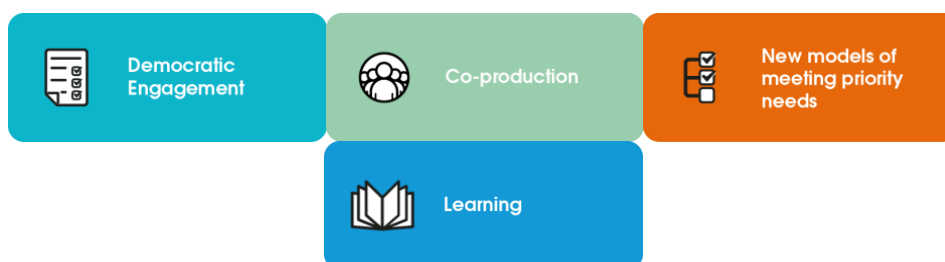




HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES



RedQuadrant working with
Birmingham City Council

Co-production of day opportunities / The Empowering People Team (EPT) for ASC Commissioning

In 2022 Birmingham City commissioned an independent co-produced review of day opportunities. The vision for Adult Social Care was to promote community resilience and enable vulnerable citizens to access support and services within the communities in which they live, exercising choice and control so that they can live good quality lives and enjoy good health and wellbeing. The commissioning team responsible for day opportunities also wanted to understand the impact that the pandemic had on people, communities, and services, putting co-production at the centre of their approach. To achieve the vision, they wanted to establish a group of co-producers to independently lead engagement with people and partners.

Birmingham City Council commissioned RedQuadrant to deliver this independent co-produced review of day opportunities in the city, recruiting and training people from Birmingham to co-lead a programme of co-production and engagement. This group of people with lived experience formed the Empowering People Team (EPT), including people who use day services, specialist colleges, and family carers.

In June 2023, Birmingham commissioned us for a second phase of co-production with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the aspirations, challenges and barriers that people identified in the first phase. This included a new round of recruitment and training of EPT members - the EPT grew to 23 people in total. The engagement programme sought to also reach a wider range of seldom heard voices to understand what they would want from services and how Birmingham can support people and services in the future. In this second phase, over 40 meetings were held involving more than 500 people to have their voice heard.

The backdrop to this work across two phases between 2022 and 2024 was one of significant change and uncertainty. Day services were still recovering from the impact of the pandemic and in the autumn of 2023 the Council issued a section 114 notice. It was important that the review and engagement were independent, credible, and meaningful as they were crucial to so many people and families who relied on these services for support, and that the co-producers felt confident and were supported to lead engagement at what was a difficult time for many.

It was also important that the full range of day opportunities both internal and external were included and these were diverse and dispersed across Birmingham. The scale of the task was extensive and logistically challenging to deliver in a way that was accessible, genuine, and co-ordinated allowing everyone who wanted to be involved to have their say.

The Council's internal service supports adults across nine sites including four gardening projects. There were also 45 third sector and private organisations providing day opportunities services in Birmingham. They supported people with a range of support needs including learning and physical disabilities and older adults with dementia.

Seldom heard groups and future users were enabled to have their say and a programme of targeted events were held including a community open day, discussions with carers groups and visits to special needs schools and colleges as well as some day opportunities for younger people and those supporting the wide range of diverse communities in Birmingham.

A central element to this work was the recruitment and development of a group of co-producers drawn from across the wide variety of services and communities in Birmingham. The lived experience of people using day opportunities and their carers was the essential ingredient to a genuine and meaningful independent review and we sought nominations from across existing day services and community groups.

We started with a training programme of five sessions across two groups - one with full verbal capacity (mainly young people and carers) and one for those who needed more time to articulate their thoughts. This enabled people to grow into the role and fully understand the scope and limitations of what they were undertaking. This also built trust in the process between council officers, the co-producers and our team. Following the training we held a workshop to bring the two groups together and to plan events and agree their way of working. At this event the group came together and named themselves the Empowering People Team (The EPT).

With our support, the EPT developed a set of principles as a guide to co-production work and they also developed easy read guides and questions to support them in confidently co-leading every session with support from RedQuadrant and staff from within commissioning

and day services. During the second phase new co-producers were recruited and trained and the membership grew to 23 members.

The findings from the events were collated and discussed with the EPT at a workshop where the key messages and recommendations were agreed, and these were included in a Cabinet report in May 2024.

The two reports produced by the EPT and us were presented by EPT members with our support and council officers. The reports were well received by Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and have informed the development of a commissioning strategy for day opportunities and a service improvement plan for internal day services.

The Empowering People Team continue their work and are building on the experience they had gained in leading co-production. They want to continue to support the strategy development and implementation and the service improvement process. The EPT have contributed the day opportunities tender which went live in early 2025 by developing a set of questions that was published as FAQ for the tender process.

The work of the EPT continues. They undertook a co-produced review of leisure centre accessibility working with SERCO and Ladywood Leisure Centre. They have also worked in partnership with the Quality Champions Team visiting and exploring the commissioned leisure centres.

They are currently working with commissioners to support activity around transforming Transitions and looking at the Staying Independent at Home contract. Two members of the group are also working with health and others to support Autism friendly services in Birmingham.

One of the most important outcomes of this approach was that EPT members have increased in confidence and have been able to support new members and some of the quieter members who are now confident to speak up in larger group situations and contribute to events. EPT members have commented on the difference it has made to them personally to be doing something important and benefitting the wider community of day opportunity users. They have reported that participating in the review has helped in improving their confidence, speaking skills and mental wellbeing as a result of being heard and feeling useful.

This work has demonstrated not only that coproduction is beneficial to both those commissioning services but when undertaken with appropriate training and support, also to those who join as coproducers.

EPT members have all said that they want to continue being part of the group and are keen to undertake further projects across the city. The expanded EPT now includes a range of people from all parts of the adult population needing support to live a good life, including carers. Effective coproduction comes from building long-term relationships between those responsible for delivering services and those using them. If it is supported to develop going forward, Birmingham's EPT is a significant asset and means to achieve this in the city.

Quote from client

“The approach taken by RedQuadrant to engage, train and support the co-production volunteers, the Empowering People Team, had a huge impact. By factoring in time for the volunteers to familiarise themselves with the co-production theme, get to know each other, ask questions and have a go meant that as a commissioning manager I was able to observe and support the process with absolute confidence that the end result would be exactly what we had requested and more. Alongside the commissioned end product, to be able to see the confidence and self-esteem of the volunteers develop and their enthusiasm to do more meant that I have been able to involve them in more co-production activity including a review of the accessibility of commissioned leisure centres for adults with a range of support needs, and contributing to the quality question setting for a recent tender for day opportunities. The RedQuadrant facilitators, Paul and Lynda, made a lasting impact because I still get asked how they are!”

For further information contact:

John Freeman

Commissioning Manager – Complex Care, Adult Social Care Directorate, Birmingham City Council

john.freeman@birmingham.gov.uk | 07517 595726 | <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/>

Frank Curran

Senior consultant, RedQuadrant

Frank.curran@redquadrant.com | +44 7515 875381 | www.redquadrant.com



People-centred councils
driving social innovation
putting people first

E: comms@councils.coop | T: [@CoopInnovation](https://www.coopinnovation.co.uk) | W: councils.coop