

# All together now:

A toolkit for co-production with young people for use by Wolverhampton service providers, commissioners and schools.

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## Welcome

Welcome to our toolkit for co-production. Lots of different people have contributed their ideas and experiences to it. We think that this co-production process has made it richer, more interesting and relevant. We hope you agree.

The development of this toolkit has been led by Sunita Pallan-Jhalli, HeadStart Wolverhampton **Senior HeadStart Young People Engagement Coordinator**, and the HeadStart Young People's Engagement (HYPE) team. Emerson Morris, one of the HYPE team apprentices, took the photos. Our young HeadStart Ambassadors and many other young people involved in our co-production have also contributed their own views about what good co-production is, to bring the value of co-production to life.

We have worked with Anne Rathbone from Boingboing Resilience CIC ([www.boingboing.org.uk](http://www.boingboing.org.uk)), and University of Brighton Centre of Resilience for Social Justice ([www.brighton.ac.uk/crsj](http://www.brighton.ac.uk/crsj)). Anne has aligned the toolkit with the theory and evidence around co-production with young people for resilience, mental health and wellbeing. We have used some of the ideas and materials from Boingboing's co-production resources, and so, if you know Boingboing, you may find some bits familiar. You can reproduce parts of this toolkit with permission, but please reference it as follows:

Anne Rathbone, Sunita Pallan-Jhalli, Hansa Clay, Raymond Codner, Tara Bourne, Samantha Gregory, Francesca Turner, Emerson Morris (2018). *All together now: a toolkit for co-production with young people for use by Wolverhampton service providers, commissioners and schools*. HeadStart Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, UK: City of Wolverhampton Council.

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## About the Toolkit

### Who is it for?

The toolkit is for anyone working with young people in services, schools and communities. It has been produced to give more practical detail to help you implement the Youth Engagement Guarantee, which you can find at [www.headstartonline.co.uk/engagementguarantee](http://www.headstartonline.co.uk/engagementguarantee).

**Our Goals** The aim of the toolkit is to give any staff member working with young people a practical understanding of what co-production is, how effective it can be and how to do it well.

### We hope the toolkit will do this by:

- Giving an overview of what co-production is, and what it's not
- Convincing you of why this way of doing things is better
- Explaining our shared understanding of what good co-production looks like
- Providing real life examples of how youth engagement can work in practice in services, schools and communities
- Sharing examples of engaging and empowering ways of working
- Helping you to feel more confident in taking this approach

### How we hope it will make a difference

Wolverhampton Council has a strong track record of young people engagement and co-production. Within the council, HeadStart Wolverhampton in particular is being recognised nationally for its high level of commitment to co-production and joint decision-making with young people. We hope that this toolkit will build on this and continue to influence the way decisions that affect young people are made. In this way, more young people will feel valued and listened to, and they will benefit from support and services that are more relevant to their needs.

**Our belief** is that if staff give young people opportunities to contribute to their communities through co-production activities, then young people will seize those opportunities, and will challenge and change negative perceptions about the younger generations. Not all changes are big and quick, but together we can consolidate and develop a strong culture of empowerment and positive social action for young people in Wolverhampton that will affect generations to come.

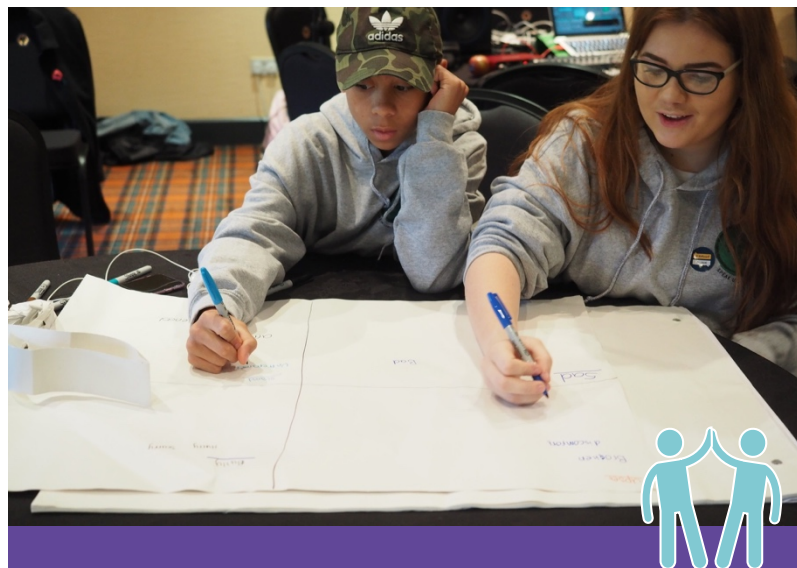


## About co-production

### What is co-production?

Co-production might sound like jargon, but it just means “working together to produce a product, service or activity.” It is based on the idea that many heads are better than one. It also celebrates the value of direct life experience (rather than only professional expertise) in planning, designing, delivering and reviewing services. In the public and third sector it is, amongst other things, a way of working that builds on the experience, knowledge and skills of a range of interested groups to design, commission and improve services, raise awareness through campaigns and produce education tools. Wolverhampton young people working with HeadStart have produced a great video about co-production, which you can see at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-f7hHa8xN4>

We can think of co-production as a journey that staff and young people go on together to get to a better place, learning from each other on the way.



There are many formal models of co-production, but we like to use our own adaptation of Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” (Arnstein, 1969). Whilst we realise the limitations of this model, we use it because we have found that it is an accessible way for staff and young people to have conversations about co-production and how young people can get involved.

This model is widely recognised as the classic labelling of participation levels, which demands a restructuring of power, from staff to young people. It shows opportunities to engage at different levels, with real progression opportunities that can be taken up by young people according to their different interests and motivations. Diagram 1 (below) shows how we have interpreted Arnstein’s Ladder for HeadStart co-production.



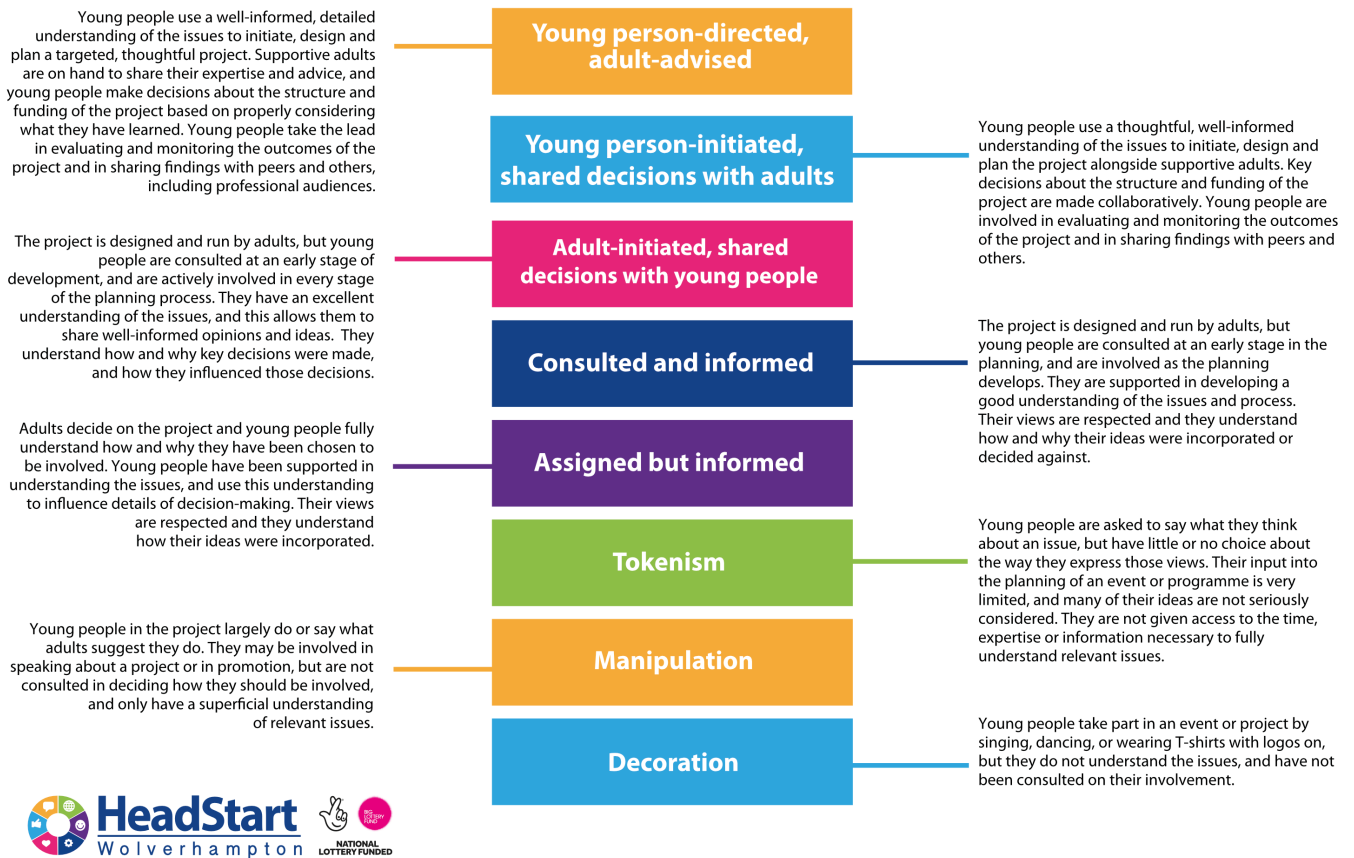


Diagram1: HeadStart Wolverhampton interpretation of “Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation” adapted 2016

It is important not to use this model to make negative judgments about young people who get involved at “lower” levels initially. We feel, though, that the ladder model presents a reminder or challenge to staff to offer high quality, meaningful opportunities and progression.

We see co-production as starting at the third level from the top (“Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people”) with the most meaningful co-production being work that takes place at the top two levels of the ladder. Sometimes it is appropriate to start at lower levels, but the aspiration should always be to aim higher.



## CASE STUDY: Progression through co-production



### Fran's story

“ Co-production with HeadStart has given me a fantastic opportunity to build my confidence. ”

Fran's journey is an example of a young person progressing through the different rungs of our ladder.

“I am now a staff member of the HeadStart team, but I didn't start there. I first got involved in HeadStart for a few hours a week. At first, I didn't have a lot of understanding of the issues or what was going on, but I was quickly asked to be part of events, such as attending conferences, to represent young people. I guess I was at the decoration stage. I quickly moved on though to being consulted and informed. I have recently been part of a commissioning and procurement process, where £1.4 million was awarded to various groups across our City. Here, the staff oversaw the process, but my opinion as a young person was valued and taken seriously, and I could see it directly impacted the final decision. I am continuously part of co-production, working with the Young People Engagement Team to write programmes, recruit staff and help to develop the Youth Engagement Guarantee, which spells out for services the need to involve young people meaningfully in their HeadStart work.

For me, this is one of the most important pieces of work I have been involved in, as it helps to make sure that young people are empowered, and their opinion really makes a difference. An example of being at the top of the ladder includes being given the opportunity in writing agendas, and facilitating our B-Safe Team meetings, which is our Junior Safeguarding Board in Wolverhampton. This has meant I have been able to use initiatives and really run with my own ideas. Co-production with HeadStart has given me a fantastic opportunity to build my confidence in working alone, working with professionals and being part of things I never thought I would be”.





## Principles of co-production

Co-production approaches can be used in many areas of service provision, awareness raising activities and research (this guide mainly focuses on the planning, design, commissioning and delivery of services). Therefore, it is most useful to think of co-production as based on a set of principles that help us decide which routes to take on our journey, rather than a strict formula that everyone follows, regardless of what they are trying to achieve.

We have used the principles outlined in the new publication *“Co-production in mental health - A literature review”* and combined them with our own, co-produced principles used in the HeadStart funding proposal and in our Youth Engagement Guarantee. We stay true to these, so we never get lost on this journey.

Our fundamental principles for co-production with young people are:

### **It is asset based (or strengths based)**

What we mean by this is that a co-production approach sees young people as having their own valuable perspectives, knowledge and skills. It is fundamentally different from the traditional position of seeing young people as (some might say, passive) recipients of services. Instead, it values them as equal partners in the design, commissioning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services.

### **It builds on people’s existing capabilities**

Co-production with young people also means building on the skills and strengths young people have, rather than imposing staff expectations of what is required. It means changing staff members’ thinking about planning, commissioning, delivery and review of services, so that it provides opportunities for young people to grow their capabilities. It actively supports young people to put their skills and life experience to work, for their own benefit and the benefit of their peers in the community.

### **It is based on reciprocity and mutuality**

This means offering a range of incentives for young people to work in reciprocal relationships with staff and with each other. It relies on clearly outlined mutual responsibilities and expectations, which are regularly revisited and reviewed. Essentially, it means that young people are valued and receive various benefits from being involved and that it is clear what these benefits should be.

### **It values and enables peer support networks**

Engaging peer and personal networks alongside staff, as the best way of transferring knowledge. Young people who “own” a service, because they are directly involved in its planning, commissioning, delivery or review can be our most effective promoters, recruiters and deliverers of the service.





## CASE STUDY: Young people campaigning



The HeadStart Ambassadors group wanted to make a change in their communities. They looked at upcoming national campaigns and decided that they wanted to support the Young Minds **#HelloYellow** campaign to show solidarity with all children and young people on World Mental Health Day (<https://youngminds.org.uk/get-involved/how-to-fundraise/helloyellow>).

As a group, the Ambassadors designed, created and staffed their own stand at the HeadStart Autumn Conference, that helped to raise awareness of the campaign. This is an example of co-production at the top two rungs of our ladder.

### It involves a blurring of distinctions

It is the opposite of “us and them”. It is working towards “we”, removing the distinction between staff and young people, and between providers and users of services. It recognises that we all share a stake in making sure a service is the best it can be, and that working together is the best way to achieve this.

Sometimes co-production results in the development of groups or activities that go beyond being described as a ‘service’, like the example of the young people-led campaign, above. Some people argue that ‘services’ are too “us and them” and just the very word “services” can put young people off using them. It can be useful to think more about ‘helping relationships’ and, very often, young people are the best people to offer these to their peers (peer delivery).

### It is about facilitating rather than delivering

It’s not about staff assuming they know everything and telling young people what to do. It’s about working with young people to empower them to lead and champion the planning, design, commissioning, delivery and review of services, alongside staff.



## CASE STUDY: Peer delivery

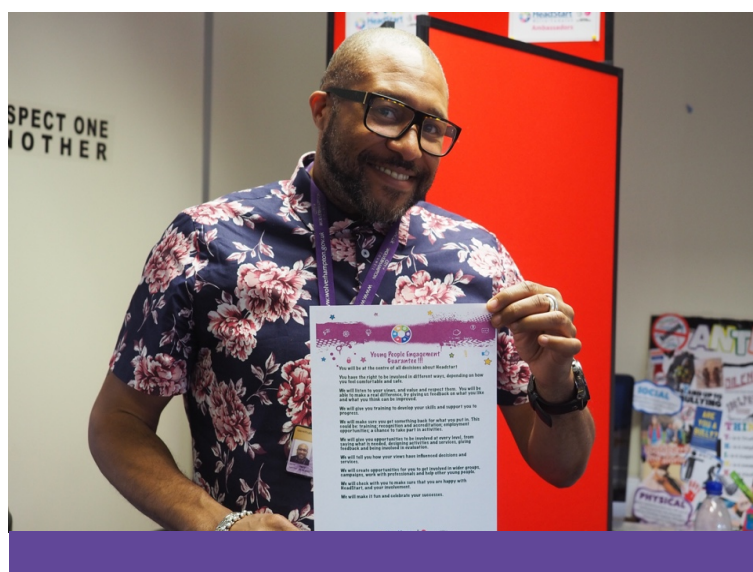
The HeadStart Wolverhampton Ambassadors have received training and support to develop their knowledge of wellbeing and their facilitation and presentation skills. They are now leading and delivering peer education workshops to young people around key wellbeing topics. For example, they have designed, created and delivered a workshop for other young people around dealing with stress. This has been delivered to young people in schools and communities.

## CASE STUDY: Building on learning and taking the lead

The HeadStart Wolverhampton Ambassadors are developing the Ambassador co-production model by co-designing and co-delivering Ambassador sub-groups in the four HeadStart bases. Building on learning from their involvement in the main Ambassador group, they have been peer recruiting young people from local schools and communities in the four base areas. These young people will attend groups to co-produce peer led initiatives in their areas. This has been delivered to young people in schools and communities. The Ambassadors are planning, organising and co-delivering sessions in which newly recruited young people will be involved in peer consultation, planning for future local projects and contributing to decision making in HeadStart as a whole. They are being trained and supported to deliver educational workshops with their peers.

The approach underpinning HeadStart co-production builds from all of these principles and is in line with the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2016-2019 (City of Wolverhampton Council, 2016).

HeadStart Wolverhampton has embedded these principles in the approach of its Youth Engagement Guarantee, which requires all HeadStart commissioned services in Wolverhampton to use this approach.





## The Young People's Engagement Guarantee:

We require all our partners and commissioned services to develop and demonstrate co-production that is based on the following principles:

**1** Young people will be at the centre of all HeadStart activity and decision-making.

**We call this co-production.**

**2** Every young person has a right to be involved, whatever their needs and abilities, so our young people engagement opportunities will be safe and **accessible for everyone.**



**3** Young people's views will be **heard, valued and respected.** They will be able to make a real difference, by challenging and informing change.



**4** Young people will be given training and support to develop their skills and progress their involvement, in ways that match their interests and needs.



**5** Young people will receive clear benefits as a result of being involved in co-production. This may be: training; recognition and accreditation; employment opportunities; access to services.



**6** Co-production with young people will be integrated into every part of governance, delivery and decision-making across all Headstart activities.

**7** Young people will receive direct feedback on how their views have influenced decisions and services.



**8** Young people involved in co-production have opportunities to influence other partnership programmes and activities, and produces longer-term sustainability.



**9** Young people engagement will be evaluated to demonstrate its value and impact.



**10** Young people engagement will be fun and young people will be celebrated for their success.



For more information visit [www.headstartonline.co.uk](http://www.headstartonline.co.uk)

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## Why bother co-producing with young people?


There is little doubt that it is simpler, quicker and requires less effort to just get on with projects and tasks without taking a co-production approach. It is important, then, to be really clear about the benefits of co-production. Here are some of them:

- Whether you are a school, a service provider or a commissioner, involving young people in co-production leads to services and support that are more suited to their needs, and therefore will have more impact and be better value for money.
- Co-production with young people gives staff a sounding board to challenge their assumptions and ideas and can help them see how little things can have big impact in real-life situations.
- It gives a more up-to-date picture of current needs and priorities, which amongst young people in particular, can change at a fast pace.
- Young people will have their voices and opinions heard and their skills are often strongest where adult skills are weakest. For example, young people may have expertise in digital media, social media, or performance which are lacking in adults working alongside them.
- It can empower young people to take control in their own lives (which is shown to be significant in promoting good mental health) and to use other services and support systems more effectively to meet their needs.


Over the next two pages are some of the key benefits of co-production, as seen by HeadStart staff and young people.




## Key benefits of co-production - what staff think




Young people know what works best for them




It's about young people being role models and inspiring their peers




It gives young people a platform to speak for themselves



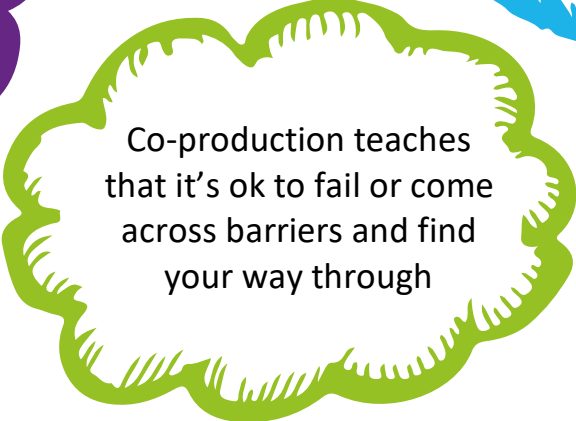
If they've been part of designing it they are more likely to use it and tell others



Young people aren't afraid to be innovative and creative in a way that adults have become too inhibited to do



It gives young people insight into what professionals do, and professionals insight into what it's like to actually experience services



Co-production teaches that it's ok to fail or come across barriers and find your way through



Young people who have been involved in our co-production think it has helped them to...

*...learn teamwork and respect for others*

*...get a fair say*

*... be positive rather than  
negative to solve problems  
easier*

*...understand mental health  
more and to get help*

*...use our own  
experiences to help  
others, which makes  
us happy*

*...stay out of trouble*

*... make a real difference in  
our community and give us  
a healthier mind*

*... work with a wide range of  
people who have different  
experiences in life and develop  
strong communication skills to  
express ourselves*

*...be taken seriously*





## Who can do co-production?

The short answer to this is, anyone who is committed to it. Every organisation that is commissioning, designing or delivering services for young people could and should be taken a co-productive approach. Often, staff are afraid of working in this way, especially if they do not see themselves as specialists in working with young people.

However, staff don't need to be experts to work with young people. They will find them friendly and willing to help as long as staff treat them with respect and follow the basic principles above on pages 8 and 9. This toolkit gives guidance on how to do that in practice.





## Stages of co-production

### The cycle of co-production

The model below in Diagram 2 shows a cycle of co-production that summarises the process, and shows how it can end or continue to meet the needs of the situation and the group.

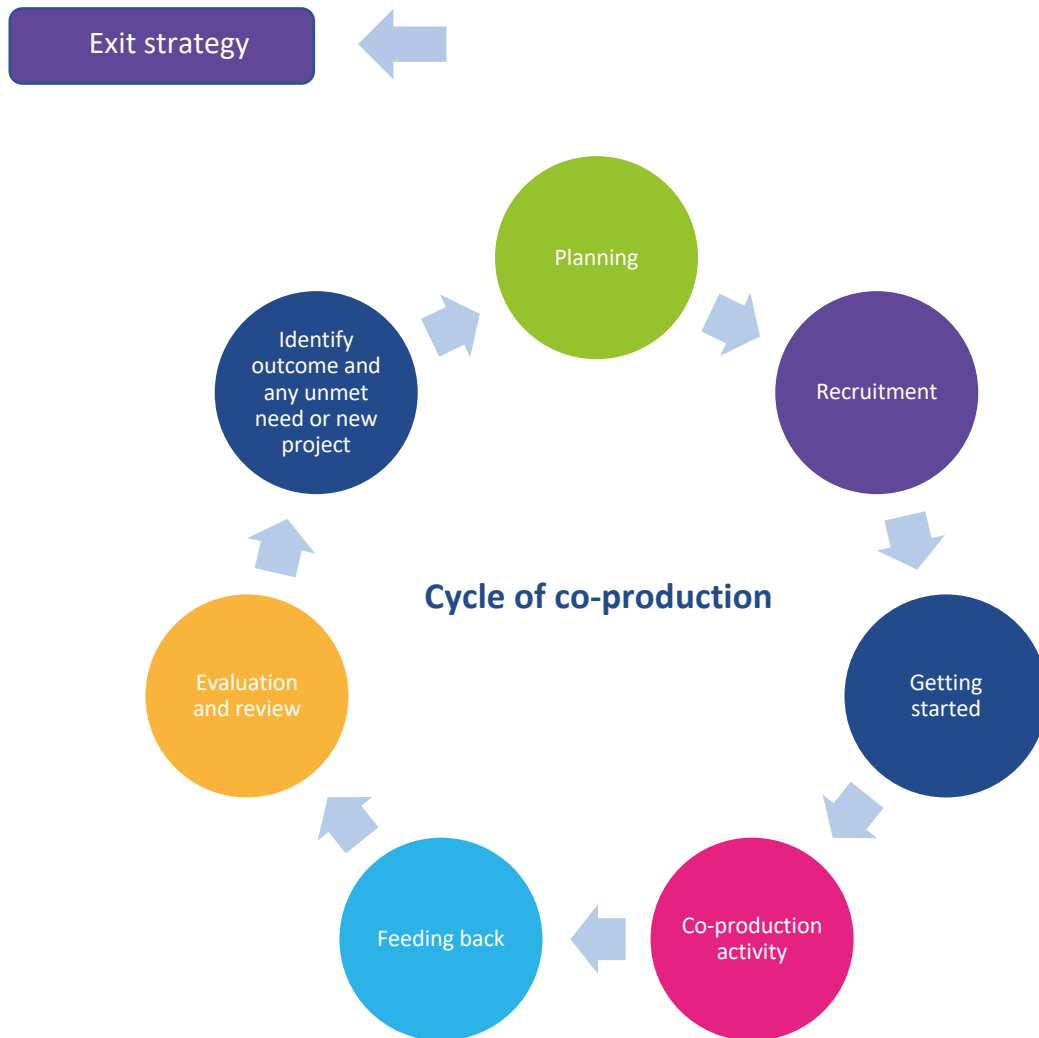


Diagram 2: A cycle of co-production (Rathbone, A. & Pallan-Jhalli, S. for HeadStart Wolverhampton, 2018)



## Planning

Pre-planning by staff is key, because it is important that staff have thought through the issues and barriers that they need to address. Of course, this does not mean that staff should exclude young people from the planning stage of the actual co-production process. It means that staff need to have thought through in advance how it might work, to make sure that timescales and resources reflect the needs of the co-productive process itself.

## Recruitment

It is crucial that co-production is inclusive of young people who may be more vulnerable or have additional needs. Otherwise, co-production will be flawed and may even lead in the wrong direction, because it provides insight about what young people with lesser challenges think and need, but not what is important to meet the needs of those with greater challenges. This is easier said than done, and so enough time and resource needs to be allocated for this (see also Aim to be inclusive on page 22). Working with other, targeted agencies or groups to reach young people with particular challenges may be a way forward, but be prepared for this to take time and patience. Targeted services, in particular, will want to be sure that the process has been well thought through and is meaningful before they facilitate access to young people they are working with.

## Getting started

Good communication throughout the co-production process is vital, and this applies from before the first session (see Prioritise good communication on page 21). Another important aspect of good co-production is achieving a balance between careful pre-planning, flexibility and involving young people as equal partners in how the actual co-productive process should go. Young people will have their own ideas about the precise focus of the co-production and methods that they are interested in. Shared decision making from the beginning is important, based on good preparation and enough of a plan to get started.



### Co-production activity

There are many activities that can facilitate co-production. Some discussion and reflection is important, but too much talking is rarely well received (see 'Provide a range of opportunities' on page 26). Young people and staff can make short films and vlogs together, design and undertake mini interviews of wider groups of young people to get their views, or use art activities. Whatever the activity, recording the discussions that go on during and after the activity is key to gaining real insight. All our tips and tricks (pages 21-32) are important to address in the co-production activity.

### Feeding back

This is about keeping everyone engaged in the co-production process, and about giving young people (and other staff who work with them) the respect of letting them know how the co-production process has impacted on decision-making (see 'Prioritise good communication' on page 21).

### Evaluation and review

It is important to evaluate co-production activities for several reasons:

- It evaluates whether or not co-production was valuable in this instance. This is especially useful if you need to justify it in terms of time or other costs.
- It makes it easier to feedback to young people what you have done with their contribution.
- Ongoing process evaluation provides you with information about how young people are experiencing working with you and how you can improve your co-production practice.

See 'Evaluation' on page 33 for more details.



## How co-production fits in with a service cycle

The model below in Diagram 3 shows how co-production can be embedded into a service planning and delivery cycle. Before starting, remember to ensure your recruitment and your preparation is inclusive.

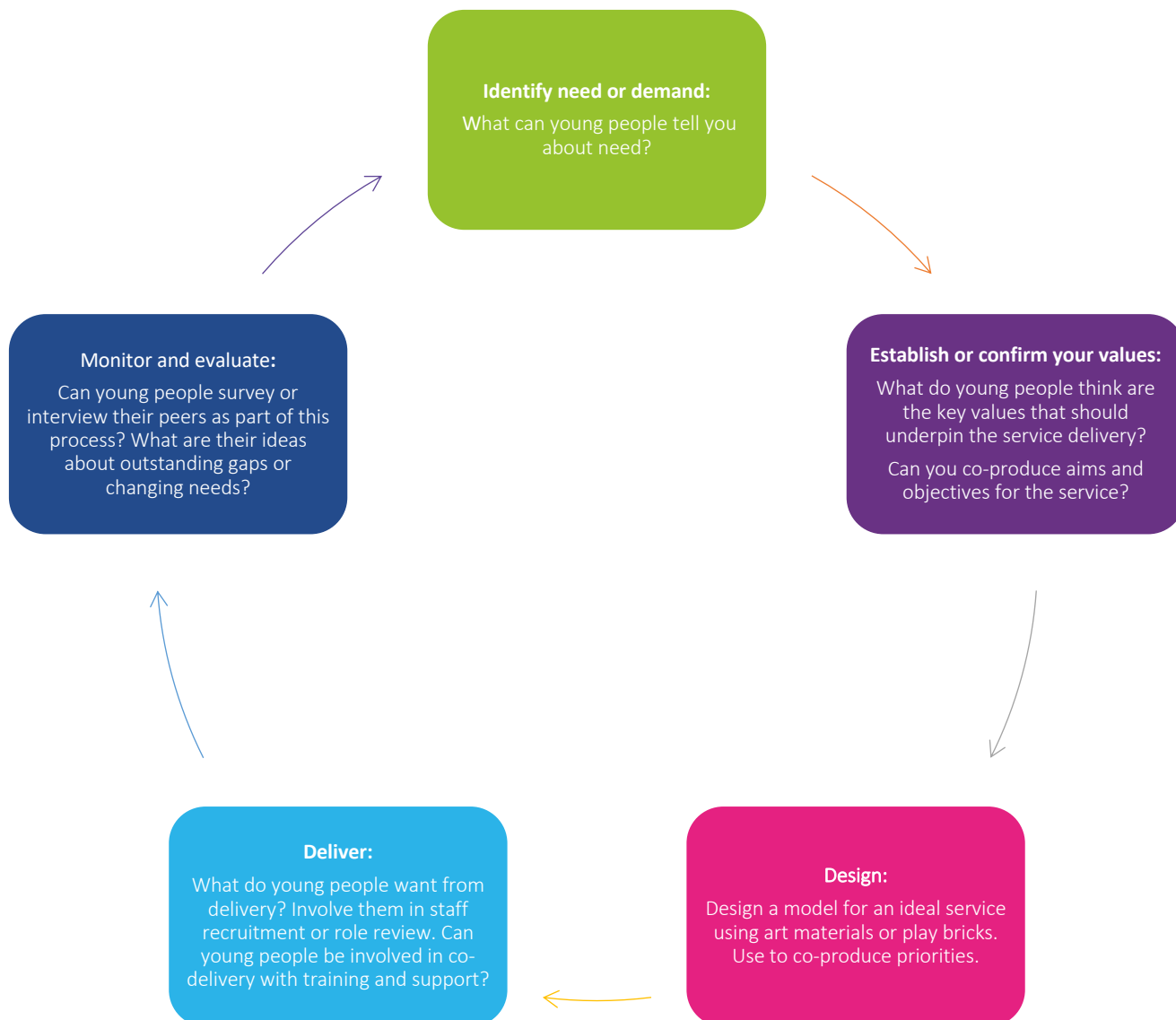


Diagram 3: Co-production embedded into service planning, delivery and evaluation (Rathbone, A. Boingboing, 2018)



## How co-production fits in with the commissioning cycle

The model below, taken from Southampton City Council co-produced commissioning toolkit, shows how co-production activities can support and enhance the commissioning cycle for young people’s services.

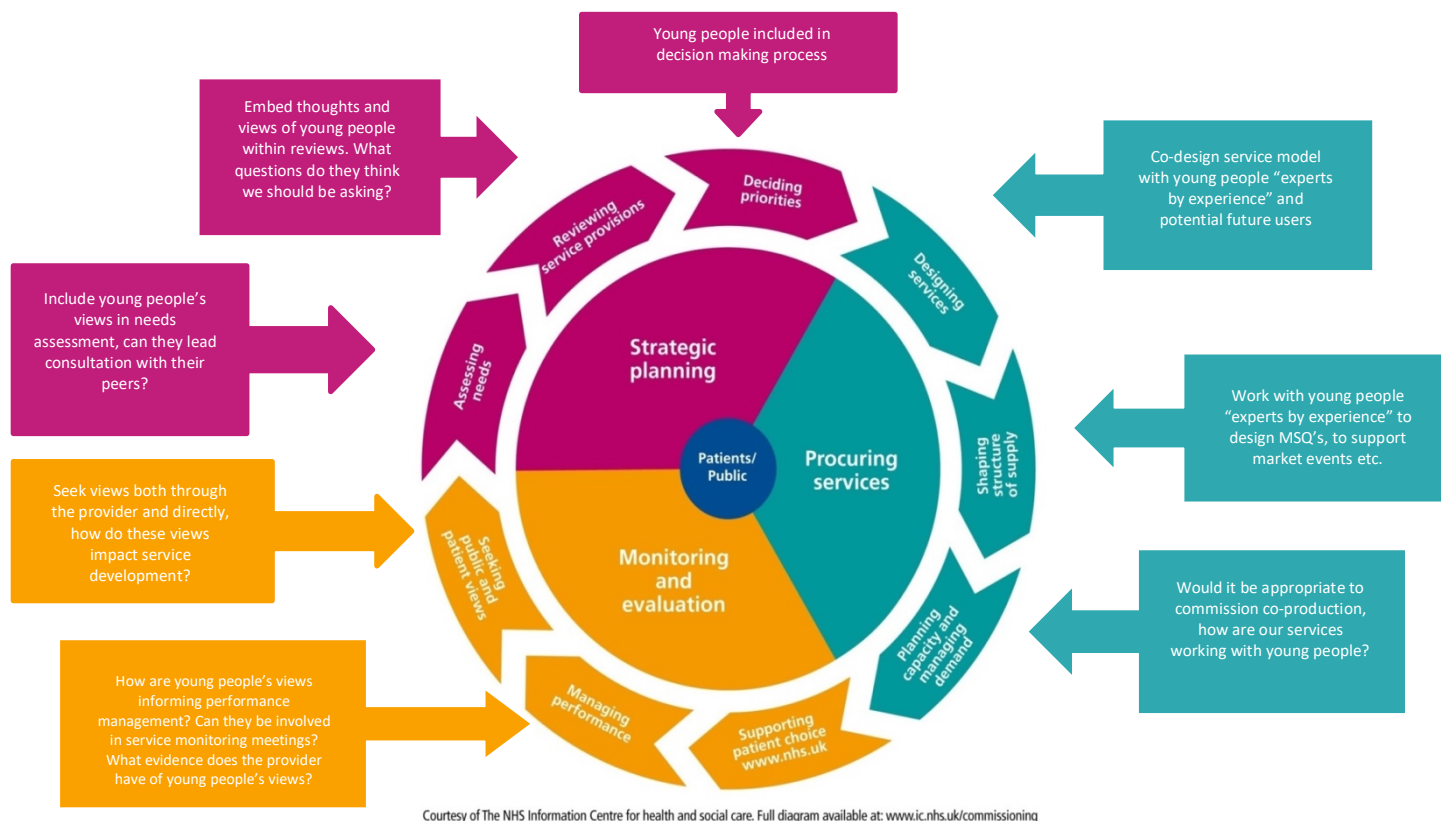


Diagram 4: Co-production in the commissioning cycle (Southampton City Council, 2018)

## CASE STUDY: Co-commissioning

Fran was part of a panel where the outcome was £1.4 million being awarded to community groups for three projects: work with parents, offering a place to go for young people, and a newshounds media group. After she had had some training on what to do, Fran was given several bids that she read through and evaluated, using a scoring sheet.

Once all members of the panel had evaluated the bids individually, they met as a group and discussed their thoughts and opinions to reach a consensus. Here, Fran’s opinions were considered meaningfully alongside others with various expertise, and had a real impact on the final decisions. She had the full support of staff right through the process.



## Some tips and tricks for effective and enjoyable co-production

The next few pages offer some very practical tips to staff who want to initiate a co-productive project with young people. They are based on what we have learned, as young people and staff, along our own co-production journeys. Our tips show how to work according to the co-production principles above, in a practical way.

### Prioritise good communication

Communication is vital before, during and after co-production sessions with young people. For young people who have phones, constant text reminders help to ensure good attendance, and avoid the pain of organisers sitting and waiting on their own in a room at 7pm in the evening.

Communication from staff to young people needs to be consistent throughout a co-produced project with regular feedback - even if it's to say there hasn't been much progress yet.

Feedback is very important. We all know how it feels when we have fed your views into decision-making and someone takes that away and we never hear about it again. It doesn't encourage us to be involved further, or with different initiatives in the future. Feedback should include:

- ✓ keeping young people and other staff informed about what has come out of sessions (providing summaries and checking that you have interpreted their views correctly)
- ✓ feeding back on how the co-production process is influencing decisions, and if not, why not ("You said - we did" is a useful format to use). Try to do this in accessible and visual ways.
- ✓ updating staff who are working with and supporting the young people in your co-productive process



### Aim to be inclusive

Some young people would love to give you their views and get involved in co-production, but have trouble with travel logistics for all sorts of reasons. Checking out whether people can get to the session, providing whatever support they need to help them get there (for example, reimbursing transport costs or even providing transport like a taxi) can transform your work to include young people who don't usually get a say.

Some young people may have other barriers to getting involved apart from transport. Taking extra steps to offer opportunities to young people who might feel excluded is extremely important if co-production is to be meaningful. Otherwise, there is a risk of ending up only with the views of more advantaged young people.

Generally, think about how to make sure that the co-production is welcoming and accessible to groups of young people with particular challenges and needs: learning difficulties, physical disabilities, mental health needs and other challenges.

Ask young people (or staff who are working directly with them) what the most convenient times are to meet. Not only is this the respectful thing to do, it will increase the attendance and inclusion at your meeting.





## Treat young people with respect

Treat young people as you would any other person - with respect for their unique perspectives. Working in a respectful way includes:

- Having properly planned and being prepared for meetings so that you can explain things clearly and simply and have all the materials you need to hand.
- Working from the point of young people's interests and needs. Be flexible to change your agenda if young people take the discussion in their own direction, as long as it is helpful to what you are trying to achieve.
- Thinking about the language you use to make sure it is accessible without being patronising. Avoid acronyms that you may be taking for granted and ban non-essential jargon from your vocabulary. Explain clearly the meaning of necessary terms.
- Dress appropriately for sessions. You don't need to wear ripped jeans, but suits and ties are unlikely to set the tone for an equal, mutually respectful dialogue.
- Listening (see page 29)



### Provide refreshments

Having nutritious food or drinks is a good incentive and promotes bonding. A break with food and drinks will enhance your co-production sessions. Check with young people what they prefer to eat and drink, within the limitations of what you can get delivered or can bring.

Remember, healthy food is good for mental health, so try to provide food that is nutritious as well as delicious.



## Make it fun

Co-production won't last long if it's boring. When preparing, think about how you can make your co-production work more creative. For example, use play bricks to design a perfect emotional wellbeing service (you may be surprised how rich the discussions are that go on); make a collage using images from magazines or the internet about young people's mental health needs to inform your commissioning needs assessment; make a film (you only need a tablet or even a smartphone) on what the ideal support worker for young people would be like. Use co-production as an opportunity to unleash your imagination and get young people involved in thinking through the best approaches to use.



### Provide a range of opportunities

Allow young people to take on responsibilities and roles. What these are depends on what you are doing. Some examples are: writing blogs, chairing meetings, or doing research for your joint focus.

Remember that, just like any other age group, young people are all different, with diverse needs, interests and abilities. Provide a range of opportunities to get involved, through written work, artwork, film or social media. Try to make your co-production with young people work through lots of different types of activities.





## Aspire to progression

If you are working with young people to co-produce service design, commissioning or delivery, remember the different levels of engagement in our ladder. Young people should have opportunities to get involved at the level they feel comfortable and progress to higher levels of co-production.

The process and facilitation should accommodate this. This will make for the best possible experience for staff and young people and the best possible outcomes for the service.



## Learn and teach

Good co-production is a two-way process of learning and teaching. With some projects, young people will need training or support to understand the brief and what we know about good practice that can form a basis for them to question, challenge and input their own perspectives. In this, they are just the same as anyone else - we all need induction and the right tools to do a job.



## Listen

The whole point of co-production is to understand what young people need and want, and what their experience tells them works, which may be different to what you assume. Co-production only works if you are prepared to put your own assumptions aside and really listen. Aim to truly understand before you aim to be understood.





## Young people acting

Some of the best co-production happens when young people can get involved in affecting change. One example of this is young people getting involved in National Campaign Weeks or their own social campaigns, like the suicide campaign undertaken by members of HeadStart Wolverhampton (<http://wolverhampton.gov.uk/article/11428/City-marks-World-Suicide-Prevention-campaign>).

Talking to staff and managers in positions of power is another effective way for young people to achieve real change. This can mean having places on management committees, Strategic Boards etc. To be meaningful you need to make sure that young people have help to be properly prepared, understand papers and topics for discussion, have the opportunity to state their views and get feedback on what actions have been taken or how their opinions have influenced decisions.

Achieving practical change can also apply in direct service delivery and quality assurance. For example, one project in Brighton involves people with lived experience in the role of **“Quality Checkers”** ([www.stayuplate.org](http://www.stayuplate.org)) whose role is to ensure that the project is being delivered in an appropriate and accessible way to their peers.



## Give recognition

Giving recognition to young people for their time and what they have achieved with you is important. This could be financial payment but other recognition can also be very much appreciated. You could see if they are involved in any accreditation schemes and whether their work with you can be used in their portfolios or CV. Award ceremonies are great too. Little gifts show your appreciation. Another great reward if you can get the budget for it is to arrange a social activity like bowling or going out for dinner.

## CASE STUDY: Recognising achievement

A group of HeadStart young people and staff went to a residential in Wales for a 2-night outdoor activity residential, including co-production activities. Upon arriving, one particular young person with additional needs, by his own admission found difficulty in completing ALL tasks set, from tying his shoelaces and making his bed to climbing a ladder and completing a very small assault course. He claimed he “could not do anything” as his parents did everything for him. By the end of the stay, with much needed constant one to one support and ongoing praise and guidance by staff and other young people, he was doing everything that others did. This included a demanding 10-mile walk, canoeing and abseiling over a huge cliff. Upon completion of the residential he was able to achieve an Active ASDAN accreditation through HeadStart. He received his certificate via an end of term whole year assembly. Photos of his journey and progress were captured and displayed to all during the presentation.

This young man not only achieved and received a recognised qualification, but also was able to overcome his own barriers and personal demons, which had previously allowed him to believe he was destined to fail in all that he tried. His family members, school staff and his peers recognised a change in his attitude and behaviour following this experience. Most importantly, for the first time, this young man openly admitted that he was now proud of himself, and really believed he could do anything that he put his mind to.



### Advocate where necessary

Sometimes you may need to advocate for the opinions of the young people with whom you have been co-producing, or you may have to represent to others the shared decisions or proposals you have reached with young people. This can be a challenge of co-production for all of us who have more senior people to answer to, especially in larger institutions.

It is important though to be prepared to speak on behalf of the young people you have been working with if co-production is to be meaningful. If a decision is made by someone senior to you that doesn't coincide with young people's views, then it is essential that the reasons why are clearly fed back and explained.



## Evaluation

Recording is key to evaluation and can seem daunting at first. However, recording your co-production activities can be easy and fun. If you are comfortable with a camera or video, then use it. Better still, identify a young person who loves to do this and who would like it to be their role. Often, young people who find it difficult to stay focused and engaged in group discussions can come to life when they have the job of recording through photos and film.

Pictures speak a thousand words. You can photograph activities, flipchart notes, images that you and young people have created together. Artwork is also a great way to present young people's views. Images have a different power than reports and monitoring information. Funders, managers and Elected Members love to see them as much as any of us. They can really encapsulate the voice of young people, especially when accompanied by direct quotes. Remember though, you need to have consent for use of any photos, and parental consent if the child or young person is under 16. You should not use identifiable photos of young people in Local Authority Care (check out LCSB guidance for more details).

Be reflective. Think about your sessions. What did you do well and what did you think could have been improved? Check this out directly with young people. You may be feeling worried about something that you did but young people experienced it quite positively (or vice versa). If you explain that you really want their honest feedback so you can improve your practice they are likely to want to help you with that. You may need to be brave to do this the first time - especially if you don't usually work with young people - but it is worth it. You will grow in your practice as a result.

**Appendix A** is a checklist you can use to plan and reflect on your co-production activities and practice.

**Appendix B** is a table that will help you to think about how you can evidence your co-production. The Wolverhampton HeadStart contract monitoring will expect you to be able to feedback on these areas, so keeping this form up to date will really help you with this.

So, it just remains for us to say enjoy your journey and don't forget to take pictures or write postcards along the way.



## Useful references

### Books, articles and other documents on co-production

Arnstein, S.R., (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of planners*, 35(4), pp.216-224.

Aked, L. et al. (2009). *A guide to co-producing children's services*, [PDF], New Economics Foundation and Action for Children, Available at: [http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/d745aadaa37fde8bff\\_ypm6b5t1z.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/d745aadaa37fde8bff_ypm6b5t1z.pdf). [Accessed on 16 April 2018].

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Social Care Institute for Excellence and Think Local Act Personal Partnership. (2015). *Co-production in Social Care: What it is and How to Do it* [PDF] – Easy Read Summary Available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/files/guide51-easyread.pdf>. [Accessed on 16 April 2018].

Stephens, L., Ryan-Collins, J. and Boyle, D. (2008). *Co-production: A Manifesto for growing the core economy*. [PDF] New Economics Foundation (nef). Available at: [http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/5abec531b2a775dc8d\\_qjm6bqzpt.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/5abec531b2a775dc8d_qjm6bqzpt.pdf). [Accessed 16 Apr. 2018].

### Films on co-production

Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). (2013). *What impact can co-production have?* [Online Video]. 21 October 2013. Available from: <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/what-is-coproduction/economics-of-coproduction.asp>. [Accessed: 16 April 2018].

Thinkpublic. (2009). *The Story of Co-Design*, [Online Video]. 9 February 2009. Available from: <http://lhalliances.org.uk/ideas-hub/the-story-of-co-design/>. [Accessed: 16 April 2018].

Boingboing. (2016). *Boingboing Community University Partnership Hits the Road* Available from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH\\_OXhKdWhQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH_OXhKdWhQ). [Accessed 15 May 2018].





## Appendix A: Co-production checklist

Stage	Check	Yes? No? Needs more work or time?
Before starting	I am clear about the parameters of the decision-making young people can have in this project	
	I am ready and prepared to communicate with young people what is “in scope” and “out of scope” for their decision-making or involvement	
	I have thought about, and decided, who I need to work with on the co-production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An established group?</li> <li>• A universal or mixed group?</li> <li>• A targeted group in age interest or need?</li> <li>• A specially recruited group?</li> </ul>	
	I am clear about how I think young people can contribute but I am also ready to be flexible and work with their own ideas	
Getting started	I am prepared with a clear message about what I want to do and why	
	I have a clear and appropriate way of communicating this message to projects working with the young people I want to work with and the young people themselves?	
Working through	I have strategies for implementing the above “Tips and Tricks”	
	I have all the materials I need prepared to make the experience accessible, engaging and interactive	
	I am ensuring that somebody, preferably a young person, is recording activities and what’s created through them	
	I am getting regular feedback from young people on my practice	
	I am giving young people regular feedback on how their views and work have influenced and changed strategy and delivery	
	I have signed consent for photos, films, use of quotes	
Towards the end and after	I am prepared to really reflect on my experience - what I did well; what I could have done better; what I learned?	



## Appendix B: Preparing for Monitoring

These questions and prompts will help you be prepared for monitoring of your HeadStart or other contracts or grants.

Questions/prompts	Your thoughts and notes
Which young people did staff recruit for involvement in co-production activities? How inclusive was the recruitment?	
How did we do this? What were the barriers and how did we try to overcome them?	
Why did we recruit these particular young people? What is their relevant lived experience or contribution?	
What was in scope for their decision-making and action and what was out of scope? How did we communicate and negotiate this?	
Can we give specific examples of how we were flexible and responsive to young people's needs in the co-production process?	
How can we show that our process was effective? How did we implement the "Tips and Tricks" in the Guide to Co-production?	
How do we know our co-production processes were effective?	
What changed or was influenced as a result of our co-production?	
What do we think didn't go so well, and what are our ideas for improving next time?	

