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**Transforming  
local public services  
through co-production**

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## Background

This policy review was commissioned by the **Arts and Humanities Research Council** as part of the **Connected Communities programme**, which is 'designed to help us understand... the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life'. The review team have worked with policy partners and the AHRC to finalise the scope, focus and brief for this policy review, which was conducted between November 2012 and April 2013.

The policy review aims to provide cross-disciplinary debate and dialogue along with challenging insights for the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) on the theme of 're-defining service delivery', focusing on the specific question:

**How are the best providers redefining their roles in order to unlock the capacity within their communities?**

The brief expands on the topic:

*The focus here would be on uncovering successful examples of co-production from a range of service sectors and countries and the potential for their experience to be replicated in different contexts. The topic would cover how current providers are changing (or need to adapt), as well as how community service recipients can be engaged as active participants in the process. It is envisaged that this review will also draw on literature concerned with organisational culture change, in order to understand how both the wider culture of the service provider and the cultural assumptions of frontline staff enable or inhibit co-production.*

The review is intended to develop insights into these policy issues raised by drawing on inter-disciplinary research and expertise from across the Connected Communities Programme, and other relevant research. The review team undertook a number of activities as part of the review, including: a rapid synthesis of Connected Communities projects and research outputs of potential relevance to the topic; a review of relevant academic literature; informal consultations with fifteen key stakeholders with expertise in co-production; and a series of four research events in March 2013 involving Connected Communities researchers, policy makers, local public and third sector practitioners and elected representatives. **Please note**, all unreferenced quotes are taken from participant contributions at these research events.

## Key messages

- ❑ Co-production is a potentially transformative approach to meeting the challenges faced by local public services, which understands services as ‘the joint product of the activities of both citizens and government’.
- ❑ The case for co-production is often made in terms of its potential relationship to efficiencies and cost-savings. But, the evidence base on co-production is limited and suggests that efficiency savings are not simple to achieve in the short-term.

‘it’s becoming a byword for passing responsibilities onto the communities and that’s leading to cynicism and anxiety’

- ❑ There is a different way to think about maximising efficiencies through co-production, which encourages drawing existing resources together in creative ways.
- ❑ Achieving this vision faces significant barriers and demands a new organisational culture of public service provision, which rests on:
  - Building a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities, for example using co-design and creative practice and;
  - Incentivising citizens and front-line professionals in a way which is relevant to their values and experiences, for example providing opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.
- ❑ Delivering co-production is less about ‘scaling up’, than taking a localist approach: ‘scaling out’ through sharing practice and spreading innovation between organisations.
- ❑ How aspirations of co-production are communicated is crucial. Not only should messages be locally appropriate, but they should also recognise that the drive for efficiency is often insufficient to mobilise people if it is detached from a wider dialogue around developing a shared vision for change.

‘It is damaging if it becomes associated with a cost-cutting mentality’

## Summary of the briefing

This briefing explores the contribution of transformative co-production to re-defining local public services:

- First, it sets out a different way of defining and thinking about co-production and why it matters now.
- Second, it sets out two key questions, driven by the current challenges faced by local public services:
  - 1. What is the evidence of efficiencies made in local public services through co-production?**

The briefing characterises the existing evidence-base on co-production.
  - 2. How can efficiencies in local public services be maximised through transformative co-production?**

The briefing then sets out how transformative co-production can be achieved as ‘an improvement over regular government production or citizen production alone’ (Ostrom 1996, 1082) and works through four conditions:

    - Ensuring synergies not substitution
    - Avoiding organisational fixes
    - Building a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities
    - Incentivising front-line professionals and communities
- The briefing concludes by setting out a localist approach of ‘scaling out’, spreading ideas and innovations between organisations as a way of achieving co-production, before drawing out key implications for policy makers.

## Why co-production? Why now?

- Local public services are currently facing unprecedented challenges:
  - **Perceived limitations of traditional service models** to meet diverse public needs and tackle entrenched and complex social problems and dependencies (Whitaker 1980).
  - **Fiscal constraint and retrenchment** which has prioritised the need to re-think the scope of local public services and how they may be designed and delivered.
  - **Demographic change** notably the emergence of a ‘super diverse’ society and the growth in the numbers and proportion of older people and of people with a long-term health condition.
  - **Changes in public expectations**, with a rise in what Griffiths et al call ‘assertive citizens’, who are less deferential and more likely to want to have a say about the services they receive (2009, 72-3, see also Hastings and Matthews 2011).
  - **Technological innovations** which support more user involvement (Leadbeater and Cottam 2007).
- Co-production offers a potentially radical responses to these challenges through recognising that the involvement of citizens and communities is crucial to delivering more effective public services and better local outcomes (Whitaker 1980).
- This idea is now familiar from a wider **policy stream** (including early intervention, localism, community rights, personalisation and behaviour change) which aims to shift the default in local public service provision towards communities taking action and control of their lives and their local communities.

## Understanding co-production: from description to transformation

- Co-production can take place at different levels ranging from simply being a form of **description**, to a way of better **recognising** people's inputs, to a way of **transforming** services and power relations:



**Description:** Co-production can simply be a description of how all local public services rely on input from users (for example, attending school, taking medicine, recycling waste).

**Recognition:** Co-production can be a way of recognising the informal, and often un-costed, inputs and resources provided by citizens and communities (for example, in caring for family and friends) and seeking to create better channels for people to shape services.

**Transformation:** At its most effective, co-production can involve the transformation of the way in which local public services are commissioned, designed, delivered and assessed (Governance International/ LGIU 2012, 10). Challenging traditional relationships of power, control and expertise, local public services are instead seen as the 'joint product of the activities of both citizens and government' (Sharp 1980, 110).

This form of co-production demands that 'producer and product, process and outcome are changed' (Cahn and Gray 2012, 131).

## Understanding co-production: from description to transformation

- Transformative co-production relies on citizens and professionals challenging their perceptions of themselves, their role and of each other (Bradwell and Marr 2008, Conroy et al 2012).
- ‘Rather than an agent presenting a “finished product” to the citizen, agent and citizen together produce the desired transformation’. This process demands ‘mutual readjustment’, where ‘the actions taken by both the service agent and the citizen are based on their joint consideration of a problem’ where both ‘share responsibility for deciding what action to take. Moreover, each accords legitimacy to the responsibility of the other’ (Whitaker 1980, 241, 244).
- ‘The service user has to trust professional advice and support, but the professional has to be prepared to trust the decisions and behaviours of service users and the communities in which they live rather than dictate them’ (Bovaird 2007, 856).
- This process of reciprocal change is emotionally charged, but potentially transformative (Ewert and Evans 2012, 76).

## Understanding co-production: from individual to collective

- Co-production can take place at the **individual, group or collective** level (Brudney and England, 1983):

	Individual co-production	Group co-production	Collective co-production
<b>Which citizens are producers?</b>	Individual, family	Group of citizens	Group of citizens
<b>Which citizens are beneficiaries?</b>	Individual, family	Group of citizens	Wider community
<b>Example</b>	Expert patient programmes  Home-school contracts  Recycling	Pooled budgets in social care (eg. to purchase equipment or commission services)  Neighbourhood watch  Walking buses for school children	School governors  Timebanks  Community ownership of parks

- Whilst all forms of co-production can have a positive impact on local public services, **collective co-production offers greatest scope to be transformative**. According to Brudney and England: ‘...we consider the collective forms of co-production more important, simply because they are likely to have greater impact on who receives the benefits derived from co-productive activities’ (1983, 62-3).
- A large cross-national survey of citizens found that the most important driver of collective co-production is **self-efficacy**: the feeling that individual action can have an impact upon political and social change (Parrado et al 2013).



## Focus of the briefing

- This briefing will explore the potential contribution of transformative co-production to re-defining local public services.
- The roots of 'co-production' can be traced to notions of active citizenship and self-help fostered in the Victorian period (Biagini and Sutcliffe 2011), but the language of co-production emerged in a largely academic US-based literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s; a period, like now, characterised by a public spending squeeze.
- The case for co-production was made on the basis of its 'strong potential relationship' between co-production and efficiency (Ostrom 1993, 231). Indeed, it is on this basis that co-production seems to have caught the imagination of policy makers.

As such, the briefing will focus on **two** questions:

**1. What is the evidence of efficiencies made in local public services through co-production?**

The briefing will characterise the existing evidence base on co-production.

**2. How can efficiencies in local public services be maximised through transformative co-production?**

The briefing will then set out how transformative co-production can be achieved as 'an improvement over regular government production or citizen production alone' (Ostrom 1996, 1082).

**1. What is the evidence of efficiencies made in local public services through co-production?**

## Limits to the evidence base on co-production

‘there’s a real need to be frank about the evidence or the effectiveness [of co-production] and not over claim’

The case for co-production is often made in terms of its ‘strong potential relationship to **efficiency**’ (Ostrom 1993, 231) but there are limits to existing evidence.

Much of the relevant published evidence on co-production is seeking to advocate for co-production.

The evidence base focuses on 'relational' services, notably health and social care; and individual co-production, particularly personalisation of public services. Comparative evidence (either in terms of comparing across levels of co-production, types of services or outcomes or comparing co-production with more 'traditional' approaches to local public service provision) is limited. There is also a lack of longitudinal evidence.

Up-front costs for co-production, such as training and advocacy for participants are hard to avoid (Needham and Carr 2009, 15).

Early interventions or preventative action shaped by co-production ‘cost money in the short-term but the savings can only be expected in the long-run’ (Loeffler and Watt 2009).

‘“savings” might be experienced by another organisation’ and not be ‘of benefit to the... organisations making the original investment’ and are ‘often hard to quantify’ (Loeffler and Watt 2009)

Social Return on Investment analyses (SROI) are one way of providing valid and reliable measures of cost-effectiveness (nef 2010). But these economic evaluations face the difficulty of establishing ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ and the savings produced by preventative services and longer-term outcomes (Turning Point 2010). These analyses may also be misleading without measuring user and community inputs (Bovaird 2013, 9). Such evaluations are also potentially costly and resource intensive.

## Some examples of evidence linking co-production to efficiency

These cases illustrate the rationales made for the relationship between co-production and efficiency and the nature of the costed evidence available: ([click title for more information](#))

### Understanding better what is valued by service users.

**User Voice Prison Councils** involve service users in the design, delivery and evaluation of criminal justice services. KPMG evaluated that this model produced a Social Return on Investment ratio of £2.11 of value generated for every £1 invested (User Voice 2010).

### Improving service quality

**Patient Care Plans**: ‘The typical practice (6300 people)... in the best quartile for care planning will typically have 35 fewer emergency admissions, 360 fewer outpatient attendances and 30 additional elective admissions/day cases compared to those in the lowest quartile... a saving to the practice of around £43000/year’ (Shirley and Melville 2010).

**Time banks** use hours of time rather than pounds as a community currency. They ‘cost £450 per member per year, but can provide savings of more than £1300 per member over the same period’ (Knapp 2011).

**The Nurse Family Partnership, USA** is an evidence-based model partnering first-time parents with a public health nurse aimed to break a cycle of ‘poverty, conflict and despair’. Randomised controlled trials show that the approach reduces child abuse and neglect by 48%, teenage arrests by 61% and ‘incorrigible behaviour’ by 90%, leading to an estimated cost-saving of 5:1 (Eckenrode et al 2010).

## Some examples of evidence linking co-production to efficiency

These cases illustrate the rationales made for the relationship between co-production and efficiency and the nature of the costed evidence available: ([click title for more information](#))

### Accessing, utilising and adding to the assets of service users

**KeyRing Living Support Networks** are vulnerable adults who provide mutual support to enable independent living in the community. The Department of Health's Care Services Efficiency Delivery team concluded that the average saving on social care expenditure per network member per year is £1491 (Poll 2007).

**LinkAge Plus** is a pilot across eight areas encouraging older people to shape, design and deliver services to promote their own health, wellbeing and independence. Upfront investment in the first two years quickly delivered net savings. The overall benefits to older people were monetised at £1.40 per £1 spent (Watt and Blair 2009, see also Turning Point 2010).

**2. How can efficiencies in local public services be maximised through transformative co-production?**

## Challenging the case: from substitution to addition

- Much of the current interest in co-production by providers of local public services, is prompted by a need to respond to reduced public spending and is underpinned by a '**substitutive**' logic (Barker 2010) ie. that the costs of providing public services can be moderated by shifting responsibilities from one provider of public services to another. For example, from the public sector to a voluntary or community group.
- Elinor Ostrom challenges this argument and puts forward a different approach to thinking about how to deliver efficiencies. Her challenge is underpinned by an '**additive**' logic (Barker 2010) ie. that long-term efficiencies in local public services will be delivered through bringing together existing resources and assets (for example, pooled, whole-place budgets, professional skills and experiential expertise) in new and creative ways.
- This 'additive' approach recognises that transformative co-production is most appropriate and significant in '**relational**' services, for example, health and social care, 'where the social issues are chronic and complex, and the solutions are contested' (Horne and Shirley 2009, 25).

'The more complex the social problems, the more important it is to design services in such a way that deep value relationships can be formed between service providers and users. More accessible, responsive and embedded provision can then deliver stronger and more cost-effective outcomes and impacts' (Berry 2012)

- For example, one health clinician reflected, 'co-production is about clinicians and patients **working together** rather than leaving the patient to manage their own care on the one hand or completely taking over their care on the other' (NESTA 2012, 3).
- 'Co-production is not, of course, universally advantageous' (Ostrom 1996, 1082), it may not be as suitable in more transactional services and different levels of co-production may be appropriate for different services and outcomes.

## Putting forward an alternative

### a. Ensure synergies not substitution

- ❑ Elinor Ostrom sets out four conditions which ‘heighten the probability that co-production is an improvement over regular government production or citizen production alone’ (1996, 1082).
- ❑ The first of these ‘...when co-productive inputs are diverse entities and complements, **synergy** can occur. Each has something the other needs... if inputs are strictly substitutable, no potential for synergy exists....’ (Ostrom 1996, 1082, 1079).
- ❑ The LIFE programme, illustrates the value of an ‘additive’ approach:

**LIFE, Participle, Tavistock and Portman Trust and Swindon Borough Council:** The current system for working with families means ‘frontline workers end up spending the majority of their time on the system itself, rather than in building the kind of relationships that open people to change’. The focus in developing the LIFE Programme with families and service providers was to build ‘a new relationship with families that starts from a different place and supports transformation’ producing outcomes wanted by many families, their neighbours, wider communities and government services. These aims have been achieved by re-designing the support system around the family, offering a dedicated team of workers chosen by families, who also set priorities and outcomes. Core to the programme is relationship, built between families and the LIFE team, that gives families the means and the space to change. LIFE focuses on changing the mind-set and skillset of front-line workers to develop this new relationship leading to organisational redesign. LIFE gives front-line workers the opportunity to discover a new approach of working which is led by the families, not the system and delivers on their own professional and personal aspirations to find solutions that work and how to change the system to make them happen. Life Programmes are now being developed across the UK. [Also see a short film](#) about the programme.



## b. Avoid organisational fixes

- Ostrom's second condition is to avoid restricting potentially efficient models for the delivery of local public services by ensuring that, '**options must be available to both parties**' (Ostrom 2006, 1082) so that there is a real sense of flexibility to local circumstances.
- Over time, governments have attributed private companies, social enterprises, mutuals and other organisational forms with intrinsic advantages, but transformative co-production cannot be delivered simply through an '**organisational fix**' (Durose et al 2012, Goldfinch and Wallis 2010)
- Instead, co-production demands an **organisational culture** underpinned by a '**logic of care**' (Mol 2008).
- In contrast to a 'logic of choice' which is based on a transactional model of public services, a 'logic of care' recognises that individuals are nearly always situated in communities or networks, which demand collaborative, inter-dependent relationships between public authorities and local communities (Sullivan 2011, 191-192):
- 'Care is not a transaction in which something is exchanged (a product against a price); but an interaction in which the action goes back and forth (in an ongoing process)' (Mol 2008, 21).

## b. Avoid organisational fixes

- ❑ The following case studies offer two examples of different organisational forms, both underpinned by a 'logic of care': (click [links](#) for more information)
- ❑ NAViGO is an award-winning, not-for-profit community interest company profiled by the Mutuals Information Service as a successful example of an organisation 'spinning out' from the public sector:

**NAViGO** provides all local mental health and associated services in North East Lincolnshire. The organisation is run by a membership board which involves senior managers along with elected members from the community, staff and partner organisations. Since their launch, NAViGO have significantly reduced their infrastructure costs, widened their services and developed a range of income-generating activities. NAViGO has developed Tukes, an innovative employment and training scheme for people with little or no previous training, qualifications or work experience due to mental health problems. Tukes now runs all ancillary services for NAViGO including reception, catering, cleaning and estates delivering on average 3000 hours of training and work experience each month for people with mental health problems. See [also](#).

- ❑ The 'Co-operative Council' is an attempt to re-imagine the role of local government in a way that encourages synergy through collaboration:

**Lambeth Borough Council, The 'Co-operative Council'** aims to 'do things with local people instead of doing things to them' believing that 'when you give residents more power, together with appropriate support, services... will improve and our community will become stronger'. The development of the [Co-operative Councils Network](#), of which Lambeth is a part, is a response to the challenge of rising demand for local public service in a context of austerity aiming to do 'differently with less'. There is a recognition that such an ambition demands structural change, as reflected in the introduction of 'co-operative commissioning', 'putting the citizen at the heart of what we do, from deciding the outcomes we want to achieve, through resource allocation... to delivery'.

## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities

‘the positive effects of co-production on service quality come from the extensive, two-way communication between staff and users in the co-production’ (Vamstad 2012, 314).

- Ostrom’s third condition is that, ‘participants need to be able to build a **credible commitment** to one another so that if one side increases input, the other will continue at the same or higher levels’ (1996, 1082).

‘To be truly transformative, co-production necessitates a new relationship and different roles’ (NESTA 2012, 3); a change in ‘mindset and a style of working’ (Needham and Carr 2009, 4).

- Co-production will not ‘occur spontaneously simply because substantial benefits could be achieved’ (Ostrom 1996, 1082). Indeed, ‘designing institutional arrangements that help induce successful co-productive strategies is far more daunting than demonstrating their theoretical existence’ (Ostrom 1996, 1080).
- Within many current providers of local public services, there is a recognition of the need to re-think the roles and relationship between citizens, communities, elected representatives, practitioners and policy makers.
- However existing organisational culture and structures are perceived to often present ‘powerful’ and ‘systematic’ barriers (NESTA 2012) to achieving transformative co-production.

## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities: understand barriers

Experts, policy-makers, local public and voluntary sector practitioners and elected members we spoke with during the course of this review, expressed a series of barriers to achieving transformative co-production:

- ❑ The language, and indeed practice, of co-production feels unfamiliar to many.
- ❑ The unprecedented fiscal demands now faced by public bodies, create difficulties in balancing short-term imperatives with a longer-term sustainable vision for change.
- ❑ A coherent and shared vision about the roles of local public bodies and communities and the relationship between them has not clearly emerged in many organisations.
- ❑ Sense of reduced agency due to fiscal constraints.
- ❑ Lack of clarity about what the starting point for co-production could be (budget, systems, cultural change, services, outcomes) with a tendency to start from existing services and to set the terms of engagement with communities.
- ❑ Difficulties in disentangling complex existing systems and budgets.
- ❑ Concern about potential risks of 'letting go' (LGIU 2011), for example, in terms of the implications for representation, accountability and raising expectations.
- ❑ Uncertainty about how and when to initiate a conversation with communities and what the 'offer' may be.
- ❑ Tendency to 'second-guess' the priorities, interests and motivations of communities (LGIU 2011), often under-estimating the skills and assets available.
- ❑ Perceived lack of support, learning opportunities and guidance

## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities: recognise assets

- Many professionals and practitioners in current local public service providers recognise their own practice and underpinning values in co-production and are looking for an opportunity to take that further.
- Such individuals are assets in building a credible commitment but, many of 'those within the public sector who have the experience and understanding to support voluntary and community groups may be particularly vulnerable' to cuts in public spending (Taylor 2011, 258).

'... they challenge the mainstream way that the organisation does business so then it's harder to defend the service from cuts... they're losing their jobs'

- Extensive research suggests that there is exemplary practice at the front-line of local governance in engaging and mobilising communities:

Exemplary practice in working with local communities to take and sustain action has been extensively documented (see van Hulst 2011). These practitioners are understood to share four key characteristics: an entrepreneurial way of working; a broader commitment to social change; credibility with professionals and communities; and local knowledge, an in-depth understanding of local communities built through their lived and professional experience (see also Durose 2009, 2011).

- Community organising also offers insights into how to mobilise and develop co-productive relationships:

**Community organising** has a long and diverse international tradition (Alinsky 1946, Friere 1970, Diers 2004), but has more recently been popularised by Barack Obama. It offers visions and sets of tools for communities to recognise their common interests and mobilise to achieve change ([Durose et al 2013](#)). The Office of Civil Society, in a programme delivered by Locality, is supporting the recruitment and training of 500 senior community organisers along with 4500 part-time voluntary organisers over the next four years ([Locality 2011](#)). [CitizensUK](#) are a network and alliance of broad-based local community organising groups based in geographical neighbourhoods across the UK (2013).

## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities: starting the conversation

'it's about de-emotionalising it, not in guidance, but in conversations'

- Dialogue is the starting point for building a credible commitment

'Change springs from trust'

- Storytelling offers an accessible way of representing different voices and experiences (Pahl et al 2013) and facilitating professionals to pro-actively engage with citizens (Layard et al 2013).

“spending time to allay each fear... as well as demonstrating the long-term benefits has helped to convert some of my... colleagues” NESTA 2012, 4)

**Patient Stories, Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust:** Patients' stories of their experiences of health care in the community and community hospitals have been collected and shared with staff as part of a learning and development programme. The initiative was a way to share patient experiences and demonstrate how simple misunderstandings can impact on that experience. The stories were then used to make a short film raising the question, 'do you always see the person in the patient'? (Cumbria Partnership 2012).

**Structured dialogue method (SDM), Chamberlain Forum, Birmingham:** is a technique for listening critically to stories and using them in policy development and evaluation, 'Stories don't just reflect the culture: they ARE the culture. If you want to change culture, you need to change the stories and the way people tell them'. Key elements of the approach involve: a provocative theme – something to generate animated discussion; a diverse storytelling circle of around ten to fifteen people; two storytellers willing to share their experience; active reflection of all participants – not just the storytellers; structured questioning – not general discussion; and a skilled facilitator to manage the process (Slatter 2010)

## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities: using co-design

- **Co-design** helps to ‘identify the kinds of problems to which a service responds, rather than just giving people a say in the answers to pre-defined problems’ (Bradwell and Marr 2008, 18).

‘Embrace community agency, let them set the terms of the interaction and have the confidence to trust them’.

- ‘By turning people into participants in the design of services, they become innovators and investors, adding to the system’s productive resources rather than draining them as passive consumers waiting at the end of the line’ (Leadbeater and Cottam 2007, 98, see also Cottam and Leadbeater 2006).

‘if you want to talk about services, don’t start the conversation talking about services’

- A crucial part of co-design is creative practice (for example, music, art, theatre, photography, film ) which offers ways of challenging traditional community engagement practice through ‘gentle disruption’ (Light et al 2013)
- It also broadens the reach of engagement (Beebeejaun et al 2013): by mediating power and negotiating differential capacities (Durose et al 2011, Pearce 2011), drawing in conventionally under-represented groups (Layard et al 2013) and engaging different types of expertise (Fischer 2000).

## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities: examples of co-design

- The case studies illustrate how co-design, creative practice and physical interactions can help to build a credible commitment between professionals and citizens, whilst highlighting the importance of tailoring such tools to target specific communities (Cinderby et al 2011, see also Wyatt forthcoming).
- Connected Communities researchers worked with groups of individuals with a family member in prison to understand the wider impact of custodial sentences:

**Families Disconnected by Prison**: Hidden Families are a group of individuals with a family member in prison. Researchers and artists, Proboscis, worked with the group using conversation and the making of booklets, postcards and collages to express the barriers they felt prevented them from engaging in the informational support services available to them. Using a combination of participants' photos, words and sketches with the artists' illustrations, a block of eight 'story cubes' were developed. These cubes are interactive, tactile and accessible objects for opening and continuing a dialogue and raising awareness of the impact of prison sentences on families. The cubes are now being used in training by organisation such as Action for Prisoners Families and NEPACS (Coles-Kemp 2013a, b).

- The Design Council worked with a public body to produce a design intervention which would facilitate communication and understanding between professionals and patients:

**Design Council with Bolton Primary Care Trust, diabetes management cards**: Regular check-ups were failing to provide the support, motivation or insight to the real issues to sustain diabetes patients in their self-care. The challenge was to develop a tool that would personalise each consultation to reflect the individual needs of the patient. A pack of cards were produced, each presenting a patient statement taken from a real-life example. Patients and their families could use the cards to communicate their experiences, feelings and needs. The cards work not only because they are intuitive and flexible, but because the design reveals the often hidden dimensions of the challenges of self-care to both parties (Design Council, no date given).



## c. Build a credible commitment between front-line professionals and communities: examples of co-design

- Lambeth Borough Council has used a temporary space as a way of building dialogue with local residents:

**Lambeth Borough Council The Work Shop** uses a local accessible physical space - a 'pop-up' shop on Lambeth High Street – as a platform for co-design. The 'pop up' contained a number of interactive installations to inspire local residents, with examples of social innovation and existing community activity. The shop was 'bright and inviting' to challenge community expectations of what a 'council' environment should look and feel like and its opening was timed to coincide with existing community activity. Over the initial three weeks, 540 local residents visited the shop generating 184 ideas for new projects and improvements in services operating in the area, with 130 local residents expressing an interest in ongoing participation in the project.

- MapLocal is a spatial visualisation tool which facilitates community engagement in shaping plans and service design:

**MapLocal** is a Smartphone app which provides a tools for mapping community assets and contributing to neighbourhood planning by tapping into local knowledge and community creativity (Jones et al 2012). Cinderby et al (2011) examined the ways in which such spatial and visualisation tools can enhance the engagement and interaction of communities for knowledge exchange and problem-solving. Woodcock et al (2011) explored the potential for information and communication technologies to strengthen community engagement with Thomas et al (2013) highlighting the importance of considering the interaction between 'online' and 'offline' communities.

## d. Incentivise front-line professionals and communities

- Ostrom's fourth condition recognises that **'incentives help to encourage inputs from both officials and citizens'** (1996, 1082). Incentivising transformative co-production is about connecting with the values and everyday experiences of both front-line professionals and communities.
- It recognises that citizens 'donate their valuable time and effort to the achievement of organisational or program purposes...*when they receive, or expect to receive, something at least as valuable in return...*' (Alford 2009, 188 emphasis in the original).
- 'Communities often become most engaged in positive projects rather than critiques of existing policies. This requires some funding as well as access to expertise' (Layard et al 2013, see also Wyatt forthcoming)
- Creative practice can offer a way of engaging communities in positive project whilst also enabling them to gain new skills, offering positive reinforcement and building confidence (Layard et al 2013).
- Creative practice can also strengthen mutuality and reciprocity within communities, building social capital, but also a sense of identity and belonging. All of these aspects contribute to a sense of efficacy to act together as a community (McCabe et al 2011, Layard et al 2013).

## d. Incentivising front-line professionals and communities: staff development and training

‘Training and evidence are central to... professional identities and practice and adapting these elements will be crucial to the success of co-production’ (NESTA 2012, 4)

- For front-line staff, dialogue, support, training and skill-development are all crucial incentives to work co-productively with communities.

‘professionals are trained to believe in solutions, instead we need to train someone to change or to help themselves, [this] means working in a different way’

‘the challenge is often to overcome people saying, “but we do that already”, [we] have to push people towards the more radical variant’

- Skills for co-production may include, ‘individual co-ordination, personal advocacy, financial support, community development’ (Bartnik and Chalmers 2007, 38); ‘part good neighbour, part facilitator, part advocate, part support-worker’ (Poll 2007) and new forms of brokerage (Spalek 2011).

[nef](#) has worked with local authorities to set up a co-production forum and developed a co-production audit and training materials for staff (2008)

The Public Service Academy, University of Birmingham is exploring the **21st Century Public Servant**, a set of twenty-first century literacies, competencies and behaviours needed to support innovation and creativity in public service (Dickinson and Needham 2012, Dickinson 2012).

## d. Incentivising front-line professionals and communities: getting the language right

'if you break it down into specifics you can carry people along. The term itself is a barrier'

'co-production competes against many other policy terms and concepts... for some people the term... opened up new possibilities for practical action, for others it was a hindrance, [it's] too technical and impersonal... (NESTA 2012, 6)

'we're not using the word "co-production", it provokes a really negative reaction, it's too abstract, [we] find it much better to break down into practicalities'

**However, the language of co-production or arguments about efficiencies and cost-cutting are not always helpful in incentivising front-line staff or communities.**

'we need to hold onto the principles of co-production and the transformative element but along the way need to bring people with us, and that means being flexible and accepting different starting points'

'the problem is sometimes the term itself, it is seen as a management term'

'It needs to be done in a way that makes sense to people while retaining the principles'

'Can we find a word in Daily Mirror language?'

## d. Incentivising front-line professionals and communities: making it real

'people don't like learning from suits... or people with posh accents. They prefer peer learning'

'what is most powerful is direct contact, one area visiting another, asking questions, seeing work in practice'

'people have to believe it's real. They've got to get the idea that... [it's] people like me'

**Instead arguments need to be real and relevant:  
'showing not telling' / 'seeing is believing'.**

'there are lots of good examples out there and how they are being shared, but what makes a difference, is the face-to-face stuff, action learning sets, visits, swaps, exchanges, they bring it to life, you don't get this online, it's more time consuming, it costs more, but it works'

'people coming together and learning from each other is better than official training'

'face-to-face works better for me because of the relationships, you trust that more than a website where you don't know the context or the person'

## d. Incentivising front-line professionals and communities: peer-to-peer learning

- Research emphasises the centrality of the role played by informal interpersonal contacts and networks of near peers in spreading new ideas (Kolb and Fry 1976; Page et al 2004; Brannan et al 2008).
- Such contacts are considered, 'the most truthful and useful sources of information' (Wolman and Page 2002, 27).
- Peer-to-peer learning is useful in inspiring and mobilising by example, through learning about practicalities and building confidence to take on new ways of working. There is evidenced demands for peer-to-peer learning, with participants often citing the extent of learning from peers as the same, if not greater, than from specialist trainers (Richardson 2008, 223-224).
- Learning through experience is not just important for professionals, but also for communities. Both may need some financial and logistical support to enable this to happen (Layard et al 2013).

**Developing peer-to-peer learning:** There is support and existing infrastructure to help develop peer-to-peer learning. For example, [The Civic Crowd](#) provides an online interactive map, providing an open resource for citizen-powered change to share ideas and offer skills and support to help realise them. [Into the Field](#) organises opportunities to experience the benefits of visiting and observing projects first hand (Britton 2013a, b).

## Conclusions: Achieving transformative co-production through localism

- ❑ Transformative co-production is a radical response to the challenges faced by local public services.
- ❑ Co-production in practice looks like the creative coming together of existing resources and assets in new ways; diverse, locally appropriate relationships and forms; credible commitment between professionals and communities, who are incentivised in different ways to work differently and get involved.
- ❑ Transformative co-production can contribute to the effectiveness of local public services by making them **better informed** by communities preferences and needs, with communities then contributing to **improved outcomes** and **achievable solutions** (Ostrom 1996)
- ❑ Incentivising and building a credible commitment between professionals and communities also drives efficiencies in local public services through bringing together existing resources in new and creative ways.
- ❑ Transformative co-production is premised on challenging the significant barriers that exist within the organisational systems and cultures of many of the current providers of local public services. This transformation is most likely to succeed where change is nurtured and supported. Rapid divestment of resources or over-direction from the centre is likely to impede progress.
- ❑ Instead of looking for opportunities to ‘scale up’ successful community innovation, focus should be given to ‘scaling out’, spreading ideas and innovation between organisations, enabling local innovation to flourish (Bunt and Harris 2012, Berry 2012, O’Donovan and Rubbra 2012, Porter 2012, Bovaird 2013).

‘thinking about scale really gets to what people mean by co-production... stakeholders go through a process of designing a service to better take account of a set of circumstances, experiences... context is really important. It’s about exploring the possibilities, limitations, genuine responsibility, shared experience... it is difficult to think about that at scale... but if you [instead] think about scale as proliferation...’

## Conclusions: Achieving transformative co-production through localism

- ❑ Ideas are spread through horizontal connections, such as geographical proximity or regional identification, socio-economic equivalence, political similarity, and psychological identification (Brannan et al 2008, 26) rather than vertical scaling.
- ❑ Scaling out would address what Locality have termed a '**dis-economy of scale**' in local public services (O'Donovan and Rubbra 2012) and generate the '**mass localism**' called for by NESTA (Bunt and Harris 2010).
- ❑ A 'scaling out' approach would have the benefit of developing locally appropriate practice and reflecting citizen preferences, for 'small-scale, informal activities' (Richardson 2011, 5).
- ❑ The emphasis on delivering services that are locally appropriate means that, 'Uniformity in the quantity and quality of the service across jurisdictions is highly unlikely' (Porter 2012, 150).
- ❑ But achieving transformative co-production has fundamental and far-reaching consequences for governance. Ostrom argues that her conditions for maximising the efficiencies of co-production in local public services are 'most likely to be met in a **polycentric** political system... [which] offers citizens opportunities to organise not one, but many, governing authorities... [where] rules at a large system level can be written in a general form that can then be tailored to local circumstances' (1996, 1082). For further reflection on these issues, please see our sister review (Richardson and Durose 2013).



## Implications for policy makers

- Neighbourhood community budgets, neighbourhood plans and community rights all offer a potentially significant shift of power to communities providing grounding for transformative co-production of local public services.
- But how the ambition of transformative co-production is communicated is crucial. The message needs to engage with values and aspirations in order to motivate and mobilise people to work differently and take action.
- Communication will need to be different within and across communities, localities and professional groups.
- Transformative co-production depends on working with communities to bring together existing assets and resources in new and creative ways.
- Local public delivery partners (as broadly defined, including voluntary, social enterprise, co-operative and mutual models) may be best able to understand and engage with such priorities and values ensuring that opportunities are communicated in credible and locally appropriate ways.
- Community rights – particularly the ‘right to challenge’ – have been communicated as an opportunity for the community to ‘take over’. This message has been interpreted on the ground as exacerbating an adversarial relationship between existing service providers and communities, rather than encouraging collaboration and synergy, and so may be counter-productive.
- In commissioning services, the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which requires public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public service contracts, can help to ensure that small, local public and community organisations are able to compete fairly.
- Incentivising and inspiring, through peer-to-peer learning which feels ‘real and relevant’ is crucial to spreading co-production.
- Neighbourhood community budget pilots have demonstrated that flexible, innovative approaches are important to initiating and continuing the dialogue between professionals and communities. Co-design and creative practice offer ways to build a credible commitment and incentivise different stakeholders.
- For neighbourhood planning, spatial and visualisation tools (such as digital maps, computer games and touch-tables) seem particularly appropriate way of engaging the community in problem-solving.

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