

# Preparing People for Strategic Meetings

Booth Centre / Manchester Homelessness Partnership



# WHY ARE WE HERE?

To develop our ability to create inclusive, supportive meeting environments.

To ensure people with lived experience are given an equal chance to sit at the table, make decisions, and fully participate in strategic change.



# WHAT WILL WE COVER?

- What is coproduction, why should we do it, what are its benefits?
- Why is it important to ensure people are properly prepared for strategic meetings? What challenges might people face if they're not prepped?
- Tips for including people. Namely, what can we do:
- Before, During, and After meetings.

Group work 1: Please discuss the following questions in your groups. We'll feedback in 15 mins.

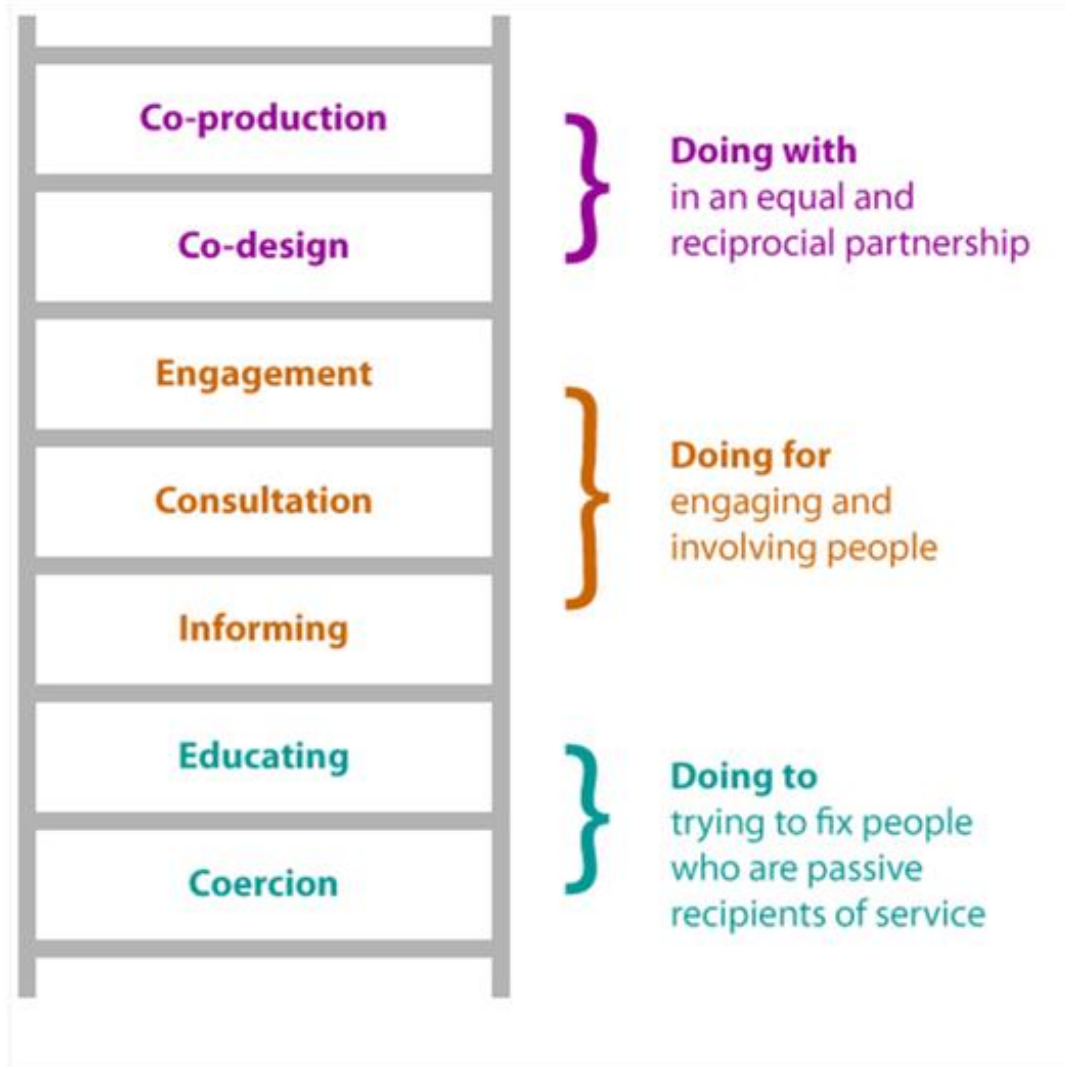
1) What do we mean when we say coproduction? Can you define it? Can you give some examples of coproduction in action?

2) Why is coproduction important? What are the benefits of working in a coproduced way?

**“Full co-production means sharing power - giving people who use services an equal chance to sit at the table and make decisions about how to run it better. It means building up people’s confidence and developing their skills so that they can participate fully.”**

*Homeless Link, 2018*

# The Ladder of Involvement



Group Work 2: Please discuss the following questions in your groups. We'll feedback in 15 mins.

- ▶ Why is it important to prepare people for involvement in strategic meetings?
- ▶ What are some of the challenges that people might face if they are not adequately prepared?

# What happens when we don't work to ensure people are fully prepared....

- ▶ Without preparation, people may **not feel informed** enough to participate meaningfully in the meeting.
- ▶ People are **not confident** to make their voices heard when they don't understand what is being discussed - e.g Overuse of 'professional' language / abbreviations etc.
- ▶ People **feel disempowered** - rather than feeling more included, they feel even further away from being involved in decision making.
- ▶ People may **get involved** in what is perceived as an 'inappropriate' way - e.g shouting out, not following an agenda.

- ▶ So far, we've discussed:
- ▶ What coproduction is, why should we do it, and the benefits of working in this way.
- ▶ Why it's important to ensure people are properly prepared for involvement in strategic meetings.
- ▶ Some of the challenges people might face if they're not prepped.
  
- ▶ We'll now discuss what we can do BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER meetings to ensure people can be meaningfully involved.



So, what can we actually DO.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this training will cover some practical hints and tips for how to ensure people are properly prepared, and have the best chance of engaging in a meaningful way.

- ▶ Think about the definition of coproduction we talked about in the 1<sup>st</sup> half:
- ▶ “... It means building up people’s confidence and developing their skills so that they can participate fully.”
- ▶ The responsibility lies with all of us. This training has been developed, and delivered in partnership with people accessing services - and we have agreed together that we want to focus on 3 areas - **before, during, and after meetings.**

# Group Work 3: Before

In your groups, please now discuss what things we might be able to do BEFORE a meeting. We'll feedback in 15 minutes.

Think about what we've already talked about today.

- What challenges might people face if they're not prepared? What are the barriers that could put people off being involved?
- With that in mind - how can we break down these barriers BEFORE the meeting starts, to ensure people can participate fully in strategic meetings.
- *Before doesn't just mean immediately before. What can we do in the days / weeks leading up to a meeting?*

# Preparation: Some examples of good 'before work'

- ▶ Ensure people have the time to digest info re: the meeting beforehand - provide the agenda / previous minutes with plenty of time before the meeting.
- ▶ Could a 'common abbreviations' sheet be provided in advance?
- ▶ Use plain English language, don't rely on too much complicated terminology.
- ▶ Ensure agenda and then delivery are clear, specific, and that the key points of the reason for the meeting are explained before the meeting.
- ▶ Provide the contact info and an explanation of who will be present in advance.
- ▶ Provide people with a 'code of conduct' for how to act in meetings - explaining what a chair is, waiting your turn to speak etc.
- ▶ **Can this and the above all be covered in an 'induction session' before a meeting? Giving people time to ask questions / digest info before the meeting starts? This could be booked in as a 'prep' session in advance of the meeting.**
- ▶ We need to consider people who don't have English as a first language. Can we match them with somebody who speaks the same language? Offer translation of the agenda etc.

# Group Work 4: During

In your groups, please now discuss what things we might be able to do DURING a meeting. We'll feed back in 15 minutes.

Think about what we've already talked about today.

- What are the barriers that could put people off being involved - even once they are sat in the meeting, ready to go?
- With that in mind - how can we ensure that the meeting environment encourages and promotes meaningful involvement from people?

# During a Meeting: Some examples of best practice

- ▶ Introductions - do we need to say our job titles? Why?
- ▶ Try not to use abbreviations wherever possible - and if we must, explain what they are each time.
- ▶ Keep language clear and easy to digest.
- ▶ Be clear throughout the meeting that people can ask for clarification on anything that they don't understand. Create a process for this. It could be that people are asked at regular times in the agenda - or there could be a way of putting hands up for a technical point etc?
- ▶ Regular summaries of what has just been discussed, to ensure everyone is following along.
- ▶ Providing people with the equipment they'll need - pens / paper etc.
- ▶ Stress balls / 'fidget toys' etc.
- ▶ Name tags, so we're not assuming people know who each other are based on having being in meetings together before.
- ▶ Seating plan / different options for seating. Do we need tables? Should we have comfy chairs as an option? How do we set them out? What do people want?
- ▶ Consider breaktimes / being clear that there is an option for people to leave for a short break whenever they need or want to during the meeting.

# Group Work 5: After

In your groups, please now discuss what things we might be able to do AFTER a meeting. We'll feed back in 15 minutes.

Think about what we've already talked about today.

- What are the barriers that could put people off being involved - even after they have already attended a meeting.
- With that in mind - how can we ensure that the follow up from the meeting encourages and promotes meaningful involvement from people?

# After a Meeting: Some examples of best practice

- ▶ Provide clear communication on what has been discussed in whatever form people want - paper / email etc.
- ▶ Build time in at the end of the meeting for good quality feedback from people.
- ▶ Actively seek out feedback in the days following from people, after they've had a little time to digest. What went well? What could be improved re: their involvement / levels of understanding of the conversation etc? What can we learn for next time?
- ▶ Provide clear info on what the next steps are - inviting people along to the next meeting, making sure people understand what they may have been asked to do and are supported with these actions.
- ▶ Managing expectations re: what may or may not be achieved following the meeting - being clear, transparent, and honest with people.

# Now what?... THE PLEDGE!!!!

- ▶ We think it's important that we remember that the vast majority of the responsibility for this work lies **with services**, not people accessing them.
- ▶ So - we would like you to have a think about what **you** will do differently after this training.
- ▶ It may be that you have never got people involved in meetings before and want to aim to get somebody along to an internal meeting within your organization.
- ▶ It could be that you already do this and will pledge to use one of the tips from today.
- ▶ What's most important is that you don't see this as a one-off training afternoon. We think that working in this way is how to achieve the best outcomes for people - by ensuring that we're all involved, all the way through.



# Cheers!

