

Video transcript: Co-production in Birmingham

Simon Furze: My name is Simon Furze, I'm from the Citizen Involvement Team at Birmingham City Council. We are the corporate resources for co-production – all three of us.

A little while ago, we really began to embrace co-production as an authority and we went to the Social Care Institute for Excellence. The most important part of that statement (refers to slide) is around trying to create an equal basis. We're very aware we're Birmingham City Council. We're very aware of the power dimension that we have with citizens, so actually that's a really big task and a really big ask and is something that we are continuously reassessing and looking to.

The first thing is that we needed to get buy in from the top. With Professor Graeme Betts coming in to Birmingham City Council, he had a very strong vision of co-production, and that gave us a chance to be able to go, and in some cases begin to force, some officers to become aware, and others like Julie and Matthew and who we would say are co-production champions, to empower them.

So we created a monthly forum we'd get anywhere from 60 to 80 citizens, organisations etc in a room and have a really long, deep discussion about a particular given subject.

Matthew brought to that, to the People's Public Service Forum, the information, advice and guidance work that we are doing. People were able to tell us, citizens were able to tell us, what information, advice and guidance they want, not what we think they need.

We set up short term and long term task and finish groups and then ongoing engagement boards and oversight committees that are not the old style, they are again trying to create that equal balance. They have a flow of citizens - we don't want to 'councilify' our citizens.

We want them to be that critical friend, we want them to be able to challenge us and not be there just to protect their position on the board.

Julie Harrison: What we're designing is services that are improved by working in co-production. We have many conversations about what's not working well and how we can improve it. It really makes me grounded when we have conversations at management team why we need to change and why we need to make sure that we work this way all the time.

There's always challenges but I'm up for the challenge and I just want to improve services that's why I get out of bed.

Simon Furze: I can't know what it means to be a wheelchair user, or somebody with visual impairment, but that person bringing that information means I grow as an officer, and it does empower me then to push back to leadership and say no, no, no, that's not the thought that's not what people with XY or Z say, actually they want to be encouraged they want to be involved and what it does mean is that we get to create services that actually are working, working first time, they're shaped by the citizen.

