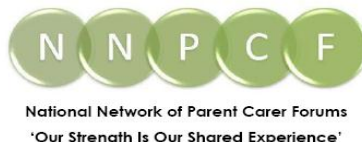


Engagement and Participation with Parent Carers,
Children and Young People (Version 4 - April 2014)
Appendix 7 - Leicester City 'Co-production - Why it
works and top tips for parent representatives'



Co-production: Why it works and top tips for parents representatives

Co-production uses the skills, knowledge, resources and experiences of individuals, communities, practitioners, policy makers, and voluntary agencies that working together act as the catalyst for change.

Co-production doesn't work just because we all want the same outcomes; it works because we all want the same outcomes from a different perspective and level of understanding of what we are planning for.

All have their part to play in co-production and no opinion should be dismissed simply because it isn't given from your perspective.

Everyone involved hopefully has the same aims ... To improve the life chances and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

It's the differences we bring to the table which in turn drives the co-production process. Every idea is a valid one ... when put together they help everyone understand what will and what won't work and what can be achieved.

There is plenty of anecdotal and statistical evidence around that the greater the level of parents, carers and children and young people's involvement in making the decisions that affect them, the more likely the outcomes that the planning of and subsequent support identified will work.

10 Tips for Parent Carers engaging in co-production meetings ...

1- Remember the principal ... You are there to improve the outcomes for possibly thousands of SEND children and young people in your area. You are there to, and do, speak for them all. Ask your Forum what they want. Use 'we' instead of 'I' when speaking. You will be more confident when you know you are expressing more than your own opinion.

2- Try your best to understand the topic but don't over prepare ... Try to remain spontaneous. If you consider the myriad of potential answers to any suggestions or questions you may put to the table, if you don't get the answers you've considered you should get it may leave you unable to respond.

3- Get to know your partners around the table ... Use breaks etc and the few minutes before and after meetings not just to network and tell them about what's wrong in your/your child's life (chances are you'll be fairly well known to many of the people around you anyway). Ask about their days/lives/families. The more you are seen as a person and not work or a potential problem to those around you, the harder it is to argue with your position.

4- There are no stupid questions ... If you don't understand the conversations or jargon, ask!

Others around the table will be in the same position. Often employees from Health have no idea what those in Education and vice versa are talking about but are reluctant to seek clarification ... They can easily come to rely on you as a source of 'un-embarrassing' clarity for each other's jargon and may support and look to you in providing balance to the discussions as you become the prime source of clarification.

5- There are no stupid comments ... Speak freely. It's easy to believe when you're sitting amongst experts that they must already know how to fix whatever's on the agenda and consequently what's on your mind. You could be right, and hopefully you are but try to avoid sitting quietly because you think what you have to say might be considered trivial or irrelevant. It could be exactly what they need to hear to make effective progress.

6- Who else is in the room ... If everyone makes a decision is it going to happen or is it now an idea others around you are taking to other people, officers, boards or committees for approval? If those around you are not their department's decision makers ask where they are, why they're not there. If there are genuine reasons for their not attending make sure you have a deadline for a response from them to the results of your work and a further meeting planned around that date, irrespective of their approval or not, to discuss their decision and as far as possible try to ensure they attend.

7- Accept others may make mistakes ... Once an error has been identified, accept it, learn from it and move on. Reminding everyone of something someone once said or did or a department's history of failures that was detrimental to good progress only serves to make them or their department less likely to fully engage in future.

8- Accept that you may make mistakes ... if you've misunderstood the process or are shown to be misinformed on your position be prepared to properly consider the alternatives offered. They may even have a better outcome once you consider it, even if it isn't the one, or delivered in a way you had imagined.

9- Others in the room will have other places/appointments/meetings they need to attend and although they will never be as important as the family you have to get back to, don't let them use you as an excuse to wind up a meeting 'on time' without reaching a conclusion. If you're not happy with the outcome of a meeting, say so and make sure there's another one arranged to conclude matters properly or make it plain that you can stay until the business is properly concluded, (even if you can't ... practice your 'poker face' and say 'I've got all night'!).

10- Enjoy! ... Sitting around a table with people who often have grand titles, equally grand salaries and qualifications can be daunting. Remind yourself that you are an equal partner in co-production; you are an expert in your own right and are the key to its success.

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Leicester City Parent and Carers' Forum: SEND Pathfinder area
NNPCF representative for East Midlands