

Bracknell Forest Council

Co-production framework 2023



Inclusive • ambitious • always learning



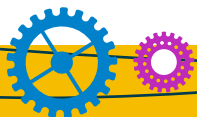
Context of framework

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Council services and responsibility

Section 3: Legislation and inspection frameworks

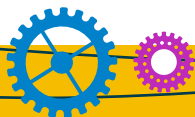
Section 4: Co-producing locally



Section 1 - Introduction

“Co-production takes a long time and a lot of effort but it’s a more encompassing process and you get better buy-in from people.”

- Staff and resident workshops 2023



Introduction

In Bracknell Forest, we have made a commitment to increasing and enhancing the use of co-production in local services. This is because:

- We know people's needs are better met when they are involved in a more equal and reciprocal relationship with professionals and others, working together to get things done.
- We know services work better when they recognise and engage the insights and experiences of the people who use them.
- We know the people who most rely on public services tend to be those who are most disempowered by the current service models.

Transforming services by using co-production can substantially improve outcomes for the people using them. It also improves the effectiveness of the professionals involved.

This framework will be reviewed annually as our learning and experience delivering co-production increases. The approach set out is part of an ambition and the early development to increase and improve our co-production.

What is co-production?

There are a number of different definitions used across the sector for co-production. The key elements are to work equally and jointly with residents and to recognise that building on each other's strengths can create the best outcomes.



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

(Co-production network, 2012)



“Co-production is an embedded approach where decision makers (e.g., public funding bodies) have a culture and environment whereby local people and communities are valued as equal partners. There is a sharing of power and belief that local communities and people who use or require care and/or support are best placed and most informed about what will help them in their needs and wishes.”

(ADASS, 2022)



“Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families, and their neighbourhoods. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.”

(Nesta, 2013)



How we are moving towards co-production

To develop our approach to co-production in Bracknell Forest, we are developing a range of materials to support professionals, the voluntary and community sector and local residents. These include:

Co-production framework: this document sets out our intentions and provides a clear definition and set of guidance on how we will approach co-production across the borough. It will encourage consistency across all our work and will be reviewed as our learning evolves.

Co-production toolkit: this resource will draw together practical tools, stories, examples and materials. It aims help people work together on co-production in Bracknell Forest and enable people to learn from each other's experiences. It will be constantly updated with local examples and materials that people have found useful in their work.

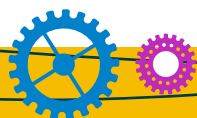
Co-production training: a series of staff training events will be delivered, introducing the core principles of co-production and practical methods that support it.

Co-production pilots: working with local teams to use a range of methods to develop, implement or enhance existing co-production activities through practical support, evaluation and reflection.

Why do we have a framework?

The Bracknell Forest framework itself has been co-designed with a range of people from the council, voluntary sector and residents, ensuring people have been involved throughout.

- It provides a shared goal and vision, an ambitious sense of how to transition towards co-production and support the council's commitment to co-production.
- It clarifies what co-production is, and what it isn't so that everyone is clear.
- It helps to develop consistent approaches to doing co-production at Bracknell Forest Council and the rationale for focusing in this way.
- It will act as a springboard for people to bring co-production into their work in as many different ways as possible. It will include our learning as we go, adapting the framework as our confidence increases and growing the network of people ambitious to work in this way.



Six principles of co-production

Co-production is a way of working. There are six common principles for co-production activity that help us to recognise it is taking place.

Some of these principles overlap with other approaches but to be genuine co-production, all elements are happening within the same activity.

These principles provide the model for recognising when co-production is taking place in Bracknell Forest.

- 1. Recognising people as valuable assets:** everyone who uses services has their own unique set of skills and abilities. Co-production enables you to focus on what people can do, what they can contribute and not just what their issues are.
- 2. Building on those skills and abilities:** co-production also focuses on helping people use their skills and abilities; it provides opportunities for them to grow and develop both as an individual and as a community.
- 3. Promoting give and take:** co-production combines the skills and abilities of all the people involved. In this way, everyone contributes their expertise which builds trusting relationships between residents and professionals and fosters mutual respect.
- 4. Growing networks:** co-production grows people's personal and professional networks. This enables people to share knowledge and information.
- 5. Sharing responsibility:** professionals and people's traditional roles are redefined so they are not exclusively focused on those providing services and those receiving services
- 6. Facilitating rather than delivering:** within a co-productive process, people delivering services become facilitators rather than providers. Their role focuses on enabling people and the co-production process rather than doing things to people.



Co-production is not:

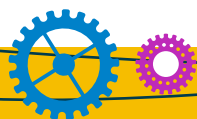
- Public participation in events or online surveys where proposals are already formed or the options are limited.
- Volunteering to do things for other people when those people don't have an opportunity to make a contribution too.
- Personalisation and individual budgets when people's involvement is focused on choosing from predetermined options to address professionally identified needs.
- Partnership working between public and voluntary sector organisations when local people are not directly involved in the conversation too.

These alternative ways of working are not wrong, and there will be occasions where the above engagement is the most appropriate. However, it is important to be clear that those methods are not co-production activity and should not be described as such.

Why should we co-produce?

- Co-production taps into the huge number of local skills, passions and experiences (assets) that exist in every community. These include the time, energy, experience and expertise of residents, their families, and neighbours.
- Co-production helps to break down barriers between different kinds of people and build stronger networks and groups. It gets beyond service silos and isolation, and enables people to work together and use resources more effectively.
- It helps to build up everyone's capacity to take action to help themselves and each other.
- It releases the direct wisdom and experience that people have about what they need, how their needs can be met and what they can do with and for others. When these are combined with professional expertise, there are likely to be better outcomes.
- It minimises waste by developing solutions with people rather than doing things 'to' and 'for' them. It can shift the focus towards person-led, community-involved, preventative services that relieve the pressure on more costly acute and specialist interventions. This can improve efficiency.

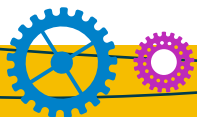
For all these reasons, co-production helps to get things right the first time, to improve people's well-being and prevent needs. It makes the best use of the skills and time of the professionals that work within services.



Section 2 - Council services and responsibility

“One size fits no one.”

- Staff and resident workshops 2023



The organisation

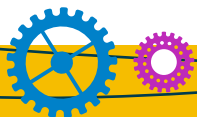
As a unitary local authority, we provide and coordinate a huge range of services in the community. This includes statutory adult social care and children's services, as well as education, early help and community support. We manage local parks, community facilities, planning, and local leisure facility contracts.

Our aspiration is to have a thriving local community with resilient residents and businesses.

There are good examples across our services or working jointly with people. However, specifically co-producing services could be extended and used more widely. The council has traditionally been versatile in approach but most comfortable developing proposals, with some community engagement, and then consulting on them rather than co-producing.

The initial priority will be to further develop and enhance co-production within the People directorate. However, this is a council wide framework and other directorates are encouraged to use co-production where appropriate. This framework sets out our approach to co-production when used in any service.

There will be further opportunities to explore and develop co-production in areas such as addressing climate change, developing community initiatives and in working on a range of issues with our partners including health and the voluntary, community and faith sector. The associated toolkit will be the practical guide to support co-production for all our services.



Our values

The council and our staff seek to model three values, to be inclusive, ambitious and always learning. Enhancing our approach to co-production is an opportunity to demonstrate all three values.



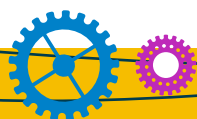
Inclusive:	Ambitious:	Always learning:
<p>In every interaction and communication, we seek to listen and understand. We make sure there is a collaborative culture of openness and honesty. We respect individuality, diversity and wide-ranging perspectives.</p>	<p>Through our determination, we aspire to excellence and adding value in everything that we do. We are bold but realistic. We work together and treat others as we would expect ourselves or families to be treated.</p>	<p>We strive for continuous improvement, proactively seeking development opportunities, reflecting, and learning from experience.</p>
<p>Co-production enables us to work with residents, gain a better understanding and benefit from their experience and skills. When used effectively, it will help us build meaningful and trusting relationships.</p>	<p>Using co-production in a more consistent and enhanced way is different and ambitious. We know it will take commitment of time and resources but this framework, the toolkit, training and ongoing support will enable us to increase our skills and the extent it can be used.</p>	<p>Using co-production effectively means we will adapt how services are delivered. There is good evidence that co-production can achieve improved outcomes. This requires reflection on learning from a range of people and also the development of co-production skills across the organisation.</p>

Governance

We are currently establishing the governance process for identifying suitable projects, monitoring co-production outcomes and allocating appropriate resources.

We know appropriate governance is required to provide clarity and transparency over the progress of co-production activity and to ensure we can provide the resources required to do it well. Governance is also an important route for ensuring that we are all consistently working towards the ambitions set out within this framework and to understand any challenges that are making co-production difficult to achieve.

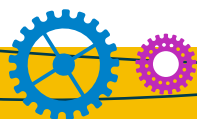
When we agree the governance mechanism, we will ensure the process balances learning and reflection without creating a barrier through reporting requirements. It will provide us with a good opportunity to increase our collective understanding locally about successful outcomes and challenges experienced.



Section 3 - Legislation and inspection frameworks

“It’s a journey that everyone is moving in the same direction but people can jump on and off depending on what they can contribute and when/with what they want to be involved with.”

- Staff and resident workshops 2023

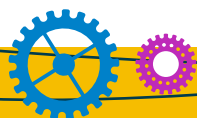


Legislation around co-production

Co-production is increasingly embedded in key pieces of legislation. In some cases the word co-production is used, in others the principles of co-production are strongly embedded. Health, social care and education are particularly relevant including:



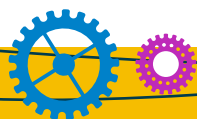
- **Care Act 2014:** Local authorities should, where possible, actively promote participation in providing interventions that are co-produced with individuals, families, friends, carers and the community.
- **Children and Families Act 2014:** The principles of co-production are embedded in the act.
- **Health and Care Act 2022:** Working with people and communities is critical if we are to create a health and care service which offers personalised care, is tailored to the needs of each individual, and which works for everyone.
- **The SEND code of practice:** Local authorities must have regard to:
 - the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents;
 - the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions. They should be provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions;
 - the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes. This will prepare them effectively for adulthood.



Inspection frameworks

CQC framework: The single assessment framework will be rolled out across the country in 2023 and applies to providers, local authorities and integrated care systems. The five key areas (safe, effective, caring, responsive, well-led) all have statements and key lines of enquiry attached to them. Links to co-production within the framework include:

- **Safe:** solutions are developed collaboratively; services are planned and organised with people and communities in a way that improves their safety across their care journeys.
- **Effective:** people and communities have the best possible outcomes. Services work in harmony, with people at the centre of their care.
- **Caring:** we treat people as individuals and make sure their care, support and treatment meets their needs and preferences. We take account of their strengths, abilities, aspirations, culture and unique backgrounds and protected characteristics.
- **Responsive:** people and communities are always at the centre of how care is planned and delivered.
- **Well-led:** there is an inclusive and positive culture of continuous learning and improvement. We have inclusive leaders at all levels.



Inspection frameworks

In May 2021, Ofsted released research into the provision of support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the UK. This highlighted significant weaknesses in current approaches including gaps in external provision and training, lack of coordination between services, lack of accountability and weak co-production.

From 2023, Ofsted will use the following framework to inspect local arrangements for children and young people with SEND. The second point is particularly relevant to co-production. Using co-production will help strengthen the work towards all these priorities.

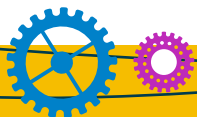
1. Children and young people receive the right help and support at the right time.
2. Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support.
3. Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way.
4. Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes.
5. Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities.
6. Leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND.
7. Leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families.
8. Leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in their local area.
9. Leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people.
10. Leaders evaluate services and make improvements.
11. Leaders create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish.



Section 4 - Co-producing locally

“The biggest challenge for us is to know when co-production should and shouldn’t be used.”

- Staff and resident workshops 2023



Our vision for co-production

During our workshops with local people, we identified qualities that make it possible for people to co-produce. This included:

- Seeing people as equal partners with valuable input and knowledge.
- Actively supporting people to put their skills to use and make a contribution.
- Sharing experiences and working together on a shared goal.
- Valuing our relationships, having new experiences and meeting new people.
- Working in an open and inclusive way that builds trust.
- Continually learning.
- Making it fun, it should be a positive experience for everyone involved.

Modelling it locally

We know that creating genuine co-production across Bracknell Forest Council will take time to do well. There is never a perfect time to begin. The most important thing is that we get started.

Achieving co-production is an iterative process and there are steps along the way before we achieve genuine co-production.

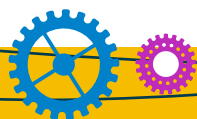
Each step on the pathway creates an opportunity for learning and further development.

We won't see every service moving at the same pace, for example, we may achieve full co-production within one project or stream of work but not in others.

In some situations it will be necessary to use other methods, such as consultation and engagement. All these methods are valid and it is important that we make sure we do these well.

We need to be consistent in our assessments of what methods we are using and why. If we are consulting, we call it consulting, when we are co-producing we name it too. And in each case we can be clear why we have selected this as the best method for what we are trying to achieve.

The following sections are designed to help us frame the work we are doing and understand the difference between co-production and other forms of engagement.



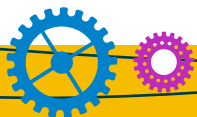
The flower of participation

This image has been developed by the NHS to illustrate the different ways in which services can work with people. In Bracknell Forest, there is a lot of interest in how co-production is different from other types of engagement. The next page provides some practical examples.

Ultimately, it is important that our collective direction of travel is towards a future where more people are having a great experience of being actively involved in designing, delivering and evaluating the support they receive with Bracknell Forest Council.

People are at the heart of the flower. Not all situations lend themselves to co-production but we will always try to co-produce. It's important to match the right methods to the aims you are hoping to achieve.

Over time we will continue to assess projects on a case by case basis but will always try and use co-production where possible.



Other types of participation

Co-design: We work with people who use services to design the support they want and need based on their experiences and ideas. They have genuine influence in shaping services that we then deliver for them.

Engage: We work with people who use services by asking open questions to understand their views and experiences. They may be able to influence some decisions, but this depends on what is appropriate within the timeframes and budget we have available.

Consult: We invite people who use services to fill in surveys or attend meetings to discuss a challenge we are facing. We decide the focus of people's input based on what we need to know. Sometimes people may experience their involvement as tokenistic and say they do not have the full story or the power to affect change.

Inform: We produce leaflets, online information and run sessions to tell people about the services available, the eligibility criteria and how they work. We produce newsletters that update people when changes have been made.

To co-produce or not to co-produce

We should only consider co-producing if we are truly committed to working in this way. We are unlikely to have everything perfectly in place before we begin, but we need to acknowledge that co-production takes time and resource, especially at the start.

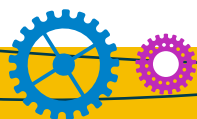
These are the questions we ask before we decide to start co-producing:

- ✓ **Do we have enough time to make our engagement with people meaningful and maintain strong, reciprocal relationships with them throughout?**
- ✓ **What is open for discussion? – What can people truly influence?**
- ✓ **Who do we need support from in the senior leadership team and councillors?**
- ✓ **Who can we team up with and learn from so that we are not doing this on our own?**
- ✓ **Can we pay people for their time?**
- ✓ **Are we prepared to get it wrong? Can we make time for reflection with all participants to understand how things could be improved in the future?**

There are some occasions when co-production won't be possible. To build a local culture of positive co-production, we must be confident to say when (and why) we can't co-produce. This will build trust in the process and create more positive relationships with local people.

For example:

- When decisions have already been made and residents can't influence them
- When you have very restricted timeframes to deliver a decision
- When you don't have sufficient internal support to carry through changes



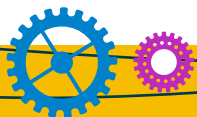
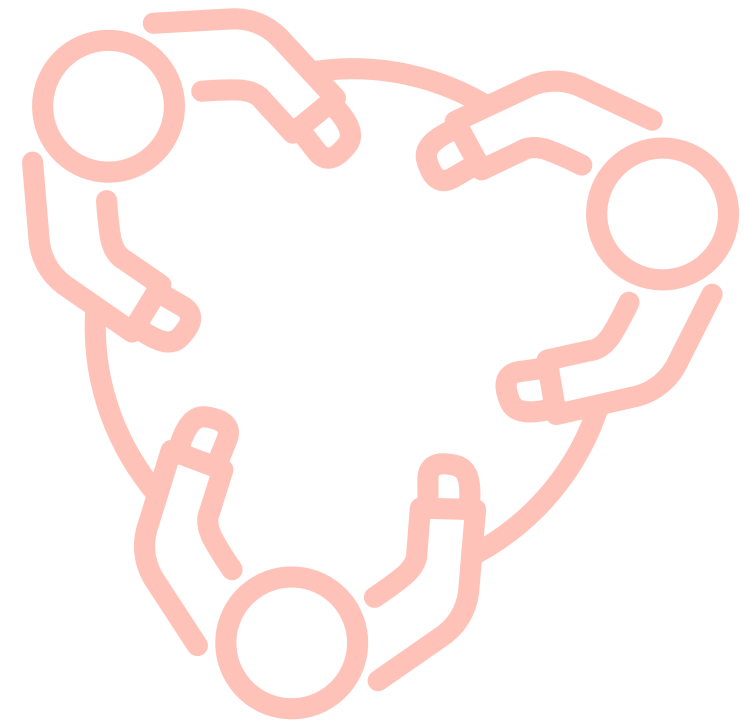
Starting to co-produce

Once we have decided that co-production is the right method for the outcomes we want to achieve we need to bring people together. With this group we need to ensure that we have a shared understanding about:

- ✓ **What we want to co-produce and why**
- ✓ **The issue we are tackling (and what is outside of our remit)**
- ✓ **The outcomes we want to achieve from working together**
- ✓ **How we will keep track of progress**
- ✓ **How we will capture and share our learning**

Before getting started we need to be confident that

- everyone is clear about what co-production means in the context of our specific project and why we want to use it to approach this work
- we have got the right people in the group to be able to understand and represent the important perspectives and experiences that are important for our work together



During co-production

When we are working together, we need to keep reflecting on our progress, relationships and the principles of co-production. We will consider the following:

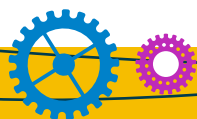
- Are we assuming that people who are here are speaking for wider groups and is this justified?
- What is realistic and achievable within the (practical) constraints that we have e.g. resources, timeframes, decision-making?
- Is everyone able to contribute to discussions? Who is quiet and who dominates? Can strategies be put in place to enable all members of the group to contribute?
- Is everyone asking questions and sharing their knowledge? Is everyone's knowledge valued?
- Does any jargon or local context need explaining?
- Does anything need to happen to support the group to work for everyone?
- Are the times and places that we meet making our work accessible to everyone?

Other things that will help

- Dedicated time and resource to give co-production space to flourish
- A commitment to working in a way that recognises the skills and experiences (strengths) that everyone brings and an understanding that we don't have all the answers
- Thinking carefully about how to share power and level out the playing field – e.g. taking off our lanyards, meeting people where they're already gathering, meeting outside 'office hours'
- Thinking beyond 'sessions' that people have to come to; working with people to go beyond the 'usual participants'
- Creating the 'ways we will work together' with people, including how shall we behave, what language shall we use, what shall we do together?

Being honest about what is possible

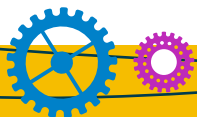
- Being upfront and realistic about what people can influence and comfortable explaining why
- Being aware of what else is happening in the organisation and avoiding duplication which can lead to 'engagement fatigue'
- Remaining open to change and open to unexpected ideas and solutions. Being ok with uncertainty
- Making sure everyone understands the timeframes and when and how information will be shared during and after your work together



Governance - within the co-production work

Within the programme of work, it's really important that the group is clear about what is within their control and how decisions will be made and then taken through the council's key decision and governance processes. Some of this can be agreed through collaboration – working together with people to decide 'how we will behave together' and 'how we will make decisions together'.

Making time for these discussions and being upfront about the council's governance processes will help to build trust and ensure there are fewer surprises on the way. Ensuring everyone understands the wider governance processes will help the group keep focused on the areas where they can have biggest impact.

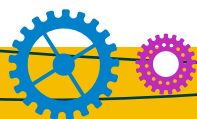


Some useful questions include:

- Are we making assumptions about who leads our meetings and our work? How do we share responsibility and accountability?
- When do decisions need to be made by the group?
- When are important decisions being made outside the group which will impact on our work? How much influence do we have over those decisions?
- How does information flow from the group to key senior leaders and vice versa?
- Which senior leaders do we need to involve in our work and when?

Evaluating the process

- Co-production as a process has its own outcomes so that as well as producing better outcomes and decisions for the project, the participants will also benefit through their involvement.
- Each co-production project should have some time inbuilt for reflection and lessons learnt. Any learning should be shared through the internal co-production network.
- Many organisations use a co-production audit as an ongoing tool to enable them to assess how established co-production is within their work. This will be further explored locally.
- Learning is intended to be an ongoing conversation, involving everyone who has taken part. Shared reflection is valuable in understanding how people have experienced the co-production process and how to make improvements in future activity.



Measuring the impact

There are two main reasons for measuring: to 'prove' and to 'improve'

Prove: gathering information to demonstrate the value of something to others

Improve: gathering information to learn what is and isn't working and generate learning to make the work better while we are doing it

We need to ensure we have a mix of measures that help us to prove and improve while we are co-producing.

We need to work with people to measure what matters to them and to measure with people – as much as possible. We should involve people in agreeing what should be measured and how, even if this is different to the usual data we collect.

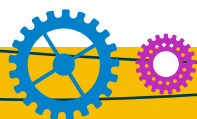
We must pay attention to the different types of information we will be collecting. Where previously, we may have used something based on a spreadsheet and numbers, it is likely that the information gathered from co-production will be more qualitative including case studies, interviews, diaries, logs and photographs. We know this is also important in generating learning and insight.

We need to ensure the people involved in co-producing the activity are also involved in evaluating and learning from it. We need to make use of the wide range of experiences and insight in order to improve our future work.

We must build learning into all of our work together. When we are getting new work underway, we will agree our shared goals (outcomes) at the beginning and make time to check in on progress each time we meet.

Consider the language you use together, to ensure everyone can contribute. We will use phrases such as 'what will success look like' as it's more accessible than 'evaluation'. Asking everyone 'how will we know it's working' will enable everyone to identify indicators that matter to them.

We will ensure we make time for learning together as a council and sharing our learning (the good, the bad and the ugly) with our colleagues each time we work on co-production.



Delivery on our values

We will be continuing to review our approach to co-production and will update this framework each year as our learning grows. We are committed to reflecting on our co-production activity to understand what has and hasn't worked. There is high ambition to make the most of co-production and use it across our services, and adapting this framework will help us reach this.

Feedback is welcomed from all those involved in working jointly with us to improve our services.

