

Working Together

Co-production Newsletter – Autumn 2020



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Welcome to the Autumn edition of Co-production Oxfordshire's newsletter. We aim to keep you informed about co-production happening locally and nationally, and to let you know how you can get involved, develop your skills and bring about positive change.

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Reflections on Co-production Week 2020

Sarah Stephenson-Hunter, Co-production Board member and champion

As a relatively new Oxford resident, I'm still exploring all that the city and county has to offer.

One unexpected discovery has been the term "co-production" and I can honestly say it's been a revelation!

In my role as Staff Disability Advisor at the University of Oxford, I provide confidential



support to staff with disabilities and long-term health conditions across the collegiate university. I am also committed to sharing my knowledge and expertise in the wider community wherever possible. I was approached by the Oxfordshire County Council Co-production Team and asked to be

a member of the Team-Up Co-production Board after having been a guest speaker at an OCC event earlier this year. I have to confess I was rather sceptical on what exactly it was I was being asked to do and what exactly “co-production” meant but once I delved deeper I soon realised that it was simply a name for something which I’d already been doing for many years both personally and professionally.

To put it simply co-production means, “working together as equals and making best use of our resources and strengths to find ways of doing things that benefit our community.” As someone who has had a variety of health issues throughout my life and who has been totally blind since 2011, I have had cause to access support from both statutory and voluntary services and have not always found this to be a positive experience. I have always found it quite incredible that often such services are developed without listening to the lived experiences of the very people they seek to support, and this is exactly what co-production revolves around.

Although I have only been a member of the Team-Up Co-production Board for a short while, I have already found it to be an incredibly empowering, uplifting and inclusive experience. The Board provides support and advice to people trying to do co-production and has a “check and challenge” role. I am also now one of the co-production champions, which are a group of practitioners who

encourage co-production in their respective services and organisations. Even though the coronavirus pandemic has meant I’ve not been able to physically meet my fellow board members and champions, I can honestly say they feel more like friends than colleagues and I always come away from meetings feeling encouraged and empowered.

One of the most powerful aspects of co-production is the genuine desire to learn from others and share experiences of things that have worked well and those that have not. There is a “bring and share” section at each meeting and this is always my favourite part. Not only do you get to hear about some of the fantastic projects that the champions are involved in across the county, you really do learn that co-production isn’t just some dry academic theory which restricts imagination and creativity but quite the opposite!

With this in mind I was really looking forward to this year’s Co-production Week in England which took place between the 6th and 10th July. Last year, Co-production Oxfordshire ran its first ever Co-production Festival, where people from all over the country came together to talk, learn about and celebrate co-production, as well as have some fun with a variety of art and music activities. Although this year’s events had to be switched to online it nevertheless included a schedule of inspiring, interactive and stimulating events.

One such event was an open Team-Up Board meeting through which we have sought to demonstrate what a board meeting looked like and to hear from members about their motivations for being involved.

The event was a great example of the warmth, friendship, mutual respect and authenticity, which I found to be integral to the work of the Board and champions.

Sadly, I wasn't able to attend many of the other sessions I would have liked

to during the week but from the interest I saw on social media, and from talking to others who did, there is a genuine sense that co-production is becoming more of a movement than a methodology. I feel privileged to have been asked to be part of this movement here in Oxfordshire and I would really encourage you to find out more for yourself about what co-production involves and how you can use it to shape your service, project or community group no matter how large or small.

Co-production Week England 2020: Highlights and Feedback

"The passion the champions and partners showed was infectious."

Despite the pandemic, Co-production Week England (6-10 July) was a great success with a packed programme of thought-provoking

online events run by local and national organisations. Our initial disappointment at not being able to meet together for our co-production festival was

"I like the modelling of the principles of co-production within the meeting/ event"

lessened by the encouraging response from local and national organisations to run virtual events. 21 services and organisations took part. Everyone worked hard and fast to put together an event or resource in order to share good practice in co-production and the learning from working together to respond to the crisis.





Holding events online actually

“Thank you to yourself and the team for a simply brilliant, impactful co-production week. Just fabulous.”

enabled the week to be even more collaborative, with more people running events and increased access from around the country and even Europe. Following positive feedback, whatever the circumstances next year, we may run at least some events online in order to increase accessibility. Co-production Oxfordshire ran three events, which were over-subscribed with delegates joining us from all over Britain. Our Co-production Board members, most

of whom use services or are carers, and champions took key roles and spoke passionately about their experiences and commitment to working together to improve people’s lives. Six speakers from different sectors shared their recent experiences in Friday’s event: Lessons from COVID-19: How crisis enables collaboration.

“More people signed up to our events advertised during Co-pro Week than to any other event we’ve done.”

We supported and promoted events from other organisations, such as Rethink Mental Illness, Oxfordshire Kindness Wave, Oxford Influence Group and Oxfordshire All In. The Care Leaders ran a series of training events and Oxfordshire Recovery College shared their experience of setting up online interactive workshops quickly and co-productively in response to the pandemic. Cormac Russell, Managing Director of Nurture Development, led a discussion on asset-based community development and Be More Pirate shared lessons from the golden age of piracy. University College London (UCL) and Camerados each created spaces to just ‘be’ and chat with others, which have been lacking in the pandemic.

“In 20 years of working for the council, this [the co-production programme] is the thing that has made the most difference.”

There were many positive comments during and after events, and a follow-up survey to delegates resulted in encouraging feedback. “Insightful”, “inclusive”, “welcoming”, “enlightening” and “wonderful” were words that were used to describe events. One delegate said the Co-production Board had ‘a culture to aspire to’. There was also some

constructive feedback on what we can improve, including people wanting more information on the practicalities of forming a Board and the amount of time given to introductions. Evidence suggested that the week will have a substantial impact. Several delegates said they had been inspired to start doing or increase co-production in their own areas.

“I learnt loads! Will be speaking to our [local authority] to see if we can get a board up and running.”

News, Training and Resources

The Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE)’s Evaluation of the first two years of the Oxfordshire County Council’s Co-production Programme was published on 7 July 2020 and is available [here](#).

Co-production Oxfordshire were on the radio! Co-production Lead Danie Woodbridge and Board member and Champion Sarah Stephenson-Hunter were interviewed on BBC Oxford on Sunday 16 August as part of their Make a Difference campaign. Listen again [here](#) (at 2:21:40).

The newly formed Oxfordshire Voluntary and Community Sector Alliance are seeking to engage with the local voluntary sector and other

key stakeholders to get their views and input. Find out more [here](#).

If you haven’t done it yet, check out our [free introduction training module](#). We are planning to **re-start our advanced training programme**. Details to be confirmed soon but contact us to express your interest.

Local user-led learning disability organisation **My Life My Choice produced a video presentation for Co-production Week.** [‘Co-production: Doing it the together way’](#) is about working collaboratively with people with learning disabilities to make sure that their voices and opinions are heard. It looks at how My Life My Choice and its members work together to deliver self-

advocacy groups, talks and training, and champion the voices of people with learning disabilities.

Oxfordshire Community Support Services, who provide tailored support activities for adults who have a learning or physical disability, dementia or ageing health or mental health needs, **produced a film on how they have been working differently** during the crisis. *Collaboration in a Time of Crisis* is available [here](#).

If you are interested in different approaches to evaluation, check out **Arts at the Old Fire Station's webinar recording** on [Storytelling Evaluation Methodology](#).

Oxfordshire Kindness Wave are running a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for 230 Housewarming Parcels to be sent to young people moving into their new homes from 1st of October 2020. Find out how [here](#). See below for more information on Young People Supported Accommodation, the new service for these young people.

Our friends at **Co-production Network for Wales** are running a free *Introduction to Co-production* webinar on Monday 7 September. Find out more and sign up [here](#). In case you missed them, the **five inspiring videos from young people with experience of care**, which were shared by The Care Leaders in Co-production Week, are available [here](#).

The Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) have recently run two webinars and the recordings are available:

- [Co-production in a Changing World](#)
- [Co-production and communities: how to make it real for commissioners](#)

As part of their community reporting work, **People's Voice Media** are collecting stories from people during the pandemic in a project called COVID Conversations: Share your story. You can share your story, or encourage others to do so, [here](#).

Co-production Question Corner

Have a co-production project you want to share? Need help with involving people in a project or the design of a service? Get in touch at coproduction@oxfordshire.gov.uk We will do our best to answer and will publish questions and answers in the next edition to share the learning.

Spotlight on Oxfordshire: *Oxfordshire Recovery College* *Stephanie Byrne*

Oxfordshire Recovery College offer a range of courses and workshops about mental health for adults across Oxfordshire. Our courses range in theme from understanding diagnoses, such as depression or psychosis, to using creative writing or art in recovery. Our courses are for people who use services- so people with experience of mental health issues – but also for their family, friends or carers, and for mental health professionals.

Co-production is at the heart of everything we do –we involve people with lived experience of mental health issues in every aspect of the college from making strategic decisions to designing all our courses. On all our courses and workshops at least one of the tutors presenting will be speaking from their own lived experience of managing mental health issues.

Our aim is to give people hope for the future and encourage each other to build on our existing strengths and develop resilience. We have a co-produced mission statement:

Through learning together, we support each other to grow in hope and confidence and better manage our own mental health.

In September 2020 we will be offering both online workshops, and courses students can attend in person. Our in-person courses will take place in our training room at the Straw Bale Building behind Restore on Manzil Way in Oxford. Courses last 3 hours and we have clear guidelines in place to keep our students safe. We will have courses about Understanding Depression and Understanding Anxiety - and a new course very relevant for today's changing world situation called Adapting to Change.



As an alternative we will also be offering a range of online workshops. These last one hour and we send students a link to join in. We have a 5-week course about the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, as well as workshops about Coping with Stress and Healthy Sleep.

All our courses and workshops are informal and interactive, and 90% of our students report they found our courses helpful. Here's one student's feedback:

“This course was an absolute eureka moment for me, thank you so much. I have been asking my doctor, counsellor, Mind worker for exactly this kind of thing for years but got nowhere. To be able to speak to others who are experiencing the same as me, without them judging me, and not having to listen to a counsellor, who has never had a panic attack in their life, telling me what I should be doing was incredible. Your tutors were amazing, patient and understanding. Also being able to share your experiences with others and know that they understand is so valuable.”

We also run a regular Tutor Training to train new tutors - many of our tutors started their journey at the College as students and are keen to share their lived experience of learning to manage their mental health with others who are struggling.

We always welcome new students and people keen to train as tutors. To find out more take a look at our website:

www.oxfordshirerecoverycollege.org.uk or give us a call on 01865 779613.

Spotlight on Oxfordshire County Council: *Young People’s Supported Accommodation*

Oxfordshire County Council provides accommodation for vulnerable young people or young people at risk of homelessness. The young people are aged 16-24 and may have experienced separation from or loss of family, trauma, abuse, neglect, parent drug and alcohol addiction, or parent mental health or disability issues. The contracts for these services were coming to an end in April 2020. In Autumn 2018 Strategic Commissioning Manager and Co-production Champion Liane Low led a thorough review of the service to find out what was working well and what could be better.

Views were gathered through surveys, interviews, workshops, semi-structured telephone interviews and focus groups. 240 pieces of feedback were given, including from 70 young people.



Young people talked about wanting more support and more time from staff. They also asked for help in developing skills for independence (for example cooking, 'necessities of life', managing money and finding work).

A new service has been remodelled as a result of all of this feedback and information, which is being co-commissioned with district councils. The new service will provide more intensive support to young people to develop their independent living skills, and find employment, education or training.

7 organisations are providing the service, with the shared provision for 16 and 17-year olds brought in-house with OCC delivering the support and an organisation called Response delivering the property management.

Throughout the commissioning process frontline staff and district councils shaped the tender documentation and were part of the evaluation panels. Young people were invited to attend the interviews for providers and in-house staff. Being part of these professional processes is a challenge and young people need effective training and

support to ensure that they understand and provide input into this process in a consistent and professional manner. Their contribution should also be recognised, and the service will offer accreditation to young people for being involved in interviews as well as other areas.

Providers will ensure that young people and staff shape the service through frequent engagement and co-production activities so that young people have input in the evolution of the service. This is a contract requirement and will be monitored by OCC and good practice shared.

Young people are being supported with the move, which has now started for the in-house service and will take place for other young people by 1st October. Providers have created [introductory videos](#) for young people which can be used by staff to support with moving and there is a joint video to introduce the new service and providers delivering it. Visit the council website for further information:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/ypsa>

Get involved!

Do you have a project to tell us about, or comments or suggestions? Want to subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter?

Please do get in touch... (see contact details on next page)

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Acronyms used in this newsletter:

OCC – Oxfordshire County Council

SCIE – Social Care Institute for Excellence.