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Co-Production Week 2020: The Importance of Building a Co-Production Network

Vicky explains how co-production is more than just individuals, communities and organisations embracing the concept; it is about a wider network of people coming together and sharing learning

Over the course of co-production week 2020, we have been busy building our Ageing Better network of co-production steering groups which involve three regionally located groups, representing Ageing Better programme areas in the South West, South Midlands and North of England. Our first task is to pool together our learning to create a central online **Co-production Toolkit**, which is to feature a catalogue of resources such as, “how to guides”, video blogs, case studies, partner & participant stories, webinars on a range of themes, and much more; the ideas are only just starting to materialise.

We want to be able to share our learning with others and we realise the importance of building networks. No programme is an island and we see ourselves as one part of a much bigger picture in terms of helping to influence how co-production is utilised and integrated.

Our hope is that our work will help to inspire other individuals, organisations and stakeholders from a range of different settings. We are already buzzing about what services, people and professionals can achieve together, and we want to inspire others to buy in to the ethos and practice of co-production. We believe that it's all about effective collaborations and we value the importance of tapping into other co-production networks. We thought we'd share some of the ways that we are doing this, and highlight what is already happening out in the world of co-production. We hope that you won't just be inspired, but will take action to get involved too.



An appreciation to those doing great co-production work

SYHA and the Ageing Better Co-Production Project will be taking part in the second virtual Co-production Network session next week, hosted by our colleagues from [UCL's Centre for Co-Production](#). We will be joining 60-70 other network members to explore how we can keep co-production alive during these challenging times and break down the barriers to co-producing in a virtual world. UCL are a creative bunch and offer loads of different ways that you can get involved and bring co-production practice into your own environment; you can sign up to their newsletter [here](#). We really like UCL's set of guiding principles, which include:

- Respect for diversity of experience and perspective
- Collective decision-making
- Commitment to addressing power imbalances
- Understanding the meaning of and fostering authentic co-production

- Understanding the meaning of and fostering authentic co-production
- Commitment to challenging the status quo
- Be accessible to and inclusive of all
- Ensure mutual benefit for all
- Be open, transparent and honest – yet pragmatic and real
- Check & challenge throughout
- Encourage innovative practice

[SCIE](#) (Social Care Institute for Excellence), who initially launched co-production week 5 years ago, oversee a [co-production network](#) that supports user, carer and equality groups who are involved in their strategic decision making; and [Oxfordshire Co-production](#), a group of people who are committed to doing co-production, believe that, “if we all work together, we can make services better and more sustainable, and communities stronger and healthier”. They put together an amazing schedule of events for co-production week this year, in collaboration with other groups and organisations. Here is their [Co-production Handbook](#) which is designed to help people to understand and start to do co-production, it's a fantastic resource.

And last, but certainly not least, SYHA have their very own co-production consultancy service [Co-Create](#), who provide consultancy, training, facilitation and strategic support to help organisations and groups to take the necessary steps to allow co-production to happen in a holistic, meaningful way. They share SYHA's dedication to [strengths-based](#) ways of working and focus on *what is strong* and not *what is wrong*, and have supported many of SYHA's internal projects; they are helping us to build our co-production networks too.

Ageing Better's co-production legacy

There is so much inspiration out there and the Ageing Better programme are delighted to have the opportunity to leave behind our co-production learning, as part of our long-term legacy when our programme comes to an end in 2021. Thanks to £78 million of funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, the programme has spent six amazing years doing an endless amount to support older people, working with communities, for communities across 14 programme areas.

Please do keep in touch over the coming months to share our journey, as we co-create our tool-kit, design our webinars, organise our learning events and continue to build our networks. To link in and subscribe to our co-production updates, contact Vicky O'Donoghue, Ageing Better Co-Production Project Lead, at v.odonoghue@syha.co.uk.

A big thank you to all who have taken part in co-production week, we hope you have been as inspired as we have. We would especially like to thank our Ageing Better programme partners for contributing to our #coproductionweek2020 campaign. There will be lots more to follow as we have so much to share!

Written by Vicky O'Donoghue (Co-Production Project Lead for Ageing Better)

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Age Better in Sheffield

Age Better in Sheffield was set up in 2015 with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund with a remit to reduce loneliness and social isolation amongst people aged over 50 in Sheffield. In the 7th year of the programme, we are taking the learning, resources, partnerships

and projects forward with a renewed focus and passion towards building an Age friendly

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