



CO-PRODUCTION: LEVELS, TYPES AND MODELS

DEFINITIONS OF CO-PRODUCTION

The term “co-production” finds its scholarly origins in the public sector, in the work of Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom (1996) and other economists from the 1970s who studied collaboration between government departments and citizens, showing that effective service delivery was encouraged by collaboration between professional providers and service users, rather than central planning. In the past decades, governments have (re)discovered the citizen as an important actor in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies and services.

Read [Co-production Catalogue for Wales](#), pages 14-16

Co-production means **delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours**. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change. (Boyle and Harris, 2009:11)



Co-production is an **approach to decision-making and service design** rather than a specific method. It rejects the traditional understanding of service users as dependents of public services, and instead redefines the service/user relationship as one of **co-dependency and collaboration**. Just like users need the support from public services, so service providers need the insights and expertise of its users in order to make the right decisions and build effective services. In practice, it means that those who are affected by a service are not only consulted, but are **part of the conception, design, steering, and management of services**.

Co-production is central to the process of growing the core economy. It goes well beyond the idea of ‘citizen engagement’ or ‘service user involvement’ to foster the principle of equal partnership. It offers to transform the dynamic between the public and public service workers, putting an end to ‘them’ and ‘us’. Instead, people pool different types of knowledge and skills, based on lived experience and professional learning. (Boyle and Harris, 2009:12)

Watch [Co-production: The social model of disability](#) (4 mins)

MODELS OF CO-PRODUCTION

Coproduction is a process that literally turns services users from passive recipients into **active shapers of public services** because it means involving all stakeholders, including the people who use a service, in the process of determining what services are delivered and how they operate. (Realpe and Wallace, 2010:8)

THE CUTS SCENARIO which uses substitutive co-production	THE TRANSFORMATION SCENARIO which focuses on additive co-production
Here the primary intention is to save money and/or reduce staff: the public sector hands responsibility for services over to service users and/or communities. 	Here, public sector resources are combined with individual and community resources, providing new opportunities for participation and co-operation. 

On the whole, it is easy to spot the difference between individual co-production and collective co-production. **Individual co-production** describes those situations where a client or a customer, individually or in a group, participates in the production or part-production of the services they use, receiving 'benefits that are largely personal'. **Collective co-production** builds on the idea that co-production is not confined to users, but involves other types of people, such as citizens, volunteers or non-governmental partners. This type of co-production is designed to produce benefits for the entire community (Sorrentino et al., 2018).

Read [Enhancing the role of citizens in governance and service delivery](#), pages 4-7

The three levels of co-production

The extent of co-production varies but it can be organised into three tiers (Community Care, 2009):

Compliance (descriptive): Co-production takes place at the stage of service delivery, as carers and people who use services collaborate to achieve results. People using services make contributions at each stage of service provision but they are not involved in implementation. Despite the awareness that care services cannot be produced without input from the people who use services, the compliance tier offers little opportunity for real change by or for the people who use services because it is about complying with an existing regime.

Support (intermediate): The intermediate level of co-production recognises and values the many people who come together to co-produce care services. It acknowledges the input and value of service users, utilises existing support networks and improves channels for people to be involved in the shaping of services. It may include new or more involved roles for users in the recruitment and training of professionals and managers. Also it may see responsibilities being shared with the people who use services.

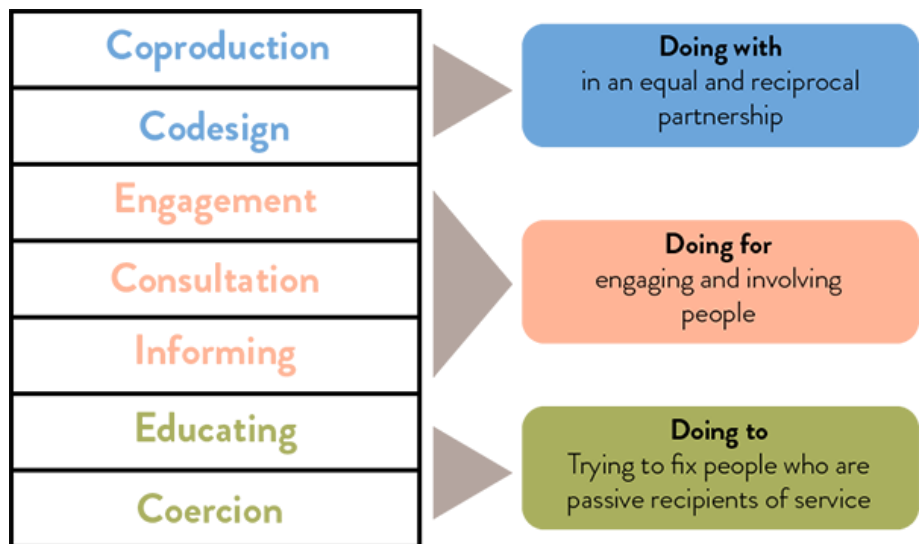
Transformation: The most effective methods of co-production can transform services and create new relationships between the people who use them and staff. This transformative level of co-production takes "a whole life focus", incorporating quality of life issues as well as simply clinical or service issues.



		Responsibility for design of services		
		Professionals as sole service planner	Professionals and service users/ community as co-planners	No professional input into service planning
Responsibility for delivery of services	Professionals as sole service deliverers	Traditional professional service provision	Professional service provision but users/communities involved in planning and design	Professionals as sole service deliverers
	Professionals and users/communities as co-deliverers	User co-delivery of professionally designed services	Full co-production	User/community delivery of services with little formal/professional
	Users/communities as sole deliverers	User/community delivery of professionally planned services	User/community delivery of co-planned or co-designed services	Self-organised community provision

Source: Adapted from Carnegie Trust (2006), 'Commission for Rural Community Development - Beyond Engagement and participation, user and community co-production of services.' By Tony Bovaird, Carnegie Trust.

At this stage, the service user becomes an expert. Professionals and people who use services and their carers come together to identify and manage risks. There must be trust and respect on both sides. To reach this stage there must be reallocation of power and control through user-led planning, delivery, management, empowerment and governance and collaboration must be entrenched. It often requires organisational change.



Watch [The ladder of co-production](#) (5 mins)



CO-PRODUCTION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Added value:** Co-production can access assets that were previously under-used and can also deliver greater satisfaction for people who use services.
- **Using the expertise of service users:** Service users value approaches in which the professional assists them in achieving aims they have determined themselves. Co-productive approaches can also contribute to the development of mutual support systems which address issues before they become acute.
- **Practical skills:** Some co-productive models, such as time banks where participants share skills and companionship, can provide practical advantages such as formal and informal skills and learning.
- **Health benefits and prevention:** Co-production has been found to have a positive impact on health with a link found between time banks and reduced levels of hospitalisation. Certain co-production schemes could contribute to the wellbeing and prevention agenda in health and social care.
- **Social capital:** Schemes that build supportive relationships and increase the confidence and activity of participants have positive benefits for social capital. In addition to the benefits felt by the users of services, service providers and the wider community can benefit from these approaches.

CHALLENGES

- Difficult to manage well when dealing with larger groups
- Can appear exclusive and unrepresentative to those users/residents who are not invited to take part
- Requires a considerable time commitment on the part of both professionals and participants
- Building social capital: It is possible that co-production schemes can sideline already marginalised groups, as there are limits to the extent that some people can co-produce without support. Issues of social exclusion, equality and diversity need to be taken into account. There is also an awareness that co-production should not be a method for governments to dump its problems on the community and service users.
- Challenges to existing frameworks: Statutory authorities' tendency to risk aversion, as well as tax and benefit regulations, can create problems for co-productive initiatives. Also, accountability can be threatened as private and public, formal and informal, budgets that were previously separate become entwined.
- Security and independence: There can be concerns about the long-term sustainability of projects as many co-production initiatives want to be independent, relying on funding that is often short-term and unstable.
- Staff support: For co-production to work effectively staff and service users must be empowered.
- Some in the sector believe that this approach requires specific skills and new roles should be created for individuals who help staff overcome their unwillingness to share power with users. Even if this is not the case, there is a need for training and staff development to support co-productive approaches. There should be clear support for positive risk taking and staff should be encouraged to seek out opportunities for collaboration.



KEY REFERENCES

- [Video] Co-production (4 mins) [LINK](#)
- [Text & Video] What is Co-production. Involve.org. [LINK](#)
- [Text] Co-production: a manifesto for growing the core economy. New Economics Foundation. [LINK](#)
- [Video] Realizing Care Policies' Transformative Potential, UNRISD 2017 (4 mins) [LINK](#) (full report in further reading)

FURTHER READINGS AND VIDEOS

- [Video series in Arabic with subtitles in English] Public Policies, UNESCO 2016
 - Episode 1 Background [LINK](#)
 - Episode 2 Definition [LINK](#)
 - Episode 3 The making-of [LINK](#)
 - Episode 4 Actors [LINK](#)
 - Episode 5 Civil Society [LINK](#)
 - Episode 6 Analysis [LINK](#)
 - Episode 7 Targeting Youth [LINK](#)
 - Episode 8 Dynamics [LINK](#)
- [VIDEO] [Public Policy and Analysis](#) (9 mins)
- [Video] Re-thinking the Policy Making Process for today's needs by Betty Tushabe, TEDxRugando (12 mins) [LINK](#)
- [Text] Chapter - Care Policies: Realizing their Transformative Potential, UNRISD [LINK](#)
- [Text] Activating Citizens to Participate in Collective Co-Production of Public Services (2014) Bovaird, Ryzin, Loeffler and Parrado [LINK](#)
- [Text] The Challenges of Co-production. How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services. (2009) New Economics Foundation, 2009. [LINK](#)
- [Text] Understanding co-production as a new public governance tool, Policy and Society. (2018) Maddalena Sorrentino, Mariafrancesca Sicilia & Michael Howlett [LINK](#)
- [Text] Coproduction during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Will It Last? (2020) Steen and Brandsen [LINK](#)

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

- What is your first impression regarding how social policy is made?
- What do you think is the potential to co-produce services where you live? Can you explain a co-production process where you participated?



- What would be the greatest challenge to get the different actors in your area to collaborate?

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