

**'Nothing about us,
without us, is for us'**

**A Roadmap to
Inclusive Coproduction**

**We ♥
Morrison**



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Cymru
Public Health
Wales



promoting equality in housing
hybu cydraddoldeb ym maes tai



**The
Health
Foundation**



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Introduction

This practical roadmap is a product of the *Community Assets, Participation and Integration: Taking Action Locally (CAPITAL)* project, funded by the Health Foundation.

- The CAPITAL project aimed to facilitate integration and build stronger relationships, recognising that social capital is a key determinant of health and well-being. It did this through working co-productively in an asset-based community development approach. You can read more about the project [here](#).
- While there is a great deal of guidance available about co-production, the question remains how to involve groups that are commonly under-represented or 'seldom heard'. If co-production is about sharing power and contributing on an equal basis, it is important that all appropriate partners have a seat at the table. If they don't, we see 'social exclusion creating the conditions for its own perpetuation' as policy makers 'write off' the capability of some communities to have a meaningful input into decision-making.
- We hope you will find this a helpful resource in involving parts of your community that you have perhaps not previously worked with, or need to reach.

How to use this roadmap

By clicking on this map icon, you will be taken to the roadmap for inclusive coproduction. You can click on this icon anywhere you see it to return to the main roadmap. Alternatively, you can use the contents bar on this page to navigate to a specific sub-section.



Select a 'landmark' on the map to enter that section.



Once in a section, use the arrow in the top-right hand corner to move through it.

This roadmap has been co-designed with participants in the CAPITAL project. Their views are highlighted in speech bubbles.



This isn't just a document to read through, it contains tasks and tips to help you shape your project with inclusive coproduction at the core. These are in shaded boxes to make sure you don't miss them.

Find out more about the CAPITAL project [here](#)

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Co-Production

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1 Pre-planning

Language Matters

This toolkit is designed to equip decision-makers to involve groups that are commonly under-represented or 'seldom heard'. Other terms might include 'excluded' or 'vulnerable'. However, language matters.

We asked:

Often decision makers will refer to people who are 'vulnerable', 'disadvantaged', 'socially excluded' or 'seldom heard'. We think it's important to avoid language that depicts people as somehow 'less than' others. We are therefore thinking of calling this document a 'Roadmap for Inclusive Coproduction'. What do you think?

Participants told us:

There should be standard levels of balanced language so nobody should be categorised negatively.

It's like an ID that you have been given and sometimes it makes you feel ashamed. It is difficult when you work hard to improve your life but put into a box. These words can make people lose value in themselves.

To be inclusive gives people confidence

Defining 'Community'

How people define their community may be different to how policy makers may define it. Technology that connects people may render postcode a meaningless marker of community, if the ties of shared interests are stronger.

It is also important to note that people with shared experiences may not have shared backgrounds. For example, in many respects people seeking sanctuary and settled people living in social housing may seem worlds apart, but they shared experiences with each other of looking for opportunities for community involvement and activities for their children or using the local park.



Talking the Talk

Have you:

- Considered how your choice of words might make those you want to work with feel? For example, 'need to reach' is more inclusive than 'hard to reach'.
- Chosen empowering, inclusive language?
- Worked out what the most relevant markers of 'community' are in your context?

1 Pre-planning

Setting an Agenda

Talking to participants in the CAPITAL project, we heard:

'Communities should be consulted first before any project is decided. Organisations should not prescribe what they want to do in a community, rather sit and talk to communities first and come to a shared decision.'

It is a long-standing practice to consult with communities on ideas – to find out what they think of a proposal. However, consider the benefits to involving the community even before this stage – to talk to communities to look for ideas first.

- ✓ Diverse perspectives may spring new ideas
- ✓ Shared resources
- ✓ Balanced decision-making
- ✓ 'Right first time'

This means not setting an agenda. But there is nothing to stop you setting parameters. In the CAPITAL project, we knew from research that increasing social capital is good for well-being, so that was our overall aim. However, we then worked with our partners in the action group to work out the best way of increasing social capital in the context of the group.

Starting the conversation

When you've worked out who you need around the table, and what you need to talk about, you'll need to start the conversation.

At this point your ideas may be vague. While you may have a clear aim in mind, the objectives to achieve that aim may not be particularly well-defined, and there should be plenty of flexibility in deciding the next steps.

However, it remains important to use clear, direct language.

- Avoid jargon
- Be clear about what your aims are and open to ideas about your objectives
- Ensure questions you want to ask are clearly defined



Aims vs. Objectives

Write down your aim.

Hover your mouse over which of these two statements best defines what you have written down:

1 Pre-planning

Summary

- Think about what terms you use to describe the groups of people you're hoping to work with. How can you level the playing field with your language?
- Be open to different interpretations of 'community', talk to people to understand what connects, or could connect, them.
- Set parameters, but not an agenda. You may have a clear aim but can work with the community to set your objectives. Come with as blank a sheet of paper and sketch out ideas together with the community.
- Use clear, jargon-free language to describe what you're hoping to achieve and how and why you want the community to be involved.

2 Bringing People Together

Discover Your Strengths

The CAPITAL project is based on the asset-based community development (ABCD) model.

Use asset-mapping workshops in two ways:

1. Understand the strengths and experiences amongst the community you're working with
2. Engage people with an immediate focus on how they can contribute and get involved

To support people to discover their strengths, you can use the Head, Hand, Heart model below.



2 Bringing People Together

How to get people's attention

- Work with existing community groups where they exist.
- Advertise widely using straightforward language, using local social media and community radio platforms to get the message out.
- Offer different times, places and methods to join in.
- Provide refreshments, travel and childcare expenses.
- Ensure communication needs and reasonable adjustments are met, such as making sure the venue is accessible to those with disabilities, or providing interpreters for speakers of other languages
- Consider people's motivation for being involved. Several participants in the CAPITAL project said they joined 'out of curiosity' but this may not be enough to get really good, long-term engagement.
- Start out inclusively – feedback from participants was that starting out with homogenous groups didn't necessarily capture all the benefits of bringing people together. However, be prepared to address any prejudices or conflicts that may arise from bringing groups of people together who do not normally interact.
- Consider who is 'missing'. After an initial round of workshops, host specific workshops for particular groups, to create a 'safe space' and reinforce the message that they are welcome. Alternatively, advertise the entire series of workshops from the beginning, so that people can understand the full breadth of groups that are being invited to take part, and can self-define which group they feel most comfortable in.

Summary

- Set aside plenty of time and resource to run as many asset-mapping workshops as you can – this is how you engage people, and investing now will pay dividends as the project develops.
- Have a clear narrative about why you are starting this project, and why you're hoping people will get involved, recognising different motivations that you can draw on.
- Be inclusive from the start – use existing groups and forums where they exist, and make sure as many people as possible hear about what you're doing.
- Reimburse expenses to mitigate any financial barriers to involvement.
- Consider providing childcare, refreshments and interpretation if necessary to encourage participation.
- Look out for who is 'missing' – if necessary, run bespoke asset-mapping workshops to create a 'safe space' or extend a particular welcome.

3 Delivery

Deliver something tangible, led by the community and of benefit to them, quickly, to justify and maintain engagement.

Ownership

Co-production and community empowerment require 'institutions', who traditionally hold all the power, to cede or relinquish some of their power to the communities they are working with. Instilling a sense of ownership at an early stage is more likely to create the conditions for a sustainable project, to avoid a sense of abandonment if you are working in a time-limited capacity.

This can be easier said than done! There might be institutional barriers that prevent you from giving up certain decision-making powers, or from being open to new ideas from members of the community.

There may also be hesitancy from the community to take power and assert their position as equal partners in coproduction. This might be due to lack of confidence, or not believing their ideas will be heard. In some cases, some skills building or training will help, but it should not be assumed that members of the community do not have the capacity to take ownership.

Talking to participants in the CAPITAL project, we heard the following contributed to their sense of ownership of the co-produced project:



3 Delivery

Co-Ownership

Co-production and community empowerment require 'institutions' who traditionally hold all the power, to cede or relinquish some of their power to the communities they are working with. However, it does not require anyone to give up all their power or their stake in the work.

While you will need to release power, you also need to be able to articulate your organisation's priorities, aims and constraints. Be clear about your organisation's aims and objectives, so that your role is also clear.

You will need to work together to determine joint objectives and measures of success. Plan what will you do if your objectives start to diverge from those of other partners, including members of the community.

Consider what you can and can't contribute, when you will rely on your partners to deliver something, and what boundaries you need to draw around your role in the project.

Each partner may find it helpful to do this as ideas for delivery are being firmed up, to ensure that expectations are clear and consistent for all involved.

Name of partner organisation/group:

We can...	We can't...
We will...	We won't...
We want to deliver...	We want to avoid...



Remember, new relationships take time and will evolve as you continue to work together.

3 Delivery

Resourcing

One of the many benefits of co-production is shared resources, often meaning better value for money can be achieved. However, it's important to avoid placing an unfair burden on community participants who volunteer their time unpaid.

In addition, there is a disproportionate demand on 'need to reach' groups to share their lived experience. This creates inequality of expectation on some people, and there is a risk of re-traumatisation by regular requests to re-tell stories of disadvantage.

Participation of community members should benefit not only the work you're doing and your organisation, but also the community and the volunteers themselves. Consider what training, networking and other opportunities participants can access as part of their involvement.

There are costs associated with involvement on a voluntary basis and it is important to ensure adequate financial and staffing resources are available for the development and support of volunteers. It is best practice to reimburse expenses of those involved in activity on a voluntary basis. Ensure participants have clear information about what expenses can be claimed and how to make a claim.



You might want to refer to guidance on volunteering, such as [this model policy](#) from the WCVA.

Participatory Budgeting

- Part of the equal sharing of power and decision-making should be about how money is spent.

Shared decision-making is an important way to build social capital in participants and nurture engagement.

- The CAPITAL project provided a relatively small community budget of £2500.

The only criteria for how this was spent was that the decision was reached in partnership.

Participants were supported through a participatory budgeting process. This included:

- **Brainstorm ideas** – community identify issues and challenges
- **Categorise** – ideas according to feasibility, capacity and resources available
- **Develop** – the proposals with help from experts or facilitators
- **Vote** – community members vote on project/s to fund
- **Agree** – community agree on how money will be spend



Summary

- Deliver something tangible, led by the community and of benefit to them, quickly, to justify and maintain engagement.
- Remember, new relationships take time and will evolve as you continue to work together.
- Foster and encourage a sense of ownership by:
 - Welcoming ideas from members of the community
 - Involving them in the delivery of those ideas from the beginning – start as you mean to go on
 - Encourage members of the community to take on tasks and responsibilities
- If appropriate, support the group to create their own identity that is distinct from that of your organisation, so that they can continue even when you can't dedicate resource to supporting them.
- Don't be afraid of your boundaries – be clear about what they are and set out what you can and can't help with from the beginning. Come to a shared agreement about how to meet any needs that cannot be met by any of the parties involved.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to facilitate involvement throughout, and that decision-making on use of funds is shared.

4 Overcoming Roadblocks

Things will not always go according to plan.

The CAPITAL project took place between May 2019 and January 2020, continuing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Here's what we learnt...

Do the possible instead of mourning the impossible

Realisation that although other ideas have been paused for now, that they are still possible, because we have managed to get one idea off the ground.

Keeping on encouraging each other and keeping on doing what we are doing even when it looks like nothing is changing.

- To keep up momentum and engagement, focus on what can be delivered despite the setbacks.
- 'Put a pin' in ideas that can't be delivered due to circumstances outside of your control. Don't forget about them, and agree when you'll next revisit them.

Redefining 'involvement'

- Some people will need support to engage in innovative (e.g. digital) ways. For example, you may need to provide data packs or reimburse the cost of Wi-Fi. That investment will be worth it in ensuring that everyone can stay involved.
- Some people won't be able to, or won't want to, be involved in the traditional sense of attending every meeting. Broadening what you think of as 'being involved' will be more inclusive and will benefit all. This might mean contributing via messages or an online forum rather than joining meetings.
- Be flexible in your expectations – people may have conflicting priorities that cause them to take a break from being involved in the project. If you touch base with them semi-regularly you may find they come back to the group when they can.

By sharing experiences and ideas on the [WhatsApp] platform makes you feel like you are still part of the group.

Virtual meetings have been successful and regular meeting and conversation are essential.

4 Overcoming Roadblocks

Summary

- Communication is key – keep your lines of communication open even when this is most challenging.
- React quickly – when things don't go as planned, work together to decide what you can deliver even with the setbacks.
- Don't discard ideas that look impossible now, keep them in your collective back pocket for later.
- Consider how you can reduce any financial or cultural barriers to involvement in new ways e.g. providing data packs, being flexible in how people can stay involved.

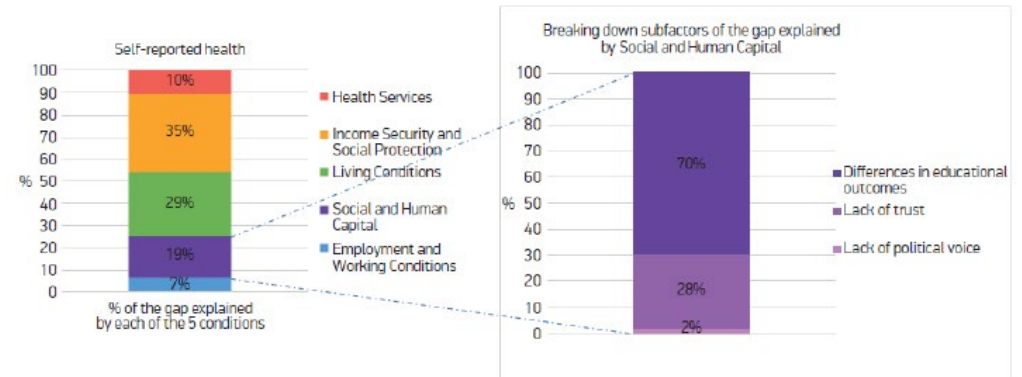
Defining Success

Co-production and Health Equity

The CAPITAL project demonstrates the potential for positive impact on community and individual health and well-being, not just through the output of a co-produced project, but through the process of coproduction itself.

This is due to the impact on the wider determinants of health, particularly in the area of social and human capital. Lack of control, trust in others and low educational outcomes, when combined, are statistically significant in explaining 19% of the gap in poor health between the most and least affluent 20% of adults within European countries.

Fig. 0.14. Social and Human Capital's contribution to inequities in self-reported health (EU countries)



Source: authors' own compilation based on data extracted for the years 2003–2016 from the EQLS.

Through the process of co-production, participants in the CAPITAL project reported:

- ✓ Increased closeness with those in the group and to the local community
- ✓ Greater awareness of local amenities and community assets
- ✓ Learning and skills development
- ✓ Greater opportunities to use their skills
- ✓ Experiencing the benefits of community cohesion
- ✓ Increased confidence and resilience
- ✓ Amplified voice
- ✓ Feeling better equipped to link with key institutions, rights and pathways to participation

These benefits are also widely reported in other research relating to the effects of the coproduction approach.

So by practising inclusive coproduction, ensuring participation of people and groups who have been excluded or overlooked, you can realise these benefits more equitably and contribute to reducing health inequalities.

Defining Success

So, co-production has the potential to improve the health and well-being of participants; what other benefits might there be?

Remember the benefits to involving the community from the very beginning, pre-planning stage – to talk to communities to look for ideas first.

- Diverse perspectives may spring new ideas
- 'Right first time', saving time and better value for money
- Balanced decision-making

“Valuing lived experience can make services and activities a better fit for the people who use them. It helps make services more accessible, authentic and responsive to their needs, but also more human.”

A Meeting of Minds: How co-production benefits people, professionals and organisations

Practising inclusive coproduction means that improvements to services or community development projects can truly respond to the diversity of people who use them, and meet the requirements of those most in need. By ensuring no one is left behind, we can address systemic inequalities.

We learn from different people with different experiences and skills sets. Sharing ideas helps to cut out unnecessary things, through corrections by people who have better experience in the area.

Shared resources

Bringing balance to decision-making

It helps to have all the skills, expertise and knowledge coming together, it makes the work easier.

Dignity of everyone's opinions for the betterment of the community.

Sharing different ideas cuts the journey short to the end product.

Defining Success

How will you know if you've succeeded? Reviewing Progress



Review progress against the aims of your project

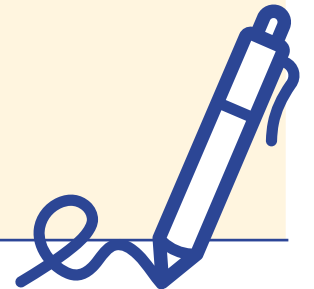
- What's gone well?
- What's left to be achieved?

What have been the positive aspects and impact of how you have worked together?

Revisit the objectives you decided together

- What's gone well?
- What's left to do?

How will you celebrate what you've achieved and tell people about it?



Summary


- Remember the role of co-production in improving health and well-being and reducing the health equity gap. To capitalise fully on these benefits requires co-production to be as inclusive as possible.
- Inclusive co-production also enables services and programmes to fully realise the potential to make services accessible and responsive to all.
- Take some time at key points in the project to review progress and look at success measures.
- Consider how you're doing against your aims and objectives, but also what is going well with the ways in which you are working.
- Don't forget to share your success! Tell others about it to encourage inclusive co-production in other areas and give a boost to your own morale as well!

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