals and/or decision makers in the co-production team need to undertake more of a facilitation role that allows, encourages and supports others to come forward and make contributions. As part of this facilitation role, professionals and decision makers need to undertake some self-reflection to fully acknowledge their own personal strengths, weaknesses, prejudices and bias to ensure that the starting line of opportunity can be clearly established and accessed by all. Next, they need to recognise what the word power means to them and the ways they exert power in their normal roles and everyday lives. Doing this will then allow those with perceived power within the co-production team to actively identify ways in which power can be shared or shifted to enable and empower others, especially those who perceive themselves as powerless. Once this inner journey or personal introspection has been undertaken, professionals and decision makers within the team should then be able to define themselves in a way that enables them to change the relationships they have with the rest of the co-production team, as well as others, for the better.

To continue the development process, it is important that professionals and decision makers then enable the rest of the co-production team to undertake their own inner journeys and self-reflection by creating a safe and supportive space for them to grow.

Done effectively, this then breeds the self-realisation that as individual members within the co-production team they are capable; that they have been authorised and can do what is needed; that their voice does matter; and that they will be listened to, believed and trusted throughout the co-production journey. Undertaking this task is hugely beneficial for co-production as it allows for everyone involved to move from mindsets of doing to and doing for and into the mindset of doing with. Additionally, it creates opportunity for the Identification of the individual barriers and needs of all involved to be highlighted and overcome or met. Consideration can then be given to a range of reasonable adjustments and training requirements that may need to be implemented or undertaken at various points prior to and within the co-production process to allow people to not only have a seat at the table but a voice at the table: a voice that is listened to, valued, reasoned with, can challenge and be challenged, that can hold people to account, and invokes appropriate action.

Co-production is not about having all the answers - it's ok to say 'I don't know, let's work together to figure it out'



Skills For Co-production: How to Gather

Once we have identified who we should/need to gather, it is important that how and when we gather them is also given thought and consideration. People shouldn't be gathered, or engaged, for the sake of being gathered or engaged. This is people's lives not a simple tick box exercise!

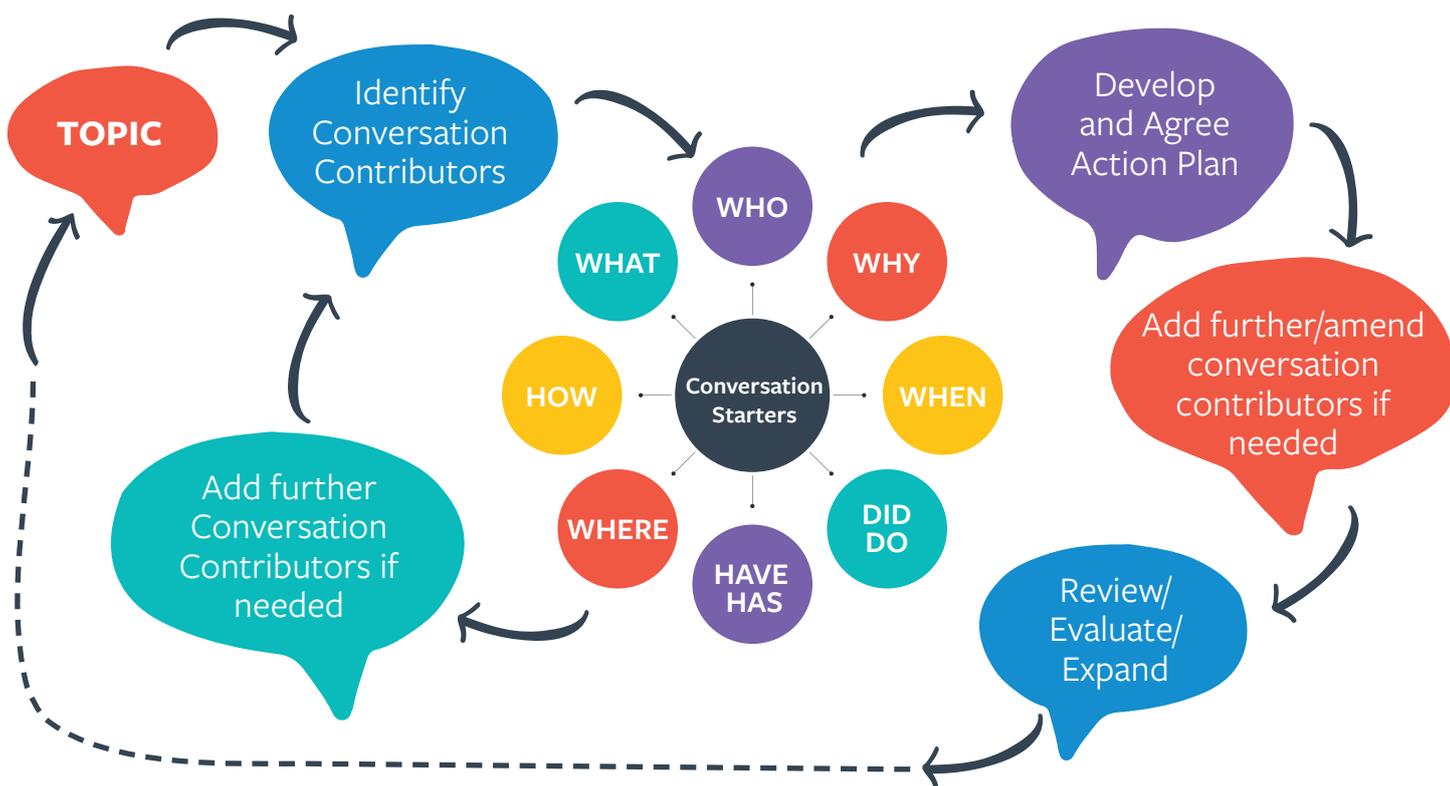
The following points are offered as top tips to reflect upon as we build a gathering, or engaging strategy to inform our practices and launch our journeys of co-production.

- 1.** Map your existing networks
- 2.** Identify people's strengths, knowledge and relevant experiences in relation to the topic, issue or problem
- 3.** Think about community and/or project strengths: resources, places and spaces for interactions – going to where citizens are and conducting co-production work in their spaces helps breaks down some of the barriers to their engagement and helps them to feel a sense of ownership over the process
- 4.** Build on what you already know (research, consultations, existing data) even when it's been completed by someone else – there is no need to reinvent the wheel, instead adapt and develop what already exists to fit your purpose or task
- 5.** Build a communication and engagement plan to help bring missing voices on board
- 6.** Don't assume people's capabilities – allow space for them to show you what they can do
- 7.** Keep asking the 'who is missing' question
- 8.** Ask those who are already engaged if they can bring some of those missing voices on board – gatekeepers and champions
- 9.** Enable choice and opportunity for people to tell you how they would like to be engaged
- 10.** Don't rush the process: building relationships takes time
- 11.** Talk about what people want to talk about as a starting point and then make the links into the projects agenda, remit or focus
- 12.** Be open for conversations and co-production activities to lead you into new areas of inquiry and new journeys of co-production on different issues and topics
- 13.** Use open questions "tell me about..."
- 14.** Ask follow-up questions throughout the co-production journey – build the story and allow people to peel back the layers of their individual experience in their own time

- 15. Make it accessible – understand how people communicate and also listen out for what’s not being said: NO JARGON!
- 16. Consider what has worked in the past, what is possible and what may be needed
- 17. Don’t be afraid of what they might ask for or what additional issues might be identified. If they ask for the world dig deeper to develop understanding of why they are asking for those things, then build a strategy to address the underlying needs and/or wants. If upon reflection the ask is too big, unrealistic or not beneficial it is ok to say no, as long as you provide justification for why it can’t happen and explain in a way people understand, whilst pointing out what might be possible and inviting people to work with you to explore do-able solutions
- 18. Let people know what’s in it for them – incentivising the process of co-production with positive social outcomes helps build motivation and willingness and has the potential to unlock new levels of imagination and creativity
- 19. Regularly check in with the co-production team and wider community network to provide feedback on the process and the difference the work is making. Even if nothing has really happened, people will appreciate the acknowledgement that the work they are involved in is important and that it is still being looked at and consider rather than being forgotten or lost.
- 20. Keep it fun!

Diagram 5

Conversation Flow



An Eruption of Chaos: The Covid-19 Pandemic

Phase 2 of the Our Voice Matters project was met with the global challenge of Covid-19, forcing a re-evaluation of the project's end of phase 1 recommendations and outlined workplan for phase 2.

Covid-19 meant that we couldn't do the things we had planned or wanted to. It saw all of us having to overnight, adapt to a new way of living and working, creating space in our homes to accommodate all the different areas of our daily routines: home schooling, recreation, meetings, connection ... Everything!

Lockdown was hard. Loneliness and isolation never more real - restrictions, confusion, separation and fear. However, as things at home seemed to be slowing down for some, filled with boredom and repetition, for the Health and Social Care sector, crisis mode was escalating. The continual balance of keeping people safe and waging war on an invisible enemy created a conducive environment for chaos to erupt.

There was no roadmap or instruction guide based on past experience of how to deal with the developing pandemic of Covid-19. Our ability to plan and maintain a sense of control were lost. Services had to drop all other priorities or existing work plans, and re-focus on dealing with the next emerging issue that such chaotic systems/situations are notorious for continually throwing out in non-linear and irrational ways. In this situation, relationships between cause and effect are impossible to determine because all the factors associated with the issue, need or problem constantly shift and no manageable patterns can be identified to follow. Therefore, it becomes pointless to try and look for right versus wrong answers. With each development the number of unknowable factors increases, and everybody involved in the fire fight is placed under increasing

pressure to make decisions without the luxury of time that in usual circumstances already feels stretched or pushed, but within this chaotic situation is almost non-existent. A lack of time due to a fast evolving and changing situational environment means that our ability as decision makers to mitigate risk and evaluate what is best, is gone, and instead the decisions we make become a breeding ground for reflection and learning. With so much going on it is hard to hope for anything more than just to survive and leave ourselves enough energy and resources to face the next development and make the next decision.

All of this unknowing and lack of control makes chaotic systems and situations an almost impossible environment for co-production to take place. We have already considered the fact that good co-production takes time, and time is something that isn't available within chaos. However, that doesn't mean we shouldn't continually be on the lookout for those dips in urgency and for opportunities to engage and involve people. As we journey through the crisis our ability and capacity to deal with the chaos increases through a process of continual learning and trial and error, and as a result the classification of the system or situation has the potential to move from chaotic to complex or complicated; the emergence of a new normal.

Equally, what can be established as a foundation for future co-production activity within a period of chaos, is to set up a parallel process and team who have free space for innovation and the task of making sense and reflecting on the situation and the decisions being made in real time. This will also allow them to put things in place to make sure they capture learning as quickly and as accurately as possible, and to identify emerging opportunities that are being thrown out of the chaos that can inform future practices (Dr. Amel Karboul, How to make decisions in such a chaotic situation?). An example of this throughout the Covid-19 pandemic has been the shift to the virtual world and how the idea of hybrid working is set to become part of our everyday lives as we move into post Covid-19 recovery models.

The next section of this report will focus on how inadvertently pockets of innovation and these small parallel teams outside of the main bulk of fire fight evolved across Cwm Taf Morgannwg and how citizen/resident voice continued to be valued and championed within co-production activities throughout this crisis.

“In a crisis you should always deploy an innovation team alongside the business recovery teams...to capture the novel practice” – Dave Snowdon: Founder, Cognitive Edge



Section 2:

**Cwm Taf
Morgannwg
Co-production
in Action**



Discovering a New Normal

As well as placing life on hold in many senses, the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown periods opened the door for a more virtual way of working. Technology became our best friend in a variety of different ways; from assisting scientists and researchers to develop the vaccine, to helping people stay connected to family and friends, our reliance on technology exploded through this time of crisis.

Zoom, Teams, FaceTime, The Portal, social media, emails and so on became our daily life; a lifeline for many and the saviour of those industries who were able to embrace all that those remote working models had to offer, adapt, and in some cases thrive in the most uncertain of economic situations. However, with the good there also came the bad. This increased reliance on technology became an even bigger isolating trap in which some people across our communities lost all connection to the outside world. Digital poverty quickly became a buzz word across the globe, stopping disadvantaged children and young people being able to access education, and highly vulnerable people feeling abandoned, lost, invisible and alone.

Early on, as the Covid-19 pandemic started to erupt across the region, services had no option but to turn their focus to mobilising to fight the frontline battle and the ideas and values of co-production almost became a distant memory. Decisions had to be made instantaneously and therefore there was no capacity to consult, inform and consider lived experiences within the process. If you were in the middle of the fight against covid, it was difficult to see or think about anything else. It was all consuming. For those not on the frontline a different sense of despair also started to develop. A loss of identity and the grieving of what was. Lockdown and restrictions caused many issues of their own, helplessness and hopelessness

rippled through communities. The fear of the unknown. As the initial 3 weeks of lockdown spiralled into 3 months and then into local lockdowns and fire breaks, the isolation trap increased and intensified the inequality gap across our communities.

However, within all the chaos a spark of hope across Cwm Taf Morgannwg also grew. Whilst services were unable to see outside of the covid-19 frontline battle, community organisations and an army of volunteers came forward to fill the void that had been left behind. Food parcels, prescription pick-up's, befriending services and over the fence check in's became a regular occurrence. Fear was on the rise, but so too was community spirit. Drawings and art work started to adorn people's windows, colourful bunting appeared in local streets, and zoom game nights became a force to bring some much-needed cheer. Across the third sector, organisations and charities also mobilised to overcome the wake of digital poverty. They secured funding to buy tablets, laptops and other needed technology; as well as developing self-learning training guides to teach people how to use that technology alongside their own IT support services for people to call and get advice and help, all in a bid to ensure people could stay connected.

Sitting in between the frontline battle of services and the community-led action of organisations and volunteers across the region, the Our Voice Matters project found itself in a unique position. It became a parallel project which could have oversight of both, as well as create a platform for the voices of residents to be heard, valued and where appropriate fed back into frontline services and/or community groups, to help provide context and generate

support and ideas for the next round of decisions to be made. As part of its work during the covid-19 pandemic and lockdown periods, the Our Voice Matters project captured some of the incredible work that was happening across the region, as well as developing some projects of its own, and the following case studies are presented to provide a summary of some of the action and learning that developed.

“I’m missing my family and friends, and not being able to cuddle my grandchildren. I am worried about my elderly mother who is in a care home and who I am unable to visit and it makes me feel useless that I cannot help my daughter with childcare” –

Sandra aged 68

“I think everyone I have spoken to in lockdown, family and friends, people in the shopping queue’s, I think its fair to say that everyone’s mental health has been affected by Covid-19 in some way. Even people without underlying mental health issues have felt the strain.” – **Leanne, Mountain Ash**

“lockdown is boring. I just want to be able to go out and do things like before. I want to play football with my friends”

– **Bradley, Aberfan**

“We’ve really developed a sense of community spirit up here on my street. I never used to know or speak to my neighbours but now we speak all the time and it’s made us feel like we are in this together and that this is a good place to live” – **Stacey, Tonyrefail**

“a support worker has been helping me with my shopping, but through the week if I need something I have gone out myself. I know I’m not suppose to and I should stay at home but I want to keep some independence, especially with going to the bank and looking after my finances” –

Rebecca, Treorchy

“Stay Safe Please” –
Carys, aged 6

“My biggest issue with coronavirus is not being allowed to see my friends and family. I miss them lots because they are my world and I would do anything for them and this makes me sad because whenever I see them out on a walk I can’t give them a big hug!” –

Fearne, aged 10

“Not that much has changed for me during lockdown as I didn’t really leave the house that much before, but I do miss not being able to deliver training courses to the Police and Hospital Staff with People First Bridgend, and not being able to see my family members and help them with the family business” – **Mike, Bridgend**

“This is a crazy time we are living in and it is difficult for a lot of people, especially older people who live alone like me. I have been really lucky that I have good neighbours who have helped me loads and keep me company when I feel lonely, and that my family call me often” –

Jean, Blannlechau

Kindness in Lockdown

Kindness, what does it mean to you?
Is it something of significance, or taken for granted day after day?
What does kindness look like, as many of us struggle to feel okay?

A smile. A wave.

A simple nod of acceptance as we claim,
'We are in this together, so don't hide away'
'I see you, we've got this' as we continue to endure and not stray.

What's that I hear?

The sound of laughter ringing far and near
What does kindness sound like in a world full of fear?

A knock at the door, a call on the phone,
The pings of text messages, emails, and an army of volunteers.

'Just checking in' or 'how are you today'
Conversation fills the air as we continue to clap and cheer.
On a Thursday night at 8pm sharp, thank you key workers,
Thank you, thank you, you are all stars.

Mmmmm.... The smell of freshly baked cakes,
Or a bouquet of fresh flowers,

What does kindness smell like in a time when we can't give handshakes?

Freshly mown grass of a person in shielding,
So that they can enjoy some well-deserved breaks.

Relax, feet up, but let's all stay safe.
A daily wellbeing walk to re-discover nature,
Those places of beauty we often forsake,
Now an essential lifeline in which we can partake.

Wait.... Who is this I see?

Foodbanks, doorstep deliveries, hundreds of food
parcels being given out for free.

What does kindness taste like as we reach for a nice cup of tea?

Barbecue burgers and sausages out in the sun,
Handmade packed lunches delivered effortlessly.

For those who are struggling, isolated and alone,
It tastes like reassurance, comfort and relief
As they didn't need to leave the house to face a shopping spree.

So, as we stay at home and reflect on the government's plea,
Let's think about what kindness feels like for you and for me.

As we look forward to the day we can embrace unity,
A warm hug of a family member we are so desperate to see.

That day is coming, so don't lose all hope.

That day is coming when we can all shout, yippee!

And when that day arrives let us all agree,
That kindness is important and we should make it a priority!



Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Kindness in Lockdown ICF Our Voice Matters Project

As part of its response to COVID -19 and the national lockdown measures impacting citizens across Cwm Taf Morgannwg, the Our Voice Matters project launched its #CTMLockdownVoices campaign to provide a platform for citizens to share their experiences and stories of lockdown in whatever way they felt comfortable.

As a result of COVID-19 and the lockdown period, many co-production activities that involved citizens and people with lived experiences were placed on hold, as service priorities shifted, and decision-making processes changed to accommodate the evolving nature of crisis response. Therefore, the #CTMLockdownVoices campaign aimed to create and maintain the value of citizen voice, using the information offered by citizens to identify emerging trends and areas of concern to feed back into regional decision-making processes and advocate for change to response efforts where needed.

Overwhelmingly the stories and experiences received through the campaign indicated that a number of people across the region were struggling with their mental wellbeing, and that lockdown was proving difficult for many. However, alongside this emerging theme, there were also stories of hope, kindness and a new found sense of community spirit. As a result, the Our Voice Matters project decided to try and develop the positivity of these second set of stories to help combat some of the issues being identified through the first, aiming to cultivate an 'explosion of kindness' across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Linking in with mental health awareness week, the campaign asked citizens across the region to think about kindness using their 5 senses of sight, smell, sound, taste and touch; and citizens responded! All the feedback collected was then analysed by the project to see if there were any common denominators that people were associating with the explosion of kindness that was starting to ripple through communities across the region, resulting in the creation of a co-produced poem titled Kindness in Lockdown.

The poem was also translated into an Easy Read format, and then presented to citizens for comment and approval. Reception of the poem was unanimously positive. Following its approval, the poem was circulated to both statutory and third sector partners across the region to continue the ripple of kindness and spread further hope and joy as the battle to overcome the virus continued. Again, the reaction was overwhelmingly positive and as a result some of the citizens who had been involved in the poems creation suggested that the poem should be brought to life through video.



Following a series of online meetings to establish a steering group of citizens to oversee the video project, a film producer was commissioned, and work began to develop the design/style of the video co-productively. The appointed steering group were given authority to decide and approve all key aspects of the video project from start to finish, including finding solutions to combat social distancing whilst showcasing a range of citizens from across the region. The steering group also identified that because of lockdown restrictions they would be unable to feature as many citizens as they would like and therefore a home footage side project was launched. Filming guidelines were produced and shared with partners across the region to encourage as many people as possible to participate, with the received footage being incorporated into the final video.

The Kindness in Lockdown video was launched as part of the Our Voice Matters project activities for International Day of Friendship and can be viewed on the following links:

Welsh Subtitles: <https://vimeo.com/442671324>

British Sign Language Translation: <https://vimeo.com/444830195>

Initial feedback that led to the creation of the Kindness in Lockdown poem, and subsequent video, along with other data collected through the #CTMLockdownVoices campaign has now been shared with key regional partners to feed into the Regional COVID-19 Impact Assessment and Citizen Priorities Report to ensure that the voice and experiences of citizens are considered as decision-makers start to plan future activities for life with and post COVID-19.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Interest Based Activities
- Social Media Campaigning
- Personal Storytelling
- Easy Read Information
- Citizen led Steering Group

Why is this co-production:

- Equal relationship of trust and respect between a range of citizens from different backgrounds and the Our Voice Matters project
- Empowerment and opportunity creation to give everybody a voice
- Development of individual responsibility and ownership generating a sense of self-worth and purpose
- Viewing citizens as EXPERTS of their lives and valuing their opinions, thoughts and ideas to challenge decision-makers to consider the citizen experience to shape their future thinking
- Creating opportunities for Collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations, and further collaboration between service providers and citizens





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

The Lighthouse Project/Tonyrefail Community Network

Supporting Older People through the covid-19 pandemic

The Lighthouse Project was established in January 2020, just prior to the covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures that swept across the UK. It was originally set up to help people in the community with bereavement support and the ongoing effects of loneliness following the loss of a spouse or loved one. Growing from the founder, Dawn Parkin's garage, The Lighthouse Project was searching for a room from which they could run their activities when they were offered to take on an entire community centre. The team of volunteers, under Dawn's direction and passion, embraced this and have been able to take The Lighthouse Project from strength to strength despite the barriers caused by covid-19, to maximise their impact across the Tonyrefail community.

Through covid-19, the project has supported residents through the kindness of locals and organisations, taking community inspired action and transforming it into a vast network of individuals, organisations and services coming together around a common theme to benefit those in need. The team started its support by visiting older and vulnerable people throughout the community for door step chats, to help people feel like they matter and haven't simply been forgotten. As the covid-19 pandemic worsened and lockdown restrictions lengthened, the project identified through these door step chats that there was a need for food parcel support. The network stepped up to the challenge, working with local food banks and receiving community donations to ensure that nobody went hungry.



As their work and support has increased across the community, the team have been able to build trusted relationships with individuals, and this has resulted in community members being able to share how they are feeling and flagging up other needs and issues they may have. Once needs and issues have been identified, The Lighthouse Project does everything it can to meet these needs, or to signpost to specialist support services within its network so that everybody within the community can thrive. This has included helping individuals to connect and undertake activities online as they have not been able to go out. The team have delivered online cookery competitions, cooking with company sessions, and a Tonyrefail Bake Off.

Through interaction with older people as part of their support activities, Dawn and The Lighthouse Project realised that this initiative was something that wasn't just needed in times of lockdown, shielding and restrictions. For many people covid was no different to their life before as they had regularly had little contact with others and had experienced loneliness and isolation, alongside that feeling of being forgotten. As we move out of lockdown periods and into a covid-19 recovery model, The Lighthouse Project hopes to become a central place for older and vulnerable people to meet, connect, feel valued and enjoy the fullness of life.

Dawn admits that prior to the covid-19 pandemic she was ready to leave Tonyrefail, however after witnessing the grit, determination and community spirit demonstrated by this community and the wider networks The Lighthouse Project has developed, she has simply been blown away and is proud to live there.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Community Visibility
- One-to-One Discussions
- Collaborative Working with Partner Organisations
- Online Activities

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of all involved: Needs Driven Service
- Peer relationship and support network development
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between community members, organisations and services to develop and strengthen networks.
- Ongoing needs identification and consultation to inform future project activities and initiatives.
- Sharing of resources to ensure maximised reach, impact and benefit to citizens.





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Easy Read Covid Information Dissemination

Cwm Taf People First

The covid-19 pandemic has been a difficult and confusing time for many people. For people with a learning disability however, this time has been even harder due to information not being made in accessible formats in a timely manner resulting in them being left behind and feeling lost, surrounded by a cloud of fear and uncertainty.

Cwm Taf People First quickly realised that the lack of Easy Read information for people with a learning disability was causing an issue, and started to respond in a range of innovative ways to meet their members needs. Pre-covid, all of their meetings were held face-to-face, at day and community centres across Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent. As an organisation they had limited I.T. equipment, and knew that to operate effectively through the lockdown periods they would need to find ways to enable their staff to work remotely.

Once staff were digitally connected, the organisation identified a significant barrier for people with a learning disability who were disadvantaged by digital poverty and lacked the digital skills to be able to engage effectively. To overcome these barriers Cwm Taf People First worked tirelessly to speak to their

members via telephone to help them interpret and understand the rapidly changing covid-19 pandemic updates and restrictions. Through these check-in's, members requested that:

- They look for funding to purchase iPads to gift to members as a source of connection via FaceTime, iMessage and Zoom.
- They illustrate and create Easy Read information relating to the covid-19 pandemic updates and restrictions to send to members, electronically and hard copy, to help them understand, as well as reduce confusion, fear and uncertainty.

Following a number of successful funding applications, Cwm Taf People First were able to purchase and gift 100 iPads to people with a learning disability across Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent. To help bridge the digital skills gap, staff worked remotely with connected members to develop training packs and set up I.T. support software. Through the use of these iPads, staff and members learnt how to have multiple caller FaceTime calls to hold weekly meetings that could accommodate up to 50 people. Once at capacity, meetings switched to Zoom, where



Engagement Tools utilised:

- Easy Read Information
- Illustration
- Digital Connectivity
- Consultation
- Focus Groups

people with a learning disability learnt how to lead workshops, training sessions and run a week-long conference. A number of safeguards have been put in place by the organisation to ensure members are safe online.

This digital connectivity also meant that covid related information could be disseminated by the organisations' illustrator and Easy Read team quicker, being sent via iMessage and email as well as being shared on social media. Members and their families reported how helpful this information was, and this work led to further conversations with Public Health Wales about the importance of Easy Read information, and has led to the creation of a regional Health Champions team as a partnership with Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board and the regional Research, Improvement, Innovation Coordination Hub.

“Someone from People First came to my door with an iPad and showed me how to use it. Sometimes I didn't know what to do. Now I do!” – **Daniel**, Cwm Taf People First Member

“Before lockdown I did have a laptop but not the software. Through the project I have now been able to meet new friends online and learn new skills” – **Rebecca**, Chair of the Board of Trustees – Cwm Taf People First

“In lockdown we did lots of meetings we did, that's really good that is” – **Josh**, Cwm Taf People First Member

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of ALL involved: Needs Driven Initiative
- Empowerment through increasing skills and understanding, by providing information in accessible formats so that everyone can be involved
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations, and further collaboration between service providers and citizens: shared learning for service improvement
- Peer relationship and support network development



Cwm Taf People First



Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Scarers and Carers

Young Carers Experiences across Merthyr Tydfil

Barnardo's Merthyr Young Carers Service Stephens and George Charitable Trust ICF medium grant funding via VAMT

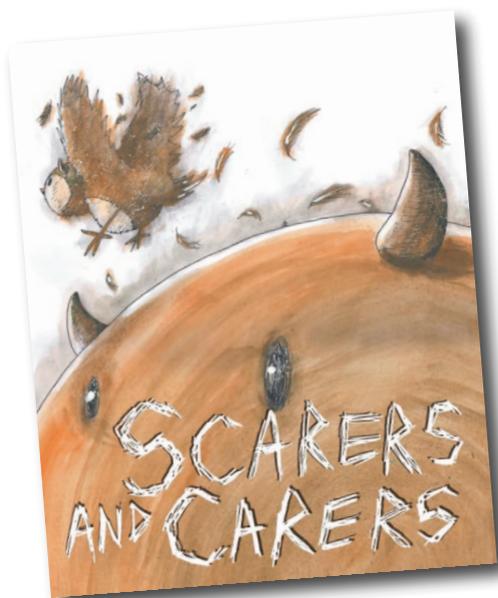
Young carers across Merthyr Tydfil were keen to share their experiences of lockdown, help raise awareness of who young carers are and promote the rights of young carers. To help them do this they created a book called Scarers and Carers.

Scarers and Carers is a partnership project between the Barnardo's Merthyr Young Carer's Service and Stephen's and George Charitable Trust. Following the awarding of Integrated Care Funding medium grant funding via Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil, discussions between the two organisations began to identify a way forward for working with and involving young carers in the project. As part of these discussions and wider work with young carers, the idea to create some sort of document or book regarding their experiences of lockdown was suggested.

The logistics of working with young carers through the covid-19 pandemic has proved to be challenging, however, with the necessary and right support, sessions were able to take place virtually. Through these sessions, eight young carers met regularly as part of this project, and provided representation from across Merthyr Tydfil.

The young carers involved decided that they wanted to use the project as an opportunity to 'tell their story' of how they care, what they do, issues faced and how resilient they are. They also decided that they would like to use illustration as a way to share their stories. To help them do this effectively, the group worked with some storywriters and together they created a story about a young carer named Dora who cares for both her mother and brother. Dora then meets up with Alfie who is astounded that she does so much, and is in awe of how resilient and resourceful she is. The book was titled Scarers and Carers.

The completed book was launched during Carers week, June 2021, and was attended by a number of decision makers including Sally Holland, Children's Commissioner for Wales; Sue Walker, Chief Education Officer; Sarah Crawley, Director of Barnardos; Lisa Mytton, Leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council; and Cerys Gamble, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board's Carer's Coordinator. The book launch was also live streamed to allow many schools, parents and other organisations to also attend.



Engagement Tools utilised:

- Interest Based Activities
- Focus Groups
- Illustration
- Collaborative support from partner organisations

As a result, the confidence and the profile of young carer's was instantly raised. Copies of the Scarers and Carers books are now in all of the schools across Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council area. In addition, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board have purchased a number of copies of the book and has placed these in their hospitals. Schools and pupils are now more aware of the role of young carers, as are other organisations.

The young carers, as authors of the book, were invited to attend the Hay Winter Book Festival, 2021, Hay Summer Book Festival, 2022 and have been awarded the High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan award. The group have also won the 'Digital Project of the year' Active Citizen Award from the Merthyr Tydfil Academy of success awards 2021.

"I liked everything about the book. When I was bored it gave me something to do and something to look forward too. It was weird seeing the book for the first time because it was not done by an adult" – **young carer**

"It was fun, and really good giving ideas and hearing others ideas. It was great! I was surprised that the book was so good. The best part is about seeing a kid caring...it's a fact!" – **young carer**

"His confidence has increased immensely, he has shocked everyone" – **parent of a young carer**

Why is this co-production:

- Empowerment and opportunity creation based on identified need and experience
- Working in the best interests of ALL involved
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations, and further collaboration between service providers and young carers.
- Co-creation and co-design of the final product, providing a sense of ownership and developing future responsibilities
- Peer relationship and support network development





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Re-purposing of Glanrhyd Church

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board Research, Improvement and Innovation Coordination Hub

Through its commitment to The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTMUHB) have been actively working with the regional Research, Improvement and Innovation Coordination Hub (RIIC hub) and local community members to think about opportunities to take innovative approaches to create positive long-term impact for the benefit of the local population, patients and staff.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales), 2015 has provided organisations and services ambition, permission and legal obligation to improve social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing locally. As a response, the vision for the Glanrhyd church site is to provide a space that will better wellbeing, celebrate site heritage, improve future engagement with our communities and be an example of an energy efficient building.

Glanrhyd Hospital is a mental health hospital in Pen-y-fai near Bridgend and is managed by CTMUHB. In the centre of the hospital is a former church that has very limited use for religious purposes, and is in a poor and deteriorating state. The existing church building has been identified as a heritage opportunity that has the potential for re-purposing in a number of different ways. Early discussions regarding this re-purposing indicated that there was a need to bring together a variety of stakeholders to formally discuss, agree and plan how the site could be best used to meet the needs of all involved in the most effective way.

The regional RIIC hub were brought into the project to help coordinate this process due to its track record of securing funding and accessing support to drive projects forward, using a co-productive approach that involves a range of stakeholders to develop sustainable service design and delivery models.

As the start of a longer-term co-produced plan, the RIIC hub developed a work package of community engagement activities. This included facilitating both community and partner focus groups in order to evaluate local needs as well as ideas for the space. The local community and residents of the village were actively involved in this work, as well as community mental health services, the health boards chaplaincy team, organisations who offer services and support to carers, and existing patients and staff of Glanrhyd Hospital, to provide a rich picture of needs and wants from a variety of perspectives. Social media was also used to widen engagement and allow more people to be involved in the process. All engagement activities centred around the following 4 questions/points to consider:

- What community facility would you like to see at Glanrhyd Church?
- Why is having a community place important to you?
- How involved would you like to be in the decision making and development of the project?
- Is there anything you would like to share which you haven't had the opportunity to so far?



Information, ideas, solutions and concerns gathered through these engagement activities was then fed into research partners from the Welsh School of Architecture to develop a building plan that both meets the needs of those engaged, as well as site specifications in relation to faith, heritage and Government targets for sustainability and the environment.

As the project progresses, consideration has been given to ensuring that those engaged receive feedback and further opportunities to be meaningfully involved in the development of detailed design specifications, including ideas for interior design and future use to increase community and partner engagement.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Interest Based Activities
- Consultation
- Focus Groups
- Social Media Interaction
- Collaborative support from partner organisations

Why is this co-production:

- Empowerment and opportunity creation based on identified need and citizen feedback and response
- Working in the best interests of ALL involved: Needs Driven Initiative
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations, and further collaboration between service providers and citizens.
- Co-design and co-decision making between all stakeholders to develop a repurposing and building plan to help ensure buy-in and the long-term sustainability of the site





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Hear Our Voice in Lockdown: Online Conversations

ICF Learning Disabilities and Parents and Carers

As both statutory and third sector services and organisations across the social care sector in Cwm Taf Morgannwg diversified their priorities as part of the COVID-19 response effort, many co-production activities were placed on hold, as decision makers focused on crisis management strategies to stop the spread of the virus and keep citizens safe across the region.

However, as lockdown measures became part of daily life, and the creation of a new normal started to emerge, it became apparent that conversations with citizens were crucial in understanding how the needs of people with lived experiences had changed as a result of COVID-19 and how these experiences and needs could shape the future planning of longer-term service delivery. In addition, a mechanism for service providers and decision makers to effectively communicate their plans to citizens was needed. Therefore, with the support of the Our Voice Matters project, Cwm Taf People First, RCT People First, People First Bridgend and The Grapevine, started to design a suitable virtual platform for critical conversations to take place with relevant local authority departments and service provider representatives.

To ensure that people with a learning disability and parents and carers were fully equipped to participate in these conversations, the support organisations with the Our Voice Matters project delivered a range of training sessions and pre-conversation meetings to help increase both the technology and self-advocacy skills of those wishing to contribute. This also helped to focus the conversations and keep people on track to deal with one theme at a time.

During these pre-engagement activities, it was identified that the Zoom platform was the platform of choice for people with learning disabilities, and therefore was adopted as the communication tool to host the Hear Our Voice in Lockdown online conversation series.

The first formal online conversation to take place under the Hear Our Voice in Lockdown series was held on the 18th June 2020 as part of learning disability week as an opportunity for people with a learning disability and parents and carers to come together and share their experience pre lockdown and during lockdown with a range of service providers and decision makers. Audience members for this first virtual event came from all over the UK, and the conversations that developed highlighted the unique resilience people with a learning disability had for dealing with periods of isolation and finding creative ways to stay connected.

Although this first virtual conversation was considered a success, key learning came from it that allowed the Hear Our Voice in Lockdown series to improve its effectiveness and increase the representation of conversation contributors.

**Learning Disabilities
The 'New Normal':
Daytime Opportunities**

OUR VOICE MATTERS

**Thursday 29th October 2020
11am-12:30pm**

A virtual conversation will take place between people with a learning disability and service providers to discuss the ongoing plans for the re-opening and re-engagement of daytime opportunities across RCT and Merthyr.

Based on recent developments regarding local lockdown restrictions and the rise of coronavirus cases in both local authority areas, people with a learning disability would like to discuss:

1. What current provisions are in place for people to attend day centre services and other daytime opportunities including work and volunteer placements
2. What provision and support is in place for those living in supported and independent living accommodation to re-engage in daytime opportunities
3. What are the long-term plans for day centre services and wider daytime opportunities in a post-covid climate

Registration will be via Eventbrite ticket:
[CLICK HERE](#)

PEOPLE FIRST LIMITED Rhondda Cynon Taf Cwm Taf People First

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Pre-engagement/Empowerment Activities
- Citizen led agenda setting
- Personal storytelling
- Co-evaluation of process
- Collaborative support from partner organisations

Why is this co-production:

- Empowerment and opportunity creation to give everybody a voice
- Development of individual responsibility and ownership generating a sense of self-worth and purpose
- Working in the best interests of ALL involved: Needs Driven Initiative
- Viewing people with a learning disability and parents and carers as EXPERTS of their lives and valuing their opinions, thoughts and ideas to challenge decision-makers to consider citizen experience to shape their future thinking
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations, and further collaboration between service providers and citizens.
- Ongoing and continuous cycle of evaluation that informs the future development of the project and learns from its mistakes.

Ongoing co-evaluation of the process has played a critical role in making sure that conversations are inclusive, accessible (albeit virtual) and valued by all who attend, allowing people with lived experiences to work as equal partners with decision makers and service providers to set the agenda and co-deliver opportunities for discussion and collaboration. As a result, the Hear Our Voice in Lockdown series has held a number of further online conversations looking at plans across the three local authority areas for the re-opening of day centre services; guidelines surrounding extended household 'bubbles' for people who live in supported and independent living accommodation; the importance of friendships and peer support both in and out of lockdown; and an essential review of the Social Services Learning Disability Team across Rhondda Cynon Taf. These conversations have ensured that the voice of people with lived experiences are at the heart of the future planning and priorities of social care services for people with a learning disability and their parents and carers across the region.

Information gathered from these virtual conversations has been analysed and the collective findings, along with specific quotes from people with lived experiences has now been shared with key regional partners to feed into the Regional COVID-19 Impact Assessment and Citizen Priorities Reports 2020 and 2021.

"I really think my voice was heard because they all listened to me and everyone was asking questions, and everyone was nodding" **Session Panellist** – Showing Resilience Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

"Having breakout sessions meant we were able to hear from a wide range of individuals about their experiences. Being able to ask questions was also really valuable" **Session Attendee** – Showing Resilience Through the COVID-19 Pandemic





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

VAMT and Merthyr Valleys Homes Wellbeing and Activity Packs

ICF Older People and Children and Young People

As lockdown intensified across the country, Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) and Merthyr Valleys Homes workers based at Calon Las Community Hub become increasingly concerned about the potential impact loneliness due to COVID-19 and the lockdown restrictions was having on community members across the Gurnos and wider Merthyr Tydfil community. As a result they decided that they would like to do something positive for older vulnerable people who may be isolated at home.

Following the identification of ICF small grant COVID-19 response funding, VAMT alongside partners from Merthyr Valleys Homes (MVH) and the Merthyr Valleys Homes Youth Project (formally known as 3G's Youth Project) came together to develop a bid to tackle these areas of concern, helping to combat loneliness and isolation during lockdown and increase the mental wellbeing of those they planned to engage through the delivery of stimulating wellbeing activity packs. The project was successful in securing the grant funding bringing £1000 response funding to the Gurnos area of Merthyr Tydfil.

The project partners then reached out to other local community groups working with older people to share the project idea, generate input and identify those who may benefit from the receipt of a wellbeing activity pack. Delivery of the packs also gave opportunity for 1:1 conversations to take place with

recipients and to enquire if any further help was needed, allowing for wider signposting and collaboration opportunities.

A total of 106 packs were issued across the Gurnos area and all were gratefully received, with recipients indicating that they invoked a sense of connectedness at a time when there was a lot of fear and uncertainty within the community due to COVID-19, as individuals felt that someone was looking out for them and their wider needs. Each of the packs also contained a lot of local and national information relating to COVID-19 and in particular where else individuals could obtain ongoing support.

This model of support proved extremely successful and as a result was taken on and expanded further by Ryan Bevan the Loneliness and Isolation Officer at VAMT and replicated for other groups and individuals across Rhondda Cynon Taf. *“I wanted to use the wellbeing and mindfulness packs to target and engage with community members who were extremely lonely and isolated. By this I mean that they do not have access to any online resources, IT equipment or smartphone, and therefore the packs were used to ease the burden and isolation COVID-19 had caused”* – **Ryan Bevan**, Loneliness and Isolation Officer

Similarly, some of the funding sourced for the packs was also allocated to target children and young people who were also socially isolated from their peers during lockdown. When considering the packs for this age group, the project partners decided that a ‘snack pack’ and ‘hygiene pack’ would be more beneficial, especially since children under 16 years were discouraged from going to local shops. Providing these snack packs gave the young people who received them something to look forward to and enjoy, but also promoted a healthy routine in terms of hygiene and eating habits. Additionally, these packs lightened the burden being faced by parents, especially those who would have usually benefited from the free school meals scheme. Through the lockdown period the project was able to issue 53 snack packs and 53 hygiene packs.

As lockdown measures eased through the summer of 2020, the project identified that there was a continued need to help children and young people as they prepared to return to school. As a result, the project also created some Back to School packs to help recipients both mentally and physically prepare to go back to school.

“Working in partnership with other organisations and community projects has really benefitted all involved. We have been able to work together and identify families, young people and community members who were in need at that time and work together to meet that need. As a team it provided us with an opportunity to be out in the community safely and check-in with the young people and also their parents. While delivering the packs we were able to establish what other support we could provide but also signpost to other support initiatives that were being delivered across the community” – **Sarah Williams**, Senior Youth Workers, MVH Youth

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Community Visibility
- One-to-one Discussions
- Collaborative Working with Partner Organisations

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of all involved: Needs Driven Service
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different third sector organisations to provide holistic support through collaboration and signposting.
- Sharing of resources to ensure maximised reach, impact and benefit to citizens.
- Ongoing citizen needs identification and consultation to inform future project developments.
- Replication of a working model of support to reach other citizens in different locations, with adaptations to specific areas of need.





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Arts Factory

Emergency Food Parcels and Support

As lockdown measures took hold across the country, Arts Factory identified a need for emergency food parcel support for vulnerable individuals and families across the local community.

As a result, they were able to secure both a small and medium COVID-19 response grant from InterLink to be able to combat food poverty issues for those who fell outside of traditional foodbank criteria.

Upon receipt of funds, Arts Factory entered into an agreement with Fareshare Cymru and initially purchased enough food to make up 12 food parcels per week. However, it was quickly identified that there was a high level of need across the Rhondda area and therefore the project doubled its capacity to provide 24 emergency parcels weekly, with a total of 284 parcels being delivered over the April-July 2020 lockdown period. Through collaboration with Canolfan Pentre, the project was able to serve both the Rhondda Fach and Fawr areas, and working together allowed both projects to share knowledge, contacts and resources more effectively so that the number of beneficiaries could be maximised. Working with Canolfan Pentre also meant that beneficiaries could receive activity packs as well as food parcels, ensuring that both their mental and physical wellbeing was being taken care of.

The collaboration work of the project extended to other organisations also as the project identified that many of those receiving food parcels had a lot of other needs and issues, and therefore Arts Factory wanted to ensure that community members had access to a wraparound service where they could receive the right support and make connections to combat the loneliness and isolation many felt during lockdown. Partner organisations included Age Connect Morgannwg, Reconnect 50+, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Rhondda Counselling Services, Supporting People, Rhondda Community Mental Health Team, Manage Money Wales, Rhondda FoodBank and the local Community Hubs. In addition, Arts Factory staff listened to the needs and experiences of the people they interacted with through their emergency food parcel delivery service and decided to develop weekly Zoom mental health awareness sessions to raise spirits and give them something to do whilst gaining skills to look after themselves better during the pandemic, and to reduce potential long-term dependency on the project after lockdown.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Community Visibility
- Skills Development Opportunities
- One-to-one Discussions
- Collaborative Working with Partner Organisations

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of all involved: Needs Driven Service
- Development of individual responsibility and ownership generating a sense of self-worth and purpose
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations to provide holistic 'wraparound' support.
- Sharing of resources to ensure maximised reach, impact and benefit to citizens.
- Ongoing citizen needs identification and consultation to inform future project developments.

The project has had some very positive feedback from community members, and this has increased Arts Factory's profile in the community as a source of support moving forward. Through its community interaction, the project was able to identify that one of the biggest issues affecting individuals and families across the Rhondda area during lockdown was increased financial pressures due to greater food and utilities usage/costs whilst at home. The project was able to support families whose children would normally receive free school meals, and who would have been out of the house all day. These families found that their gas, electric and food bills were a lot higher than usual and therefore struggled on tight budgets to be able to look after themselves sufficiently during the lockdown period.

"I was struggling during lockdown so I contacted Arts Factory and they referred me to Age Connects Morgannwg who called me every week to see how I was doing. Arts Factory also called me every few weeks and it was nice to know that somebody cared"

"The parcels helped as I had to self-isolate for 14days and was unable to get for food"

"I was helped with a parcel when I really needed it, so once my money was back in place I donated some food so that Arts Factory could help others"

Following the success of the project and the identification of ongoing need for a low-cost food parcel scheme across the Rhondda area, Arts Factory are now looking into the possibility of creating a self-funded initiative where low cost food parcels can be made available to the community. So far, consultation with community members regarding the development of this scheme has been very positive.





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response Series

Learning Disability Health Champions

Cwm Taf People First
 People First Bridgend
 Swansea Bay University Health Board
 Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Research, Improvement and Innovation Coordination Hub

Recent research indicates that people with a learning disability are more likely to experience health inequalities.

As a result, they are at a higher risk of premature and preventable death, with the life expectancy of a person with a learning disability being 20 years younger than a person without a learning disability. Research further indicates that institutional discrimination towards people with a learning disability exists and that they are likely to be treated unfairly in all parts of the health care service. *Confidential Enquiry into Premature Deaths of People with a Learning Disability, Mencap's Treat Me Right Report, and Mencap's Death by Indifference Report

In light of these research findings and working with guidance from Public Health Wales, Cwm Taf People First were approached by Swansea Bay University Health Board Learning Disability Services to undertake a co-produced piece of work to address these issues. Swansea Bay University Health Board supply Learning Disability Health Services to Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, and this piece of work was localised

to the Cwm Taf area. Through Cwm Taf People First focus groups, people with a learning disability were asked if they would like to participate in this project. They were also consulted about the things that were important to them in relation to their health, as well as being asked to share their personal experiences and previous interactions with health care services. Following their input, the Health Champions project was developed as a way for people with a learning disability and health care services to work together to create positive changes that address health inequalities.

Due to its dynamic and innovative nature, the Health Champions also gained hands-on weekly facilitative support from the regional Research, Improvement and Innovation Coordination Hub. The full Health Champions team then met regularly to identify the needs and priorities for the project to work on. Cwm Taf People First coordinated dates and times to suit everyone who wanted to be involved and zoom was chosen as

the preferred virtual platform as it was identified by people with a learning disability as the most accessible for them. Topics they discussed included:

- What does being healthy mean
- Mental capacity
- Discrimination and unfair treatment
- Communication
- Reasonable adjustments

Following these discussions, it was agreed that the first co-designed action for the team would be to work with Primary Care Health Services (GP Surgeries) across the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area to highlight the importance of annual health checks in improving the lives of people with a learning disability. Annual health checks ensure that any health issues are identified quickly and help reduce health inequalities that may be present or experienced by a person with a learning disability. An accessible training pack was then created using the input and experience of all Health Champions team members, aiming to increase the number of people with a learning disability receiving a full health check annually. This training pack will be delivered as part of the projects second phase of activities which will also include working with the specialist learning disability nurses based in 3 hospitals across the region to identify ways to reduce health inequalities in hospitals and secondary care health services. People First Bridgend have now been invited to join the project team as part of its second phase to ensure regional representation and implementation is achieved.

“It is important that we train GP’s so we can have a say and tell them our stories” **Joel**, Cwm Taf People First

“GP’s should be checking everything is ok! Having an annual health check can stop people being ill and sick” **Darren**, Cwm Taf People First

“The Regional Partnership Board RIIC Hub was pleased to support the excellent work of Cwm Taf People First and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board enabling the voice of those with a learning disability to be heard at our surgeries in Cwm Taf Morgannwg. Please get in touch if you would like to be part of this movement” **Joanne Sullivan**, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Research, Improvement and Innovation Coordination Hub

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Consultation
- Focus Groups
- Listening project
- Collaborative Working with Partner Organisations
- Accessible information using Easy Read

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of all involved: Needs Driven Service
- Drawing on the strengths of all team members
- Development of individual responsibility and ownership, generating a sense of self-worth, purpose and the ability to create positive change
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between people with a learning disability and different statutory and third sector organisations to make positive sustainable change.
- Sharing of resources to ensure maximised reach, impact and benefit to all.
- Ongoing needs identification and consultation to inform future project developments.



People First Bridgend
Pobl Yn Gyntaf Pen-Y-Bont



putting people first
rhoi pobl yn gyntaf



Cwm Taf People First



Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

VAMT

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and other local partners

Shielding Support, Older and Vulnerable People

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) Community Coordinator repurposed their work to facilitate the necessary community response to meet the needs of communities, citizens and partner organisations across Merthyr Tydfil.

At the beginning of the lockdown restrictions imposed by the government, a number of community members received letters from the Chief Medical Officer for Wales advising them to shield thereby increasing their level of social isolation and potential loneliness. Shielding requirements also meant that these community members could potentially experience difficulties in obtaining essential items such as food and medicine, and therefore a coordinated response was needed to ensure that all of their immediate and ongoing needs were met through this time. The VAMT Community Coordinator played a critical role in facilitating Borough-wide community-based emergency support for these individuals, developing a holistic model of support that was accepted and implemented by all key partners, including Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC).

MTCBC initiated the model of support by reaching out to those community members who had been advised to shield to establish their individual needs. They were also able to offer access to the Welsh Government emergency food box scheme. Wider identified needs would then be passed to the VAMT Community Coordinator to establish an appropriate third sector response. This included shopping, prescription collection, and telephone befriending services, building on the strength of professional relationships within the third sector to develop a new way of working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Community Visibility
- One-to-one Discussions
- Collaborative Working with Partner Organisations

“As Covid-19 hit the community of Merthyr Tydfil, the Stephen’s and George Charitable Trust were contacted by the Community Coordinator in VAMT. Every day we would receive an email containing a concise list of clients contact details that required a food parcel as they were shielding. The list was always accurate and detailed. The community members knew we were going to call and support them...Together we impacted households across Merthyr Tydfil and this work started a catalyst of support and local councillors got involved to deliver parcels to the people who were shielding in their areas.” – **Helen Hughes** (Stephens & George Charitable Trust)

In April 2020 during the initial lockdown period, an additional 74 referrals were made through this collaborative model of support for people who were shielding.

“Thanks for sending me out a food parcel, I was very worried about what I was going to do as I didn’t have anyone to help me. The young man who delivered it brought is right to my front door. It’s nice to see that there are people out there helping us”

“Thank you for picking up mine and my wife’s prescription. We don’t have any family near us, and I was worried about going to collect it myself since we had a letter telling us we needed to shield. We’ve been ok with shopping because we managed to get an online delivery.”

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of all involved: Needs Driven Service
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different third sector organisations to provide holistic support through collaboration and signposting.
- Sharing of resources to ensure maximised reach, impact and benefit to citizens.
- Ongoing citizen needs identification and consultation to inform future project developments.
- Replication of a working model of support to reach other citizens in different locations, with adaptations to specific areas of need.



VOLUNTARY ACTION
MERTHYR TYDFIL
GWEITHREDU GWIRFODDOL
MERTHYR TYDFUL



MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TYDFUL



Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Development of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board Website

Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board Partner Organisations and Citizens across the region

Continuous Engagement Fund

The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership Board (CTMRPB) brings together health, local authorities, education, housing, third sector and private partners to improve the wellbeing of the population and how health and care services are delivered across the region.

The CTMRPB has a number of priority groups that it aims to work with as highlighted within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, 2014. These priority groups include: people with a learning disability; people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments; unpaid carers; people who access mental health support services; people with autism spectrum disorder; older people and those living with dementia; and children and young people with complex needs. CTMRPB partners work together to look at how services and support can be accelerated and improved for these groups, so that they can access better wellbeing and health outcomes.

To help CTMRPB partners achieve this, it is important that the needs and experiences of people within each of these priority groups are genuinely heard and actioned appropriately; and that they have meaningful opportunities to be informed and involved in this work.

To help ensure that individuals and community groups are able to participate in the work of the CTMRPB, it was agreed that a new website and brand needed to be created with support and guidance from both community members and partners. To do this, over 22 organisations supporting members of the priority groups were invited to take part in a series of co-design workshops. These workshops were held virtually due to the covid-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions. Feedback and findings from these workshops were then used to create an engagement model for community members to be involved.

In November-December 2020, 100 people who represented the priority groups from across the region were invited to take part in a series of virtual workshops to help shape the new CTMRPB vision, future brand, and communication plan. Engagement data collected from those who attended has helped the CTMRPB to develop its new website as a platform for information sharing, active participation and storytelling, upon which community members can input, raise questions and concerns, and have their voices heard. Specific feedback incorporated into this design included:

- Lots of imagery and films that include words and people from the communities the CTMRPB serves
- British Sign Language translation on all of their films
- Easy Read documents to download
- Accessible and simple language that brings to life the words spoken by the priority groups
- A range of options on how to receive communication from the CTMRPB via the contact page
- A useful documents area where people visiting the site can see how decisions are made; including reports
- An 'Our People Page' so that community members and organisations know who sits on the CTMRPB

The website also includes an accessibility software tool called 'Recite Me', so that individuals using the website can customise it in a way that works best for them.

Following its launch, and to support the ongoing development of the CTMRPB website, regional research was commissioned with a range of partners looking into the specific communication and engagement barriers of individuals within each of the priority groups. Recommendations from this research has helped inform the development of a Regional Involvement Pathway, and meaningful community led involvement in the CTMRPB Population Needs Assessment which is due to be published in Spring 2022.

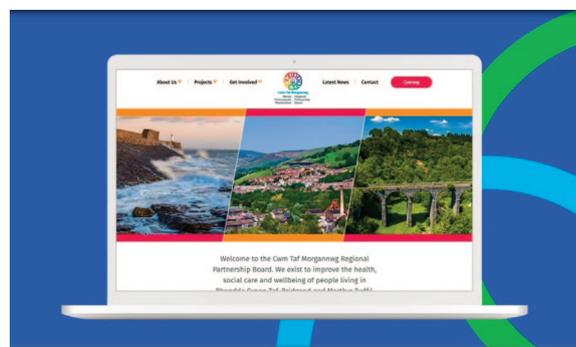
“with the Population Needs Assessment coming up, it’s so important people living in our region have a way of being involved and informed with the work we are doing. Our research and workshops identified some communication barriers that we must address” – Rebecca Goodhand, Communication and Engagement Officer, CTMRPB

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Consultation
- Focus Groups/workshops
- Social Media Interaction
- Collaborative support from partner organisations

Why is this co-production:

- Empowerment and opportunity creation based on identified need and citizen feedback and response
- Working in the best interests of ALL involved: Needs Driven Initiative
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between different statutory and third sector organisations, and further collaboration between service providers and citizens.
- Co-design and co-decision making between all stakeholders to develop a platform that was accessible, meaningful and fit for purpose





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

My Day My Way: Daytime Opportunities for People with a Learning Disability

Cwm Taf People First
People First Bridgend

Community Foundation Wales

The My Day My Way project was created to challenge services to provide more diverse, person-centred and meaningful daytime opportunities by empowering people with a learning disability to be fully involved in decisions about what they do in the day; included in the wider and ongoing evaluation of current opportunities available; and have their voices heard and experiences considered in the planning and design of new opportunities across Cwm Taf Morgannwg.

Traditional models of social care and day centre services have often become a destination or holding place rather than a mechanism for growth and development, resulting in people with a learning disability not enjoying the fullness of a good and quality life that they deserve. As the covid-19 pandemic appeared, closure of day centre services and other daytime opportunities for people with a learning disability provided a vital time of reflection to establish whether or not the previous offer of day services was fit for purpose, effective and sufficient.

Following multiple conversations with people with a learning disability throughout the lockdown periods, Cwm Taf People First and People First Bridgend established that many people were unhappy with their previous daytime

opportunity offer and would like a chance to try something new and meet new people. As a way to help people with a learning disability express their views surrounding the topic, and to develop a platform for the future co-design of daytime opportunity services, the My Day My Way project was created.

As part of its co-productive approach, the My Day My Way project recognised that people with a learning disability were experts by experience, and therefore a fundamental ingredient of achieving the projects vision. To ensure their voice was at the centre of the project, a number of Project Explorer paid posts were made available, resulting in 2 people with a learning disability gaining regular paid employment, and 3 people with a learning disability becoming sessional workers. To ensure success in these roles, a detailed support plan was built to help the workers harness their existing skills and develop new ones. Project Explorers co-designed with a range of professionals a variety of engagement tools to allow people with a learning disability to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a way that suits them.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Easy Read Questionnaire
- Peer Led Interviews
- Storytelling and Illustration
- Listening Project



Information collected was then co-analysed with Project Explorers to identify themes and created recommendations to give to local authorities and service providers to help design future daytime opportunities offers within covid-19 recovery planning. This has been well received by the local authorities across Cwm Taf Morgannwg who are now identifying opportunities to use the findings of the My Day My Way project phase 1 and engage with the My Day My Way project phase 2 to assist in areas of service improvement.

“I enjoy doing my job with People First and I have been good at meeting new people” – Bradley, Project Explorer: My Day My Way

“Working on the My Day My Way project I have been good at learning new things and knowing rights, but I need to get better at keeping to time and I need more practice on zoom” – Darren, Project Explorer: My Day My Way

“My Day My Way has given us an opportunity to find out what people really want and what makes a good day for them. We have also been able to let providers of services know what people’s wants, needs, and dreams are for the future, allowing us to get off the wheel of fitting people into boxes they don’t want to be in or don’t meet their needs and instead co-producing a more effective future where people can thrive” – Dawn Price, Operations Manager, Cwm Taf People First

Why is this co-production:

- Working in the best interests of all involved: Needs Driven Service
- Building on the strengths of all team members
- Peer relationship and support network development
- Creating opportunities for collaboration between people with a learning disability and different statutory and third sector organisations, developing and strengthening networks.
- Ongoing needs identification and consultation to inform future service developments.





Co-Production in Action: COVID Response series

Cambrian Village Trust: Be Active Clydach Vale Healthy & Active Fund

Walking is a great way to promote a healthy lifestyle, increase physical and mental wellbeing and explore the local outdoor spaces within a community, local authority area or region.

At the height of lockdown measures as a result of COVID-19, walking and outdoor exercise became a lifeline for many individuals as a mechanism for maintaining positive mental wellbeing during a time of global crisis. Recognising the need to promote the importance of local outdoor activity during lockdown, partner organisations from InterLink, RHA, Active Nutrition, Ynysybwll Regeneration Partnership, Spectacle Theatre and Volunteers Matter, worked alongside Cambrian Village Trust to develop creative ways to engage individuals and promote opportunities for them to Be Active.

Social media became a crucial tool in actively engaging individuals and through this platform, Cambrian Village Trust was able to set up a virtual walking group called Making Tracks. The project allowed individuals to post videos, photos and stories from their exploration of different routes around Rhondda Cynon Taf to a Facebook group which encouraged others to discover the beauty of nature within their local community. To increase engagement, Cambrian Village Trust would also post videos, create challenges and run competitions based on previous participant feedback and to inspire individuals to push themselves further. A moment to step away from the negativity surrounding COVID-19 and lockdown and instead switch focus to achieve something positive.

As lockdown measures began to ease over the summer months, Cambrian Village Trust developed their Mini Explorers project to support families to undertake positive outdoor activity and learn new skills together. With full social distancing and COVID prevention methods in place, the project was able to offer family bushcraft sessions in a local Countryside Park. This gave families the opportunity to come together and learn how to construct a shelter, collect and chop wood, build a fire and toast marshmallows. Families were also then able to learn about the different birds and animals that live in the park to help generate an eagerness to want to connect with and discover nature more.

Through their outdoor based activities, Cambrian Village Trust has also been able to develop a new partnership with Friends of Cwm Clydach Countryside Park, a volunteer-based group set up to look after and maintain Cwm Clydach Countryside Park. This new partnership has allowed volunteers through the Friends of Cwm Clydach Countryside Park group to access free outdoor activities such as canoeing, archery and bushcraft skills. The volunteers have responded really well to the development of this partnership and have said that it gives them a reason to get up in the morning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the manual labour and the outdoor activities they are able to engage in has been beneficial for both their physical and mental health.



As World Mental Health Day approaches, Cambrian Village Trust, alongside their partner organisations are launching their March a Mile for Mental Health challenge to help further raise awareness of mental health issues, and how being active in your local outdoor environment can help you improve and maintain your personal mental wellbeing.

Through the Be Active project, partner organisations have developed a range of virtual activities than can be undertaken both indoors and outdoors and these have included (but is not limited to) sing-a-long sessions, healthy cooking masterclasses, dance workouts, online drama sessions, walk and talk sessions, creative writing and storytelling, as mechanisms for citizen engagement, wellbeing promotion and welfare monitoring through lockdown periods.

Engagement Tools utilised:

- Interest Based Activities
- Social Media Interaction
- Personal Storytelling
- Skills Development Opportunities
- Organisation Partnership Development

Why is this co-production:

- Development of individual responsibility and ownership generating a sense of self-worth and purpose
- Developing partnerships to broaden the reach and scope of opportunities for citizens to engage
- Project creation based on identified need and citizen feedback and response



Section 3:

Using What We Have Learnt to Influence the Future



Summary of Observations

The action taken in response to the covid-19 pandemic across Cwm Taf Morgannwg is something that as a region we should be proud of. Many services, organisations, communities and individuals have stepped up to the mark to ensure that together we find a way through the chaos of the global pandemic, and come out the other side stronger and better.

The challenge now is for us to not waste the lessons learnt through this process and simply return to the pre-covid normal, as in many cases, the covid-19 pandemic has provided us with an interesting opportunity to both identify and reflect on some of the shortcomings and missed opportunities of previous service delivery models, through organic co-evaluation methods.

Some of the common themes identified through the case studies that have been presented as well as wider work that has been conducted over the last 18 months are as follows:

- A sense of shared responsibility. Citizens and community members have recognised the strain that has been placed on Health and Social Care services as a result of the covid-19 pandemic and have been, where appropriate, willing to stand in the gap and alleviate some of the burden. Community and organisational initiatives to combat loneliness, isolation and ensuing associated mental health issues have risen, using innovative engagement methods to operate within imposed restrictions and maximise reach and impact. This has also allowed community members to become agents of change in their communities by giving the needed space and opportunity for them to try new things and identify meaningful activities to engage in, that has allowed them to build new skills and transfer existing skills into new spaces and contexts.
- Limiting movement due to lockdown restrictions has allowed many to embrace their local community, good and bad, and to play an active role in making it a better place and somewhere to be proud of. As a result, a renewed sense of community spirit and the ‘all in this together’ mentality has rippled through the region harnessed by those ideals of kindness and helping our neighbours. Through wider engagement and research over this period, many residents across communities within Cwm Taf Morgannwg have also indicated how the reduction of traffic has made their communities and in particular, their local green spaces, safer to access and how investing in their local environment, whether their own garden or a community space has been extremely beneficial to their mental wellbeing.



- The importance of accessible communication has played a crucial role in the success of overcoming the associated issues of the covid-19 pandemic and reaching and engaging previously labelled 'hard to reach' groups and instead generating an understanding that these are 'need to reach' groups and that being flexible in our communication styles enables them to be involved. Within this, digital communication and doing things online, has become a critical tool. Identification of issues surrounding digital poverty for vulnerable groups followed by a wave of determination to reduce this gap by third sector organisations and services has opened up conversations with groups and individuals who had never been engaged within the regional discussion previously, providing fresh experiences and perspectives that can be used in many problem solving and idea generating activities to improve services as part of covid-19 recovery models.
- Virtual working has not only supplied an access route to some need to reach groups but has also provided time and space for professionals working within our regional services to also engage in wider regional discussions, lending themselves more willingly to co-production processes. The covid-19 pandemic has allowed for connections between professionals to happen almost instantaneously and has seen some interesting partnerships developed between organisations and services, creating a more collaborative environment linked by common themes and sharing limited resources. These partnerships have then been able to reach out to individuals and groups across our communities and to add a richness to existing and ongoing work plans as well as creating new ones by embracing elements of co-production and laying a foundation for future, more innovative, ways of working.
- Not only have we seen the development and strengthening of professional networks across the region, but there has also been capacity for peer support networks to emerge. Virtual connection and engagement models has allowed individuals

with a similar life experience, such as being an unpaid carer, or having a learning disability to connect outside of physical geographical location, and develop support networks around specific issues linked to their lived experience, sharing learning and coping strategies. The strength of these peer support networks have demonstrated and have future potential to reduce pressure on services moving forward.

It is evident that citizen voice and lived experience is an important tool in developing a sustainable covid-19 recovery model and development of a new and better normal. As chaos starts to disburse and our ability and capacity to function within the new normal increases, we need to be vigilant to identify opportunities of complexity that could truly benefit from co-productive design and delivery models. Allowing for the emergence of a pool of diverse expertise that have the freedom and flexibility to experiment, explore, adapt and grow to find not only realistic, but sustainable solutions for improving our Health and Social Care services across Cwm Taf Morgannwg. The starting point for this improvement needs to be the lessons that we have learnt from a collective of individual experiences through the covid-19 pandemic, as a catalyst to inspire action and change.

For this to be effective, three things need to happen:

1. strategic level buy-in, commitment to, and appropriate investment of new and innovative co-productive ways of working
2. the permission-ing of operational level services, staff teams, and third sector organisations to embrace the values of co-production in all elements of their work
3. The gathering, empowering and valuing of citizens, making reasonable adjustments to meet their needs and fully support and enthuse them to be involved in the co-productive process by developing and communicating a clear framework for change in which they can trust their voice, thoughts, opinions and ideas can make a difference

As a result, we will hopefully start to witness the promotion, empowerment and advocacy of critical citizen voices and experiences becoming the fundamental basis of our future service creation, design, decisions, delivery and evaluation, so that our service offer is more appropriate to emerging needs trends and is beneficial to all.



Phase 2 Recommendations

At the end of phase 1 of the Our Voice Matters project, 5 regional recommendations were made to help embed co-productive practice across Cwm Taf Morgannwg. The covid-19 pandemic halted the planned foundational work for these recommendations to be realised and implemented across Health and Social Care services in the region. Therefore, at the end of its phase 2 work, the Our Voice Matters project future recommendations still align with these 5 identified areas of improvement, but following the learning developed throughout the covid-19 response models and action undertaken, has now developed six recommendations that provide wider context, justification and milestones for achievement.

Phase 2 Recommendations

1. The development of regional ownership and understanding of co-production through the co-creation of regional definitions for relevant terms, including but not limited to:
 - Co-production
 - Engagement
2. The development of a regional statement of intent for co-production (or co-production charter) and regional co-production strategy to help demonstrate and embed co-production across Health and Social Care services in Cwm Taf Morgannwg
3. Creation of a regional community of practice with the function to oversee and evaluate the implementation of regional co-production practices as detailed within the statement of intent and co-production strategy. This community of practice will also be a space for sharing learning and good, emergent practice, through the creation of guides and toolkits, as well as celebrating success to inspire others
4. Development of a workforce and citizen support package to help train and embed the values of co-production for both service providers and users of services
5. To continue the development of a regional involvement pathway that develops a mechanism for people to have a valued voice and for that voice to strengthen the work of projects and services being commissioned and delivered
6. To develop regional co-production criteria for the commissioning /funding of future projects and services, to be included as part of the funding application process. To develop a process for citizen engagement and co-decision making on reviewing and determining the success of local and regional service provider tenders and funding applications, against identified citizen and strategic priorities

Our Voice Matters
RCT People First

Trerhondda
The Strand
Ferndale
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF43 4LY

Tel: 01443 757954
www.ourvoicematters.org.uk



Rhondda Cynon Taf
PEOPLE FIRST LIMITED



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With thanks to the Co-production Network for Wales



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