

Co-production evaluation workshop

For this workshop, Morwenna, Cecilia and Janet posed a scenario to get people thinking about doing evaluation differently: You wake up tomorrow morning and a miracle has happened! All of your evaluation is now being done using co-production.

- How does your day look different?
- What are the steps you need to take to get to this point?

The discussions were so good that we have reproduced the comments here.

How does your day look different if you are doing co-produced evaluation?

- There are not just researchers in the office! There's a better, more representative, range of people.
- Researchers are often in a different place (e.g. not in the office, out in places where stakeholders and partners live and work).
- There is more (maybe overwhelming) administration because of the need to keep people up to date and engaged.
- There are more shared conversations; voicing of different views and challenging questions asked.
- There is someone to coordinate and facilitate events etc...
- Researchers become mediators and influencers....but is this an appropriate role or should a team approach be taken for this function?
- Researchers are working more with vulnerable people.
- Productivity decreases? The process changes, taking more time!
- Can't rely on Gantt charts, would need to apply for extensions on existing projects
- There is more contact and pro-active communication with people and a diverse range of emails, which may be out of working hours
- There are missed calls from partners
- More meeting face to face, more popping by – and there are more meetings and refreshments. Taking care of people with food and drinks – PA needed!
- More on costs – running out of money!
- Managers might be frustrated...are they brought in?
- Realising that I don't need all the answers as the researcher – liberating
- There is more ambiguity: need to feel comfortable with that
- My head is in a different place, taking more time to engage and use active listening
- Knowledge of those in the middle of service design takes a central position
- The approach to evaluation is more iterative e.g. Feedback informing service development and informing evaluation

We are thinking carefully about how to best share findings

- Moving away from reports which are one-way, mono-vocal, 'definitive' and final
- Towards discussion forums which are dialogical, accessible, emergent

Tackling tension and disagreements about purpose, relevant data, interpretation in terms of:

- Who holds the casting vote?
- Who is accountable (and has to defend/vouch for) findings?
- We have to deal with people challenging the impartiality of 'external evaluation'. Councillors accept the opinions of others and see the use of a co-produced approach.
- Internal processes need changing.

- There is more job satisfaction, less stress because we have more knowledge of what works and why.
- The contact leads to more opportunities!

What are the first steps you could take to move toward co-produced evaluation?

Learning what the boundaries are, when doing co-production. Be honest about what you can and can't do – manage expectations and make sure there are clear roles

Identify the 'right' partners – key champions – a key person to take it forward.

Find a champion/Knowledge Broker who can manage power dynamics, enable equality, and take on the role of a neutral communicator linking people and promoting exchange...but hard to recruit someone to this role?

Carve out some initial time, at the beginning, to think about how you can do co-production and why you would do this

Consider what evidence is there for co-production? What does success look like? And for whom? Methods? Aims?

Focus on relationship management. Plan more contact time with stakeholders

- Figure out how to get wide and diverse participation
- Find existing networks to work with, but also include different kinds of people who aren't in networks
- Organise forums, places and environments that enable multi-way input
- Change the format of meetings, for example send draft agendas around with someone leading on co-creating the meeting agenda
- Plan regular meetings and project management
- Consider how to manage change in participants
- Clarify language (acronyms) and bust jargon. Check out that people have a shared meaning for different concepts and ideas.
- Encourage people to challenge and question.
- Consider the integrity of the process
- Find staffing resources to support it
- Explore available budget
- Be open, without assumptions
- Balancing our expertise with/acknowledging expertise of others
- Engaging with NIHR and research funders: we can't set out research results in funding bids if we're co-producing the research!
- Offer training which supports knowledge sharing, on co-production and person centred research, where academics have less autonomy and are supported to 'let go'.
- Think about how to sustain engagement over time.