THIS IS NOT A MANUAL ON COPRODUCTION

This is the product of a Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) policy lab on engaging communities in local democracy which took place in 2022-23

November 2023

Co-production
/kəʊprə'dʌkʃ(ə)n/

noun
"the production of a work made jointly with others."

verb
"A way of working together to reach a collective outcome. The approach is values-driven and based on a principle that those affected by a service are best placed to help design it."

Inclusion
/ɪn'kluːʒn/

noun
"the action or state of including or being included within a group or structure; The practice or policy of providing equitable access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised."

Democracy
/dɪ'mɒkrəsi/

noun
"the practice or principles of social equality; A system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state."

Co-design
ˌkəʊdɪ'zaɪn

transitive verb
"to design (something) by working with one or more others: to design (something) jointly."

Participatory
/pɑːˌtɪsɪ'peɪt(ə)ri,pɑː'tɪsɪpət(ə)ri/

adjective
"involving or characterised by participation. Enabling people to take part in or become involved in an activity."

Co-operate
/kəʊ'ɒpəreɪt/

verb
"to act or work together for a particular purpose."

Engagement
/ɪn'ɡeɪdʒm(ə)nt,ɛn'ɡeɪdʒm(ə)nt/

noun
"the action of engaging or being engaged. (See also participation)."

CONTENTS

This is an encyclopedia of ideas about how we are engaging local communities in democracy. We are thinking of this as a set of tools to help ourselves, along with other policy officers and project workers in local government, to think and act co-operatively when we are making things happen.

We are using the CCIN approach which challenges Co-operative Councils to put our co-operative principles in to practice to demonstrate the "co-operative difference" in the work we are doing. The CCIN values and principles have been the filter through which we've worked together to think about and share approaches to participation, coproduction and democracy that have been helpful to support the work of co-operative councils, the communities they have worked with; and the CCIN affiliates who participated in this policy lab.

🔗 councils.coop/about-us/values-and-principles/

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Part 1

THINKING ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY:

What's got us to here?
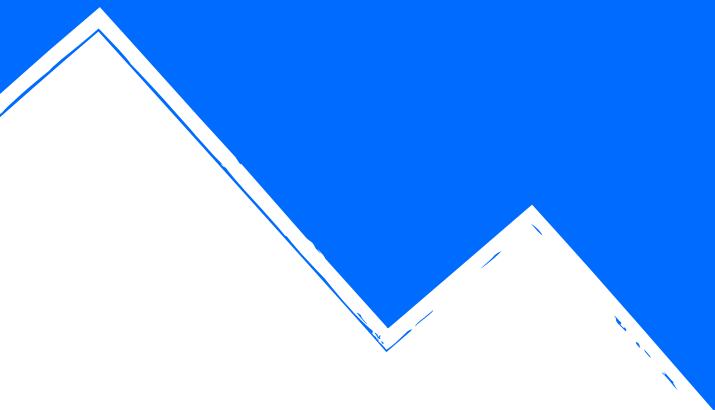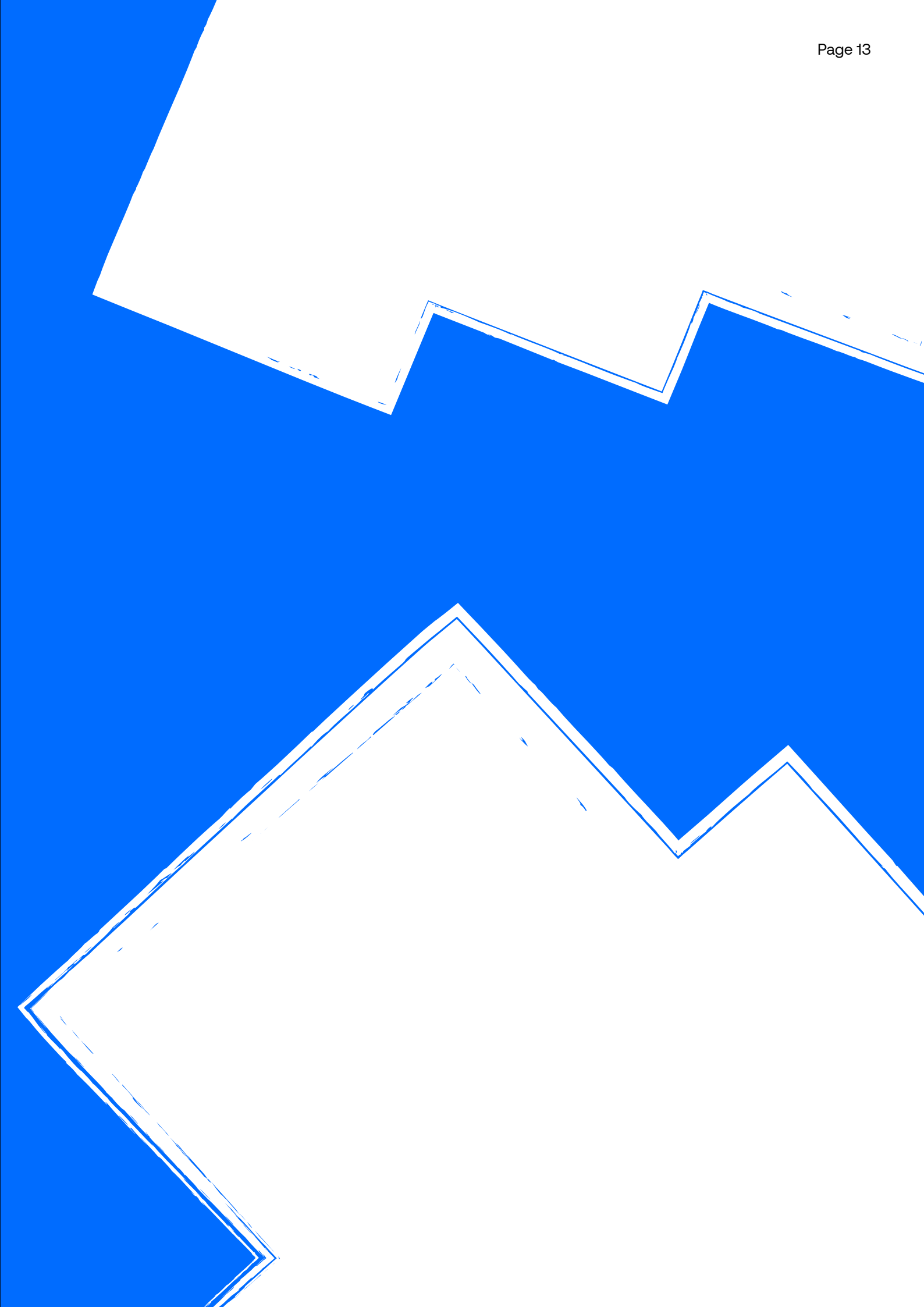
CCIN supported a policy lab called "engaging communities in local democracy". A group of Co-operative Councils and CCIN affiliates came together with people who are "living" the impact of local government services so that we all can understand better what needs to be done and how we can do things better.

While we were working together and sharing our knowledge, insights and ideas, someone said "it's not like there's a manual": yet policy officers and colleagues are trying their best to work to best practice; to share power and be inclusive. We have found, by being together, a collective enthusiasm for each other's favourite tools and approaches. Not everything is right for every person or every circumstance, of course, but everyone's ideas and experience had relevance, along with a rich insight and learning. Our experience has been transformative and so we went ahead and produced this as a collection of ideas in order to share with other policy officers who might be facing those same challenges. In many ways, all of us feel ill-equipped and inexpert on this topic, but we took great encouragement and inspiration from each others' insight and examples. So it isn't a manual – because none of us feel that we are in a position to share the "right" or "best" way to do this. But it is our way of trying to share more widely, the abundance of creativity and opportunity that flows from good participatory working.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE WE FACE?

Coproduction is a great idea. Such a great idea that it's in danger of becoming a buzz word. There are some great examples of coproduction out there, but also some examples of people and organisations knowing they should be doing it, but not quite understanding what it means. This can leave officers being tasked with coproducing a project that they do not have the time, skills, resources or organisational support to do well.

Fundamentally, coproduction is about the people affected by a decision being an equal part of the decision-making process; about the people who will use a service designing that service. It sounds simple and, at its core, it is. But there are some critical conditions needed to make coproduction happen.

These conditions are so critical that, without them, we believe that it's genuinely possible we could be making things worse by harming trust and creating distance. These conditions are about those who hold the power sharing that power. This means so-called "professional experts" understanding that the people who use a service have knowledge that the professionals don't. For us it's about being able to do whatever it takes so that people in the communities we serve, who may have felt powerless and ignored, feel welcomed and safe enough to share their time, energy and experience to engage with the very organisations that they may have felt ignored by.

Edgar Cahn's book No More Throw Away People tells the parable of the Blobs and

👁 Watch the video – youtube.com/watch?v=eJDO1rcJbBw

the Squares to explain the Coproduction imperative. This video co-produced by Time Banking UK retells the story.

Co-operative coproduction is about developing trust and a relationship. It's not a quick fix or something that can be tagged on at the end of the process, but a way of working the whole way through. That's not to say that if a project has already started there is no room for coproduction. Just that we need to be open and honest with ourselves and others about what has already been decided and what we can coproduce together. And we all feel that the ideal for us as co-operators is to commit to developing, building and maintaining relationships on an equal basis, over time.

So, if coproduction is when we work together to make something jointly, and participatory approaches are the ways we get to work together that are inclusive and effective, we have found that we also need to better understand who "we" are. It's certainly true that coproduction is easier with a defined group of people and agreed representation – where people have had the opportunity to get organised and have a shared purpose (much easier to talk to an established disabled people's panel about a day services review than to try and find a "community" with whom to discuss giving up road space to create cycle lanes). But the more we focus on the inclusion, the more we learn about who "we" really are.

We have discovered that, to include people means we need to think about the barriers to involvement for people. Even the most

powerful are "silenced" by real or assumed roles, demands or expectations. We found that by trying to understand what silences different types of roles, we have been able to take action to include that, as it always does, benefits everyone.

So let's share what we learned about these different roles first.

THE CHALLENGE OF INCLUSION

We started by thinking about the different roles we found in our work, which are applicable in any setting or theme. We spent time thinking about what it has been like when things didn't work well and, during this process, thought specifically about how different groups might be "silenced" and how that might harm the process.

We found that there is often an initial assumption that, by getting the decision makers (or, often their representatives) together with people with lived experience, we can better understand a problem. And this is, of course, true but there are some difficulties with this.

In this sort of transactional relationship, we assume the decision makers are representing the whole system and all of its power to change and that, if only the right person is able to listen to the right person, they'll be able to make the change. System change doesn't work like that. And in terms of participation, the reality is that (precisely

because we operate in democratic systems) decision makers (and certainly not their representatives) are not endowed with that much power. So it's about making the most of that democracy: opening up conversations so that all the parties can come together to release the power in that democracy.

We need, therefore, to think about how we are properly including all of these groups:

PEOPLE WHO RESPOND INFORMALLY AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

Those in voluntary, faith, social and non-statutory settings trying to make things better for people

PEOPLE WHO ARE SUBJECT EXPERTS

Those who work with evidence, data and checking things

PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING IT

Those who have lived experience and those who love and care about them

ACTION, LEARNING & MAKING PRIORITIES TOGETHER

PEOPLE WHO ARE DECISION MAKERS

Policy Makers and commissioners

PEOPLE IN FRONT FACING ROLES

In a statutory or commissioned services

→ Rochdale Borough's prevention approach aims to take action together with all these groups playing their part.

There are times when it might be useful to come back to this diagram to think about who needs to be involved. At these times, we've inserted a little symbol (shape) as a reminder.

PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING IT

We often refer to this group as "people with lived experience" – but there are different roles / barriers and powers attached to people's lived experience. There are people who have had an experience who want to take the opportunity to use it to make things better for those who come after them. There are people who are living it right now, who, like it or not, need to share their experience in order for the situation to be fully understood and for them to get the outcome they need. These are very different states of being and states of power. How we include both (and all the nuances in between) is important.

PEOPLE WHO RESPOND INFORMALLY

It's not unusual for those with lived experience to find value in sharing their experiences in order to help the system to coproduce. Sometimes, therefore, a person can transition from a role where they are representing those who are living it, to a role where they are now in a place of power themselves: power to help those people and power to represent them.Ideally, there is a line of sight from that lived experience into paid employment. But there are others in this group as well. Many paid and unpaid voluntary and non-statutory roles come into this category. They may have a formal job but they have the freedom to say what they think, unlike many statutory or commissioned roles. Arguably, this group have a lot to do in unleashing the power of that democracy – they can be the "boundary spanners"; the people with the potential to both influence, and include.

PEOPLE IN FRONT FACING ROLES

These are the people who are in statutory or commissioned roles. What Lipsky calls the "street level bureaucrats". It is often true that these roles have the autonomy to make decisions and take action when it comes to casework, however, when thinking about their influence over decisions and policy, they are often heavily silenced by the "way" their work is regulated. They are the public servants who have to show a façade of neutrality; they are the people who are

Exercise

HAVE A LOOK AT THAT DIAGRAM AND CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

→ Where are you on this diagram?

→ Are you in more than one place?

→ Are there times when you feel able to share that you are in more than one place and times when you don't?

→ Where do most of the people you regularly work with sit on this diagram?

→ Where is the space where you know the fewest people?

→ Why is this?

→ Are there people in your place who have the permission, competency and connection to create a space for all these groups of people to come together?

empowered to carry out rules and policy but with limited opportunity to influence that policy. Their experience is vital for us to understand what needs to change in a system but so often, if they are in the room at all, it's as a supporting role to the people with lived experience.

PEOPLE WHO ARE SUBJECT EXPERTS

These are the people who can share the empirical evidence. The ones who can verify a theory or idea with the data and evidence needed to support a way forward. We often include data but, perhaps less often the academics and analysts who understand it best.

PEOPLE WHO ARE DECISION MAKERS

Elected members, policy makers and commissioners. We often assume these people are the ones with the power to make the changes. And they are. But they are often in a position where they feel that they need to defend the status quo or the reputation of their part of the system. When we think about the human behind this pressure we being to realise that they have much less power than we assume and it's certainly the case that they can't make the changes without the power and support of all those other groups.

So, now we have started to understand "who" needs to be involved, what their barriers are and what are the conditions and assumptions that might hold them back from participating fully, what comes next? We need to think about "**how**" we can bring all these people together in inclusive, accessible and engaging ways to figure out

a way through the challenges in the system. Importantly, we need to think about equity: how each representative is renumerated for their time in participating. Who gets paid for their expertise and input? **How** do they get paid and how equitable is it? **How** dignified is it?

What follows in this document is all about those "**hows**". We hope it is nearly as helpful to those reading it as it has been to those who contributed to, and edited it.

CO-OPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

A core co-operative value is that of self-responsibility. This is defined as "every member doing their bit" which is a great way of describing what we need in co-production – it's that sense that everyone involved is coming with the intention of finding and doing whatever they can to help make this important thing work. It's a value that comes up again and again when we talk about "how" we need to be when we are coming together in co-operative coproduction.

A lot of it is about relationships: and more specifically about the extent to which those in local government are able to behave and act in ways that support the development of constructive and co-operative relationships across the system. Too often, the constraints of time, resource and regulation coalesce to build assumptions about how we can behave that are, sadly, destructive in terms of trust and equity in relationships. To begin with, the default assumption that Policy Officers in local government are a "representative"

acting on behalf of the decision makers is not a good place. We need a clearer and more helpful understanding of their role.

We have learned that there are enormous power imbalances in the way our roles default across the system. It's not just policy officers who have problematic assumptions sitting behind their work. Look, again, at those front line workers in statutory or commissioned roles; especially those who are in a role of advisor, helper, supporter. Where is the power assumed to be in the relationship between the helper and the one who needs the help? Who does the system really assume has the knowledge, expertise and capability to help the person?
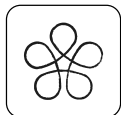
GOOD HELP

Rochdale borough has been working towards being a Good Help place since 2020. This has involved a lot of cross-system work to understand how help really happens and the conditions needed for people to get the very best outcomes when they reach out for help. It's been an illuminating experience understanding the parts of the system that are naturally confident with some of the aspects of good help and uncovering what it really takes in a system to enable good help to happen.

A DIAGRAM ABOUT GOOD HELP
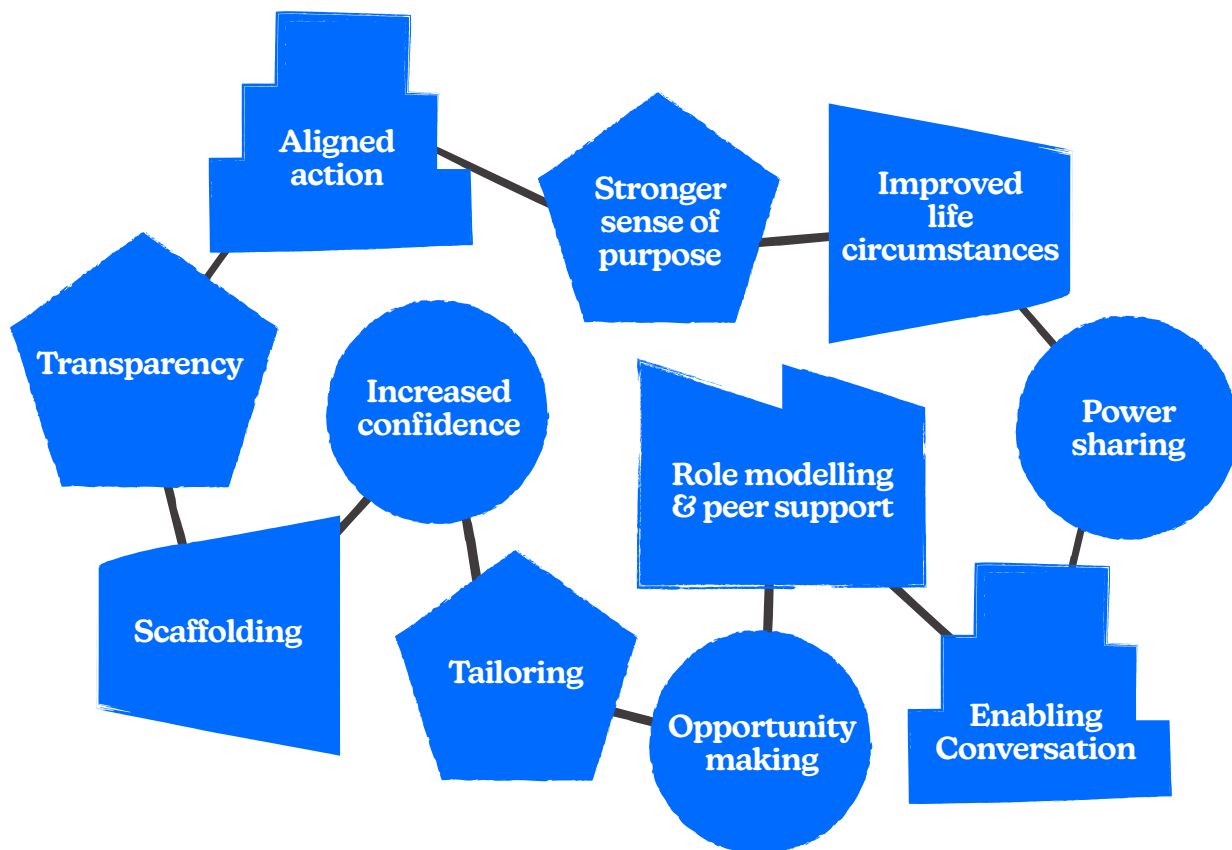
These "features" of Good Help are all about maximising the power that exists between the helper, the one needing the help, and all the skills, opportunities and resources they have around them. The question to answer is: what is our shared purpose and how can we make the most of what we have to make a difference towards that purpose? The action is all about understanding and deploying that power. The language changes. Advice becomes enabling. Support becomes scaffolding. Guidance becomes opportunity making. We become more tuned in to the, sometimes harmful, effects of bad help. We all learn. What we have discovered is that we all need good help!

Working from within the system we regularly have to face the fact that life circumstances are not as good as they could be for many people. There's a need to build hope and our confidence around a shared sense of purpose, a simple yet perspective shifting framework such as Good Help can bring us together, so that we can align our actions and make things easier for everyone.

CONTACT THEORY

Our context is not helpful. The power in many of our institutions comes from exploiting and marginalising communities. It's well within living memory that some of our country's policies sought to actively segregate and it's still the case that the law *drives* separation and fear in places not that far away.

"I feel like I'm trying to sow a seed in incredibly difficult terrain."

– Team leader, Voluntary sector

In the latter part of the 20th Century, the societal problems that segregation and marginalisation create began to be understood and the social science hypothesis or contact theory came about. It states that interpersonal contact between different groups significantly reduces stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. It reduces rivalry and competition, drives collaboration and replaces these with the conditions for collaboration. Gordon Allport outlined four conditions under which contact will reduce prejudice:

→ Equal status

→ Common goals

→ Intergroup co-operation

→ Support of authorities, laws or customs

Later in this document, we'll share examples of many different "participatory" activities that we enjoy. Some of them might seem like a bit of inclusive fun, which they certainly are. But they are also a way of accelerating this important contact between people. Games where the stakes are low, where there is no risk or status, where people may laugh and be human together and where something is created or an insight drawn, are beautiful ways of creating this contact. Games like zip zap bop, drumming, dancing

or making something together: all these types of activities create connection. Artists, actors and clowns, who need absolute trust in their "company" to be able to create together, call this thing "complicity." Arguably, complicity is as important in participatory policymaking as it is in participatory arts. In our experience, the few minutes taken to engage in the activity pay dividends in depth, truth, trust and rich collaboration further down the line.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

In one of our early events, we discovered that we all took steps, in some way or other, to create a space of psychological safety so that we can understand, learn, challenge and be challenged in order to work together effectively. It's another facet of inclusion and, as such, benefits everyone but there are some for whom psychological safety is critical; for whom the absence of it triggers trauma and causes harm and who need time to develop trust to understand that the work has been organised in a psychologically safe way.

Timothy Clark outlines four "stages" of psychological safety – though it's not necessarily true that everyone experiences these in a linear way. But broadly speaking, we have found that it is possible, through the careful management of the environment and conditions of working together, to build our psychological safety so that we can all fully contribute.

1. Inclusion safety

People have the safety to be part of the work or the team. They understand and

Exercise

HAVE A LOOK AT THESE FOUR STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND THINK ABOUT TIMES WHEN YOU HAVE FELT GOOD AND POOR:

→ Inclusion safety

→ Learner safety

→ Contributor safety

→ Challenger safety

→ What are the settings in which good psychological safety exists? Which settings default to being unsafe and why do you think this is?

feel that they are valued and their contribution is appreciated.

2. Learner safety

People are able to share that they are learning and not hide things that they don't yet understand. People can experiment, make mistakes, admit things we don't understand and ask for help or clarification.

3. Contributor safety

People can put forward ideas and proposals and know that there is no chance they will be made to feel embarrassed or ridiculed. The source of their idea is respected and valid and they know that they can be "vulnerable" enough to share it.

4. Challenger safety

People can question anyone's ideas, suggest changes and share their thoughts potential unforeseen negative impacts of others' ideas.

FRAMING & LANGUAGE

Language has the power to include or exclude; to trigger, feed or challenge assumptions. We've found it to be important for us to take the time to use language carefully, fairly and equitably in our communications about our projects so that those who are not involved but who have an "interest" understand the why and how as well as the what. The language we use to describe our work can serve to protect the integrity and inclusivity of our approaches if we get it right.

The frameworks institute exists to support communication about social change. It shares resources and approaches to framing our understanding of problems so that solutions can be "seen", which supports the imperative to take action. The research shows how people use mental shortcuts to make sense of societal problems and this can fuel judgemental attitudes or create unnecessary distance. The framing of our communication helps us to challenge any of these mental shortcuts and create a sense of shared action. We've found it useful in helping to shape the language in policy documents, strategy and presentations.

A note of caution – we have all fallen prey to the conceit of getting excited about a new approach or theory and using the fancy and exclusive language we've just learned when we're describing it. This is unhelpful. The very terms "participatory" and "coproduction" are part of this dictionary of multi syllabic gobbledegook that this manual is full of! Words like this can exclude and have the exact opposite effect to their meaning. It's not easy to manage this but it is really important to do the work. One good way of dealing with this is the hand signal approach often used in sociocratic meetings (see, there's another long word!) When technical jargon or acronyms are used in speech, members can make the shape of a T with their hands. It doesn't disrupt the flow of speech but the speaker can clearly see that they need to explain what they are on about in order to include everyone. Use of the "T" signal is often followed with a "thank you for pointing out that I've just said an acronym or technical term. This is what I mean…"

UNSEEN AND UNHEARD VOICES ARE EVERYWHERE!

Over a coffee in a café in Rochdale, a team leader from a local voluntary sector organisation tried to describe the challenge of authenticity in co-production.

"Getting all of the voices heard and all of the experiences understood is vital to solving some of the big problems in our systems: yet it is such a challenge because we're all soft, squishy human beings and we're all more than one thing. None of us is "just" a person with lived experience or a front line worker. We've got a whole lifetime of experiences and foibles, fears and sometimes trauma. We have to pick our way through all of that without knowing any of it and try and make something work.

An example is: a senior leader in a voluntary organisation that is highly values driven comes across to a front line worker as being overly concerned with achieving targets and protecting the reputation of the organisation. They appear to be hesitant about challenging a part of the system that is not fully understanding something it needs to do in order to get better outcomes for people. The worker assumes this leader is, perhaps, lacking in insight or understanding; that they are not in touch with the real challenges. That worker might feel that their perspective is not valued or their needs not recognised.

This might contribute to that worker feeling disillusioned or burned out.

What the worker does not know is that senior leader is someone who has come from exactly the same place as that front line worker. That leader came into the sector because they really care; perhaps because they, themselves, have lived experience of the thing that organisation exists to serve. But the leader has learned to survive in their years of experience. They have learned that they have to protect the organisation's

"None of us is "just" a person with lived experience or a front line worker. We've got a whole lifetime of experiences and foibles, fears and sometimes trauma. We have to pick our way through all of that without knowing any of it and try and make something work."

reputation and achieve targets because that's how the organisation gets through the financial year. They are trying to carry this burden on behalf of the livelihoods of their entire workforce, the service users they are commissioned to work with as well as the people who need a service and aren't getting one. It's a lot of pressure. All that leader is doing is responding to that pressure. But the worker misunderstands.

The worker would "get that" if they had a proper relationship with that manager – if there was a place of shared trust and collaboration where they, and others could really understand each others' experiences and their priorities and how that can create stress. It's not that we all need to sit around sharing our traumas or anything but just having that psychological safety to be able to tell our truth and understand something about the different positions we are all in would really help. It would really protect our workforce from the impact of the workplace stress we're all under in different ways.

When we're working in co-production, whoever it is, whoever is in that room: there needs to be care taken to make it safe to tell the truth. That way people's lived experience can be shared without defensiveness, workers' experience can be shared without them feeling gaslit and leaders' experience can be shared in a way that builds trust.

I feel like I'm sat there in the middle of it all and I can see and understand everyone's position (because of this middle position I'm in). And it's like I'm somehow expected to sit by and let it happen. Well that's not good for me, either."

"It's not that we all need to sit around sharing our traumas or anything but just having that psychological safety to be able to tell our truth and understand something about the different positions we are all in would really help. It would really protect our workforce from the impact of the workplace stress we're all under in different ways."
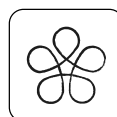
Part 2

PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES WE KNOW AND LOVE

The content of this section has been produced through co-operative working with CCIN councils and affiliate organisations together with grass roots and lived experience groups from our local areas. It has also been influenced by a piece of international co-production on the subject of adult and community learning, between the Volksochschulle, Aachen and Rochdale Borough Council, supported with the kind support of the German Federal Government through DVV international.

→ DVV: Deutschen Volsochschul-Verbandes

We've come together through monthly online meetings, using online whiteboards or collaborative murals to help us keep a track of our collaboration, and through three in person events; two in Rochdale, one in Cheshire West and Chester where we were able to immerse ourselves in the experience of participatory approaches. That has been both an enlightening and enriching experience for all concerned
and if we could bottle the confidence and encouragement of that experience we would do so gladly. Instead we're trying to capture some of the ideas, energy and excitement in this document to help us all continue in that work.

It's important to note that, whilst the content of this toolkit is applicable to any local government policy setting, we took the shared theme of anti-poverty, which was and is, a pressing priority in our work to help us ground the activity. That was a very helpful thing to do as it gave us all the opportunity to share ideas of things so we could use our learning to support work priorities in the here and now.

This section, therefore, is our attempt to share some of our favourite tools, ideas and approaches that we believe help support participatory working and coproduction.

CO-OPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

This work began life as a CCIN policy prototype on co-operative engagement in 2018. Colleagues in the voluntary and health sector in Rochdale borough worked up a prototype based on the Winnipeg model.

We then spent a couple of years applying this prototype in different settings in local policymaking and discovered two things:

→ It's "generative": the more of this work we do, the more possibilities open up

→ There are lots of "ways" of doing this work and it would be good to be able to co-operate to be able to share those ways and generate more knowledge, understanding and inclusion.

We also discovered:

→ Hesitancy about this work. There are various myths floating about, which are riddled with assumptions that it takes too long, it overpromises, and it is fraught with conflict. Whilst good coproduction does take time, we have found these myths to be untrue. In our experience, good coproduction saves time, creates potential and reduces conflict.

→ There is a real desire to do more and better but many policy officers feel or have felt isolated from the knowledge and in need of something to help guide them about where to start and how to carry on.

→ Despite legislation and policy clearly indicating the necessity of this work, there is not enough capacity and confidence in the systems, leaving the great potential of this work unnoticed and, in some cases, avoided.

⊖ clkapps.winnipeg.ca/DMIS/ViewPdf.asp?SectionId=537531

So we developed this co-operative policy lab so we could come together to study, discover and share what we know and to try and convert that into something that supports the generative and positive aspects of this work, whilst challenging the negative.

Exercise

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE LANGUAGE OF ENGAGEMENT

This useful quiz from Think Local Act Personal helps us to check our understanding of the language we are using to describe what we're doing.

Quiz

Co-production - Co-production in commissioning tool - Think Local Act Personal

Once you've tried the quiz, have a think over some of the engagement you might have experienced and look at the Co-operative Engagement frame. Where did the activity sit on that frame? What level was it aiming to achieve and did it achieve that aim? If so, how?

🔗 thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/co-production-in-commissioning-tool/co-production/quiz/

A CO-OPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT FRAME

Here is the co-operative engagement frame we started with ➜

This frame has been used in a variety of settings in Rochdale borough and other areas, and is a really useful starting point for thinking about how to engage people.

The flowchart speaks for itself – a simple and highly effective, non-judgemental decision tree which has been so useful in Rochdale borough and other areas in helping us to think about how we do our work. Action Together have developed training, materials and support to enable people and organisations across the borough to become more confident in this approach to co-operative engagement.

🔗 actiontogether.org.uk/rochdale

🔗 tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01944366908977225

Start here

Can people and communities influence the outcome?

No

Yes

Inform

Get information to the right people in the right way

Inclusive messaging can include:
– Considering language & format
– Using community comms channels

Involve

Work with existing groups and networks to gain deeper insight

No

Is the potential influence high and do you have enough time & resources?

Yes

Collaboration can include:
– Community-led research
– Co-design
– Co-evaluation

Collaborate

Collaborate with people closest to the change to co-produce new solutions

MODELS OF PARTICIPATION
LADDERS AND WHEELS

The Ladder Of Citizen Participation (designed by Arnstein in 1969) is now widely used to outline the different methods we can take to involve people in change making and when designing services or policies. It has been adapted by many other people since. The Ladder neatly describes the different types of engagement we can use - from the lowest level (which is simply providing information to ensure people are aware of a change or a proposal) to the highest level (which is co-production, where people participate to design a service or policy and hold equal power in that process).

All forms of inclusion and participation are useful in their own context – we should be careful not to dismiss the 'lower' levels of engagement as inadequate simply because they are at the bottom of the scale. When people can have only a limited role (for example, due to legislation or budgets) we just need to be clear about this and set it out the reasons for it at the start. Equally, some people may only want a limited role.

We've discovered an alternative way of thinking about participation which is A Wheel of Participation. It was suggested by Cheshire West and Chester Council in response to feedback and conversations they had about co-production. It's deliberatively designed to take the hierarchy out of engagement. It shows that one method is not better than another. We just need to use the right approach for the situation we find ourselves in. This will produce the most useful information. It will also help to build relationships because we've been honest with people about how much they can influence and change things.
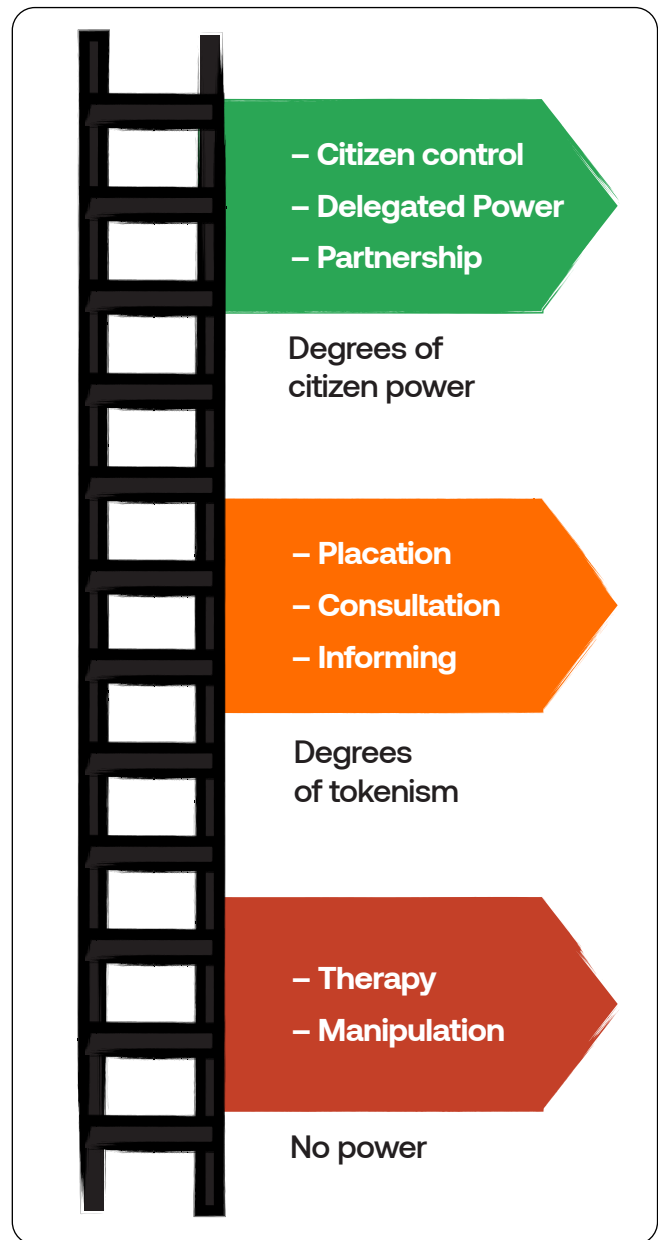
Arnstein (1969) Ladder of citizen participation

SUGGESTED PARTICIPATION WHEEL

Design from Cheshire West and Chester

Approach	Definitions
Communications	Sharing of information and messages
Research	Gathering data on an issue. Collecting local people's views and experiences on a specific subject
Engagement	Informal testing of ideas, approaches or proposals that are at an early stage or that are well-defined but not expected to be controversial
Consultation	Formal and robust testing of defined proposals, subject to local and national quality standards. Includes specific definitions within planning and human resources
Co-design	Coming together of interested stakeholders and professionals to share views, information and power to jointly design plans, proposals or services
Co-delivery	Coming together of interested stakeholders and professionals to work together in delivering a service
Community Action	Local stakeholders developing or taking control of a service to deliver it themselves
Capacity & Relationship Building	Underpinning work to build the capacity of individuals and communities to engage, and of public bodies to listen and respond. Building trust

Case study:
MAKING OUR WORK MEANINGFUL

Unlimited Potential (a social enterprise specialising in social and economic innovation) was commissioned by Salford's Health and Wellbeing Board to explore solutions to 4 complex issues:

→ **Child poverty/children's futures**

→ **Climate change/healthy environment**

→ **Loneliness/making time for each other**

→ **Suicide/look out for each other**

Working together really helped the board understand what "health and wellbeing" actually means to people in their own experience. This turned into working on 2 co-production projects: creating good homes and recruitment into good jobs.

They followed this method for the project:

1. **Recruitment** – they went out to the places where people are to find and recruit people from diverse backgrounds in the project, with the belief that people aren't hard to reach, we just need to take the time to find them and build relationships with them so they can trust us. They actively sought out people with different experiences and opinions. It makes for better conversations and ideas.

   They recruited 11 people that stuck with the project.

2. **Convene Assembly –** this means retention. To keep people involved in the project they had to care about it, find the work enjoyable, and be supported to take part (so workshops were arranged around their responsibilities and they were reimbursed for taking part). Their needs were put first - because the organisation needed them, more than they needed the organisation!

3. **Playful Environment –** this means sharing power (the most difficult bit). It also means making a safe space to work and time to make mistakes behind closed doors.

4. **Decision Makers –** it's important to find and engage the right decision makers that have both the power to make a change and that are open to this way of working. This creates a group of people genuinely sharing power and with a vested interest in finding solutions together.

5. **Present Proposals –** presenting the proposals to a receptive environment and audience is a must to make sure ideas can be shared and have a chance of being taken on board.

6. **Co-design –** a plan for the future to make sure change happens.

To find out more go to Co-production for Health and Well-Being

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🔗 unlimitedpotential.org.uk/home

🔗 partnersinsalford.org/salford-health-and-wellbeing-board/

🔗 unlimitedpotential.org.uk/enterprise/

→ Image courtesy of the People's History Museum

"NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US"

This slogan summarises that notion that no policy should be decided upon, developed or delivered without the full participation of people and groups affected by that policy. It has been widely used since its revival as a phrase as part of the disability rights movement of the 1990s but also has its roots in the development of democracy across central Europe; the latin phrase "nihil de nobis, sine nobis" being traceable to the early 1500s.

Many of us have found this phrase to serve as a helpful way of foregrounding our work and the methods we are using.

TOOLS THAT HELP FOR THINKING ABOUT AND SHAPING OUR WORK

What follows in this section is a list of approaches, exercises, models and activities that are participatory and which have all been tried, tested and appreciated by one or more of our group in recent years.

Instinctively, as you read through the descriptions of these various tools you may feel excited by some and almost uncomfortable about others. No tool is suitable for everyone and every situation. It's worth remembering that the tool that excites you may make the people you want to hear from uncomfortable and not give you what you need. The tool that initially made you feel uncomfortable may be the one that feels most appropriate to your audience and that will best support the conversation that you need to hear.

A common theme when we've discussed the tools or approaches we've used is that the "off the shelf" model has never been "quite right". There have always been tweaks, large and small in the way we've applied these tools and we would encourage this.

WHERE IS THE POWER?

This is a phrase that came into use in Rochdale borough through the use of the Co-operative Engagement Frame. It was during a discussion about "how" to improve the experience of people facing multiple disadvantages when trying to navigate around a complex system. Whilst having a discussion about how hard it is to understand where the blocks and barriers are and what they are, a member of the Elephants Trail,

(participatory group). Chris said "just ask yourself where is the power?" That question instantly transformed the thinking of many in the room. It opened up understanding about where it "feels"like power is; where there might be assumptions about power and how often powerlessness is a feature of the frustration in navigating systems.

It's now a question asked in the case work of people working in MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter). One worker said: "When things feel tricky, we ask "where is the power?" and the answer points us towards what we need to pay attention to."

DESIGN THINKING

Design thinking is a methodology that helps teams to collaborate, create and test new solutions. The process involves working in a non-linear way through five phases:

→ **Empathise**

→ **Define**

→ **Ideate**

→ **Prototype**

→ **Test**

This is a really useful approach to participatory practice – creating teams filled with people who have a variety of experience relating to the topic and working through the phases of design thinking to understand and develop new ideas. Design thinking practitioners call these people "T shaped" , meaning you can actively bring all of your expertise (whether lived or learned) and experience as both a specialist

Case study:

ROCHDALE BOROUGH CITIZENS HEARINGS 2018

Rochdale Council worked with a group of citizens, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations and academics from Edge Hill University to design and test what would happen if the balance of power was consciously flipped. So they set up a series of hearings in a very formal space where themes could be discussed, with time to think. The hearings were chaired by a magistrate, whose job it was to hold the power in the "centre" and to ensure that there was accountability and action. The results of the hearings contributed to a leadership challenge and directly influenced the Rochdale borough relationships strategy. This short video shows what happened.

👁 tinyurl.com/54zw2t8r

and a generalist. It's a really inclusive way of thinking about how we view our team members and the equity with which we value what they bring.

SHARED PURPOSE AND CLEAR PRINCIPLES

Shared purpose is why people show up and it's the reason they take action. It's something that is not immediately obvious when just thinking about the task in hand but when we reflect on the essentials that make co-production happen, it's absolutely there. There are a great many ways of establishing shared purpose: developing shared principles like the co-operative ones, using the empathising part of design thinking and using language framing to make the purpose really clear.

There is a great example of principles which was coproduced by the Elephants Trail (participatory group) in 2017. It goes beyond listing a set of agreed principles to defining why and outlining how to embody these principles when working together.

🔗 ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity

🔗 designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/
Documents/Design%2520Perspectives-
%2520Design%2520Skills.pdf

🔗 frameworksinstitute.org/uk/

🔗 unlimitedpotential.org.uk/sites/default/
files/users/upadmin/Principles%20
%28Elephants%20Trail%2011.20%29%20
Paolo%20Feroleto_0.pdf

Case study:

ROCHDALE BOROUGH'S USE OF DESIGN THINKING FOR AN ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY 2022-3

Led by Rochdale Borough's public health team, active design participants came together to co-design the strategy and plan. The participants were identified by thinking about the five groups of people who have experience of the impact of poverty in the borough in various ways through their roles.

By bringing these people together and using design thinking through a series of summits, a strategy and action plan was created which has three things in it that are tangibly different:

It includes actions that recognise and address how people feel as well as what they need

It includes language which calls out the unfairness of poverty and steers the action to directly tackle and challenge the unfairness

It needs power to be balanced differently in order for the governance to work.

Movements & theories that can help our understanding of participatory working and coproduction

When we're thinking about our favourite tools, it has been clear that there are some things that are just that, tools – ways of organising ourselves and being together that make participatory action happen. These can include things that "democratise" our working – by shifting power, ways of creating clear "rules of engagement" so everyone understands each other's perspective and games or activities that we all use regularly in our work. Before we get onto these tools though, it is clear that there are some things that are more than tools – they are movements, theories or whole approaches which are more substantial and which can influence whole systems and which are definitely worth a deeper look at. Here are a few of our favourites.

WE STAND UPON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

There has been a lot of culture change around the world of participation and coproduction in recent years – it has moved from a place where it lived in the domains of "services who involve people who use them" to a greater understanding of the intersections and contexts of people's lives that often render those "services" meaningless. The work of groups like the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission, MEAM and Llankelly Chase GM Systems Changers have all accelerated that culture change that is influencing the system towards a more integrated and humane understanding of people in the places they live. For a comprehensive guide to co-production that is coming from that understanding of intersectionality, we would recommend starting with the Fulfilling Lives programme and the evidence produced throughout its work. There is a great coproduction toolkit made by Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden, which is an excellent example.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative inquiry is an asset based theory and practice that deals in how we can use questions to understand people, groups and communities in a way that uncovers strength. It uses "5 ds" to create a shared pathway:

→ **Definition**

→ **Discovery**

→ **Dream**

→ **Design**

→ **Destiny**

🔗 greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/independent-inequalities-commission/

🔗 meam.org.uk

🔗 gmsystemschangers.org.uk

🔗 shp.org.uk/news/co-production-a-toolkit-for-multiple-disadvantage

🔗 aipractitioner.com

The Journal of Appreciative Inquiry is full of articles and examples which keep this well-established strengths based model alive. Appreciative Inquiry is also a recognised academic approach to action research which aims to find out why something works by looking at people, organisations and relationships - and understanding the skills, successes or strengths behind them. It deliberately seeks to find the positives of a situation, rather than focusing on investigating problems and analysing root causes.

This method involves seeking diverse views and hearing a wide range of voices, so we can see multiple perspectives and understand their experiences (opening our eyes and our minds). Taking the time to develop kind and trusting relationships is essential – people can only share their personal experiences honestly if they feel safe and supported enough to do so.

POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSIONS

Poverty Truth Commissions bring together people with lived experience of poverty and the leaders within an area. They work together to understand the nature of poverty, the root causes of it and explore solutions.

There is no set template for Poverty Truth Commissions – they vary from place to place. However, they all involve setting aside time for people with lived experience to get to know each other and establish trusting relationships, so they can explore the complex issues around poverty, and what they'd like to communicate to the leaders

within an area. Following this, an event is held to bring the two groups together, where those with lived experience share their stories. They then form the full commission – where everyone comes together and meets regularly to look at which issues to address and how.

The Poverty Truth Network can provide advice on how to set up a commission and signpost you to places that have done it already.

STRENGTHS BASED

Anyone working in local government will hear the term "strengths based or asset based" coming up when we talk aboutways of working with people and sometimes communities. There are so many tools and approaches in the canon of solution focused or strengths based working which lend themselves to the language and approach of participation. But two of our favourites are:

→ Scaling

A really simple tool to help understand where we are, how far we've come, what it will take to get us to the next stage and what "good enough" looks like. It can help to ideate, to plan, to assess progress and to unlock barriers.

→ Positive deviance

This is an excellent approach for proving ourselves wrong when we think a thing can't be done! It uses what's "true and useful" from a real person's story to shape "how"

Case study:

CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER HAVE HELD TWO POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSIONS

They wanted to hear from people with lived experience of poverty and they were asked to share that in whatever way that worked for them – with stories, music or art. It led to:

➔ The Council declaring a Poverty Emergency and developing a Poverty Strategy called A Fairer Future

➔ The formation of Community Inspirers– a group of people with lived experience who now influence in a variety of ways. They sit on the Council's Poverty Truth Advisory Board as equals with senior leaders, they offer training to council officers, and have been involved in co-producing work from a variety of sub –groups which look at topics deeply:

  ▸ food poverty project called "Beans on Toast"

  ▸ changing and improving the language, approach and training of council staff who signpost people to help and support

➔ The Poverty Truth Pledge – a commitment from the council and others to promote the honest and respectful treatment of all people. The aim was to make organisations and the people within them become more self-aware and accountable for their behaviour

➔ Including the voice of young people to understand their experience of poverty – two schools worked with the television producer Phil Redmond to make a fictional short film "How we live". You can see a trailer for the video at West Cheshire PTC How We Live Film Trailer - YouTube

To find out more go to West Cheshire Poverty Truth Commissions | Cheshire West and Chester Council

◉ tinyurl.com/4wx2juds

🔗 cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-and-committees/the-poverty-emergency/resources-for-councils

🔗 cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/s76788/Appendix%201%20-%20Fairer%20Future%20Strategy.pdf

🔗 cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-and-committees/the-poverty-emergency/poverty-truth-advisory-board

LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

Legislative theatre, forum theatre or Theatre of the Oppressed uses the concept and structure of "a play" to act out the problems in policy as they impact on people's lives. Through understanding people's experiences, we are able to identify the changes we need to make and we can develop and test them through participation in the work. There is a global movement of legislative theatre and a great UK example is the work of the GM Jokers in shaping homelessness policy in Greater Manchester.

Case study:

USING LEGISLATIVE THEATRE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST "BAD HELP" IN ROCHDALE BOROUGH

During a Good Help week of action in Rochdale borough in 2021, the Elephants Trail group hosted a legislative theatre event to help colleagues from across the system to understand the impact of bad help. The session brought a diverse group of people from the statutory and voluntary sector; system leaders, commissioners, service managers, academics and colleagues from the Good Help team. During the session, legislative theatre games and activities were used to generate a deeper understanding of the issues, followed by a hard-hitting enactment of a person's real experience of bad help. Participants were able to witness the enactment, after which they were encouraged to get "into" the experience to try and find practical ways of improving outcomes for people. This generated a list of practical and impactful actions which could make a real difference to people's experience.

The event directly influenced the workforce development for Good Help across the borough and the actions made a huge difference to the approaches taken under the borough's Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) priority.

🔗 goodhelp.org.uk
🔗 meam.org.uk k

CO-OPERATIVE CO-PRODUCTION

Since we're using the term a lot in this document, it's time for a bit more detail about the practice itself: Co-production or Co-pro is an umbrella term for ways of working which enable stakeholders to come together to work and produce shared outcomes. Definitions vary but they all refer to sharing power, to equal partnerships, democracy and shared control. There are six principles of co-production which resonate very clearly with the principles of co-operation:

→ Recognising people as assets

→ Building on people's capabilities

→ Developing two-way,
   reciprocal relationships

→ Encouraging peer support

→ Blurring boundaries between delivering
   and receiving services

→ Facilitating rather than delivering

Co-production is written in legislation like the Care Act, especially in the duty to prevent, and features in countless guidance documents for local government. Many people who are involved in co-production encourage us to be careful with the use of the a term. It is sometimes used as term either for getting together with some colleagues to work on a project or a term for what used to be called consultation. It's not the same thing: co-production consciously places power in a place where it can be made equal and it is not an umbrella term for asking people what they think of an existing plan or decision. From the point of view of

Case study:

SUNDERLAND COUNCIL

Sunderland Council used a range of engagement techniques to co-produce their service design for Links for Life (a social prescribing programme): -

→ They held **asset based conversations** with the people using their Warm Spaces and staff involved in providing the support.

  Having deeper conversations took them from having an anecdotal appreciation of what was happening in Warm Spaces to a real understanding. They discovered isolation was the reason most people visited warm spaces. They also realised the significance of stigma in preventing people seeking help. This led to Warm Spaces being re-named "Welcome spaces".

→ Taking a **collaborative approach**

  They took the time to strengthen the relationships between the voluntary and community sector, partners and the council. Holding networking events provided the space and time to develop deeper understanding between them and encourage everyone to buy-in to supporting the new service.

⊖ sunderland.gov.uk

Case study:

CO-PRODUCING RESIDENT FORUMS IN SUNDERLAND WITH 'OPEN SPACES'

When the council wanted to set up Resident Forums across the borough they knew they had to build on existing assets. One ex-mining community already had a very successful and trusted community advice service (the Shiney Row Advice and Resource Project or ShARP) which acted as an 'anchor'. So they collaborated with ShARP to set up a Residents Forum in that area.

They used the 'Open Space' method at the first Residents Forum meeting. This is a technique where attendees create and manage the agenda, so they talk about what is important to them and self-organise. People were asked to observe the 'Law of 2 feet' (if you are not learning something or contributing to the conversation, move on). They were also encouraged to be like 'butterflies and bees' and to cross-pollinate other groups with information they have picked up in other conversations.

This way of working is already delivering honest conversations and good results. The council gained insights into the naming and branding of their warm spaces and social prescribing programme – understanding how to avoid stigma and encourage people to use them.

🔗 sunderland.gov.uk/cost-of-living

🔗 shineyadvice.org.uk

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the people we would seek to coproduce with, they identify that misuse of the term creates a risk of disengagement from good work and that it will begin to feel unsafe to consider the term shorthand for good quality engagement.

MEAM's River of Coproduction metaphor really helps in understanding the different elements of coproduction and how they come together to create a surge of momentum and a flow of action.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

This is a term from the 'research' rather than the 'public service' dictionary. It refers to a process of understanding a subject by undertaking research in the experience and the action of it. It's more common in the social sciences, some fields of education and in sustainability and is entirely about the ethics of research and the notion of nothing about us without us. This is why it lends itself so well to our work. Working towards

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🔗 meam.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/River-of-coproduction_poster-1.pdf

🔗 MEAM: Making Every Adult Matter: meam.org.uk

the level of inclusion and rigour one gets from true participatory research provides us with the confidence we are aiming for in our work to engage and understand people's experience in the making of policy.

There are a number of excellent resources and books including theory, practice and impact of participatory research referenced in the "further reading" section

Case study:

ROCHDALE BOROUGH MAKING EVERY ADULT MATTER PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH 2021

This was a piece of participatory research conducted in a local park during the covid pandemic. The research involved a process of understanding the system from the point of view of the lived experience of people facing multiple disadvantages, those who love and care about them, the people in their communities; friends, associates and neighbours, people who respond to crisis in communities, front line workers, commissioners, managers, elected members and decision makers.

Because of the infection control regulations the whole event took place in a series of shelters in a local park. Hundreds of people from those groups turned up, went through an ethics and sign up process, and were listened to through a series of semi-structured conversations focusing on different aspects of "help". A lot of work was done to generate psychological safety

and to place the "listeners" into a role of subservience to people's experience. An anonymised coding system was used to identify the nature of their experience so that priorities "for" different types of people could be elicited. It directly influenced the delivery model of support and a new innovation project funded through Changing Futures, which actively "does not" do the usual thing of trying to fix people's problems through the delivery of heroic council services but which invests in grassroots organisations and in employing people with lived experience to help us all understand the problem and solutions.

→ An image of the Rochdale borough coproduction event which took place in thepark during covid.

ROCHDALE BOROUGH NEW PIONEERS
Participatory research in action

The New Pioneers is a radically different delivery model for skills and work. It works on a model of intense guidance and bespoke opportunity making and, as a result, it fundamentally changes the prospects of a person's life, rather than just helping them into "a job".

The reason this project is "radically" different was because we went into a community and we knocked on the door of every household and asked people open questions about what exactly they needed to improve their life chances. The result of this is that there is a support offer and pathway in place now. The design is as much an exact replica of what people said as it's legal to do. It literally changes lives.

→ Rochdale borough's New Pioneers

Case study:

DEEP LISTENING FOR TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

Cheshire West and Chester's Our Way of Working programme was one of the approaches used by Rochdale Borough Council with the support of the Innovation Unit.

The trauma informed toolkit and roadmap for Rochdale Borough includes workforce development to support our deep listening to children and families to strengthen a system-wide, trauma informed approach. It was developed through the participation user group and includes ideas to support the skills of practitioners as researchers and reflectors.

It places the power between a trusted practitioner and a child, young person or family and, with a robust informed consent and ethics process, enables the participant to share their experiences through storytelling in a way that will directly influence practice. The process is shared back with the participant and includes resources for teams to analyse the experience to understand key findings and learnings through stories.

🔗 westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/our-model/

🔗 innovationunit.org

PARTICIPATORY ARTS AND GAMES

Using creative practices and games as a way of generating truth and ideas is a really useful way of quickly creating democracy. The verb "to play" has so many meanings; from taking part in an activity for enjoyment through engaging in a game, imagining different realities, competing, making music or theatre, cooperating for business or making a move... But children play with purpose to improve their mental, physical, social and emotional capability. They imagine, test, try and experiment their way into learning. They negotiate with each other in order to create the game and they work out problems "in" their play.

These methods can be used for what the Elephants Trail group call "truth work" and "change work" and it's often important to make the distinction between the two.

When we're using arts or games for truth work, the purpose of the game, play or activity is to make sure the truth of people's experience is fully understood, using immersive or creative ways to deepen that understanding.

When we're using arts or games for change work, the purpose is to "play" through options, design thinking, imagining and creating opportunities and solutions by playing together.

It's also useful to consider arts or games based check ins and openers to inclusive meetings. Beginning with an activity that has nothing to do with status, education, class or background, and ideally which involves participating in a shared task, can pay dividends in trust and relationship building as you get into the work. The type of task that makes people laugh together or to find themselves in a slightly baffled or silly situation (low risk, of course!) is particularly useful as it generates a bond of shared humanity and trust.

There are great books and resources available with plenty of content of creative games and activities. We've included these in the reading list at the end.

→ Participatory arts and games

OUR FAVOURITE OPENERS

This part moves us on to the myriad ways we can engage people through tools we have found useful. There are hundreds available and it's always great to develop or adapt. So, not a comprehensive list but here are a few favourites from the members of our collaborative.

CHECK INS

Taking the time at the start of a meeting to check-in with the people attending is important to set the tone, build trust, and create a safe space for what is to come – especially if people are going to be asked to share personal experiences. Before we start we need to know how they are doing and their emotional state. The type of check –in you use should be informed by who is in the room, what is being discussed, and whether all the people know each other already. There are lots of ideas online, but we like these Meeting Evaluation Cards by Sociocracy For All. They include suggestions for check-ins and check-outs.

DIVERSITY WELCOME

This one speaks for itself. It can be incredibly powerful in setting the tone and intention for a workshop or conference. It comes from Training for Change and has been adapted for a large and diverse community setting in North West England.

This diversity welcome has a clear intent of inclusion. It is a ritual and, as such feels a little unusual in the settings of democracy that we are used to but it is no more strange than the ritual of formal hierarchies and terms of reference we usually engage with!

I'd like to welcome (repeat this phrase before every bullet point):

→ People of all genders. This may include people who identify as a woman, man, trans, gender queer, non binary and others.

→ People of Asian descent; of African descent; of Arab descent and of European decent. People indigenous to this land and people of mixed, multiple and unknown descents.

→ The languages spoken here: Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, German, Polish, French, Portugese, Spanish, Ukranian, Russian, English, Sign language and many others.

→ The city region, the borough including its townships and neighbourhoods.

→ People with disabilities, visible and invisible

→ People who face health difficulties and those experiencing addiction

→ People who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, pansexual, queer or others for whom none of the labels fit

→ Your bodies and the different ways you experience yours. This may include chronic pain, strength, tension and other ways

→ Those who are looking after someone who can't manage without their help because of being a child or an older person, illness, frailty, vulnerability or disability

→ Survivors

→ People who are recovering

→ People who identify as activists and people who don't

→ People who are single, married, partnered, dating, in monogamous or polyamorous relationships

→ Those who are in relationships and those who aren't

→ Those who are children and those in their teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70, 80s, 90s and beyond.

→ Your emotions: joy, bliss, grief, rage, indignation, contentment, disappointment

→ Those who support you to be here

→ Your families, genetic and otherwise

→ People of different faiths, religious traditions, faith practices, private practices not belonging to a tradition, agnostics, atheists, seekers

→ Those dear to us who have died

→ Our elders: those here in this room, in our lives and those who have passed away

→ You are all welcome here. What are some of the other aspects of our diversity that you would like to welcome here?

→ Finally I'd like to welcome the ancestors who lived in this land where we are now. I'd like to acknowledge them.

→ You are all welcome.

BEHAVIOUR CONTRACTING

Ground rules are a great, tried and tested, way of making sure the space for collaboration is psychologically safe. There are other ways too. We trialled this with the GM Jokers when they were coming to Rochdale borough to test a new training on trauma informed environments. There had been a couple of incidents, in the past, when working with a group of "unknown people," that experiences shared were dismissed as not being reflective of how things are. Whilst this might be true in the experience of the person saying it, it undermines the truth of the person's lived experience. So we wanted to make sure that this didn't happen in Rochdale and, because the GM Jokers were largely unknown, we wanted them to be certain they could feel safe to tell the truth. So we developed a behaviour contract. Our main worry was that this would feel like we were "expecting" harmful behaviour which might, in itself, cause that defensiveness we were seeking to avoid. But we thought it was worth testing. We made it clear it was a test and asked for feedback afterwards about how it felt to be asked to sign a behaviour contract. The feedback was overwhelmingly that it made them feel that everyone was safe to say what they thought and that extra care would be taken.

THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES ON...

The 'Sun Always Shines on' is a game which focuses on what we have in common and what differentiates us. The people taking part should sit in a circle. One person stands in the middle of the circle. There should be one less chair than there are people, so there is always someone in the middle.

The person in the middle makes a statement. If it applies to anyone in the circle, they must get up and swap chairs.

For example, "the sun always shines on

… people who like cats

… people with curly hair

… people who love reading"

The person in the middle that made the statement must try to take a chair, leaving someone different in the middle next time, to make the next statement. Continue until everyone has had a go.

This is a seemingly inconsequential ice breaker, which is effective for groups of adults or children. It prompts participants to think about characteristics that they possess which will unify them with others. For children it's a gentle way of helping them see there are things which unite us and things that don't – and that's absolutely fine.

HISTORIES AND RIVERS

This is a great opener for bringing people together when they may not know each other well and when having some humanity and self is important to the task. There are different versions of this and you can speed it up by pre-drawing and photocopying a landscape with rivers and a pool (the type of image they have on the internet to describe simple weather cycles in schools).

If the group is large, pair up. If it's small, ask everyone to work independently for 10 mins and then feedback as one big group so we can all hear it. Some level of feedback is important in the end, regardless; it's just about time management.

Ask people to imagine a metaphor where we have all come together in a pool and

in which everyone has travelled through rivers of participation and action to get here. Ask everyone to draw and share their own histories as we start to get an idea of the diverse experiences that have come together into our collective pool.

There are various versions of this but the earliest reference we can find is in Robert Chambers' book Participatory Workshops, where it was used in 1998 at the first global REFLECT conference in India.

We used it in our CCIN workshops when working with a newly formed group as a check in to help us all understand and value what we each have to contribute on a deeper level than "job roles" or "why I'm here". It brings out stories and laughter and humanity surprisingly quickly.

STICKY PRIORITIES

A great tool for opening or mid project progress – gathering people together without the need for preparation, presentation and progress reports.

There's reference about this sort of tool having been used in Japan by the Asian Health Institute but we're not sure if that is its origin.

In any case, you can set the priorities and the agenda "at" the meeting by asking people what outcomes we want out of the work and from our coming together today. Ask them to list these (one idea per sticky note) and then group the notes together to collaboratively shape the agenda. This gives consensus and consent and is worth the time for its pay off of clarity.

You can also do it by passing a sheet of paper around and using that to codesign the contents of the meeting, the terms of reference, code of conduct, sandwiches, whatever!

We've used versions of this to coproduce work plans with hundreds of voices playing in to shaping an agenda. You can take the same questions to different spaces and meetings and gather many voices from these groups without necessarily having to organise specific meetings. The downside to doing it this way is that only one or two people get to do the "grouping" so some nuance may be missed.

PARTICIPATORY EVENTS

This section includes a few examples of methods we can apply to whole events. The methods have been designed with participation and inclusion at the core. They are loved by many in our group because they produce outcomes of integrity and quality.

LONG TABLE

This approach comes from the creative sector and is a method which produces depth, quality and integrity very quickly.

It was developed by performance artist, Lois Weaver, who has opensourced the method and through this generosity, we are all able to benefit from the quality of conversations that happen at the Long Table. It's important to stay true to the integrity of Lois's design, however, and we would strongly encourage organisations to engage a facilitator with a performance arts background. It's hard to describe what happens other than what you see: a Long Table, simply furnished. A facilitator who welcomes us to their dinner party at which the only course is conversation. And a question. The process achieves a deep level of engagement and insight into a topic that is deeply embedded in the place, time and people who were there.

There is a great video where Lois describes the Long Table and how it was conceived to provide a democratic and inclusive alternative to public discussion. The webpage says: "The Long Table brings what might often be seen as 'outside' in – to a realm of conviviality – while showing how everyday, domestic things which might remain hidden can be brought out – into a realm of public ideas and discourse."

"When you attend the Long Table, you feel like you are watching a beautiful, absorbing, improvised and thoroughly authentic play. Then you suddenly find yourself in the play! You witness people who say they would never normally speak out loud at a public event, find themselves telling their truth and having their story appreciated and understood by total strangers." Local Government Officer.

In Rochdale borough, Long Tables have been held with older people; with children and families; at specific events and as part of local festivals. The content of those discussions have directly influenced

policy and decision making on the great humanitarian issues of inequality, poverty and the climate emergency. At a Long Table event engaging older people to share their experiences of climate change, both the visual minute taker and academic present (both of whom have extensive experience in public engagement events) expressed their surprise at the sheer level of depth of conversation. There is no conclusion to the the Long Table; it simply ends. But it stays with people.

Long Table on the Cost of Living, Chester Storyhouse, May 2023.

The Long Table was attended by a group of invited guests from Co-operative Councils, along with people who are facing poverty in their local areas, and local participatory artists. Facilitated by artist Dora Colquhoun, the group came together and shared food. Then they were invited into the studio theatre space which was beautifully and simply lit with chairs around the edge of the room. A Long Table with twelve chairs around it, covered with a white cloth, candelabras and pens was in the centre of the space.

Dora welcomed the group and explained the background and principles of the Long Table. Some spoken word poetry was read by a local poet and after that, Dora asked the simple question, "what has brought you here?"

90 minutes later, poems, laughter, tears, sketches, cartoons, revelation, connection and deep insights had happened and the group left the space blown away by what they had just experienced. A short reflection session then took place back in the café which generated action points.

doraviolet.co.uk

DEEP DEMOCRACY

"I love it because it's a process of debate which is fundamentally respectful of (and actively encourages) the diversity of opinion. It's increasingly important in polarised times that we seek consensus, not winners and losers" (Policy officer, Rochdale Borough Council)

Deep Democracy is a way of holding discussions that includes and enables difference of opinion and diversity. It has its roots in South Africa, in the transition from apartheid to democracy. Deep Democracy involves four steps which can be used in a facilitated event - where you might otherwise hold a "traditional" consultation or debate – but the steps can be applied in any setting where there are multiple views and there's a risk that not all views are going to be heard or understood.

It assists in the decision making process, especially when it's necessary to have transparency, trust and the psychological safety to challenge in order to be sure we're doing the right thing.

The four steps can be applied as a package or in bits and pieces. They are:

→ Gain all the views

This process includes skills to facilitate in a way that surfaces all the views and doesn't stop until all the views have been shared.

→ Make it safe to say "the no"

Again, there are a set of skills and questions for facilitators to learn that enable people to share minority views and to disagree.

→ Spread the no

Carefully facilitating "the no" – with the sayer as the spokesperson for others who might share it and have not expressed it. By doing this it is possible to elicit different and nuanced versions of that no and get a better understanding. The risk here is that "the no" sayer becomes scapegoated and the skill is as much about safely preventing that as it is about encouraging people to speak out.

→ Vote and ask

"what do you need to come along?" This is where the action plan gets co-produced because where there are conditions and actions that render an action agreeable to everyone, there needs to be a guarantee that the conditions are practicable and planned.

Find out more at lewisdeepdemocracy.com

UNCONFERENCE

An "Unconference" turns the ideas of a traditional conference on its head. It's an event where the people attending decide on the agenda, the topics that will be discussed, and the workshops. So the content is not decided by a small number of people with power, but everyone in the room. It helps create equality and democracy. The aim is to prioritise conversation over presentation.

There are some helpful guides to designing your own Unconference online. We like How to Run an Unconference and Ten Simple Rules for Organizing an Unconference

🔗 tinyurl.com/3vuw85fr
🔗 tinyurl.com/2ftfp2f8

Case study:
USING DEEP DEMOCRACY TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO AGREE A MOTION FOR THE LOCAL CABINET MEETING

One of the things that is sometimes a bit tricky when it comes to the climate emergency is that it's common for most people to broadly agree that "something" needs to be done but often people can feel helpless, overwhelmed, blamed, judged and judgemental. These feelings can elicit behaviour as a response. Sometimes these behaviours are what the Gottman Institute calls the "four horsemen". They are: Criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling. These destructive relational behaviours harm trust and prevent action. In local areas, that's precisely the opposite of what we need if we are to respond to the climate emergency. We need the behaviours that support hope, trust, co-operation and action to make the changes that might help save humanity.

Rochdale Borough Council's policy team have used a Deep Democracy approach to try and bring people together to generate this constructive behaviour, but it's often the case that people who "come" to debates about climate, are all likely to agree. So it's been difficult.

In 2023, the team worked with local children and young people to create a day of debate. Bringing classes together into the Council offices and Rochdale town centre to eat together, walk and play and to get into a deeper level of debate using the Deep Democracy approach. The children were tasked with agreeing on a motion to go to the local Cabinet to challenge the system to move further forward on a climate priority. By holding the debate in this way, it was possible to really listen to the pressures and stresses that children and young people are under and, through their voices, to better understand the nuance about how people in communities really feel.

"Sometimes difference of opinion becomes toxic and it can drag whole communities into camps of who is "for" and who is "against" a proposal. This destroys trust within the community and also between people and local government or other anchor institutions. It is becoming more and more critical for us to use these techniques to bring out where people disagree and to do it safely. I was so pleased to see our children and young people engaging in this debate in such an intelligent and respectful way. Only this way can we understand what everyone needs to come along, rather than it becoming about the triumph of the winners."
Local councillor, Rochdale Borough

gottman.com/blog/the-four-horsemen-recognizing-criticism-contempt-defensiveness-and-stonewalling/

INCLUSIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO BRING PARTICIPATION IN TO EVERYTHING

These are some of our favourite ways of making our conversations inclusive. These are useful tools that we have included to just help us all enjoy more accessible and involving ways of having a conversation

MARGOLIS WHEEL

A workshop exercise to enable and share deep thoughts about an issue and to enable everyone to have the opportunity to deeply think, talk and listen about the issue.

Chairs are placed in a large circle in pairs with one row facing into the circle and one row facing out. A question is asked of everyone.

Within each pair, each participant has a set amount of time to respond to this question, uninterrupted. The listener just listens. So, for example, all the people sat facing out of the circle speak first and those facing in listen. When time is called by the facilitator, the roles swap. The listener doesn't prompt or respond in any way other than non-verbal signs that they are listening and interested. Even if the speaker runs out of things to say.

This is OK, it's time to think. Once each person in the pair has spoken, the wheel turns. Everyone moves one chair to the left. This means that you find yourself in a completely new position with a new partner (you can change the format if there's an even number of pairs which would mean people would soon return to their partner).

The question, and the process, is repeated. In this way, everyone gets the opportunity to think deeply and verbalise deeper thoughts. This sets the scene for design thinking or working. There are many different versions of this published (including in the Participatory Workshops book referenced at the end of this. For more energy and connection, it can even be done with a ceilidh or barn dance incorporated, using the move of the "grand chain" to swap partners).

PECHA KUCHA

We have used Pecha Kucha in Rochdale borough as a way of asking technical or system leaders to share complex information in accessible and brief ways so that meaningful conversation can follow about the most important aspects. Asking them to use the pecha kucha principles is an enlightening process for all, in our experience!

PechaKucha 20x20 is an approach to presentations, which is considered to be a method of providing information in an accurate and concise way, to make it accessible to citizens. It comprises a series

lisaheywood.net/gender-free/

www.pechakucha.com/presentations/stories-from-the-self-storage-files

of 20 image based slides, which are automatically advanced after 20 seconds, requiring the presenter to break down the content of their presentation into 20 ideas, each of which can be easily understood by a non-expert in 20 seconds. A good example of such a presentation can be found here

THE FISHBOWL

This technique can be used to ensure everyone in a meeting or event has a chance to speak and be heard. It's been used to great effect in Greater Manchester Combined Authority work on inclusive systems change. It's particularly important to think about "who" is involved in this activity and to foreground the lived experience (ideally with participants from all five of the groups mentioned in section one, "The Challenge of Inclusion".

How to do it:

→ Arrange a small number of chairs in a circle the middle of the room. Arrange more chairs in an outer circle.

→ A facilitator introduces the topic to be discussed.

→ The group are invited to sit in the chairs in the middle – the fishbowl. They talk about the topic.

→ The people in the outer circle listen to the discussion. They can join in anytime by taking an empty chair in the inner circle or replacing someone already seated in the fishbowl

→ This allows as many people that want to spend time in the fishbowl to take part in the conversations

→ When the time runs out, the facilitator summarises discussion

This technique promotes active listening and tries to prevent the loudest voices from dominating discussion. You can use it as an activity within a larger workshop or event (as it's described here) or the topic can be the entire focus of the event, in which case the impact is similar to a Long Table.

SOCIOCRATIC PRACTICES

Sociocracy gets a mention in two different sections of this manual. We will include more about the transformational governance potential of things like Sociocracy and Holacracy later but, first, here are some sociocratic practices that don't require governance change but do make meetings so much more inclusive.

Meetings and workshops that use sociocratic practices are inclusive by design. Regardless of our governance structures we can use these practices to prepare, facilitate and keep meetings on track in a way that keeps everyone able to take part.

Using these methods, meetings are prepared in such a way as there is clarity on what's needed. This makes agenda items faster as the purpose of them is clear. There is also time saved in the preparation of clear proposals or information gathering.

The general "shape" of a sociocratic meeting is round. Items are shared and responded to by going around the group and offering

Case study:
WISSENSMACHT!

The City of Aachen Volksochschulle and Rochdale Council held an international conference at the birthplace of the co-operative movement: Rochdale Pioneers Museum on Toad Lane in Rochdale. In the magical learning loft of that building, a group of adult learning practitioners, leaders, learners and academics spent time using sociocratic methods to build a compelling evidence base of the "wider" impacts of adult learning: those beyond the "economic" impacts.

Together they were able to generate a rich body of evidence about the individual, family, community, municipality and national benefits of participation in learning: how learning builds trust and cohesion, supports resilience, protects mental and physical health and supports relationships.

Present at the conference were delegates with multiple different languages. Because we used the sociocratic "rounds", everyone knew there was time to listen and time to speak. This meant that anyone who wanted to speak in a language other than their first one, knew that they could take all the time they needed.

The inclusion benefits were obvious. As were the outcomes. There was as much, if not more understanding generated than would have been achieved through any expert presentation – everyone was included and together a shared and equitable understanding was generated. This was able to directly influence policy and practice, including through a subsequent visit from the shadow minister for Apprentices and Lifelong Learning, Toby Perkins MP.

everyone the opportunity to respond. People self-regulate: when they know they will have time to speak, they listen; when they know others need to speak they don't "hog" the time. People don't consent to things they don't understand so meetings become a safe place to challenge and to learn as well as to take decisions and drive actions.

There are three types of items on the main body of an agenda. Consenting to cover these items is an important part of the process:

→ Reports

These are for sharing information that the group needs to know about. There is time for making sure everything is understood and time for questions. This agenda item is complete when the information has been passed on successfully.

→ Explorations

These are for discussion and response to a given topic. Everyone is able to respond to that topic with their ideas. This item is complete when enough ideas have been shared

→ Decisions

These items are for when a course of action or a policy needs to be chosen. It's complete when there is consent.

Report items don't take much time, but for explorations and decisions, there needs to be the opportunity for rounds to take place to clarify, explore and decide.

Sometimes things come up that are important but not completely relevant to the topic under discussion. These items can be added to the backlog to make sure they are thoroughly explored at a later date. Meetings start with a check in round and finish with feedback.

This is just a flavour of the types of things that make meetings inclusive. Any or all of these things can be incorporated into meetings and, in our experience, they really do help. Even just the use of a "round" and bringing the notion of consent into a difficult discussion can really help.

→ How much "listening" happens when you run meetings and conferences in sociocratic ways

PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

In a manual about co-production, it's worth taking a little time to think about the emancipatory nature of learning. When we are learning something in the right sort of way we are inspired and excited. If we have the time to learn and reflect together, to have access to coaching and to be asked really good questions, there is an opportunity to build trust and power which is not to be missed. This was certainly the experience of those who participated in the 3 learning labs on this project and it's certainly the case for Community Champions in Rochdale borough

Examples

VIDEOS

COMMUNITY REPORTING

Community Reporting is a storytelling movement, where People with Lived Experience tell their stories in their own ways and with their own words to try and influence and change services, so they work in a better way for the people that need them the most.

ELEPHANTS MADE IN BURY

This is a powerful short film made in 2021 by community reporters in Bury, commissioned by the Guardian newspaper. It highlights the

tinyurl.com/m2fdk7h3

social and economic problems people with multiple disadvantage experience when they 'fall through the net' and can't access the right support.

It features many stories, including Dave's – he lived in care, became homeless as an adult and tried to take his own life. He explains what brought him to this point and the importance of accessing the right support to get back on track.

This illuminating film shows the harsh reality of life for people with multiple disadvantages – the struggle to get the very basics and just survive. It shows how they can turn their lives around with the right support; and what people with lived experience bring to policy making, service planning and system change. It's a powerful demonstration of how the stories they share bring vital and valuable insights which shape the design of interventions and systems that change lives and outcomes.

WHO IS THE RESEARCHER, WHO IS THE LEARNER, WHO IS THE TEACHER?

A story about paradigm shifts from Rochdale borough's Community Champions.

"Rochdale borough's community champions were "ahead of the game" in terms of their understanding of the need for "whole system thinking" when we're trying to unlock the potential in communities.

Having a diverse group of people, skills and motivations helping people across a whole system takes a particular approach to learning and development. We are not talking here about the "statutory" learning we need to do (the things that keep us and others safe and legal) but the sort of learning that supports us as individuals to be part of a whole team, within the whole team of an organisation and that whole team to be contributing to the whole system.

So we have all sorts of learning and development opportunities. But one that illustrates this "paradigm shift" where the power is magically held somewhere between us all, is the session we do on "Why Community Champions." It was part of the induction but it can really happen at any time and it's useful for absolutely anyone. When you get a group of people who care about making a difference, you can ask them what they care about and why. Then you can ask them to describe the need for the thing they care about, as they see it – and ask them to start to map that need as it happens in a community: how it is linked to other things that happen, what causes it to happen, what contributes to it, what helps to sustain it.

Then you can ask them what people need. Ask them to describe exactly what it is that people need that would help to turn things around.

Asking the first question reveals deep insight about how things happen in communities; the interrelationship between all things. The second question reveals a deep understanding of the need for trust, relationships, confidence, clear sense of purpose.

When this session is run, it becomes very clear that people who care about communities know exactly what needs to be done. In this session, the "learner" is the "researcher;" they are the "teacher".

It is revelatory. For all of us. It helps us all to see ourselves as people who "can" – we have the power to make a difference – individually, collectively, and for that collective knowledge to feed into our intelligence at a borough level."

(summarised from Sharing in the Magic – Enabling Research – Edge Hill University, 2014)

We have deliberately not named the contributor(s) of the content of this document, with one exception. This piece is summarised from an interview undertaken in 2014 with Andy Knox, Community Champion (Rest In Peace).

HOW WE LIVE
- CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER

A group of young people from Winsford Academy and Wharton Primary School in West Cheshire, developed a fictional character and story about the issues young people face caused by living in poverty. A script was developed with support from television producer and screenwriter Sir Phil Redmond CBE and other industry professionals to make a short film called, How we live. The powerful piece raises awareness and understanding how young people experience disadvantage, poverty and homelessness.

◉ tinyurl.com/4wx2juds

Members of the group explain why they started the group and how being involved in the Elephants Trail has helped them turn their lives around.

The film features council staff that have commissioned the group. They describe how working with the Elephants Trail has given them the genuine insight into people's lives that they could not find through traditional consultation and engagement. They explain how skilled the members of the Elephants Trail are in articulating their experiences in a careful, thought-provoking and creative ways; and how this has been ground-breaking in shaping service and system change.

◉ tinyurl.com/bdeeseda

ELEPHANTS "KEEP FOLLOWING THE TRAIL"

This brief video explains the story of the Elephants Trail – how a collection of disparate people with lived experience of multiple disadvantage came together to form a group, with the aim of telling their stories, and the ambition to instigate social and systems change to help other people going through the same hardships have a better experience.

PODCASTS

The aim of these podcasts from Sunderland is to for workforce across the city to get a snapshot of the diverse communities in Sunderland and showcase the importance of having connecting workers to support them.

Some communities form around geographies, some form around activities or a shared need, and others form organically. Regardless of the glue that binds them together,

these podcasts highlight the importance of togetherness and companionship, the different ways that this can be found; and showcase the work to promote them. Communities can take a long time to develop, but they can disappear very quickly if they are not supported to stay together.

Sunderland Communities Podcast – Episode 2; Eyes Down (18 minutes)

This episode describes how volunteers at a community hall have brought a feeling of togetherness back to a neighbourhood of older people. It features the voices of the volunteers and people who come to the centre for Bingo. They reveal what matters to them - they don't come to the Bingo for the game, they come for the friendship, socialising and enrichment it brings to their lives.

They highlight that the ingredient of success is not having a hall – it is having volunteers with the right approach to convening the community. It is their care, respect and compassion that has rebuilt the community feel and keeps people coming back.

Sunderland Communities Podcast – Episode 1; The League (17 minutes)

This episode features the story of the Tenpin Bowling League for Vulnerable Adults and how it has been built up over 15 years. Community development workers went door-knocking to make the local community aware of the League and build up its membership base.

At its height, nearly 60 people were members and about 40 were attending each week. Covid has resulted in a drop in membership,

with 20 people who are now regular attenders; but work is taking place to build this back up.

The success of the League is down to its inclusiveness – all ages and abilities can play and be competitive. It brings friendship and camaraderie to those who join; which is all fostered and supported by the community development workers who bring them all together.

REPORTS, ARTICLES AND PUBLICATIONS

The co-production work that took place in Rochdale borough between 2010 and 2022 benefited greatly from the production of regular reports. These were developed and, often written by academics working directly with the participants, and so were not written in "local government" language but rather a beautiful combination of the various dialects, slang and languages in the borough along with the language of academics. There are a series of documents which tell the story of the work from different perspectives. These with a publication which captures the "magic" in the co-produced model of Community Champions. There are also a series of explorations and research reports telling us about the nature and experience of poverty; pedagogies for community learning from the point of view of the community champion and recommendations which directly influenced Rochdale Borough's approach to public service reform and integration. The process was bookended with a beautiful photographic storytelling of a two day reflection and stocktake of the work so far which took place in 2019, not knowing the pandemic was on the horizon, which would

prevent the participatory groups from coming together in such close proximity for so long.

All participants took great value from the process of developing, learning and reflecting in this way, and in particular, the "validation" of their insights and experiences, which came from the presence of people with a title such as Dr or Prof. Those involved in participatory working in Rochdale are enormously grateful for the pioneering, encouraging and inclusive ways in which these academics coached a system into opening its ears and eyes.

All the published reports are included in the reading section of this document.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There are two elements to consider when thinking about monitoring in participatory working. There is the monitoring of the thing you are participating about (the work you do) and there is the monitoring of the participatory process itself (inclusion, authenticity, impact). Both are important if we are to lay any sort of claim to robust practice.

There is a significant challenge to this in that co-production, whilst generally understood and accepted to be a necessary practice for engagement and insight, is often assumed to be less valid, somehow, because of the social and community nature of its practice. This is a myth. In academic circles, respect is afforded to both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Both are valid. Both are a snapshot in time. And both approaches will churn out utter rubbish if they are not practiced with rigour. So we must do the work and do it properly.

What does rigour look like in participatory research?

In the book Participatory Action Research (Chevalier and Buckles, 2019), there is a helpful chapter (6): Skills, process design and ethics. The chapter takes us through how to design a project in a rigorous way through building a project and selecting the appropriate tools to deliver it:

1. Defining the context and planning scenario. This includes understanding the level of predictability, complexity and urgency of the work to be done.

2. Defining the purpose. This includes setting out the goal, scope and expected results of the work.

3. Identifying prior decisions. This means understanding where this work fits into the overall story and who needs to be involved in the planning and the work itself.

4. Identify and clarify the specific question(s) and their sequencing. What, precisely, are we hoping to understand by doing this work and what questions will need to be answered?

5. Select and sequence tools and design all steps. Easy to jump straight to this one, especially when we are excited because we've discovered a new tool! Sometimes familiar and established tools support the predictability, safety and inclusion of people involved.

6. Plan the documentation process. This does not need to be onerous but includes:

→ The context

→ The purpose of the work

→ A summary of the process

→ A descriptive analysis of the results

→ An interpretation of the results

→ Follow up actions identified by the participants

→ Recommendations

→ Evaluation of the process itself

Consideration of the ethics of the work we do is a critical part of this. There are intrinsic power imbalances to be accounted for, along with the structural inequity in our system that support these imbalances. How can we identify and mitigate the risk of potential harm or exclusion and maintain or elevate the welfare of all the participants? What does informed consent mean in the context of our work? The Canadian Institute of Health Research's Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2018) provides a useful

Activity

BUILDING MONITORING INTO A LEARNING SYSTEM

Look back at the diagram about the different groups and think about your project. What would a potential learning opportunity look like for each of these groups? Would the learning be something that could easily be incorporated into the design of the work?

framework which should not overwhelm but encourage us in the rigour of our approach.

Finally, when thinking about monitoring and the work we must do to make the process inclusive – it is a great opportunity to build what we discover in our monitoring into systems that are capable of learning. There are opportunities in the design and ethics work we do to build in learning for all stakeholders of the work.

EVALUATION WHEEL

Having said that we mustn't get excited about tools at the expense of good, solid participatory practice, here is a great, visual tool for understanding progress in different ways. It's included because it will probably look fairly familiar (wheels and stars are often used in capturing outcomes. But it is robust, ethical and inclusive and gives us a sense of the type of activity that can measure complex things easily and clearly.

It has its origins in the socratic wheel, a participatory research tool which places equal emphasis on the factors to be measured and allows everyone to understand, visualise and participate in discussion about progress.

In our version, a large circle fills a sheet of paper, divided by lines which can serve as a scale. Each is labelled with an aspect of the evaluation. This can be made to suit any given situation but, when working together and trying to be inclusive, being confident that we're all clear about what we're doing is very important so here are some questions on that, inspired by Jennifer Reitbergen-McCracken's work:

Purpose

→ Clarity about the tasks and who is doing what

→ Do we know what each piece ofwork is for?

→ To what extent do we know whatis happening?

→ Do we know what success will look like (is the version of success defined by everyone?)

Progress:

→ Are we confident that progress is happening towards our goals?

→ To what extent are all goals treated with equal urgency and priority?

→ Where there are discrepancies, is the reason clear and agreed?

Fairness:

→ Do the questions we are asking feel fair?

→ Is the scope of our work sufficient to get a balanced understanding?

→ Who gets to decide what we ask?

Variety:

→ Are we asking the questions in a range of different ways?

→ Are we asking questions in a way that finds and understands the "outliers"?

→ Have we made the subject matter engaging?

→ Have we made sure the activities are accessible?

Inclusion:

→ Do we see representation and inclusion in decision and priority making?

→ Do the actions that are happening reflect that well?

→ To what extent do we see a diversity of people involved in the process?

→ Are barriers understood and addressed?

→ Can everyone understand what is going on and do they all have the opportunity to influence it?

Safety

→ When working together, do you observe that people feel included?

→ When working together, do you observe people sharing that they are learning, making mistakes, asking for help, clarification or support?

→ When working together, do you feel that everyone is able to contribute if they want to?

→ When working together, does it feel safe enough for people to openly challenge?

→ Have any risks been identified and reduced?

There are many versions of the use of wheels and stars in progress and evaluation settings. The point of difference with this one is the power balance in the questions we ask. Who gets to decide what progress looks like is as important as the progress itself, so using a tool such as this means that everyone can see how we are doing and whether there are points of difference between perceptions of success that might depend on the person's role or perspective.

SOCRATIC WHEEL

An example of monitoring a piece of participatory research using a socratic circle
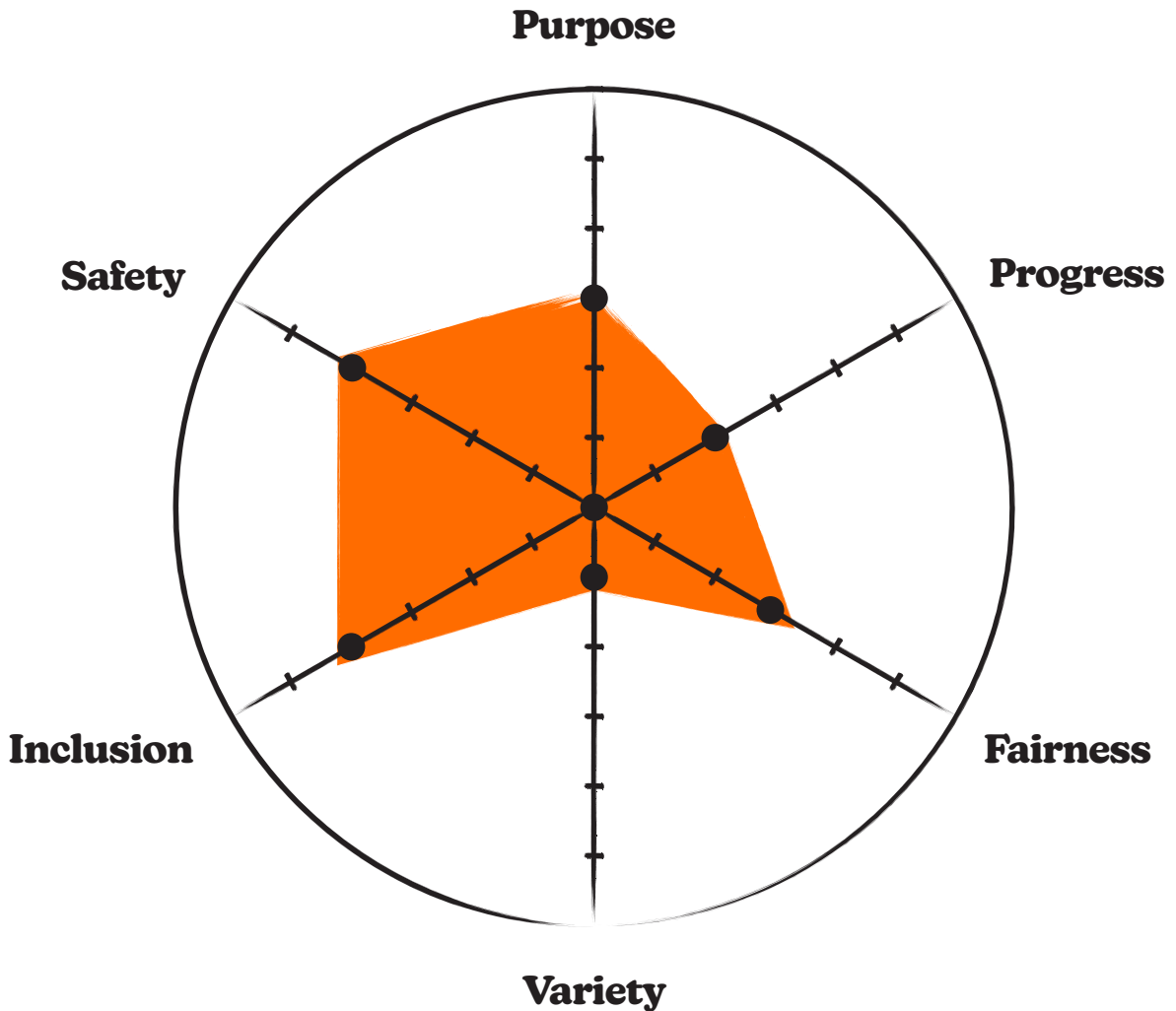
Note: This circle could be a large circular table or rope on the floor; it could be digital or on paper.

COMMUNITY CHAMPIONSUSING SHARED OUTCOMES FROM (ALMOST) DAY 1

Rochdale borough's Community Champions have been helping people as an organised group since 2009. They have a strong ethos of reciprocity and generate all manner of tangible health, wellbeing and poverty prevention outcomes through acts of kindness. In the early days, they were initially assigned to be "literacy champions" and a research programme supported the development of their approach. The research was participatory and action focused and aimed to analyse champions' experiences alongside the (evidentially positive) outcomes they were achieving in helping adults develop their reading, writing and other communication skills.

The research asked questions about how they thought they were doing with literacy and, of course, the champions answered those questions. What was interesting though, was how they responded to the "is there anything else you'd like to tell us?" part.

If this question hadn't been asked, the programme would have solidly patted itself on the back and rolled out a series of literacy champions across the borough who would have done great work. No problem there.

But the open question revealed that they could, and wanted to do, so much more than that. Many of the champions told the researcher that they were really happy to be able to help people; that they found it rewarding and was full of learning and enrichment for them as well as the clear benefits for the people they were helping. But they also told them that they felt stifled by the silo of "literacy"; that many people wanted help with numbers too, or computers. And that most people were clearly struggling with confidence, anxiety or mood. They could clearly describe the intersectionality of literacy with poverty, poor health and wellbeing, housing, identity, confidence and opportunity. In other words, they had an understanding of shared outcomes that was far more mature than the artificially siloed system had!

And that's how the Community Champions programme was accidentally co-produced!

The Community Champions are still going strong, supported by Big Life's local health improvement service, Living Well. They are a wonderfully diverse, skilled and active group. A really noticeable thing in the culture of their organisation is the psychological safety to challenge.

CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT EVENT

The Celebration of Achievement Event is held each year to celebrate and recognise the successes of children in care and care leavers in Cheshire West and Chester. It is a popular and well- attended event which allows young people, workers, decision makers and carers to come together and celebrate everything that our young people have done over the last 12 months. The 2023 event was held in the event space at Chester's new Market. The space was donated free of charge, freeing up the budget to provide a fun packed, special and memorable day. Our young people have been able to design the event that they want and invite who they want making it a real family celebration.

Through the Older & Younger Children In Care Councils, a task group was established to plan and deliver the event. The task group has equal decision-making powers with adults, enabling young people to co-design and produce an event that they want based on their views, wishes and feelings. This task group met to decide on things such as: venue; timing; refreshments; resources; and entertainment. The young people taking part are given a voucher for the time they spend working on this event.

Involving young people in this event each year gives them new experiences & skills such as planning and making decisions, public speaking, budgeting, analysing and prioritising. Lots of our children and young people would not always get this experience and year on year we see an increase in their confidence levels from what they have achieved and from positive feedback they get from decision makers. The co-design of the event also makes the event more credible in the eyes of children and young people.

SHOW YOUR WORK!

It's a common trait, especially in local government, to "hide our light under a bushel". There are multiple reasons for this; many of them worthy, and linked to our identity, as public sector workers, to uphold neutrality and to not show off. As laudable as this might be, it's part of the problem when we come to tackling the barriers to inclusion and participation. We won't show our work until it's "ready" in some way (usually until it's been through the "proper channels" and been "ratified").

The problem with this is that it excludes people from being involved, included, from making comment, from having the psychological safety to challenge. It makes people feel that we're not interested in what they might have to say. In short, we come across as "aloof". We are trying to do a good

job and not share what we've done until we consider it worthy of being seen but the message we give out is actually the opposite. So, how not to be "A Loof?" What to do?

Here's a start: Austin Kleon's book – "Show your Work!" it's written for artists. This might seem irrelevant to this issue but consider that many artists experience imposter syndrome and are reticent to share their work until it's "ready" but the result of that is that they are not "engaging" their potential audience. The book aims to support artists to "get discovered" but the tools are also useful to help us think about how our work is discovered, shared and understood.

It might help some of us to shake off the "survival" tactic of keeping our heads down and get engaging with people about the work we're doing.

NOTICING BAD PRACTICE

There is certainly a phenomenon we've all shared which is often referred to as a, kind of, enlightening moment – the moment where you've come so far and become more confident and experienced the impact of decent participatory working to the point where the metaphoric scales both tip and come off your eyes. That's the point where there's a shared experience that "we can't go back". It was a phenomenon experienced in large numbers in local government during Covid. A moment where local government realised how helpless it was in the need to "engage" through hyperlocal networks in order to reach people who were suddenly very obviously experiencing health inequalities with potentially (and actually) catastrophic effects. We feel that we've been

left with a dissonance: where we know what we can't go back to but there's not enough clarity on what we need to go forward to.

But a good windfall of all of this is our ability to notice more clearly the stuff we can't go back to. Here's a great example. In Robert Chambers's book, Participatory Workshops (reference at the end) he calls out the 'The Pain': -

A PAIN (Pompous And Insensitive Notable) opens the workshop. A high table on a dais has been diligently decorated with potted plants. The PAIN is male and ageing. Because he is an Important Person, participants have dressed formally. He is late. The organisers fidget and fret. When he finally arrives, everyone stands up. Disabled as he is by long experience of being listened to with proper, decent respect, he drones on and on about his personal experiences in a world long since past, and pet ideas which he has preserved unchanged for decades. Participants look surreptitiously, then openly, at their watches. The press has been invited. When the PAIN finally finishes his peroration, they ask irrelevant question about local politics. Afterwards there is a prolonged tea break. Fawning supplicants flock to get their word in with the Big Man. When he leaves, half the morning has been lost. The furniture has to be rearranged. The participants have learnt nothing. The PAIN has learnt nothing. The wrong tone has been set. But protocol has been observed (this can happen almost anywhere).

Where else have you witnessed the PAIN? And how can we take steps to support the PAIN out of the PAINFUL (The Pompus and Insensitive Notable Failing to Understand or

Learn) position into one of inclusion in shared power? The PAIN will have had a journey of their own in getting to their position, filled with decent values and a drive to make things better for communities and creating common ground to include them is a critical thing to consider when thinking about our next steps, for sure.

KEEPING IT GOING

To finish up section two we thought about how the more you practice participatory working, inclusive practices and co-production, the more you start to carry the insight and influence of people on your everyday work. This is a beautiful and natural process which has the windfall effect of supporting longer term culture and system change. Keeping it going is a challenge.

Section three will uncover some of the things we think need to happen to support the system to shift itself into one which

Activity

If you use a digital diary, try colour coding the different tasks you do. Use the diagram with the different groups to help you analyse "who" you are spending your time with.
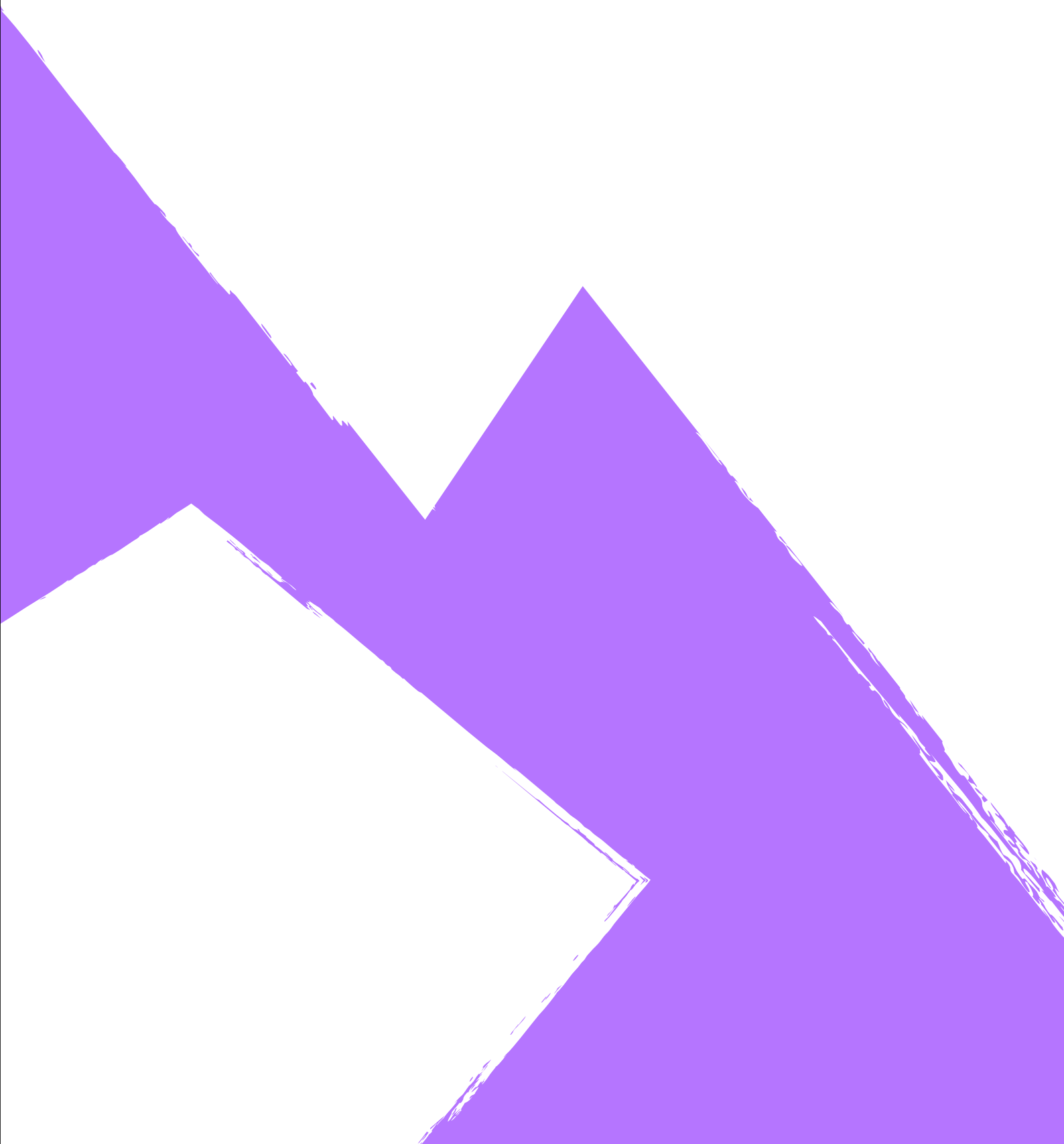
→ Who is influencing your work?
→ Who's work are you able
   to influence?
→ Who encourages you to keep going
→ With the participatory work?

supports the sharing of power and co-production by design. It will highlight the things that will need to change to enable us to "be" co-operative in our relationships and commissioning.

Part 3

CONTINUING OUR WORK

This section is in two parts. It includes signposting to guidance about paying people who don't receive a wage for their contribution and then goes on to a big list of resources and opportunities for us all to keep learning and developing our practice. We have added three sections which are the areas many of us are focusing on in order to help build a "co-operating system": one which includes and shares power as easily and transparently as it achieves its targets and regulatory requirements. This includes some thoughts on governance, commissioning and the co-operative sibling of participatory working in place; community wealth building.

PAYING PEOPLE

In many ways, this section is particularly difficult to compile: because it's an issue we revisited many times in our work and we could come to no conclusive, single and safe way of doing this.

We would like to be in a position of relative confidence and clarity because we all agree that the inability to pay people properly for their time, energy and expertise is a massive problem. And that the indignity and discomfort that sits alongside our efforts to do this is desperately uncomfortable. However, it is also true that there is not one single way to do this. Partly because the system is complicated and people's different circumstances affect them in different ways. As well as being in different and very personal financial circumstances, we all have a unique and highly personal relationship and attitude with money.

But it is abhorrent if there is any circumstance in which people are co-producing and there are some people getting paid and others not. So we include this section and the only conclusions we can come to are:

→ We must prioritise reciprocity, inclusion and dignity.

→ We must do the work.

→ We must make sure it is bespoke.

To make that happen, we feel it's important to try and develop an approach that can support and sustain the practice of reciprocity across a local system. Not every organisation is set

> ### ❝ ❞ Interview
>
> "I am so sick of this being called 'volunteering'. It's not, it's hard work. I feel so wrong when I know I'm getting paid and the people who are giving their time, their passion, their soul to bring this work to life? Well they get nothing. And we have these awful "expenses claim" things that make it feel like a begging bowl just to get your bus fare back. Well, I thought, I'm not having it! I'm going to find a way to make this work so everyone is clear about how we value them."
>
> **Project worker, New Pioneers Programme.**

up the same. Some parts of the system have access to resources and expertise and so we feel it's important to consider "how" we can work together in the locality to give this important work the attention and support it requires. For example, to make sure we have a "bespoke" offer, people will need access to one to one conversations which aren't time pressured, judgemental or "back of the queue." To make sure we have dignity designed in to our offer, the person providing the impartial help needs to be independent of the co production activity. So there is no possibility that the people involved in the coproduction know anything about anyone's personal or financial circumstances. There are welfare advice parts of the system but it's

not all about welfare advice, not everyone is on benefits, so there needs to be a confident, skilled and well connected multidisciplinary team who are well placed to support the whole infrastructure to do the work. It doesn't yet appear that there's a single "gold standard" co-production policy available that suits every person and organisation and so, with that in mind, we share some examples that we've found helpful.

SCIE

SCIE's (Social Care Institute for Excellence Guide to Paying People who Receive Benefits contains a summary of reliable and up-to-date information you need to know to make sure that when your council reimburses people with lived experience, it doesn't impact negatively on their benefits. The guide tells you

→ DWP's definitions of expenses and service user involvement, work and income - and the critical differences between them

→ What councils can do to support people with lived experience communicate with Jobcentre Plus when they are taking part in any sort of service user involvement (including template letters councils can provide to People With Lived Experience so they can inform Jobcentre Plus we are reimbursing their expenses)

→ The importance of using the right language to inform DWP of service user involvement

→ What might happen if DWP misinterpret payment for expenses as earnings

→ Things councils could do to support people who receive benefits that have a low weekly limit on earnings, such as averaging out payments for involvement

CO-PRODUCTION COLLECTIVE

The Co-Production Collective's blog – 'Co-creating our payment policy: a personal reflection' - provides real and personal insights into the different feelings and responses People With Lived Experience have had towards being paid for their contributions. Their main learning points are that:

→ Accepting payment isn't for everyone; but it can make some feel recognised and valued

→ The importance of the relationship between the contributors and people organising payment

→ Being flexible about paying people – because it can stop them taking part

→ Everyone is different – there needs to be a conversation every time about what is right for the individual

→ Vouchers are the best way of reimbursing people and recognising their contribution

TRADING ALLOWANCE

Some people might be in a position to be paid for their contribution under the trading

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⊖ scie.org.uk/co-production/supporting/paying-people-who-receive-benefits

⊖ coproductioncollective.co.uk/news/co-creating-our-payment-policy-a-personal-reflection

allowance. This exempts trading, casual and / or miscellaneous income of up to £1,000 per tax year from income tax and national insurance contributions. The allowance can be used against any trading, casual or miscellaneous income. This might include income arising from what might be deemed a "hobby" which has the potential to develop into commercial activity. It also might be relevant to those in the "gig economy." Tax-free allowances on property and trading income - GOV.UK

🔗 gov.uk/guidance/tax-free-allowances-on-property-and-trading-income

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FURTHER READING AND LEARNING

This is not a comprehensive list but it includes recommended materials; all of which have been useful to one or more of our group in their work. We've broken the list down into three themes: the "doing" of co-production (workshops, meetings and approaches), the "preparing" (participatory methods); and the "governance" (background reading about power sharing, workforce and sociocracy). Also included is a section with further reading on some of the concepts and theories mentioned. Many of the materials could fit into more than one section.

The idea of sharing this is not to overwhelm but that we felt it was useful for us to have a list of materials and approaches that can continue to support us in our learning and practice of co-operative coproduction. Not everything will be "for" everyone – but everything here has been useful in some way, or even transformative, to someone.

MATERIALS THAT SUPPORT "DOING" CO-PRODUCTION:

Check in and check out questions
To inclusively start and finish meetings: Meeting evaluation cards (Sociocracy For All)

Co-Production Collective website
This is an organisation which exists to make sure the voices of people who are often ignored or excluded are heard.

🔗 coproductioncollective.co.uk

Co-Production Toolkit
This is a comprehensive guide to co-production which was co-produced by participants of the Fulfilling Lives programme in Islington and Camden.

🔗 tinyurl.com/yhs8pj3v

Deep Democracy
This website from Lewis Deep Democracy provides content, tools and training to help resolve conflict and take action.

🔗 lewisdeepdemocracy.com

Facilitating Meetings in Sociocracy
Rau, Ted (*2023*)

A starter book for new facilitators. A great little reference book to support people trying to improve inclusion and change the power

balance in the way they structure and organise meetings.

Liberating structures

A website with 33 methods to support organisations to do their work outside of the hierarchical structures that "stifle inclusion and engagement".

🔗 liberatingstructures.com

Participatory workshops

Chambers, Robert (2002)

Participatory Workshops: a sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities.

Show your work!

Kleon, Austin (2015)

This book is full of practical ideas that can support us to be more transparent, visible and accessible when we're working.

Training for Change

Excellent and inclusive training and capacity building materials for activists and organisers. It's a useful "hub" for signposting to publications, materials and training to help develop inclusive and fair facilitation of democracy activities.

🔗 trainingforchange.org

Unconference

Materials to support people preparing to attend or organise an unconference.

🔗 unconference.net

Who decides who decides?

Rau, Ted (2021)

How to start a group so everyone can have a voice. The first meetings of a new group explained step by step through the lens of sociocracy.

Workshop activities

Workshop tactics cards (includes the fishbowl and many other activities to support workshops). Pip Decks.

PARTICIPATORY ARTS

(this is a subsection because there are lots of materials in our list on this topic – a couple of fans in our collaborative, perhaps!)

Crafting democracy:

A great book about the craftivism movement including several excellent case studies. *Decker, Juilee and Mandell Hilda (2019). Fibre arts and Activitism.*

Craftivism ideas

Some brilliant ideas for how people can "make" their message heard and understood. *Corbett, Sarah (2020). How to be a Craftivist. The art of gentle protest.*

Legislative Theatre

Boal, Augusto (1998)

This book includes the history and principles of Legislative Theatre, a detailed description of how it happens in Rio and a section of essays, speeches and lectures on associated topics.

Participatory arts activities

McCarthy, Julie (2004)

Enacting Participatory Development – theatre based techniques.

Theatre of the Oppressed

Boal, Augusto (1979)

This book explains the theory and

context of practices like legislative and forum theatre.

Theatre of the Oppressed NYC.

This is the website of the TONYC: an organisation which partners with community members to form theatre troupes that speak truth to power. There is a resources section on this website which includes tools and activities to support coproduction through legislative theatre.

🔗 tonyc.nyc

Why is that so Funny?

Wright, John (2007)

A practical exploration of physical comedy. This is a practical book for clowning and theatre practitioners but we've included it here because it is absolutely full of activities that build complicity; that build the impacts of contact theory. Many of these are able to be adapted for co-production; as check ins or democratising activity. The rest are just funny.

MATERIALS THAT SUPPORT PREPARATION, FRAMING AND THINKING ABOUT PARTICIPATORY WORKING

Action Research

Reason, Peter and Bradbury, Hilary (2008).

Participative Inquiry and Practice. An absolute tome full of theory, practices and exemplars.

Appreciative inquiry

A good introduction to the theory and practice of AI, including activities to try. *Barret, Frank and Fry, Ronald (2008)* Appreciative Inquiry: A positive approach to building co-operative capacity.

Co-creating our payment policy:

A personal reflection. Co-production collective:

🔗 coproductioncollective.co.uk/news/co-creating-our-payment-policy-a-personal-reflection

Co-operative Inquiry

Heron, John (1996)

A textbook to support the framing and developing of participatory research.

Co-produced Participatory Approaches to working with Citizens in Rochdale

(2018) Edge Hill Universtiy Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice.

Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2018)

Outlines the ethical considerations that can support our participatory practice. Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

Evaluating the impact of co-produced activity

Rietbergen-McKraken, Jennifer (1998)
Participatory learning and action: a trainers guide

Learning from a decade of co-producing ideas in Rochdale (2019)

Dr Katy Goldstraw (Professor John Diamond)
Edge Hill University Institute for Social Responsibility.

No More Throw Away People

Cahn, Edgar (2004)

This book includes the Parable of the Blobs and the Squares. The entire book describes co-production as a social justice imperative.

Chapters 15 and 16 focus on Reciprocity and provide a useful understanding of reciprocity as a core value. This includes a description of the need to change the "professional paradigm".

Participatory Action Research

Chevalier, Jacques and Buckles, Daniel (2019)

Theory and methods for engaged enquiry. This is a textbook on the theory and practice of participatory action research. It includes examples of several measurement tools including the socractic wheel and others. Chapter 6: Skills, process design and ethics is particularly useful in helping us develop and deliver our participatory programmes with rigour.

Participatory Practice

Ledwith, Margaret and Springett, Jane (2022)

Community based Action for Transformative Change. It includes a useful chapter, "participatory practice in a non-participatory world" which has a section on its application in local government.

Paying People who Receive Benefits

Social Care Institute for Excellence. Paying people who receive benefits

🔗 scie.org.uk/co-production/supporting/paying-people-who-receive-benefits

MATERIALS THAT SUPPORT THINKING ABOUT SYSTEMS CHANGE, SHIFTING POWER, STRUCTURES, GOVERNANCE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Behaving like a system

This summary document usefully outlines the behavioural preconditions for systems change:

🔗 lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Collaborate_Behaving-like-a-System_Artwork_PagesFINAL.pdf

Building Sustainable Voices

Goldstraw, J, Diamond, J, Chicot, H and Broome, D (2021)

Lifelong learning in Rochdale. Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 23 (2). pp. 7-30. ISSN 2045-2713

Compassionate Leadership

West, Michael (2021)

Sustaining Wisdom, Humanity and Presence in Health and Social Care. West outlines and illustrates the four elements of compassion in leadership, along with compelling evidence to support both the humanitarian and business case for this practice.

Neighbourhood democracy movement.

An inspiring and useful webpage full of examples and approaches to neighbourhood democracy

🔗 neighbourhooddemocracy.org

Good Help

Some useful resources to help frame thinking about the system conditions and practice for equitable, dignified and effective help.

🔗 goodhelp.org.uk

Greater Manchester Systems Changers

This website includes materials, stories and examples that support the belief that "'just outcomes' are more likely to result from 'just processes' such as systems thinking, co-creation, conflict resolution and community empowerment.

🔗 gmsystemschangers.org.uk

Humble Inquiry

Schein, Edgar (2013)

The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling. A book to support building positive relationships within organisations or programmes.

Many Voices One Song

Rau, Ted and Koch-Gonzales, Jerry (2018)

Shared Power with Sociocracy. This is a handbook for sociocracy full of clear and specific guidance, examples and insights.

Resilience and Appreciative Inquiry.

McArthur-Blair, Joan and Cockell, Jeanie (2018)

A leadership support book applying AI to the field of systems change.

Sharing in the Magic

Enabling Research (2014)

Rochdale Community Champions. A collaborative booklet published by Edge Hill University to share the success of the leadership training and research conducted by Rochdale Borough's Community Champions.

Street Level Bureacracy

Lipsky, Michael (2010)

Dilemmas of the individual in public services. A book outlining the challenges and power inherent in the workforce which operate in statutory and regulated public sector systems.

Sociocracy for All

A website full of materials, trainings and references to support the building of sociocratic organisations and practices:

Learn and Share Sociocracy with the World - Sociocracy For All

🔗 sociocracyforall.org

Sociocracy

Rau, Ted (2023)

A brief and digestable introduction to sociocracy.

Successful Integrated Working (2017)

A discussion paper to inform policy and practice in Rochdale. Edge Hill University, I4P Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice. The process of developing this document involved bringing people together from small communities, along with the professionals who worked in that area from a range of sectors. It contains an absolute gem of a page, 43, Reflective cues for future projects.

Transformational Governance Project

Access to learning, materials and a shared community space (on Slack). The work is towards a "vision of a society in which institutions and organisations are supported and held accountable by inclusive, open, transformational governance that invites change, redistributes power, and enables everyone to thrive."

🔗 transformational-governance.notion

MORE DETAIL ABOUT SOME OF THE THEORIES, PROGRAMMES OR MOVEMENTS MENTIONED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Contact Theory

Allport, Gordon (954; 1979)

The Nature of Prejudice

Design thinking

Brown, Tim (2009; 2019)

Change by Design

Framing language

FrameWorks Institute

🔗 frameworksinstitute.org/library/

Fulfilling Lives

Fulfilling Lives – Supporting people experiencing multiple disadvantage

🔗 fulfillinglivesevaluation.org

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)

🔗 meam.org.uk

Nothing about us without us

🔗 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nothing_about_us_
   without_us

Poverty Truth Commissions

What is a Poverty Truth Commission?
Poverty Truth Network

🔗 povertytruthnetwork.org/commissions/
   what-is-a-poverty-truth-commission/

Psychological safety:

Clark, Timothy R (2020)

The 4 stages of Psychological Safety

TRANSFORMATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The system needs to change in order to "design in" participation. This is going to need some serious shifts in thinking and doing and so, some of us are thinking about transforming our governance to support shifting power. We can work on any part of our system to try and understand the extent to which the component parts of governance enable cooperation and to redesign them in order to release power. Through this we hope to learn what it will really take to make the moves needed to systematise power sharing governance. In Rochdale Borough Council, for example, a small team are working as part of an enquiry exploring how UK organisations and governing bodies can meaningfully and intentionally transition from traditional to liberatory and transformational governance. The work they are doing with a learning cohort aims to try and understand the "components" of a co-operating system. These can be broken down into the components that affect relationships and behaviour or drive the transactions we make. We see these components in things like structures, terms of reference, delivery models, plans and reports, training plans and service specifications. They are driven by the interpretation of regulation and legislation which comes through strategies, policies, guidance and project overviews. Our goal is to understand ways in which these can be redesigned in order to release power.

Models of non-hierarchical and decentralised governance exist, such as holacracy and sociocracy. Exploring ways in which governance can be built in robust, transparent, accessible and inclusive ways.

Policy lab colleagues from across the collaborators attended some sociocracy training as part of the lab. Delivered by the fantastic People Support Coop, members were able to get a good insight into how and where we can start to change the way we are governed. The reassuring news is:

→ Nothing needs to be broken

→ There is no need for "winners and losers"

– you can start to build sociocracy into your system.

→ It is incredibly robust and measurable, meaning we can identify and keep a very close eye on any possible risks.

There are already a small number of sociocratic circles in place in Rochdale borough (a case study is below) and another few in development at time of writing. We build our practice and confidence. Sociocracy is a self-governance system based on four principles:

→ Consent decision making

→ Circle working

→ Double linking

→ Elections by consent

Sociocratic governance systems are notable by the feature of inclusive and intentional meetings with well-prepared agendas, agreed and clear process, inclusion as the priority. The meetings are facilitated well with clear outcomes and assigned actions and useful / purposeful minutes. They also include a feedback and backlog function to ensure the process keeps developing and nothing gets left behind: beautiful!

WORKING IN SOCIOCRATIC CIRCLES
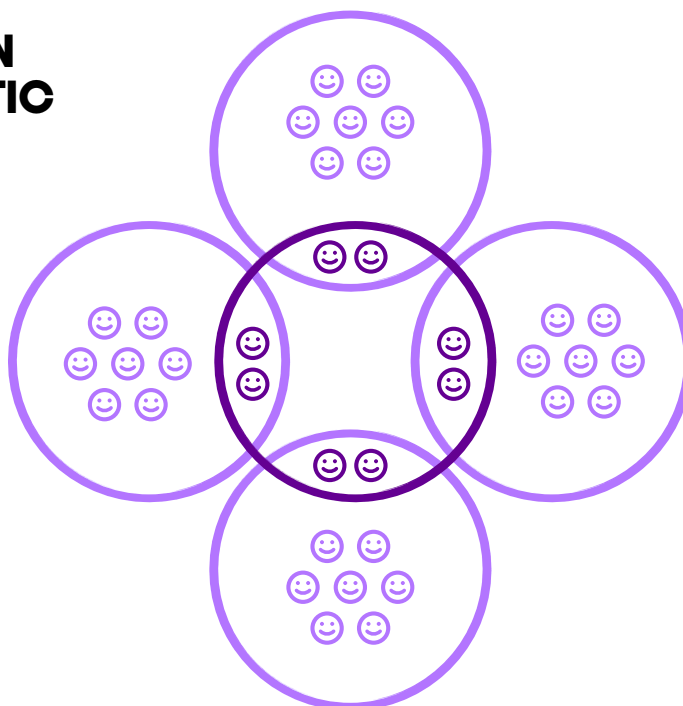
🔗 medium.com/transformational-governance/meet-the-new-transformational-governance-learning-cohort-23-24-8925aac0d56a

🔗 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holacracy

🔗 sociocracyforall.org

🔗 peoplesupport.coop

Case study:

SOCIOCRACY IN MIDDLETON COOPERATING

Middleton Cooperating are a member organisation, a co-operative, who are committed to the town of Middleton and the people who live, work and study there. The organisation uses circles to organise and govern itself and builds on values and principles of community wealth building and co-operation with a vision to cover the whole of the foundational economy.

There are three active circles working on community energy, housing and local advice and emerging ways for developing circles that will focus on social care, child care, digital and food. So far, each circle has started with a bit of resource (someone's time/capacity or some money - both the housing & energy work were supported by small grants), an allied organisation/group who want to work with the co-op and opportunity or serendipity of things coming together at the right time.

Over time, the circles will develop more autonomy and will get support from & be represented in the whole Middleton Cooperating circle. While there have been similar ingredients to getting the circles starting, each of them works differently/is at a different stage.

The community energy circle brings together a group of local activists/

residents who have some time to share, a highly skilled council officer who can support the technical and planning aspects of their work and a partner organisation with experience of getting community financing of projects off the ground.

The housing circle is in very different circumstances because many of the people participating are currently battling the effects of poor housing and poverty as it plays out in their communities. There has been more focus on supporting people so far. The strategic work focusing on local ownership has been happening alongside this with a vision to bring them together when it feels possible/doable for the members.

The advice circle started with the resource of advice already happening in the area, which was already well established. The current scope of the advice does not cover/support some of the people's needs and the challenges they face. Working with another organisation who can offer the missing specialist support will start to address the inequity and work towards making sure everyone in the community gets the advice they need.

COMMISSIONING

"It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it. And that's what gets results." Bananarama and Fun Boy Three (1982)

When we think about the implications of transforming governance, it becomes clear that there is a big old chunk of the system that needs to change. Some parts of the system "have" and others "have not" and if we don't take care of the ecosystem we are operating in, that division can cause real harm. That harm comes in the form of services and support being "less" than they have the potential to be because they haven't been properly invested in.

This is a bold statement. But it's a challenge that colleagues in the commissioning and procurement parts of our systems are dealing with. Values driven, community led commissioning and procurement is a real possibility. We interviewed a colleague who is deeply rooted in that world and asked them to tell us about it.

Here's what they said:

"It's just a missed opportunity. We are missing a trick because we already have everything we need. We have a commissioning cycle. It's well known; it's well recognised. It's what we are taught in universities.

The commissioning cycle starts with strategic planning where you think about the needs, what you already have and what the priorities are. Then you move on to procuring a service or provider: you have to think about who or what is in the best position to give the best impact for our money. And then you move onto evaluation and how you can be assured that you're getting the best outcomes through the very best quality of review. So we have these things. But there is a massive lack of consistency in how this cycle is applied and we are missing out on potential if we don't get it right.

If we don't do the commissioning in this inclusive way, how can we expect providers to be inclusive and to give people what they really need because they've asked them properly? How can we expect them to work together with partners across the system if they see them as competition? If we don't do it, they certainly won't – because they've been marketised away from co-operation. Their workforce, many of whom are in this work because of their values and vocation, will be frustrated because they can't do what they know is needed."

Earlier in this manual, a colleague from the voluntary sector talks about how they feel like they're trying to sow seeds in highly difficult and infertile terrain. What this commissioning colleague is talking about is how they can try to make that terrain less difficult. It's a tricky balance and it can feel risky: knowing that success depends on relationships and trust; living with a huge power imbalance as a "purse string holder" amongst organisations who are desperate to survive. So Rochdale Borough Council is developing a strategy to make co-operative commissioning the norm. Taking the sense of risk and maverick out of the work by giving it a really clear direction and framework.

Case study:

COMMISSIONING A WELFARE ADVICE ECOSYSTEM

In Rochdale borough, colleagues in public health have taken a long term, iterative approach to invest in a "system of a support" rather than a service.

The commissioners looked at what was already available that could help them to understand exactly how welfare advice was working; what was working and where things needed to be improved. An Economic Support Network was already in existence which included many representatives from grassroots and community organisations who had contact with people who were in real need of advice. It was possible to invest money into that network and ask them to use participatory budgeting approaches to support small projects. This built capacity and confidence in the system. It built relationships and, because of the network, organisations were able to co-operate to help people navigate through opportunities.

The network was also able to help the commissioners to understand what else was needed. They were able to analyse the offer and identify gaps – where there was inequity, where provision was underused or not in the places where it was most needed; and where there was a lack of, for example, language capability to make the advice accessible.

That analysis fed directly into the commissioning cycle. It wasn't a large amount to begin with but the commissioners were able to fund the growth and development of three new community offers that we know, literally, thousands of people now benefit from. There are queues for this help because it is trusted and it works.

There is now great progress towards a whole system, more inclusive, accessible and navigable system of support for welfare advice. It includes general support, targeted support where it is needed and some highly specialised support, which was able to be reprocured where it was really needed. It is clearly already so much more than the sum of its parts and is able to support and benefit from connection with a much wider offer.

The specialist element is a great example of what is different as a result. Rather than being a single service that is judged on performance against a set of measurable performance indicators (targets, numbers, people, interventions, follow up), it is now also able to show how it is leading the system wide support; enabling other colleagues as partners not competitors. This means that as well as procuring "interventions" from a service, the commissioners are investing in co-operation.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

Community Wealth Building describes a way of working which aims to tackle economic inequality and create a fairer economy. There is plenty of wealth in the country, but in many areas there are still people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, and local businesses that struggle to grow. So most local economies don't work for everyone. There are gaps between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and those gaps are getting wider due to wealth not 'trickling down'.

Community wealth building is a new approach to economic development that focuses on trying to create more opportunity, equality and growth for those that need it most - just by doing the things we already do in a slightly different way.

So how does it work? It usually starts with organisations that are 'rooted' or 'anchored' in a place, like councils, colleges, hospitals and housing associations, changing the way they work. This can take lots of different forms, but it is normally described as taking action in these 5 ways: -

→ **Spending**
when organisations spend, can they spend locally to benefit local businesses and supply chains?

→ **Jobs**
Can organisations recruit from lower income areas and make sure they offer good wages, terms and conditions?

→ **Assets**
Can organisations support more community ownership of land and property, so they feel the benefit of these resources and can do good things with them?

→ **Finance**
Are organisations investing in their local communities where they can? Are they making sure people have access to affordable credit?

→ **Ownership**
Can they promote the growth of small to medium-sized enterprises, community businesses, co-ops and social enterprises, which are more likely to employ local people and buy goods and services locally?

This approach grows and expands. It usually starts with 'anchors', but to have maximum impact, it needs partners and communities to get on board to create a network and eco-system where everyone is pulling in the same direction - to develop a local economy which doesn't just focus on delivering good profits, but also good lives.

So what does it look like when it works? Community wealth building should look and feel different in each local area because what is needed to tackle economic inequality will be different in each place. But when happens, it should result in better paid, more secure jobs and more locally rooted businesses that share the wealth they create with workers, consumers and communities – generating more equality, greater wellbeing and better lives.

So, it is clear that there is a huge synergy between working in inclusive and participatory ways, and following community wealth building principles. They have the same goals and seek the same results. So what does that make community wealth building? It's a great opportunity to co-operate for a wellbeing economy.
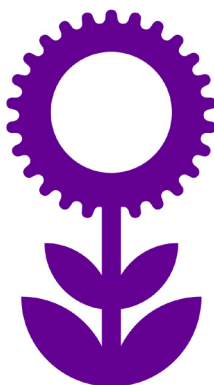
COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

HOW DOES IT WORK?

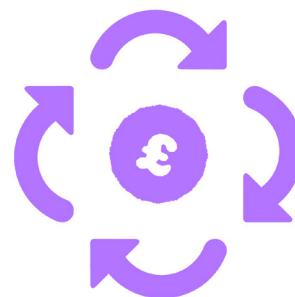**Cooperation amongst and for small businesses**

Line of sight into work and side hustles into the local economy

Fair recruitment, pay and progression routes all improve local economies

Developing and growing small locally owned enterprises, cooperatives and social enterprises locks wealth into your economy

Deepen the function and ownership of local assets ensures that the financial and social gain is harnessed by citizens
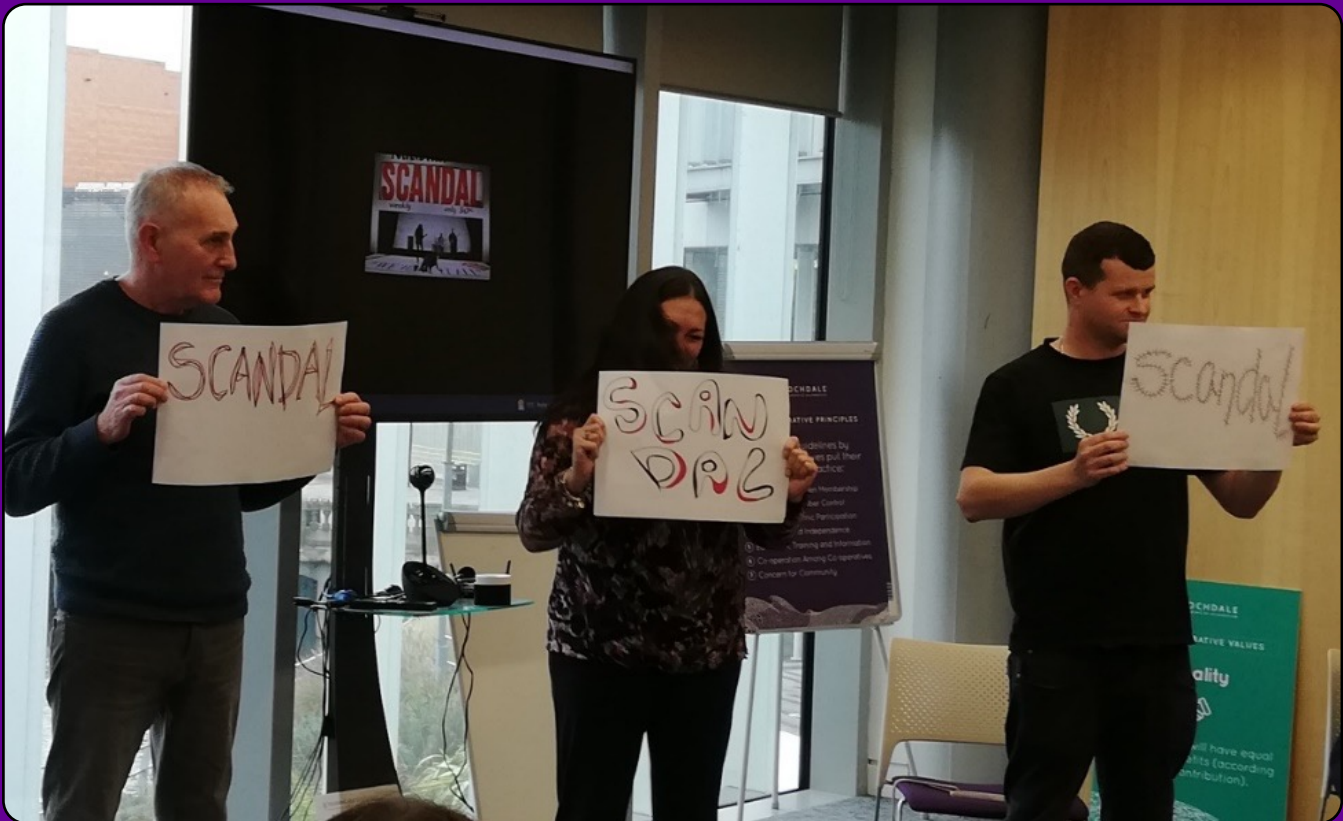
Increased flows of investment within local economies recirculates the wealth that exists in one place

Dense local supply chains of business support local employment + retain wealth locally

→ Adapted from Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES)

Part 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Participants from each of these organisations contributed time, energy, learning, insight, thinking, puzzling, grappling, writing, encouraging and, most importantly, co-operating! All participating organisations included a number of people in the events and learning process; many of whom have lived and/or voluntary experience. We thank everyone deeply for their contribution.

→ Aachen City Volksochschulle

→ Antony Collins Solicitors

→ Cheshire West and Chester Council

→ Community Inspirers, Cheshire West

→ DVV international

→ Elephants Trail

→ Kirklees Council

→ Manchester University NHS FT

→ New Pioneers

→ Oldham Council

→ Rochdale Borough Council

→ Rochdale Boroughwide Housing

→ South Tyneside Council

→ Sunderland City Council

→ Tameside Council

→ Theatre in Flow

→ The people of Aachen, Bury, Cheshire West and Chester, Oldham, Rochdale borough, Salford, borough, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Tameside

→ Trafford Council

→ Trueman Change

→ Unlimited Potential

→ Wigan Council

→ Dr Katy Goldstraw and Professor John Diamond who supported many of the projects in Rochdale borough illustrated here as case studies.

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