



Birmingham  
**SEND**  
Co-production

**BIRMINGHAM**  
**SEND**  
Local Area Partnership

# CO-PRODUCTION FRAMEWORK & CHARTER







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# 1. Why do we need a framework for Co-production?

This Framework is intended to provide clarity about what co-production is, and how it can and should work to improve Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support and services for children young people, and families.

It also includes the Birmingham SEND Co-production charter, which is the SEND Local Area Partnership pledge to families about working more closely together, and a tool for holding the SEND system to account going forward. Birmingham Council, NHS Services, Parent Carer Forum, Education Settings and Birmingham Children's Trust and others will be asked to sign up to the principles of the Framework and Charter by July 2022. This will be published on the SEND Local Offer Website and the link distributed widely across Birmingham.

Co-production is now accepted as key to effective public services. It involves citizens and public service organisations making the most of each other's strengths, assets and contributions to improve public services. The principle behind it is that it allows the resources of service users and members of the community – their knowledge, skills, time and effort – to be mobilised more effectively, so as to increase the outcomes they experience, in terms of a better quality of life. The 2022 report on Mapping SEND Co-production in Birmingham has demonstrated that there are already many valuable co-production initiatives being undertaken in the city – but that they are not yet system-wide. However, co-production does not happen automatically, just because it is desirable – it needs to be consciously

designed, promoted and supported in our schools, health facilities, social work and other public and voluntary service organisations. To support the embedding of co-production across the city, the SEND Local Area Partnership commissioned the development of this SEND Co-production Framework for Birmingham.

The process of producing the content of this Co-production Framework has happened over a period of time working collaboratively with Birmingham Parent Carer Forum and reaching out to parents and carers across the whole of Birmingham through delivery of eight 'Have Your Say' workshops between December 2021 and March 2022.







## 2. Understanding and Defining Co-production

Co-production should be considered as moving on beyond involvement, participation and engagement with SEND children and young people, parents and carers, towards something that is about people who use SEND services being treated equally and having a more powerful role in the services they receive, so that their experience of these services is more meaningful and more in tune with what they need.

### **The Local Area Definition**

There is no single agreed definition of co-production in the public services system, either in the UK or internationally. Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership has consulted widely with parents and carers to build a local definition that works for them. From this process, the following definition has emerged:

**“For us, co-production is about placing 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.”**





# 3. Guiding principles: What matters most to people?

Birmingham SEND Local area Partnership, working with children, young people, parents and carers, have identified the following guiding principles which, if implemented, should lead to improved confidence of families and effective co-production across the Local Area.

All involved in the SEND system (children, young people, parents, carers and staff) should feel:

**Trusted and able to trust**

**Listened to and heard**

**Treated with transparency and openness**

**Fully communicated with**

**Involved**

**Empowered**

**Equal**

**Accountable and able to hold to account**

## 01 Trusted and able to trust

- create working relationships where there is safety, mutual respect, shared understanding and confidence to do the best for children, young people and families, recognising that this also implies continuity of relationships.

## 02 Listened to and heard

- find out about and really pay attention to what is being said about SEND services and use this information to make changes.

## 03 Treated with transparency and openness

- share knowledge and information at the earliest opportunity, and explain decisions clearly, so that children, young people, parents and carers are confident that the system 'tells us how it is'.

## 04 Fully communicated with

- develop a culture of early, open, responsive and respectful conversation and information exchange at all levels of SEND support from strategic activities to individual planning for children and young people.

## 05 Involved

- ensure all participants have valuable roles to play in contributing to decision making and actions that represent a holistic approach.

## 06 Empowered

- ensure all participants have the opportunity to develop and to use their knowledge, understanding, skills and lived experience of SEND to improve the outcomes experienced by SEND families.

## 07 Equal

- start from the position that no one group or person is more important than anyone else and everyone has skills, abilities and time to contribute – it's about equal partnerships between people who use services, carers and professionals.

## 08 Accountable and able to hold to account

- all SEND stakeholders share ownership and responsibility for successful implementation of the Co-production Framework.







# 4. The Approach

Co-production is an approach which builds upon meaningful participation and assumes effective consultation and information. In this way, it helps to overcome the power imbalance which often makes public services seem dominated by professional values and ways of working. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) states that it is linked with better outcomes for people who use services and their carers, and that it can help build stronger communities and can develop citizenship. SCIE Coproduction guide.

In order to develop and sustain good co-production, the Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership will take the following approaches to improving the organisational cultures, structures, practices and processes in the Partnership.

## Culture

- Develop a culture whereby co-production is the 'golden thread' running through the SEND system of support
- Promote co-production values and behaviours as guiding principles and as 'business-as-usual' assumptions for all involved in the SEND system
- Ensure that leaders in the SEND system, from senior organisational positions to more local levels, clearly model and promote the principles in this Framework

- Value and acknowledge all those involved in working co-productively

## Structure

- Ensure the voices and experiences of children, young people, parents and, carers and young people are represented at the SEND Local Area Partnership table
- Ensure the voices and experiences of parents, carers and children, young people are represented in the decision processes and, where appropriate, in the service delivery mechanisms of all SEND services and support activities
- Ensure sufficient resources are available to promote and implement co-production initiatives and 'business as usual' workforce practices.

- Provide appropriate training, skills development and peer
- learning opportunities for everyone involved
- Develop a co-production champions network
- Identify ways that support parents and carers to have meaningful and active involvement in co-productive working with the SEND Local Area Partnership
- Develop and implement a communication and engagement plan
- Develop and implement a youth participation strategy with SEND young people
- Identify SEND co-production opportunities and priorities in the planning and commissioning of services, so that all localities are appropriately covered.

## Practices and Processes

- Involve parents, carers and young people from the outset in all activities which affect their interests ('Nothing about us without us')
- Make sure that everything in the co-production process is accessible to everyone taking part
- Ensuring everyone has the information they need to be part of co-production and decision-making
- Consider the needs of young people, parents and carers in the production of agendas, timings of meetings and venues





# 5. Co-production in practice - the 'how' of co-production

Co-production involves the collaboration of citizens with public service organisations, such as schools, hospitals, GPs, social work providers, and other public and voluntary service organisations. This collaboration can take many forms but its essential characteristic is that it involves service users and community members across the whole service planning and delivery process, from start to finish. At the same time, it needs to recognise that all SEND individuals and families will wish to be involved in a way which fits their own specific circumstances.

This framework will only make a difference if it is implemented. Here we discuss the 'how' of co-production - the practical mechanisms which can ensure that children, young people, parents, carers, and members of the community are able to contribute effectively to:

- Co-commissioning - the planning and prioritisation of services
- Co-design - ensuring that services meets the users' needs
- Co-delivery – citizens and professionals working together to deliver services
- Co-assessment – highlighting what works (and what doesn't)

## Co-commissioning:

Individuals, families and communities can contribute to the priorities and decisions in the commissioning process to achieve better outcomes - for example, by being represented on commissioning boards, procurement panels, governance bodies, etc.

## Co-design:

Individuals, families and communities can contribute to the design of services and support systems to ensure they are more relevant and effective - for example, by participating in the redesign of SEND services so that they have easier access or clearer communications, or meet a wider range of needs, or achieve better outcomes.

## Co-delivery:

Individuals, families and communities can contribute to the delivery of services and support systems to ensure they achieve better outcomes - for example, by giving peer support to others, by working in advocacy groups, by co-delivering empowerment workshops, by developing more effective self-care approaches, or by organising community activities - and similarly professionals can support citizens to achieve better outcomes through their everyday activities and self-development.

## Co-assessment:

Individuals, families and communities contribute to decisions on what works well, what works badly and what changes are needed - for example, by joining service review panels, by acting as 'citizen researchers' to evaluate services which they receive, or by acting as service 'citizen inspectors'.

Each of the 4 Co's is important. Of course, at any given time, one or two of the 4 Co's might be the priority for improvement in an organisation or the overall Partnership – this must be determined in the overall SEND strategy. Nevertheless, over time, it will be important that each of the 4 Co's is taken seriously within the overall SEND system.





# 6. Understanding levels of engagement: The Ladder of Participation

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 makes it clear that children, young people, parents and carers should be involved in the planning delivery and review of SEND services and that this can and should happen in different ways. At different times, this can and should be more involved and more intense.

We know that co-production is about families being involved in a SEND project/area of support from start to finish, working collaboratively and as equal partners to arrive at a shared solution that will impact the support and services which families receive. It is therefore the most intense form of interaction between public service organisations and those people who use or are affected by public services.

However, different levels of participation will be used to plan, deliver and review SEND services and support at any given time, as shown in the diagram. Not all circumstances will lend themselves to co-production, but wherever possible it should be considered the default option.

## Ladder of Participation

It is important that the most appropriate method of engagement on the Ladder of Participation is agreed with children, young people, parents and carers.



The Ladder of Participation (above) makes it clear that the move towards greater co-production can come from the side of public services or from the side of citizens.

Most commonly, public service organisations regard co-production as 'bringing citizens in' to their services – a 'service-centred' perspective. However, there may now be more value in exploring how public services can contribute to the everyday lives of people with special or additional needs, to see how to add value to these everyday activities – this is citizens 'bringing in public services', a 'citizen-centred' approach. This Framework seeks to encourage both approaches.





# 7. Birmingham SEND Co-production charter

This charter contains a set of pledges related to improving the services and outcomes experienced by children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND). It is a demonstration of commitment and intent by Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership to the principles and practice of co-production with SEND children, young people, parents and carers as a way of working that is embedded across and within the SEND system of services and support.

The charter is a formal agreement between the Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership and the Birmingham Parent Carer Forum (on behalf of the SEND network of parents and carers) to uphold, implement and review co-production as a way of working, as described in the Co-production Framework above. In signing this charter, the organisations listed below, from all public service sectors, including education, health, social

care, voluntary and community organisations - are committing to working together to ensure that the principles of effective co-production underpin the shaping and improvement of support and interventions which affect the long-term outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND).

The SEND Local Area Partnership is a group of public service organisations, including Birmingham Parent Carer Forum and RISE Youth Forum, which support children and young people with SEND and their parent carers

To ensure that these co-production principles are taken seriously, and not simply treated as 'fine words' with little meaning, the pledges below include a commitment by each of those signing the charter to play their part in putting right any instances where these principles appear to have been disregarded by any of the signatories.



# Charter pledges by Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership

The Birmingham SEND Local Area Partnership, consisting of the Governing Bodies of the following organisations:

- **Birmingham City Council**
- **Birmingham Children's Trust**
- **NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB)**
- **Birmingham Parent Carer Forum**
- **RISE Youth Forum**

## **pledges to:**

- Hold a review of the Co-production Framework after six months, and thereafter at least annually, to ensure that co-production is happening, is making a difference for children, young people and families and is following the principles in this Framework.
- Recognise all of the principles in this framework and charter, both in its policies and through the actions of all involved.
- Ensure co-production is a part of everyday practice for SEND services
- Ensure early involvement with children, young people, parents and carers so that they are aware of the Co-production Framework and are invited to sign up to the Charter.
- Listen to families and their networks and routinely collect evidence about their lived experience and how well the Co-production Framework is being delivered.
- Ensure that reviews, audits and evaluations of co-production working within the SEND system of services and support is carried out co-productively with parents, carers and young people and that their findings are used to make continual improvements and refinements to co-productive working.
- Place all findings and outcomes arising from all reviews on the SEND Local Offer in an open and transparent way.
- Where concerns are raised that the principles of the Framework have been disregarded, the Partnership will hold itself to account and will play its part in seeking to put this right quickly.
- Together with SEND families, continuously improve SEND services and publicise best practice.

## Additional charter pledges by Birmingham Parent Carer Forum

The Birmingham Parent Carer Forum pledges that it will:

- Represent parent carers in Birmingham at all strategic SEND and Additional Needs forums within the city.
- Gather the views of local families to provide an insight into the lived experience of children, young people and families across the city and working across the partnership to facilitate improvements. As an equal partner in this arrangement, it will provide effective support and challenge to services.
- Will provide various methods of communication for all parents and carers in Birmingham. We will help with raising collective parent carer voices, sharing information and collating the feedback which comes from all parent and carers the city.
- Where concerns are raised that the principles in the Co-production Framework have been disregarded by either parent carers or by others in the partnership, Birmingham Parent Carer Forum will play its part in seeking to put this right quickly.
- Jointly with the partnership, ensure wide and diverse participation of parents and carers and consider how best to increase participation of children and young people, so they also have an equal voice in the services designed to support them.
- Publicise examples of co-production successes to demonstrate how this way of working can bring better results for all parties (e.g. through case studies), so as to keep the Framework alive and in the Partnership's gaze.
- Agree simple and clear procedures to enable the organisation to co-produce effectively.



# Charter pledges by children and young people accessing SEND services in Birmingham

Children and young people who engage with Birmingham SEND services pledge to:

- Recognise the principles set out in this Co-production Framework, namely to recognise the right of all people in the system to be:
  - Trusted and able to trust
  - Listened to and heard
  - Treated with transparency and openness
  - Fully communicated with
  - Involved
  - Empowered
  - Treated equally
  - Accountable and able to hold to account
- If it is found that co-production is not taking place, we will work with the SEND Local Area Partnership to put this right quickly.
- We will help demonstrate how working in co-production with other agencies can bring the best outcomes children and young people.

## Co-production together

In addition to the SEND Local Area Partnership, all other public or private organisations in Birmingham will be invited to sign up to the principles in this Framework and Charter. This will include all Birmingham schools, GP surgeries, community health centres, children's centres, and Family Hubs, local grassroot organisations, parent support groups, and voluntary and faith sector groups.





# VISIT THE **NEW** BIRMINGHAM **SEND** LOCAL OFFER WEBSITE



Help, support, advice and information  
for children and young people with  
special educational needs and disabilities.  
[www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.localofferbirmingham.co.uk)



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City Council