Over A Brew Session

25 June 2025

THORNY ISSUES IN CO-PRODUCTION

OVER A BREW

CURATORS OF CHANGE

directors of
adass
adult social services
eastern region
connecting innovating improving
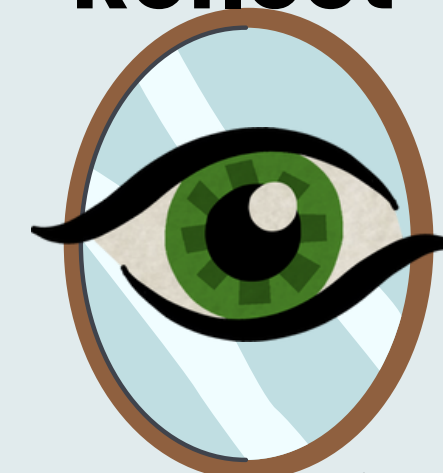
OVER A BREW
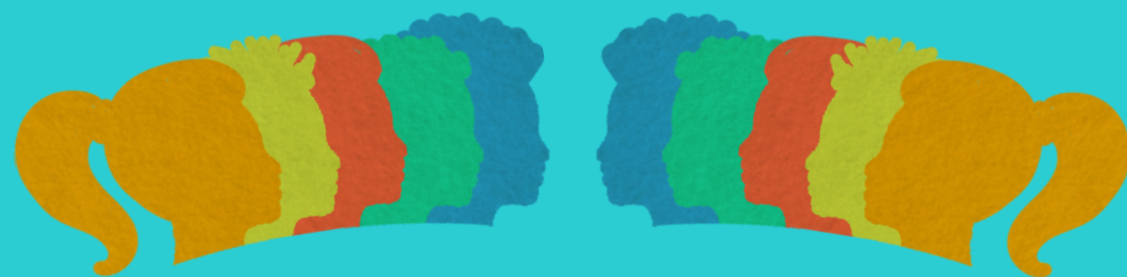## Guide

Grab a brew

Once you have your brew, ask someone to be the timer

Reflect

Each person has time to think about the questions for ONE minute

Have your say

Each take it in turns to say your response
(TWO mins each)

Use the rest of the time to reflect on what's been said
(no fixing)

Still got some time?

Talk about:
What's not been said?
What are your lasting thoughts?
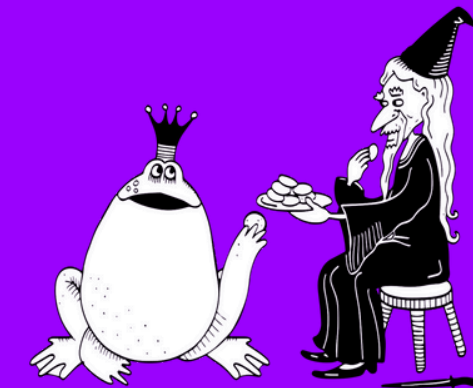
INFUSED WITH THE CAMERADOS PRINCIPLES

MIX WITH **PEOPLE** WHO ARE **NOT** LIKE **YOU**

ASK SOMEONE WHO IS **STRUGGLING** TO HELP **YOU**

NO FIXING - JUST BE **ALONGSIDE** ONE ANOTHER

IT'S OK TO **DISAGREE** **RESPECTFULLY**

IT'S OKAY TO BE **A BIT** **RUBBISH** SOMETIMES

TO **BE SILLY** IS TO **BE HUMAN**

INTRODUCTION

Around 26 people attended the session to share ideas, insights and views... Over a Brew

In this Over A Brew we talked about **THORNY ISSUES** —those frustrating little things that block real progress in co-production.

In this session we were joined by a variety of people, including carers and people with lived experience, an assistant director for Adult social care, co-chair of a co-production board, a principle occupational therapist, a service director of adult social care, a co-production co-ordinator, a commissing officer and many more.

We explored what people have liked, lacked, learned and longed for over the last year. We celebrated the wins, the times when we have been listened to, changes have been made, and reflected on the lows - when bureaucracy, assumptions, attitudes, policy, fear, get in the way. We noticed how these things are often small, and how stubborn they are, many have been issues that haven't changed for many years, and how harmful this can be. We know that just rewriting policies or hiring co-production leads won't fix things if these deeper issues are ignored.

SUPPORT, RECOGNITION AND CONTINUING TO LEARN AND REFLECT TOGETHER WERE ALL IDENTIFIED AS KEY WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE THORNS!

THORNY ISSUES; WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

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Difficult or awkward conversations

A subject you are uncomfortable to talk about

Avoidance, complex, difficult

Things that need careful handling?

**We asked people what comes to mind when they hear the phrase 'thorny issues?'
Here is some of what was said:**

Issues that come up that are not "representative" of everyone so may not be acted on

May involve conflict

Expecting co-production to be quick and easy with clear output!

Something that can easily trigger pain

Uncomfortable to speak

People not hearing about/being given opportunities to engage

Problems that are either uncomfortable to bring up or there are no solutions/can't be sorted out

Something that can divide peoples opinions

Frustrating issues that keep coming up that can't be solved quickly

LIKED, LACKED, LEARNED, LONGED FOR ACTIVITY

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We asked people about what they have LIKED, LACKED, LEARNED, LONGED FOR IN SOCIAL CARE AND IN 'OVER A BREW's' over the last 12 months.

The following pages show a summary of what we heard from the people in the session...

LIKED, LACKED, LEARNED, LONGED FOR

⭐ Liked: What's Been Working Well

1. Feeling Heard and Valued
- A big win was that "social care listened"—this came up more than once and clearly meant a lot.
- People appreciated being "made to feel very welcomed at my first Over a Brew session."

2. Culture Shift Toward Co-Production
- There's a real sense of momentum: "The culture generated by using the principles of co-production, ripples to waves!"
- Folks noticed a "cultural shift towards more co-production taking place" and that it's now "widely used as a term."

3. Human Connection and Collaboration
- Many loved "engaging with people on a human level without a strict process."
- Bringing together professionals and people with lived experience was seen as powerful: "To get practitioners and people with lived experience in the same room to think of possible solutions."

4. Inspiring People and Fairer Outcomes
- There was admiration for "amazingly committed people working in social care and across the health & care system."
- Co-production was seen as a way to "provide services that people want, value and respect."

LIKED, LACKED, LEARNED, LONGED FOR

Lacked: What's Missing or Needs Work

1. Diversity and Inclusion
- A recurring theme was the "lack of diversity" and difficulty "accessing certain populations."
- Some felt there was "inability to be culturally aware" and a need for "a diverse range of people taking part."

2. Resources and Support
- People mentioned "lack of investment in co-production practice" and challenges with "financial support for rewards and recognition."
- There's also a need for "support being available" and "space/time to do it properly."

3. Understanding and Clarity
- Some felt co-production was misunderstood: "Not everyone understands the true concept."
- Others noted it can feel like "an afterthought in the process" or just "a tick box."

4. Reaching the Right People
- It's hard to "get out there to speak to people we don't talk to."
- There's a need for "more people coming forward" and "people feeling confident to contribute."
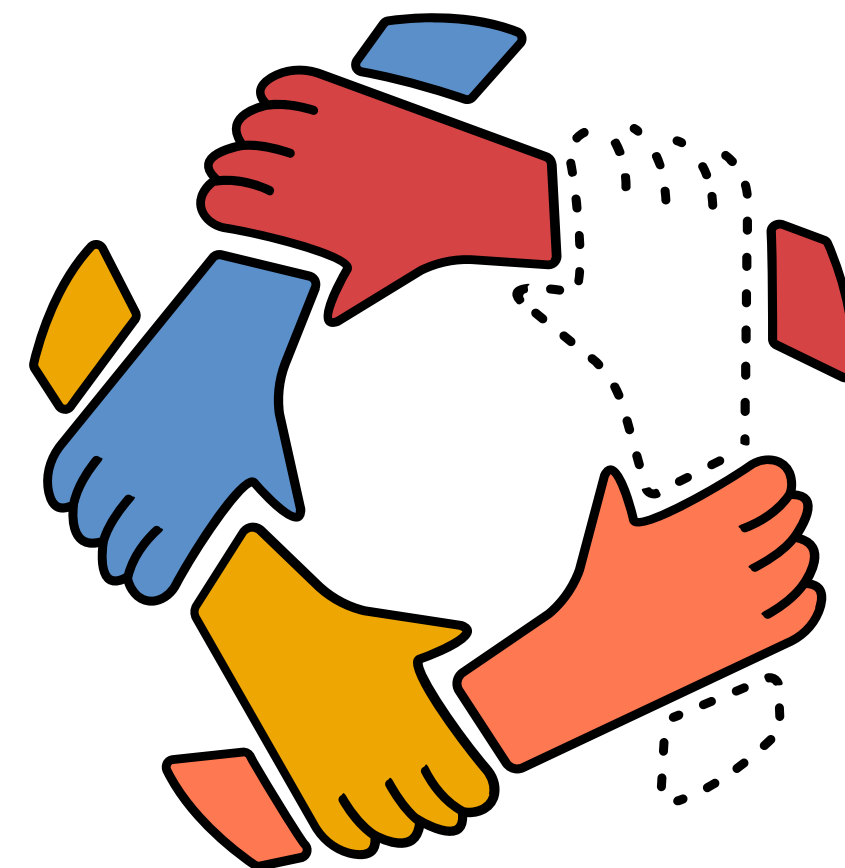
LIKED, LACKED, LEARNED, LONGED FOR

Learned: Insights and Realisations

1. Co-Production is Ongoing and Evolving
- A key takeaway: "There is no end point."
- People learned to "be comfortable sitting with things when they don't go to plan."

2. It Takes Effort and Persistence
- Organising sessions takes work: "Learned how much work goes into organising co-production."
- Persistence matters: "You need to be persistent in getting things done."

3. Simplicity and Storytelling Matter
- Co-production can be simple: "It can be as simple as a conversation."
- And powerful: "One story can be so powerful to get the message and impact across."

4. Inclusion from the Start
- A big learning was "thinking about involving people with lived experience right from the start."

LIKED, LACKED, LEARNED, LONGED FOR

💭 **Longed For: Hopes and Aspirations**

1. Better Access and Communication
- Many want to "hear about opportunities that are available" and avoid feeling "out of the loop."
- There's a call for "clear guidance and guidelines" and "easier to access information online."

2. More Time and Focus
- People longed for "more time to embed co-production in day-to-day practice."
- Competing priorities make it hard: "More time to focus on it as lots of other priorities to address."

3. Connection and Support
- Some felt isolated: "A co-production role can be quite isolating."
- There's a desire for "the connection and understanding" and "shared resources of co-production outcomes."

4. Inclusion and Representation
- People want "the right voices in the room at the start of the process."
- And to "hear the voices of people who don't verbally communicate."

BREAKOUT ROOM ACTIVITY

We asked people to go into Breakout rooms and to discuss thorny issues as a smaller group.
People used the following prompts to think about the topic.

- What has stood out in terms of thorny/sticky issues? Why?
- Any complaints that have stuck in your mind
- Any compliments that have stuck in your mind?
- What is frustrating you the most?
- What would help ease the frustration/remove the thorns?

The following pages are a summary of what we heard...

THORNY ISSUES; WHAT'S FEELING STUCK OR FRUSTRATING

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1. Diversity and Representation
- A major concern is the lack of diversity in co-production: "Often similar or the same people being involved."
- There's a worry that these regulars become "experts on the system rather than a general member of the public."
- When diversity is raised, the response is often: "We need to hear from more people"—but nothing changes

2. Power and Influence
- People feel blocked when trying to escalate issues: "Getting the issues heard at a higher level as often that is where power sits to make the change."
- Even when frontline staff agree change is needed, "not getting the backing from senior management" is a common barrier.
- There's frustration when "something will be done but it never does."

3. Trust and Follow-Through
- A lack of visible change is eroding trust: "Not seeing change happen… being dismissed when mentioning some possible solutions."
- People want to feel that their input leads to action, not just discussion.

4. Systemic Challenges
- Financial pressures are the elephant in the room: "It makes it harder to do co-production as it is not a statutory requirement."
- Siloed working and duplication are still happening: "We are not co-producing together."

5. Inclusion and Accessibility
- There's a need to rethink what "hard to reach" really means: "Can feel a bit of hard to reach sabotage coming on!"
- People who don't have a physical or verbal voice are often left out.
- The signposting cycle can feel like "people don't really have choices."
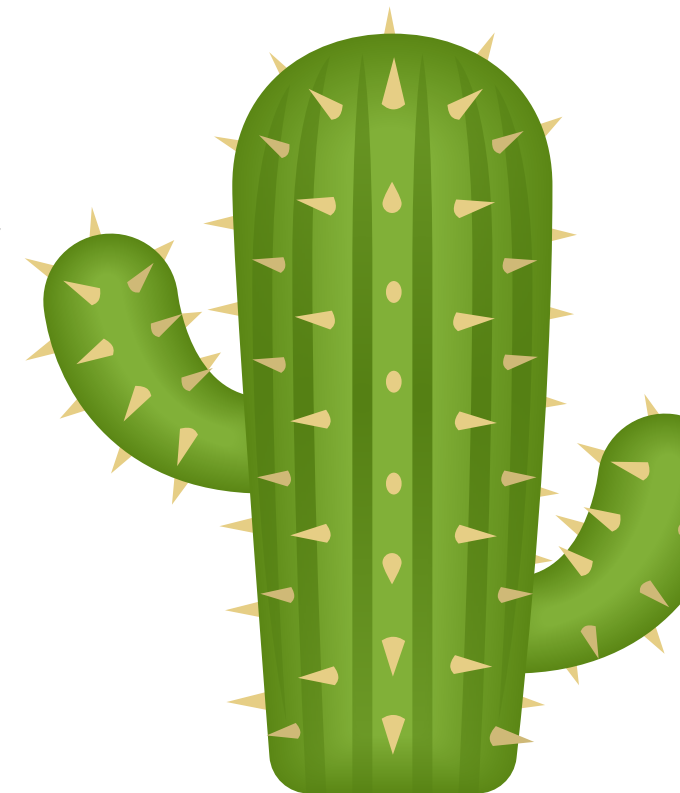
THORNY ISSUES: IDEAS OF WHAT COULD HELP

1. Tools for Better Engagement
- The "Gobby" survey platform was suggested as a way to gather both stories and stats: "Helps to give that quantitative data backing to the qualitative data."
- Sharing tools like the "Jargonator" (yes, a squeaky toy!) was celebrated as a fun and effective way to cut through complexity.

2. Support for Practitioners
- There's a call for "support for professionals around facilitating safe and secure environments"—especially when feedback is tough to hear.
- Training people to run their own Over A Brew sessions could help spread the load and build confidence.

3. Recognition and Reimbursement
- A big thorn is the lack of budget to thank people properly: "People give up time to work with us – so need properly reimbursing."
- Acknowledging contributions, even in small ways, matters.

4. Sharing and Learning Together
- People want to "share co-production that we have done across the region" and stop reinventing the wheel.
- There's value in hearing from "very different roles, experiences and authorities"—it helps people feel less alone

FEEDBACK AND TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SESSION

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Really looking forward to the write up. Amazing work everyone

These sessions are always so helpful and encouraging, thank you!

Brilliant Poems! Thanks for sharing

Excellent group – everyone should feel really proud of all the achievements!!!

Taking away some great new connections and a commitment to come back to more Over a Brew sessions!

Thanks for a brilliant session. I'm inspired and will share with our team. (especially about the Jargonator!!

Feeling inspired after this session! Great ideas like the Jargonnator! 😄 Great to learn about Gobby too. This session always goes so quick but lovely to take the time to be fully present in it. Thank you!

I've found it to be a really collaborative and productive space! – I'll definitely be back!

Thank You!

Please join us for the next session on 30th July 2025... to talk Over a Brew!

https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/curators-of-change/t-jzngqlz