

A good practice guide to partnership working

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Introduction

Coproduction is a successful way of working because it ensures services are fit for purpose and offers long term sustainability to organisations whilst giving people agency over their own lives and highlighting their value and talent.

Working in partnership cannot be approached as a bolt on to the organisation or ran as a stand-alone project. Coproduction should be embedded in the culture of the organisation so that it is considered the normal way of working by all staff, management and volunteers. By weaving in the ideals of equality and compassion into every aspect of the working day it becomes obvious that working in partnership is the way to achieve empowered people and organisations.

The Booth Centre mission is to bring about positive change in the lives of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and help them plan for and realise a better future. This mission is underpinned by values that embed the ideals of coproduction into organisational culture.

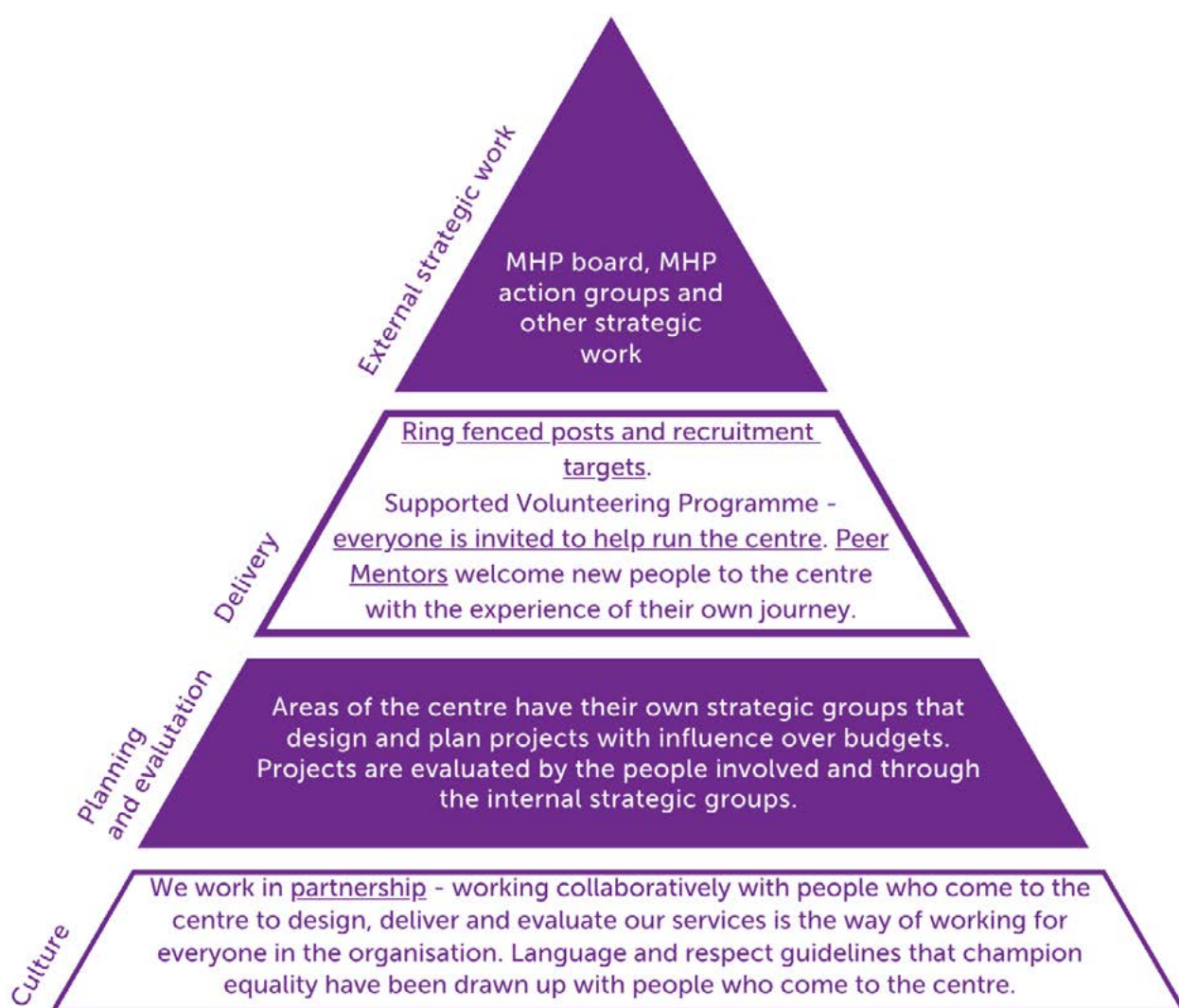
Partnership

We recognise the importance of working collaboratively with people who come to the centre to design, deliver and evaluate our services.

We work jointly with other organisations to achieve the best outcomes.

Partnership working at the Booth Centre

The foundation of coproduction at the Booth Centre is the ethos that together we can achieve more, this organisational culture is the keystone to partnership working and to be successful requires buy in from everyone. For the planning, evaluation and delivery of the service the Booth Centre has specific programmes, staff posts and strategic aims that weaves coproduction into the day to day running of the centre. The Supported Volunteering has its own dedicated good practice guide.



Language

The words we hear, the words we read influence us, language leaves its mark on who we are, how we feel and what we think. It is important to recognise the power of language and how it can affect behaviour. In 2018 the Booth Centre Advisory Group (an internal strategic group with open membership) wrote our language guidelines. The discussions highlighted that labelling and some terminology is dehumanising and not consistent with an inclusive, non-judgemental culture; an enabling factor for coproduction.

Drawn up by the advisory group June 2018

Please don't refer to us as:

Beggars, drug addicts, alcoholics, drinkers, rough sleepers, lived experience, clients or service users.

Instead please use the term 'people':

We are people who are or have been homeless. Ideally we would like to be referred to based on the skills and experience that we bring to the situation.

External meetings

If we are going to an external meeting we would like staff to ask us how we would like to be introduced - our favoured way is as a volunteer, because we are volunteering our time to attend. We may not want to be referred to as someone with lived experience. If we have taken up a paid post we want to be introduced by our job title and without an additional label of "lived experience".

Terminology of blame

Please don't talk about us as "not engaging" with services, as it is the services responsibility to be responsive and accessible and saying that we "aren't engaging" is putting the blame on us.

"People
are
people"

Internal groups

The planning and evaluation of the services at the Booth Centre happens through a series of groups that represent the different areas of the centre for example the arts group will lead on the design and evaluation of the arts programme.

The groups meet regularly to plan and evaluate activity, the time taken to plan these meetings is the responsibility of the worker and is part of their job description in how they are expected to work to deliver outcomes.



Meetings at the Booth Centre

1. Planning

All meetings need to be planned if they are going to be effective.

The planning with the group may involve:

- Deciding when and where the meeting is going to take place.
- Booking a room.
- Setting out an agenda.
- Deciding who is going to chair the meeting and making sure they are prepared for this.

Organisation on the day:

- Setting up the room.
- Arranging refreshments.
- Promoting the meeting and encouraging people to attend on the day.

2. Running the meeting

It is important that everyone comes away from the meeting feeling like they have contributed, been listened to and that the meeting has achieved something and is going to make a difference. If these things don't happen it can be damaging – it can make people feel de-valued and can put people off going to meetings or getting involved in any partnership working in the future.

Some things that can help meetings run smoothly:

- Sit people in a circle, so everyone can see each other, this will help people feel included.
- Do introductions at the start of the meeting, so people know each other's names.
- Explain the aim of the meeting at the start and what you hope to achieve.
- Set some ground rules together at the start of the meeting e.g. being respectful, letting everyone have a say, listening to each other, staying on topic.
- Make sure everyone gets to talk and that no one is talking too much.
- Encourage people to listen to each other.
- Keep people on topic and bring the conversation back if it goes off track.
- Make some decisions.
- End the meeting well – thanking people for their time, recapping on what has been discussed and agreed, making a list of actions, letting people know what will happen next.

3. Content of the meeting

People don't like meetings if they feel that nothing happens as a result or if people are asked their opinions about things that they can't change – because this makes them feel like the meeting is pointless and just playing lip service to partnership working. **It is really helpful if in your planning and agenda setting that you ensure that you include:**

- Something that people can discuss and make a decision on that will take effect immediately, or within a week and that people will be able to see. This will encourage people to see the immediate value of the meeting and feel that they can influence immediate change.
- Something that people can discuss that may effect change in the medium term.
- Something that people can discuss that may effect change in the long term that can help with future planning. You need to let people know what will be done with this information – how it will be fed into planning processes, when a change might happen and keep people updated over a longer time period.



4. Follow up from the meeting

It is really important that you allow time to follow up from any meeting, otherwise it is unlikely that the meeting will produce any results and people will be less likely to get involved in the future. **Follow up may include:**

- Writing up the minutes or the action points and sharing this with people who were at the meeting and in the group.
- Doing the thing that the meeting has decided is an immediate action and then sharing the outcome.
- Telling people about the changes that have happened as a result of the meeting and keeping them informed about the impact that their input has had.
- Recognising and thanking people for their contribution. This is the thing that will encourage more involvement.

External groups

All workers will either regularly or occasionally attend external strategic meetings with people from the Centre. In order to make this a positive, useful and meaningful experience the following guidelines were produced. Involving people to take part in external strategic work takes preparation (1 to 2 weeks before a meeting), concentration on the day and follow up work – ensure you allow time for all three.

1. Understand the purpose of the meeting

Make sure you understand what the meeting is about, what the reason for the meeting is, and what our policy/approach to the subject is.

2. Who is going to attend?

- The individual needs to have current or recent relevant experience.
- They would need to be in a position where they would be able to participate in a meaningful way.
- In general, we wouldn't ask the same people to attend more than 2 regular meetings.
- It's usually good to prepare at least 2 people to attend a meeting.

3. Prepare the people you ask to attend – do this a week or two before the meeting.

- Invite people to attend, give them the option to say no. Tell them about the meeting, what the purpose is and what would be expected of them. Remember they may never have been to this type of meeting before. Keep talking to the individual over the next couple of weeks.
- If there is any paperwork from the meeting e.g. an agenda or minutes of the last meeting then make copies for the person and talk it through with them. Talk about who is going to be at the meeting, the point, what is likely to be discussed and what they would like to raise.
- Talk to the individual about how they will introduce themselves at the meeting (this usually happens at the start of each meeting). People do not have to introduce themselves with personal details.

4. On the day

- Ask people again if they are happy to attend.
- Think about travel, drinks, lunch and smoking.
- Make sure you've got copies of the meeting papers for everyone.
- Tell people again who is likely to be at the meeting and what together you want to achieve.
- Introduce people to people at the meeting and make sure introductions are done at the start of the meeting.
- Try to create opportunities for the people who go to the meeting with you to talk but also help them to contribute appropriately, which may sometimes mean that you need to encourage them not to talk.

5. After the meeting

- Thank them for coming and congratulate them – it's really good to give people feedback as they may feel that they said too much, too little or the wrong thing.
- Ask them how they found it – what did they like and not like about it. Explain anything they didn't understand.
- Ask them if they would they like to attend again. In general people get more out of meetings if they attend regularly and start to get to know the other people and the issues that are being discussed and overtime it gets easier for them to have more involvement.
- If minutes are sent out after the meeting, then make sure you print them out and give people a copy.