

Swansea Council

Co-Production Policy

Foreword

Our ambitious vision to deliver a successful and sustainable Swansea (outlined in the [City and Council Corporate Plan 2023-2028](#)) can be realised by tapping into the wisdom and expertise of residents in our communities. We are committed to involving our communities in decisions that affect them, building on existing good work and partnership working to pave the way for doing co-production more frequently when appropriate. Co-production extends beyond simply asking for feedback. Residents and Swansea Council work together to commission, design, deliver, and evaluate projects and services. We believe that working in this way will lead to better outcomes for individuals and for our communities.

This won't happen overnight, it will be an ongoing journey with lots of learning along the way. To support the skills and culture required for high-quality co-production, we are expanding our active partnership working to effectively collaborate with partner organisations. We also support staff learning and development so that we can be confident and skilled co-producers. Within the council, there are pioneering individuals and teams who are already co-producing with residents. We have established a Co-production Champions network to provide a dedicated space for peer support and learning. In addition, we have invested in staff training and are developing a co-production toolkit to help with co-production implementation.

Finally, the development of this corporate policy demonstrates our commitment to co-production. It will be accompanied by a toolkit to help us transition to this new way of working and start to embed co-production in our organisational culture. We are putting these foundations in place with the introduction of this policy to enable more council departments and teams to begin to incorporate co-production in their work.

Cllr Rob Stewart
Leader of the Council

Martin Nicholls
Chief Executive

Contents

Background

Purpose of this policy

Definition

Co-production and other engagement approaches

Applying co-production

When and under what circumstances to co-produce

When it might be difficult to do co-production well

High level guiding principles for implementation

Roles in the process

Additional information

How this policy was created

Related policies and other resources

Background

Purpose of this policy

Within the council, there is a greater emphasis on co-production. We share our intention in the Corporate Plan (2023-2028) to involve more local people in council decisions that affect them, their families, and our communities. We will accomplish this by incorporating co-production behaviours and thinking into everything we do.

As a result, co-production approaches are being considered more frequently alongside other methods of consultation and involvement. Co-production can be used for a variety of small to large-scale plans, services, and policies. Swansea Council will consider co-producing with residents whenever possible.

The adoption of this corporate co-production policy aims to:

- ensure that co-production is considered alongside other methods of engagement and is applied in all areas where it can add value, across the entire scope of Swansea Council's work
- ensure that the term 'co-production' is understood consistently throughout the council
- encourage a consistent approach to co-production across council departments and when talking about co-production with other organisations and residents
- Support creating the conditions for building trusted relationships between the council and the communities it serves, enabling co-production to eventually take place

This policy draws on the [West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board Strategic Co-production Framework](#) and the [Swansea Council's Co-production for Social Care Strategy](#). It aims to build on existing work and good practice at Swansea Council and other organisations.

We recommend reviewing and updating the policy every five years. Any policy reviews could be co-produced with residents who are involved in policy development work with the council. Any policy changes must be reflected in the toolkit and any accompanying documents.

What is co-production?

Definition

Co-production is an asset-based approach to public services that involves people providing services and people receiving services to share power and responsibility, through working together in equal, reciprocal and caring relationships. It creates opportunities for people to access support when they need it, and to contribute to social change.

We have adopted the definition used by West Glamorgan Regional Partnership and Swansea Council's Social Care strategy, based on the Co-Production Network for Wales' definition.

There is no one single way to 'do' co-production but all good co-production shares values that ensure the voices of people with lived experience are heard equally alongside other people. Co-production starts from the idea that no one group or person is more important than any other group or person. This means no 'them and us'. In co-production we are all 'us'.¹

Co-production is a mindset and a way of working, based on these five principles:

1. Value all participants and build on their strengths.
2. Develop networks of mutual support.
3. Do what matters for all the people involved.
4. Build relationships of trust; share power and responsibility.
5. People can be change-makers, and organisations enable this.

The council frequently needs to work with its own staff or with outside providers. This is referred to as employee engagement, stakeholder engagement, partnership working, or collaboration. This is often required as a prerequisite for co-production, but something can only be called 'co-production' if it involves residents as well as those who commission or deliver services.

Co-production and other engagement approaches

“Engagement” is an umbrella term referring to any interaction between public services and their service users or members of the public. Co-production is a type of interaction that involves 'doing with' people in an 'equal and reciprocal partnership' and is based on values and shared decision-making. The spectrum of engagement diagram² below shows where co-production fits in relation to other engagement approaches.

¹ Taken from the [Council's Co-production for Social Care Strategy](#)

² Spectrum of engagement diagram is based on the work of Sherry Arnstein and Co-Production Network for Wales

<u>doing to</u>		<u>doing for</u>			<u>doing with</u>
coercion protection	education persuasion	information	consultation	participation	co-production
e.g. safeguarding	e.g. recycling education programmes	e.g. Council website info about bus passes	e.g. budget proposals survey	e.g. Neighbourhood watch projects, youth forums	e.g. Person-centred care, service co-design, co-commissioning
We have a duty to act to ensure people's safety.	We know what people need to do, we need to get them to do it.	We provide information where/when/how people need it.	We decide what questions to ask, and collect data to inform our decisions.	We listen to people's lived experience, to inform our thinking and decisions. People are involved, but we hold the power.	We listen to people's experience and share ours. There is shared power in our decision making. We value different experiences.
Council as regulator		Council as provider			Council as partner

While approaches to engagement involve thinking through the decision-making processes that underpin a piece of work, it is possible that a single project or programme will incorporate a variety of approaches.

For example, in the case of a council as a regulator, it is still possible to involve parents in ensuring effective family support programmes, or to involve children in effective care services, even if they may not have a choice whether to engage with those services or not. The first step in putting co-production into practice is determining where various aspects of your project or service fall on this spectrum, whether it could sit further towards 'doing with' approaches, and how to involve people accordingly.

Once the different engagement approaches are identified within a programme or piece of work, thought can be given to methods. Generally co-production requires conversation and accessibility so certain methods are more aligned with co-productive practice than others. Whilst consultation or participation may be a necessary part of overall engagement, in themselves these are not processes that enable shared power or decision making. It should be made clear from the start about the extent to which co-producing with residents will affect change and openly manage expectations as the work develops.

This policy's accompanying toolkit will provide guidance to help staff choose the right approaches and methods.

Levels of co-production:

Co-production can take place in a variety of settings and circumstances. In the council, co-production occurs at three levels:

1. **Individual Level:** Co-production relating to individual needs and support plans. For example, residents actively contributing to identifying needs at an assessment .
2. **Service level:** Co-production at the service level refers to how services are designed or delivered. For example, residents participating in the planning of activities within a residential setting, being involved in staff recruitment, giving training to providers, developing service specifications, and playing an active role in the monitoring and evaluation of those services.
3. **Strategic level:** Co-production at the strategic level relates to future service delivery planning. For example, reviewing how well services are performing, deciding how budgets are allocated, defining good practice and quality improvement at a 'high-level'.

Applying co-production

When and under what circumstances to co-produce

The toolkit includes instructions for understanding these indicators of readiness and feasibility. These are the circumstances under which Swansea Council should consider co-production in the first instance:

- **When the Council lacks a clear solution for at least some aspects of the problem or opportunity.** The problem could be approached from multiple, sometimes conflicting perspectives, and there could be multiple solutions. The more unknown elements there are and the higher the level of complexity, the more valuable a co-production approach is. If there is already an obvious solution that requires some feedback before implementing, consultation or participation would be more suitable approaches.
- **When expertise from both lived and learned experiences is required to provide answers.** By lived experience we mean the knowledge gained from our background and day-to-day experiences in life. By learned experience we mean the knowledge we acquire through work and education. It is necessary to gather a group who are a mixture of council staff and residents who don't work for the council. For example, if co-producing a service, the group should include people who deliver the service and people who use (or might in the future use) the service. If it is a problem or opportunity that only requires learned experience (e.g. a highly technical challenge), then information and consultation around its implementation would be more suitable approaches.

- **It is possible to gather people in the same location at the same time.** Genuine co-production necessitates bringing together people with lived experience, professionals, and others involved (e.g. policymakers, architects). Everyone involved in the process has something to learn and something to offer. While co-production may require people to work separately at times, it usually involves people coming together at least some of the time. The needs, preferences and safety of underserved communities should always be prioritised when making decisions around how and when the group collaborates. When people cannot be brought together, dividing them into different groups and utilising participation methods may be more appropriate.
- **When the group of people gathered to co-produce can make at least some decisions.** Co-producers should make decisions, not just suggestions. While it's unrealistic to expect that everything can be co-decided, co-production supports some decision-making by co-producers (including people with lived experience). Some decisions may need to be escalated and passed on to others as proposals or recommendations. Consultation or participation may be more appropriate approaches if there is little room for any decision making.

When it might be difficult to do co-production well

These are the circumstances under which Swansea Council should consider whether a different approach is more appropriate, or if co-production needs to happen at a later stage in the process.

- **When the timeframe is insufficient to build and nurture relationships.** The co-production process needs flexibility to 'move at the speed of trust'. This includes relationships between everyone in the co-production group. In an ideal scenario, any deadlines are flexible to make time for relationships and trust to grow. Any deadlines should be flexible in order to allow time for relationships and trust to develop. If this is not possible and existing deadlines must be met (for example deadlines set by statutory responsibilities or funders), these deadlines should be months rather than weeks away. Consultation or participation would be more appropriate approaches if there is insufficient time to build and nurture relationships.
- **If it is required by law to consult.** Where there is a statutory obligation to consult, consultation should be used. However, it is still possible to consider co-productive approaches and values when conducting the consultation process. Any new ideas sparked and new relationships built through consultation could act as a starting point for co-production.

- **When decisions must be made very quickly (for example in an emergency or crisis situation).** If the council does not have the necessary arrangements in place to co-produce in these types of scenarios, information sharing and rapid consultation is often the best engagement approach.

High level guiding principles for implementation

The toolkit provides more detailed information about the guiding principles. Any Swansea Council project or programme that uses a co-production approach must adopt these principles when doing the work:

- **Transparency about the scope for decision making from the start.** Key stakeholders from a service or portfolio must meet early in the co-production process to determine which decisions can be made by the co-production group.
- **We are generous with our hospitality.** While this isn't complicated, it is sometimes overlooked or planned at the last minute. To support the process of building trust and relationships, we must provide hospitality. Offering a cup of tea, cooking a meal, knowing and remembering people's names, and greeting them warmly are all examples of hospitality.
- **Nobody should be out of pocket for taking part.** A budget should be set aside whenever possible to cover the costs of participating in the co-production process (for example travel reimbursement or lunch/dinner provided).
- **We plan for good well-being.** Taking part in genuine co-production requires vulnerability for all involved. There should be a plan in place for how the group will look after each other's well-being throughout the process, with an emphasis on responding to the group's needs as and when issues arise.
- **Everyone's contribution should be recognised.** Co-producers give their time, stories, and intellectual property to the co-production process. People's preferences for how they want to be recognised are likely to differ. Payment, benefits from what is being designed, or something else a person values (such as access to training or a donation) could all be forms of recognition.
- **We pay attention to communication.** Good communication is essential to an inclusive co-production process. People have different preferences, and it's important to use a variety of approaches and tools to make sure everyone understands how to participate and is understood. We must avoid acronyms, jargon and abbreviations .

- **People should be informed about what happened following their participation in a co-production process.** All feedback should be provided to participants on time, concisely, and clearly, including what action is being taken, by whom, and when. This is an important mechanism for maintaining relationships and having ongoing conversations.

Roles in the process

- Relevant Council stakeholders with decision-making power (e.g. cabinet, councillors, heads of service) should be involved in conversations as soon as there is the potential for co-production in an area of their work. Their participation in the process will have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- Team to co-ordinate and facilitate the co-production process. This should be flexible enough to allow residents to be involved in the coordination and organisation. This should also be cross-agency; for example, partner organisations, council staff, cabinet, and/or other elected members could all be part of this team.
- Partner organisations to help with engagement, recruitment, well-being, and knowledge. It is essential to collaborate and actively partner with community-based organisations or community-based council staff and members to get the right people involved.
- Voices from different parts of the community to be heard alongside decision makers and council staff. You may start with an existing group but check whose voices are missing and plan to reach out to them and involve them. This may necessitate new approaches, collaboration with various community groups or personalised invitations to particular individuals.

Additional information

How this policy was created

Swansea Council commissioned Co-production Lab Wales to support the policy design process. The policy draws on co-production best practice from within and outside the council.

This policy has not been co-produced with residents because there was little scope for decision making by residents in this instance.

The policy was developed based on the insights gathered from numerous internal engagement activities, including:

- interviews and workshops with Swansea Council staff across departments
- interviews and workshops with Swansea Council members
- in-depth conversations with Cabinet Members
- workshop with Corporate Services & Financial Resilience Service Transformation Committee
- workshop with Corporate Management Team
- workshops to test the policy draft with the Swansea Council Co-production Champions.

The Co-production Lab Wales also interviewed staff from other Councils across the UK to understand their approach to co-production, participation and engagement at internal staff policy level.

Following the public consultation on the draft policy, further amendments were made to reflect the input received.

Strategic level co-production is also the most complex and skilled level of co-production, and it is recommended that the council establishes stronger foundations with individual and service level co-production in the short term, paving the way for more strategic level work in the long term. It is recommended that future reviews of this policy be co-produced if the conditions for co-production outlined in this policy are met.

Related policies and other resources

Accompanying toolkit (due for completion by 22nd January 2024)

[LINK] and [DESCRIPTION]

Local and Regional Policies and Plans

This policy builds on work and standards set out in specific service areas and departments of the council and partners. We recommend familiarising yourselves with these documents as they are relevant to any work which involves engaging with residents in Swansea

- [Swansea Council's Consultation and Engagement strategy](#)
- Swansea Council's [Public Participation Strategy](#)
- Swansea Council and Swansea Co-production Network's [Strategy for Social Care in Swansea - 'Working Together'](#)
- Swansea Council's Volunteering Strategy
- [Swansea Council's strategic equality plan](#)
- Swansea's [Human Rights city pledge](#)
- Swansea Public Services Board and One Swansea's [Local well-being plan 2023-28](#)
- [West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Board Strategic Co-production Framework](#)

National guidance and policies

We recommend ensuring that you are familiar with the following guidance and policies that are relevant to involving residents in the design and delivery of public services in Wales.

- [National Participation Standards](#)
- [National Children and Young People's Participation Standards for Wales](#)
- [National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales](#)
- [Practitioners Manual for Public Engagement](#)
- [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#)
- [Knowledge base resources page from the Co-production Network for Wales](#)
 - [Glossary of engagement terminology](#)