

Co-producing public services:

The Birmingham Co-production Roadshow

University of Birmingham, 29 March 2011

“Co-production of public services means the public sector and citizens making better use of each other’s assets and resources to achieve better outcomes and improved efficiency”



Governance International and the University of Birmingham hosted a Co-production Roadshow on behalf of NESTA and the *new economics foundation* on 29 March 2011 in the Senate Room, University of Birmingham.

SETTING THE SCENE

Halima Khan, Director of the NESTA Public Service Lab, welcomed participants from a wide range of public and third sector organisations and user groups involved in public services. She stressed that co-production is a key element in the Public Services Lab’s work in promoting citizen- and community-centred public services and welcomed the potential benefits that the burgeoning co-production movement could bring to future public services. So far, NESTA’s work, in partnership with the new economics foundation, has defined co-production, developed a ‘model’ around six key principles and explored why co-production has not been scaled more widely in public services. NESTA has now launched [People Powered Health](#), working with the Innovation Unit. This new programme supports the design and delivery of innovative services for people that are living with long-term health conditions.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Professor Tony Bovaird from INLOGOV (University of Birmingham) outlined why co-production has become so important in UK public services. Service users have experience and knowledge that service professionals don't have. They are also in a strong position to help other people who use services. Public services which can unleash these resources can be more efficient and achieve better outcomes. Tony reported the results of a *Governance International* and Tns-Sofres international survey to show how widespread co-production has already become across Europe. Moreover, the results indicated that about 70 per cent of citizens are willing to do more to improve public services.

Tony outlined the distinctive principles of co-production, which:

- involves a shift from service users being passive consumers to active asset holders;
- promotes a more collaborative relationship between staff and service users;
- focuses on delivering outcomes, not just services or targets.

He distinguished **substitutive co-production** in which public sector inputs are replaced with inputs from users or communities – this brings immediate efficiency savings – and **additive co-production** in which user and community inputs complement those from the public sector. He emphasised that the latter type of co-

production may greatly boost public outcomes – but it requires investment of public resources.

Although the concept of 'co-production' is still novel in public services, Tony suggested that elements of it have already become well understood and indeed practised:

- **Co-commissioning** (e.g. participatory budgeting, individual budgets and personalisation, people who use services involved in the selection of providers)
- **Co-design** (e.g. user groups to revise service processes and forms, wikis to provide service information)
- **Co-delivery** (e.g. expert patients, neighbourhood watch, parent governors)
- **Co-assessment** (e.g. user ratings, tenant inspectors)

Elke Loeffler, Chief Executive of Governance International, outlined the *Governance International 5-Step Change Management Model* for successful co-production in public services.

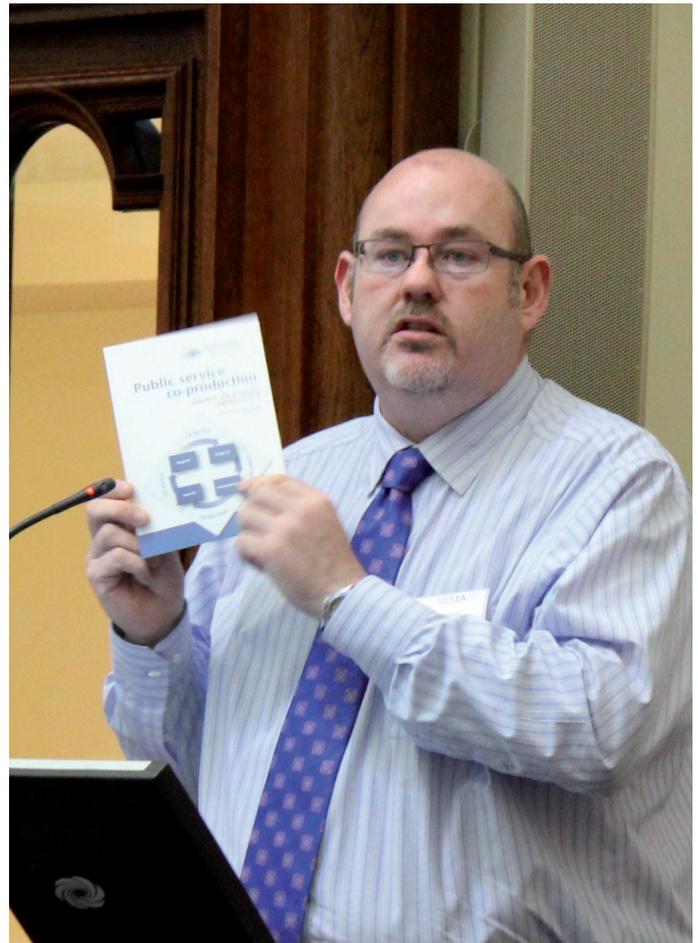
1. **Map it!** Find out how much co-production is already taking place – there is usually much more going on than public agencies appreciate. Another good starting place is to look at the level of self-help by users and the level of self-organising in communities and to ask how much more effective this could be if the public sector supported it more actively.
2. **Focus it!** Not all services can be or should be co-produced – public agencies must prioritise their co-production activities, identifying where are the biggest savings or improvements in outcomes.
3. **People it!** Public agencies have to identify the people who are keen to co-produce with them, e.g. by undertaking 'capabilities' mapping in local areas and key services, and then to mobilise these people in high-impact activities.
4. **Market it!** Explaining co-production clearly to people who use services and to frontline workers and designing proper incentives to encourage them to work together are critical to motivating them and capturing their imaginative inputs.
5. **Grow it!** Successful initiatives need to be scaled up and adopted in mainstream services – this needs convincing business cases of where co-production works and how it can transform existing services or provide new ways of achieving outcomes.



Paul Sheehan, Chief Executive of Walsall Council, outlined the challenges driving local government to pay more attention to co-production. The Coalition Government's reforms have brought a *'fundamental and irreversible change to public services and the role of the state'*. The key question in this new era is *'What can the public sector at the local and national level afford to commission?'* He suggested that, with reduced budgets, if co-production is more resource intensive it is unlikely to happen. However, co-production could provide part of the solution to the public sector's current problems and enable citizens to have a greater stake in creating public value. He also emphasised its role in civic development, encouraging citizens to demand rights and responsibilities for shaping and delivering services. Moreover, the active involvement of service users in commissioning and design processes allows for better understanding on both sides, alerting government to desired outcomes and service users to opportunities and constraints around service provision.

Where Walsall Council is moving towards co-production, it is doing this because it provides a way to do things better, driven by a clear business case. This helps managers to understand and provide leadership to shape co-production. He finished by suggesting that both sides, government and citizens must become ready for change – while the state must first unlock its door, when the door is opened, people must be prepared to walk through it. **Jim McManus, Joint Director of Public Health, Birmingham City Council and Birmingham PCTs**, detailed his experience of co-production in health services and the reasons why co-production hasn't always taken place. A key obstacle to successful co-production has been that it represents hard work for commissioners with busy workloads – and this had not been helped by the short timeframes to which commissioners had typically been working. Other obstacles to co-production included: user antipathy because they believed that it's the job of professionals to provide services; professionals believing that they know best; and the belief that co-production was risky and expensive.

Jim emphasised that co-production was now a necessary way forward in health as it both empowers individuals but also creates positive social impacts. Where co-production can help people to exercise more control over their daily lives, nudge them towards preventative behaviours that stop problems developing, encourage them to self-manage their conditions and enhance their feelings of self-efficacy, it can greatly improve the outcomes they experience individually. This has two major effects – it emphasises healthier living and higher wellbeing, rather than simply treatment of illness. Secondly, it ensures that health care



inputs actually work better when we use them. Jim concluded that co-production was therefore likely to be particularly important for groups such as people with long term conditions, people who needed to change their health-relevant behaviours, carers who need support, people recovering from operations or rehabilitating from heart attacks and people with mental health issues. And, above all, co-production would be critical to the whole preventative agenda in health and wellbeing.

Join the new economics foundation Co-Production Practitioners Network!

The network provides a forum for frontline practitioners to discuss their work, the approach they take, and the challenges they face. Sign up at:

<http://coproductionnetwork.com/page/about-coproduction>

WORKSHOP CASE STUDIES

Martin Simon, from Timebanking UK, and Lawrence Hughes, from Fair Shares, showed how time banking can act as a mechanism for co-production. Martin Simon outlined the fast growth of time banking – there are now over 102 UK time banks, with 20,000 people. Time banking makes people feel useful, stops them becoming isolated, and brings them into a community in which they feel safe and secure. Lawrence Hughes described how [Fair Shares](#) started out as the UK's first time bank in Gloucestershire in 1998. This has expanded to six Time Banks with more than 1,000 participants, 200 organisations and 60,000 hours of community engagement, e.g. through a 'Prisoners and Families Project' that helps prisoners maintain contact with their families, reduce re-offending, and improve rehabilitation.

Caroline Tomlinson, co-founder and Director of In Control, described how the national charity is working to build stronger communities. Caroline outlined how In Control works directly with communities and individuals to provide support, develop and test new ways for them to take greater control over their lives, e.g. through the personalisation agenda and individual budgets. [In Control](#) also examines the differences these initiatives have on individuals and communities in order to spread best practice and provide a strong business case for the possibilities of co-production.

Alison Lush, from Solihull Council gave a presentation about the Council's Environment Champions, who help the Council to tackle the community's problems with vandalism, littering and other environmental crimes through greater community involvement. Since the project started, more than 270 champions have taken part in projects that are co-designed and delivered by the Council, residents, and school children. This has brought significant savings for Solihull Council, reduced anti-social behaviour and bolstered social cohesion. Photographs outlining the environmental impacts of the project can be viewed on Governance International's [case study of the project](#).

Rabiyah K Latif, Birmingham City Council, described the Council's employment advice service for refugee communities. Due to language barriers and trust issues on the part of refugees seeking advice from public services, the Council decided to work more closely with those organisations that provide local services that can help refugees to get into employment. Through this approach, the Council was able to help to raise the employability of even the most 'hard-to-reach' refugees and to build capacity for self-help and self-organising within the refugee communities. This peer support approach also produced significant cost savings. To read about this in full [click this link](#) to Governance International's website.

Publications on co-production

Public Service Co-Production: What it is, why it matters and how to do it. A Governance International Briefing Note.

Making the cuts – how to involve service users and communities: The Big Society, Small Budgets Model (BSSB), A Governance International Briefing Note.

From Engagement to Co-production: How Users and Communities Contribute to Public Services. Written by Tony Bovaird and Elke Löffler in Taco Brandsen and Victor Pestoff (Eds), *New Public Governance, the Third Sector and Co-Production*. London: Routledge (2011, forthcoming).

Practical approaches to co-production. Building effective partnerships with people using services, carers, families and citizens. (November 2010). Written by Shahana Ramsden, in collaboration with the TASC Co-production Group on behalf of the Department of Health.

The Challenge of Co-Production. How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services. By David Boyle and Michael Harris. New economics foundation (nef) 2009.

Public Services Inside Out. Putting co-production into practice. By David Boyle, Julia Slay and Lucie Stephens. New economics foundation (nef) 2010.

Right Here, Right Now. Taking co-production into the mainstream. By David Boyle, Anna Coote, Chris Sherwood and Julia Slay. New economics foundation (nef) 2010.

