

# THE FUTURE OF SEND CO-PRODUCTION IN BIRMINGHAM: MAPPING THE OPTIONS

Work Together Be Bold Be Better

**Co-produce!**



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# Introduction

This mapping exercise, commissioned by Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership, has explored how co-production between public service organisations and citizens (children, young people, parents, carers, and members of the community) could be made stronger, wider, and deeper in Birmingham for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership has consulted widely with parents, carers, children and young people to build a local definition that works for them. From this process, the following definition has emerged:

*“For us, co-production is about placing place equal value on the contributions of children, young people, parents, carers and professionals in making decisions and improving the services received and the experiences and outcomes of those living with SEND in Birmingham.*

*Co-production therefore requires involving people in an open and inclusive manner right from the very start of their experiences with public services, as a means of building and maintaining trust, so that they can contribute fully to the commissioning, design, delivery and evaluation of services and outcomes.”*

The first report of the project *Mapping SEND Co-production in Birmingham* showed that there are already many co-production initiatives being undertaken within the SEND community in Birmingham, most of which appear well-regarded by those involved. These examples are highly revealing and are likely to be significant for determining future priorities. Moreover, very few interviewees doubted the importance of co-production playing a greater role in the future.

These are all real and valuable positives. However, there are limitations to the initiatives mapped in the first report. Most are relatively small-scale or quite local in their impact, e.g. around a school, a nursery or a hospital. Many have only been operated for a limited period, e.g. when funded from a time-limited grant. Even in those SEND services and settings where co-production thinking is mature, the impact on professional practice and service delivery has remained underdeveloped. Consequently, co-production has not been systemic. That needs to change.

Moreover, the scale of the required change is challenging. The first mapping report highlighted two key points. First, in each sector, most services do not yet embed co-production as a way of working. Second, co-production, by its very nature, entails a person-centred approach which pursues the improvement of the holistic quality of life of the children, young people, parents and carers and therefore generally involves cross-sector working.

If co-production is to play a much larger role in improving public services and transforming the quality-of-life outcomes experienced by children and young



people with SEND, and their families, these initiatives need to be deepened and widened, and further co-production initiatives need to be considered. The personalisation of services must be transformed into processes which support the active contributions of children, young people and families to be drivers of outcome improvement, not just add-ons.

In this report we set out a range of options for future SEND co-production in Birmingham which public service organisations can use to achieve this transformation to a genuine co-production way of working. Many of these options require long-term systemic and cultural change and will be hard to implement. The development of the SEND strategy in Birmingham will consider how these longer-term options can be prioritised.

However, many of the options in this report could be quickly tested within the Education, Health and Social Care sectors and, where they prove to be effective, could be quickly embedded within the day-to-day practices of local public services.

This mapping has been undertaken as part of the work of the teams implementing the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) as a response to the comments made in the SEND re-inspection by OFSTED in May 2021 – specifically, it contributes to 'Objective 3: Working Together Well', which is providing a co-production framework, containing an agreed definition of co-production, and a statement of the co-production values and behaviours across education, health and care. This in turn feeds into the overall SEND strategy, which is being prepared under Objective 1 of the APP.

## Purpose of Report

The aim of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of the options available for SEND co-production in Birmingham
- Outline the next steps in encouraging all public service organisations involved in SEND to widen, deepen and make more effective their co-production approach



# Methodology/Process

The report provides feedback from a range of engagement activities held between December 2021 and March 2022. It has been compiled by Tony Bovaird (CEO, Governance International) and Maria McCaffrey, the SEND Co-production Officer, in collaboration with colleagues in the SEND Improvement Team and from Birmingham Parent Carer Forum (PCF).

Before the mapping exercise started, the project was scoped with the SEND Local Area Partnership leaders to identify the key issues to be covered and key stakeholders to be approached initially. It was agreed that the exercise would focus on co-production of public services and outcomes between public service organisations and citizens (including children, young people, parents, carers, and members of the community), rather than joint working between organisations.

Moreover, we agreed to cover in this mapping how citizens worked with public service organisations across the whole service planning and delivery cycle, exploring how children, young people, parents, carers, and members of the community took part in each of the 4 Co's of co-production:

- Co-commissioning – e.g. by helping to prioritise SEND services
- Co-design – e.g. by helping SEND services to fit people's needs better
- Co-delivery – e.g. by helping to give peer support to people with similar experiences
- Co-assessment – e.g. by helping to identify what works (and what doesn't)

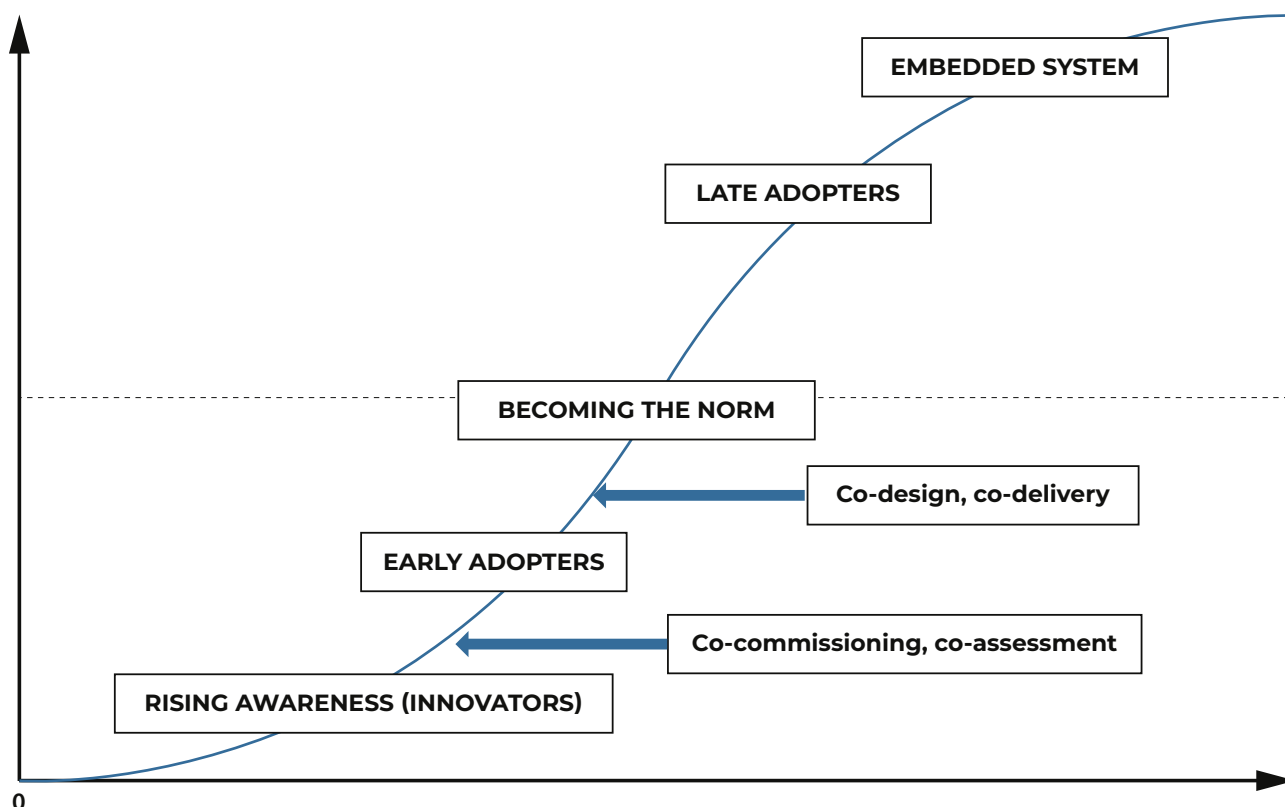
Interviews for the first mapping report (February 2022) were held with key actors in the SEND 0-25 years community, from a list compiled in collaboration with the SEND Local Area Partnership leaders and the Birmingham Parent Carer Forum and over time the initial list grew to more than 60 interviewees. The first mapping report set out 48 SEND co-production initiatives in which these interviewees were involved – 8 of which were mainly co-commissioning, 19 co-design, 17 co-delivery and 4 co-assessment. This suggests that the Birmingham SEND system is more advanced in its awareness and implementation of the co-design and co-delivery approaches to co-production. In Figure 1 this is represented in a 'learning curve', where co-design and co-delivery are already being experimented with by 'early adopters' of co-production in the SEND system, whereas co-commissioning and co-assessment are still at the stage of rising awareness, involving as yet only a relatively small number of innovators.

For this second report on Options for SEND Co-production in Birmingham, eight focus groups with key actors have been undertaken, together with a range of other ways of collecting information, including further interviews with individuals, feedback from eight Parent Carer Engagement events, and comments



which were solicited from the members of several youth participation groups and parent carer support groups. Over 100 people have been individually contacted during this process, as well as the members of several active participation groups.

Figure 1. Learning curve of the SEND Co-production in Birmingham



## Types of option for future SEND co-production in Birmingham

From our consultation with these diverse stakeholders, we have developed a wide range of options for future SEND co-production in Birmingham, which we have grouped into five categories:

- Options for developing more effective SEND co-production across all 4 Co's
- Options for **co-commissioning**
- Options for **co-design**
- Options for **co-delivery**
- Options for **co-assessment**



## The 'Top Ten' Options for developing more effective SEND co-production

The focus groups and other sources in this mapping exercise have suggested a wider range of initiatives for developing more effective SEND co-production in Birmingham. We group them here under the following ten headings:

1. Clear leadership around the role of SEND co-production in Birmingham
2. Better communications to improve SEND co-production
3. Need for organisational structures which support co-production
4. Need for organisational processes which support co-production
5. More effective participation groups to cover all 4 Co's of SEND co-production
6. Sharing good practice in SEND co-production – disseminating, learning and training
7. Widening and deepening co-commissioning
8. Widening and deepening co-design
9. Widening and deepening co-delivery
10. Widening and deepening co-assessment

Figure 2. The main options for future SEND co-production in Birmingham

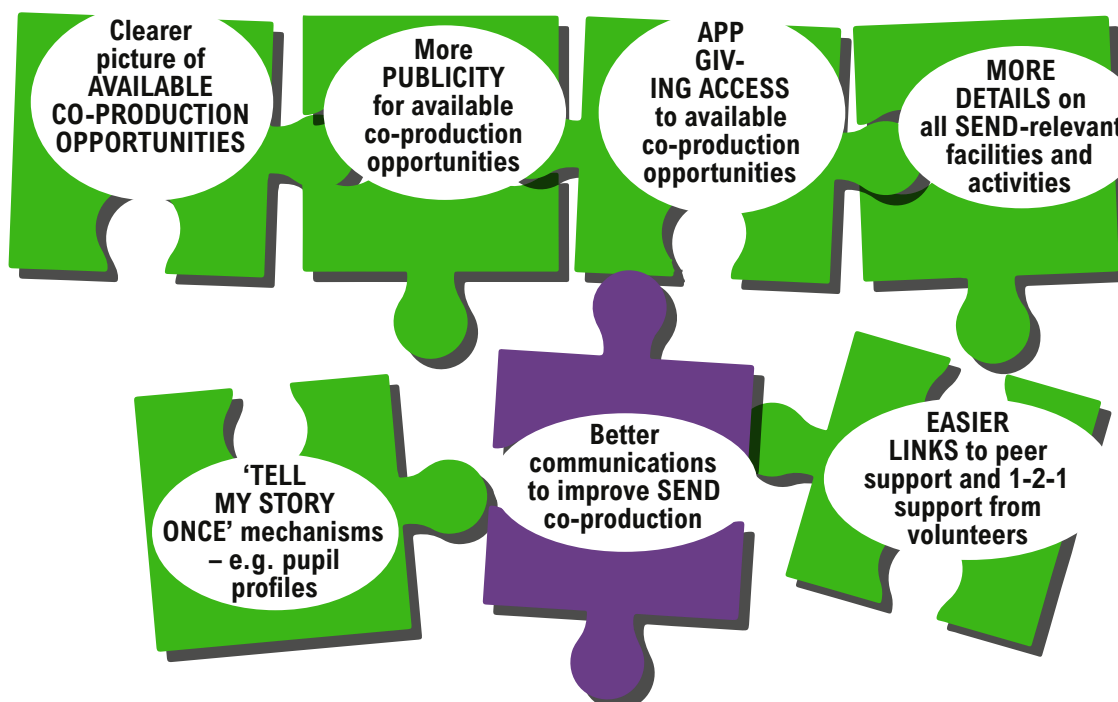


In the following sections, we give a short summary of the potential initiatives on which each of these 'top ten' options are based. The full range of recommendations from all the stakeholders consulted is set out in the main report. The report also highlights the current SEND co-production initiatives in Birmingham which already demonstrate the potential for these options.

### 1. Clear leadership around the role of SEND co-production in Birmingham



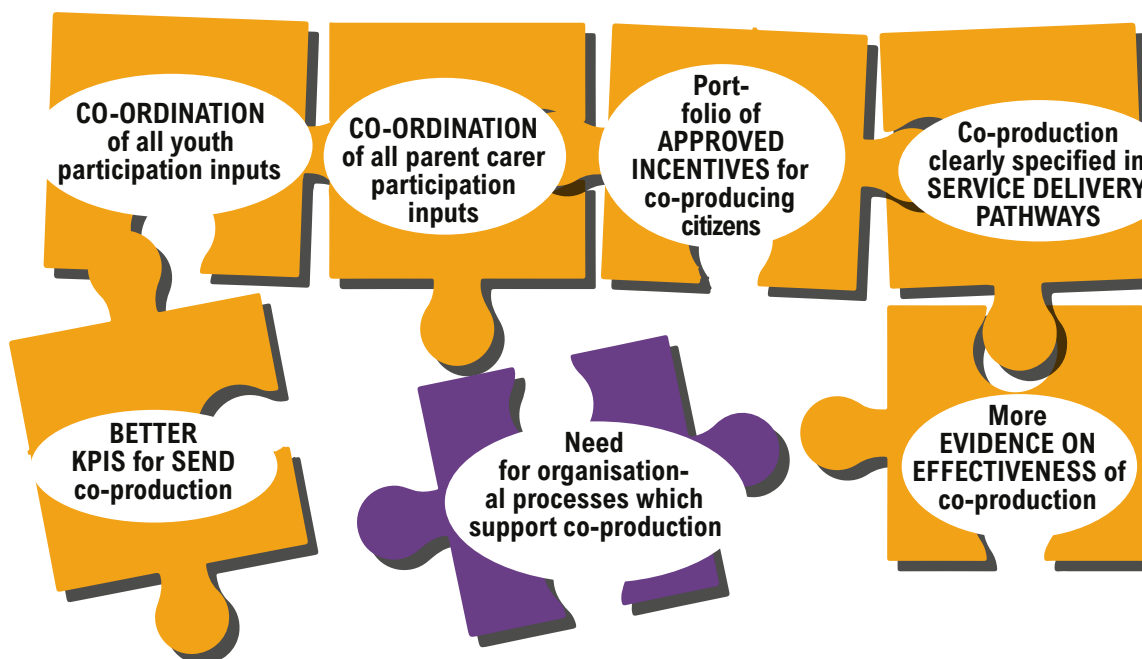
### 2. Better communications to improve SEND co-production



### 3. Need for organisational structures which support co-production



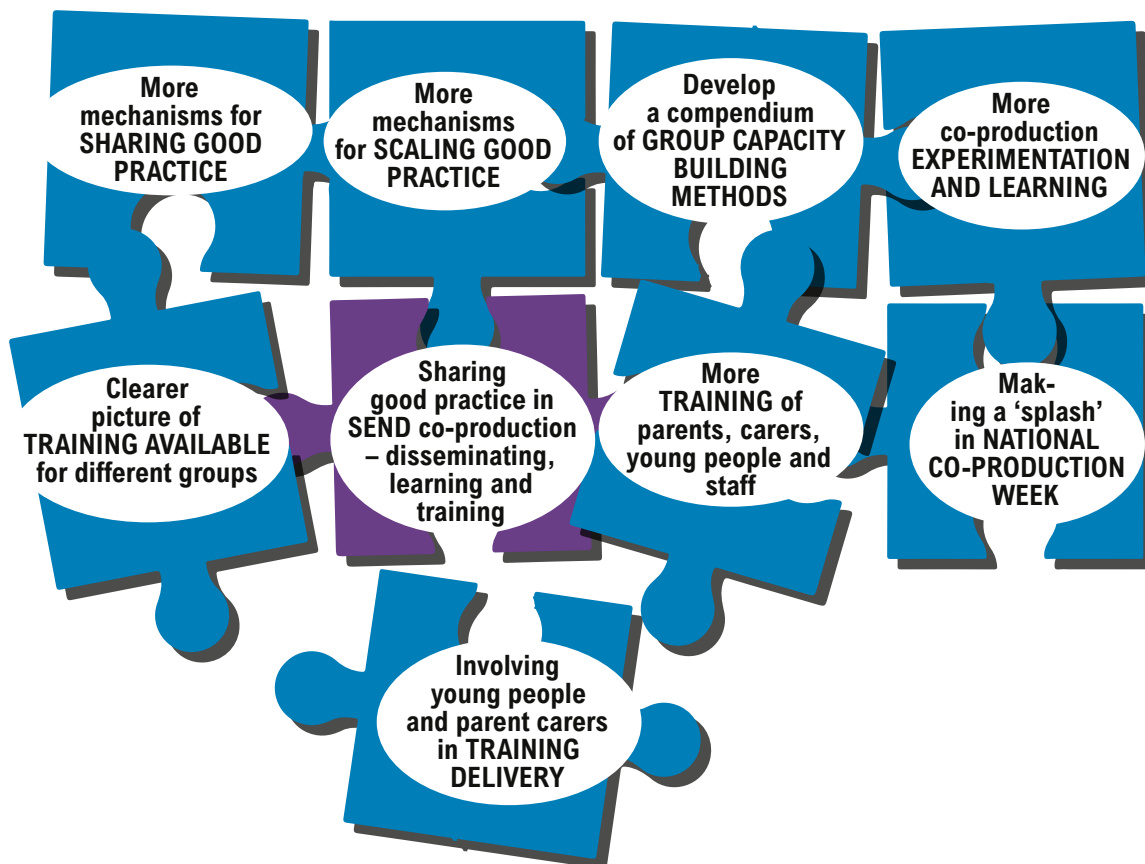
### 4. Need for organisational processes which support co-production



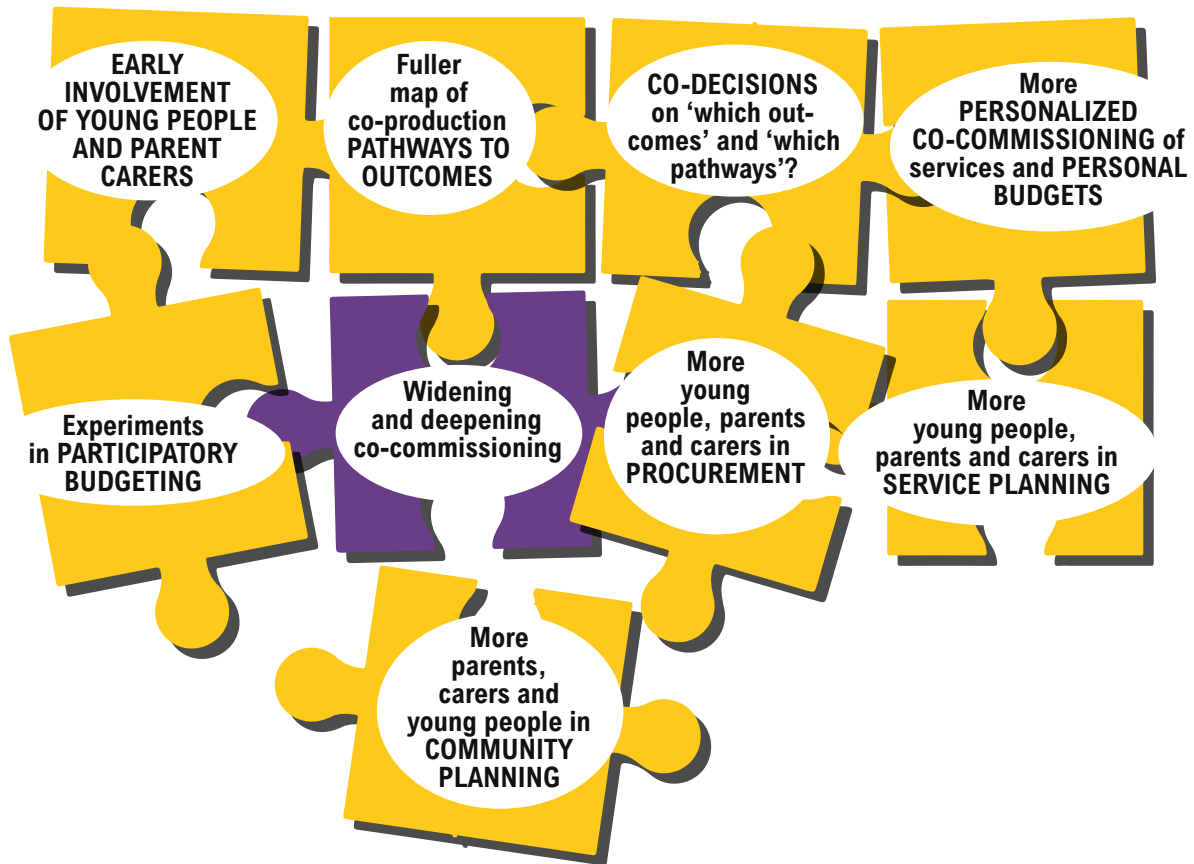
## 5. More effective participation groups to cover all 4 Co's of SEND co-production



## 6. Sharing good practice in SEND co-production – disseminating, learning and training



## 7. Widening and deepening co-commissioning



## 8. Widening and deepening co-design



## 9. Widening and deepening co-delivery



## 10. Widening and deepening co-assessment



# Next steps for testing and embedding options for SEND co-production in Birmingham

The options in this report will be fed into the process of producing a SEND strategy (Objective 1 in the Accelerated Progress Plan), which is being developed in the SEND system during 2022.

All participants in the focus groups reported here confirmed that they placed significant importance on achieving more co-production in SEND services and support. In the final stage of this exercise, feedback was sought on the relative importance placed on the co-production options outlined in this report by different organisations. Discussions were held with stakeholders from the education, health and social care sectors (including representatives of children, young people, parents and carers), in order to refine these options and to identify options which could be seen as a priority for testing in the short-term, given the commitment for action on co-production.

In taking this conversation further with key participants involved throughout the SEND system, it has become clear that some individuals are already heavily involved in managing, delivering and further developing co-production as a business-as-usual way of working with children, young people and families. It has also become clear that a rather larger group of people now wish to move to this stage.

Consequently, a number of the co-production options in this report have been identified in these discussions, across the education, health and social care sectors, as potentially valuable approaches which are likely to have positive outcomes within a relatively short timescale and therefore deserve to be explored further.

**In the education sector**, opportunities have been identified for 'quick wins' in developing and exploring co-production working in the new academic year, including:

- *Improving the sharing of best co-production practice*, involving SENCO consortia leads, local SENCO groups and SEND advisory teams, working with children, young people, parents and carers.
- *Delegating authority for SEND co-production* by emphasising to staff that they should see co-production as 'business as usual', with potential for more co-production innovations in schools during the next academic year.



- *Extending the involvement of parents and carers in the work of SEND advisory teams* in order to ensure service delivery has greater accessibility and is shaped by parents and carers.
- Developing creative ways of getting input from children and young people, parents and carers in development of the new Council-wide commissioning framework (Dynamic Purchasing System), as part of the Virtual Schools Enrichment Programme.
- Co-production of videos demonstrating pathways into employment and ways in which career opportunities for young people with SEND can be enhanced and showcased within schools – a joint activity of the Citizen Involvement Team and the YES! youth group.

**In the social care sector,** it is proposed that the newly aligned Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) team and Transitions team will support the new service by developing and delivering a training module on SEND co-production for all staff, which staff will also partly deliver, along with service users. The initiative will raise awareness and understanding of the Birmingham SEND Co-production Framework and Charter; highlight the values and behaviours underpinning the Framework; and explore opportunities for development of co-productive approaches and practices in the service, in line with the range of options outlined in this Mapping report.

**In the health sector,** a number of options highlighted in this report will be followed up during 2022:

- The Children's Champions Forum of the Children and Families Division of Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust plans over the next six months to become more involved in co-design and co-delivery of services with service users, carers, families, staff and other stakeholders.
- The Birmingham Physiotherapy Service will be working with Urdu-speaking service users to improve and extend the information and support available to them, e.g., through the advice line and webpages.
- Birmingham health providers (namely Birmingham Women and Children's Hospital, Forward Thinking Birmingham, Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust and University Hospitals Birmingham) have agreed that co-production will be introduced as a standing agenda item at all provider SEND meetings in future, to ensure an ongoing focus on co-production and prompt new ways of working.



## ... and finally

The wide range of options outlined in this report provides the SEND system with clear mechanisms for bringing children, young people, parents and carers ever more closely into the SEND decision making, design and delivery processes in Birmingham. In this way, the limitations of the current approach to co-production, as set out in the first mapping report, can be tackled – the small-scale, local initiatives which have generally characterised co-production to date can be learnt from and scaled up to have much greater impact on the quality of life of SEND individuals and families. Furthermore, new approaches to co-production which have succeeded elsewhere can be tried out in Birmingham. Co-production, as the default way of working, can become firmly embedded in the policies, strategies and everyday practices of partners in the Birmingham SEND system.

However, the wide range of co-production options outlined in this report present differing challenges to the range of SEND partners. The Birmingham SEND strategy, which is currently being developed, will require partners to make a clear set of decisions and choices about their co-production priorities. Many of the options in this report, while potentially interesting, have not yet been explored in the Birmingham SEND system – and even those which have been tried in recent years are not widely known about. There is a great deal of learning to be done in a short period of time.

The exploration of deeper, wider and more effective co-production approaches will therefore require innovation and experimentation, with the results being swiftly analysed and widely disseminated, so that the embedding of co-production is based on good practice with solid evidence.

Clearly, embedding co-production within the SEND system will be challenging. This mapping study has demonstrated that the SEND co-production initiatives currently undertaken in Birmingham generally involve organisations from more than one sector working together, and require all organisations to take a person-centred approach, based on relationships of trust, and pursuing improvement of the holistic quality of life of the children, young people, parents and carers. However, this is not enough.

More fundamentally, the capabilities of all children, young people, parents and carers in the SEND system need to be identified, developed and mobilised, as part of this quality-of-life transformation. A start has already been made in Birmingham, as evidenced by the 48 co-production initiatives outlined in our first mapping report. We believe the options in this second mapping report provide the building blocks for accelerating this process.

