

TRAUMA INFORMED NETWORK
CORNWALL



SAFER STRONGER SYSTEMS

AN EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE CO-PRODUCTION GUIDE

2025

**SAFER
CORNWALL**

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CONTENTS

- 01 Hello
- Glossary
- 02 Our co-production guide
- 03 Start from a place of inclusion
- 04 Grow organisational culture
- 05 Nurture people
- 06 Respect and dignity
- 07 Value our voice and contribution
- Experts with Experience
- 08 Continue our conversations

Thank you

This project simply would not (and could not) have happened without the generosity, passion and skills of our contributors. The guide was co-produced by a group of Experts by Experience and practitioners with their own lived experience.

We worked together as part of the Safer Stronger Systems project, to build the capacity of the Trauma Informed Network Cornwall. Funded by the Serious Violence Prevention Programme and coordinated by the charity Safer Stronger Communities.

Our like-minded collective are committed to involving people in the services that support them. We've engaged our curiosity and compassion to explore shared ideas and experiences. At times this journey has involved gentle debate, to get to the heart of an issue. We have thought purposefully about every word written in this guide and are proud to share them with you.

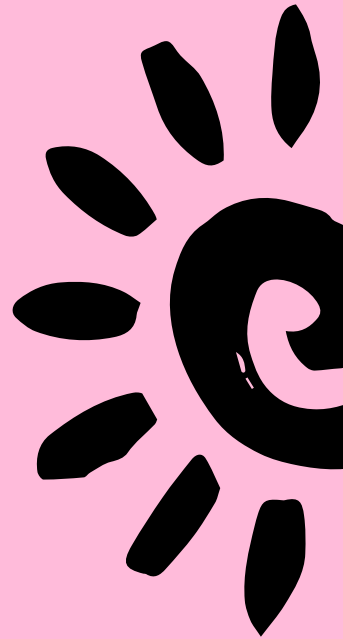
HELLO

01

Welcome to our practical guide for involving Experts by Experience in co-production. We hope these pages offer you some quick wins that build towards longer term inclusion and improvements. Making services and systems safer, stronger and more inclusive for everyone. Together.

Next, you will find our one page overview of the things we think will support Experts by Experience to work alongside you to achieve co-production. Each of these themes is explored in more detail throughout the rest of the guide...

But first, here are our shared definitions of the key words you will read as you make your way through our guidance. We hope this list will support everyone to be on the same page and understand our suggestions.



GLOSSARY

Co-production - Co-production happens when people come together as equals. Including lived experience perspectives within conversations, planning, policy, provision and legislation to influence improvements that benefit everyone.

Experts by Experience - People who use their experience to improve the way services are planned, delivered and reviewed.

Hierarchical pay structures - Levels of pay ranked according to job roles, responsibilities, experience, qualifications and seniority.

Lived experience - Knowledge and understanding gained from personally living through something.

Measuring impact - Recording and assessing what has been learned and what is different as the result of a project or service.

Organisational culture - The values, beliefs and working environment of an organisation.

Policy - Intentions, guidelines and goals that influence practice.

Power - A person's capacity to influence, control or have access to choices, resources and status. Sharing power can support the inclusion of people with lived experience.

Practice - Actions and approaches used by practitioners to support people to address their needs.

Services - Deliver support that helps people address their needs, e.g. Cornwall Council, emergency services, charities.

Shame - Emotional response arising from a feeling of having failed to meet personal and/or collective expectations. Shame shapes how people view and value themselves.

System - Connected network of individuals, organisations, policies and practices that should work together to support and include people.

Trauma - An emotional response to a distressing event. Trauma is unique to each individual. And it's really personal. Trauma is dependent on people's own experience. What feels really traumatic to them, might not be the same for you.

Trigger - A reaction to something that causes memories, emotions or feelings linked to trauma.

CO-PRODUCTION GUIDE

1. Start from a place of inclusion

Co-production thrives when people have choice. Establish clear roles, boundaries and support. Provide pathways to build skills and confidence, ensuring activities are inclusive and well-paced. Respect diverse needs and experiences. Prioritise accessibility, safety and transparency, while valuing contributions and fostering trust.

2. Grow organisational culture

Create a responsive workplace that plans for participation and values everyone's contributions. Build on people's strengths, integrate lived experience into practice and commit to empowering individuals to lead. Cultivate a culture of inclusion where listening, learning and adapting drives meaningful improvements in services and policies.

3. Nurture people

Co-production goes beyond fitting people into systems. True partnership requires professionals to embrace inclusivity and trauma awareness. Nurture continuous growth and development by encouraging brave conversations and supporting people's own platforms to share and educate. Invest in training and pathways into professional and leadership roles for Experts by Experience.

7. Continue our conversations...

Validate that co-production impacts people as much as services and systems. Provide regular updates, celebrate small wins, and share honest impact stories. Embrace diverse models for measuring impact. Share learning with peers and stakeholders to ensure transparency, champion progress and build trust in collaboration.

4. Respect and dignity

Co-production requires equal esteem. Give everyone respect, control and a meaningful voice in planning and decision-making. Experts by Experience must have equal opportunities to shape policies and services, ensuring true partnership and shared impact. With ample notice and active listening, contributions can empower improvement.

5. Value our voice and contributions

Co-production requires understanding and valuing people's experiences. Provide fair compensation, offering flexible options in respect of individual choice. Acknowledge the personal cost of participation and ensure access to support as needed. Prioritise inclusivity, well-being and meaningful involvement to create an equitable experience for all.

6. Experts with Experience

Support a culture where practitioners can safely share and draw on their life experience. Prioritise shame-competent risk assessment, address vicarious trauma and promote well-being by providing good quality, confidential support and supervision for all.



1. START FROM A PLACE OF INCLUSION

Co-production thrives when people have choice. Establish clear roles, boundaries and support. Provide pathways to build skills and confidence, ensuring activities are inclusive and well-paced. Respect diverse needs and experiences. Prioritise accessibility, safety and transparency, while valuing contributions and fostering trust.

- You can be an Expert by Experience without ever sharing your story.
- Co-production is about people coming together to make improvements.
- Ask people and groups how they want to contribute.
- Openly advertise opportunities.
- Communicate to people that their contributions are valued.
- Develop a pathway of opportunities to build trust, confidence, resilience and skills.
- Provide clear role descriptions, boundaries and timelines.
- Establish expectations on all sides. Be realistic with someone about the impact they can have. Changing people's minds takes time.
- Offer transparency about how and where people's stories will be shared and for how long e.g. agree time limits.
- Ensure opportunities are held in accessible and quality environments where people feel physically and psychologically safe.
- The venue really matters, as does good quality food and drink. Ask what people would like and offer choice.
- Support people's transport, medical and cultural needs, as well as caring responsibilities.
- Consider pace and timing of activities.
- Address digital inclusion.
- Please be aware that Experts by Experience may feel passionate and animated when working with you.

2. GROW ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

“Lived experience provides a richness for everyone. Our stories have the power to connect and drive improvement.”

Create a responsive workplace that plans for participation and values everyone's contributions. Build on people's strengths, integrate lived experience into practice and commit to empowering individuals to lead. Cultivate a culture of inclusion where listening, learning and adapting drives meaningful improvements in services and policies.

OUR GUIDANCE:

- Prepare your workplace to listen, respond and make improvements.
↪ this needs senior sponsorship
- Build an asset-based approach, centring people's strengths and experiences.
- Ask practitioners how they will apply their own life experience within recruitment and selection practices, as standard.
- Create a culture of responding where people feel comfortable to participate.
- Routinely invite people to feedback about their experience of services through a choice of channels, including anonymously.
- Make a commitment sharing power and the leadership of organisations and services.



3. NURTURE PEOPLE

Co-production goes beyond fitting people into systems. True partnership requires professionals to embrace inclusivity and trauma awareness. Nurture continuous growth and development by encouraging brave conversations and supporting people's own platforms to share and educate. Invest in training and pathways into professional and leadership roles for Experts by Experience.



Be curious and engage in brave conversations.

Be mindful that co-production is about more than expecting Experts by Experience to fit into corporate culture, systems and structures *this is really important!*

Support people to build their own platforms to share and educate from.

Promote career pathways into professional and leadership roles for Experts by Experience

Training builds confidence. Offer people with lived experience a variety of opportunities e.g. storytelling, human rights, assertiveness, etc.

All professionals must also participate in learning to become inclusive e.g. trauma awareness training, shame competence, etc.

4. RESPECT & DIGNITY



Co-production requires equal esteem. Give everyone respect, control and a meaningful voice in planning and decision-making. Experts by Experience must have equal opportunities to shape policies and services, ensuring true partnership and shared impact. With ample notice and active listening, contributions can empower improvement.

- Co-production means people are truly involved in planning and designing services, from the beginning.
- Establish equal esteem. The same respect and dignity should apply to everyone in the room.
- People should have control over their own voice.
- Co-production means people are truly involved in planning and designing services, from the beginning.
- Opportunities should be planned for e.g. give people at least 4 weeks notice about meetings and events.
- People's contributions should be met with active listening and a connection to the person sharing.
- People should have a meaningful opportunity to make actual improvements.
- Experts by Experience need an equal seat at the table, making decisions and influencing policy and practice.

Cornwall Mind have established a Group Agreement with their lived experience network. The agreement is shared as a reminder before each group meeting and also at workshops with the NHS.

Members agree -

To treat each other with respect and kindness.

Promote a supportive environment.

We actively listen.

Together we know more.

We acknowledge our limitations.

We recognise the relationships and power balance in the room.

We're able to be ourselves.

5. VALUE OUR VOICE AND CONTRIBUTION

Co-production requires understanding and valuing people's experiences. Provide fair compensation, offering flexible options in respect of individual choice. Acknowledge the personal cost of participation and ensure access to support as needed. Prioritise inclusivity, well-being and meaningful involvement to create an equitable experience for all.

- Invest in your own understanding of what would be a valuing experience for people and groups you wish to engage.
- Recognise fully what it costs to participate and remain well, versus hierarchical pay scales.
- Being part of a conversation can be triggering, even if you're not sharing your own experience directly. This work has an emotional cost.
- Pay people for their time and experience.
- Cash can cause unintended stress or be triggering, offer a choice of flexible alternatives e.g. vouchers, time credits.
- Be prepared to offer or find support if someone experiences unintended effects of their role.



“It can feel unsafe to share my personal experience, like I’ll be seen as a lesser person. But that’s where my passion comes from”

6. EXPERTS WITH EXPERIENCE

Support a culture where practitioners can safely share and draw on their life experience. Prioritise shame-competent risk assessment, address vicarious trauma and promote well-being by providing good quality, confidential support and supervision for all.

- Empower practitioners to draw upon, and share, their own life experience within their roles.
- Create a culture where this is supported e.g. peer-to-peer roles need additional supervision.
- Ensure risk assessment is shame competent.
- Acknowledge vicarious trauma and well-being.
- Offer access to safe and confidential supervision. Consider using a provider outside your organisation to remove apprehension or fear of them sharing what has been said.

7. CONTINUE OUR CONVERSATIONS

Validate that co-production impacts people as much as services and systems. Provide regular updates, celebrate small wins, and share honest impact stories. Embrace diverse models for measuring impact. Share learning with peers and stakeholders to ensure transparency, champion progress and build trust in collaboration.

- Understand that participation has an impact on people not just services and systems.
- Validate the personal impact co-production can have (positive and negative).
- Provide people with regular feedback about the progress being made towards improvements in services and systems. Even if nothing has happened, please explain why.
- Celebrate small successes. A step towards shared goals is progress.
- Be curious about different models for measuring impact.
- Tell impact stories, the good and the bad.
- Share learning with peers, networks and commissioners.

TIME TO TAKE ACTION

Co-production starts when we accept that no one person has all the answers. We must include lived experience perspectives within conversations, planning, policy, provision and legislation. Our knowledge is invaluable to influence improvements for everyone. Because, “Together we know more”





CONNECT WITH OUR CO-PRODUCTION COMMUNITY

Safer Stronger Communities is a registered charity
No. 1157843 www.saferstronger.com