

# Putting People at the Heart of Care and Support

**23 September 2025**



directors of  
**adass**  
adult social services  
eastern region  
connecting innovating improving



## THE SESSION

We gathered with ADASS East and the Putting People at the Heart of Care and Support Working Group for our annual face-to-face session, an open, inclusive and welcoming space.

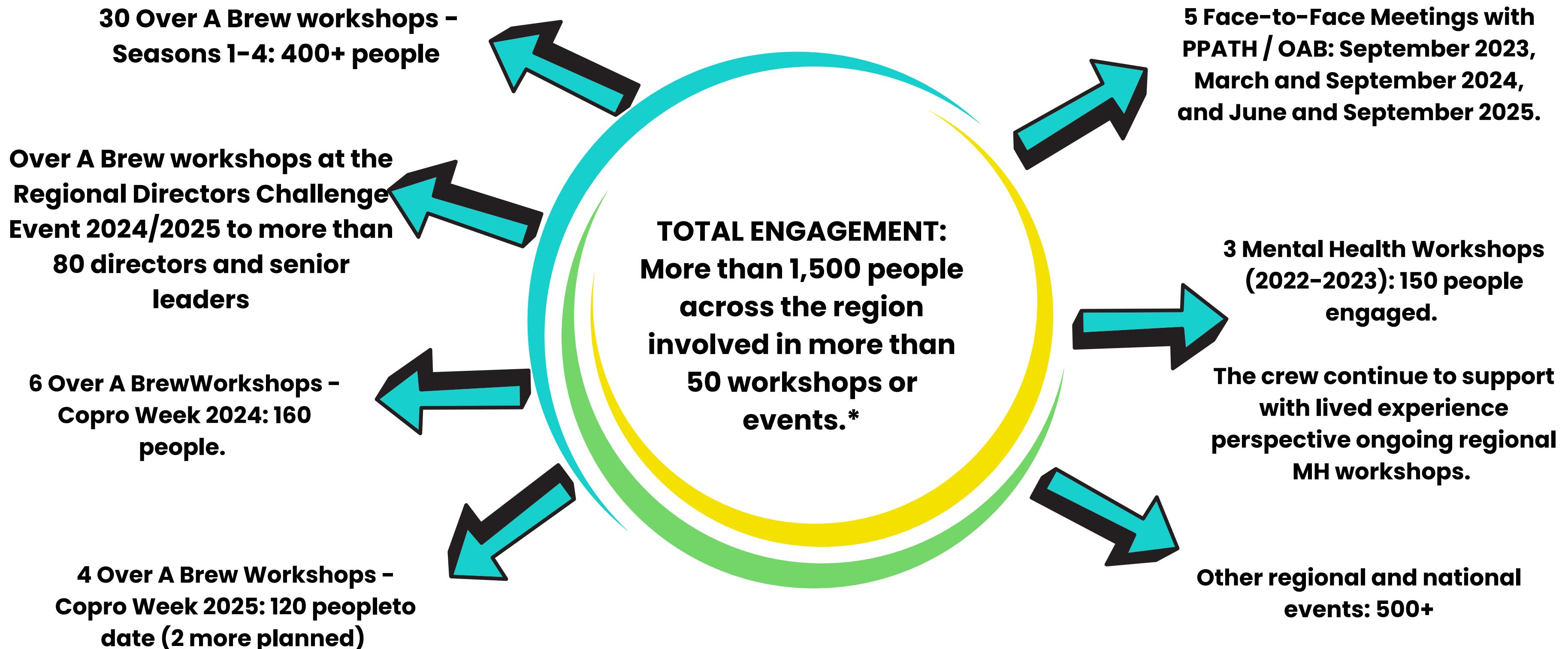
Together we reflected on progress, shared successes, and looked ahead. We:

- looked back at how Over A Brew has grown,
- checked in on current co-production commitments,
- talked about what needs to happen next and what is getting in the way of co-production still.
- made new commitments for 2025 to 2026

Special mention to Cambridgeshire, Essex, Central Bedfordshire for supporting new people with lived experience to join these gatherings.



# KEY NUMBERS



# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?

**We asked the group what they thought was working well in co-production.**

## **The following themes emerged:**

# 1 - Growing understanding of co-production

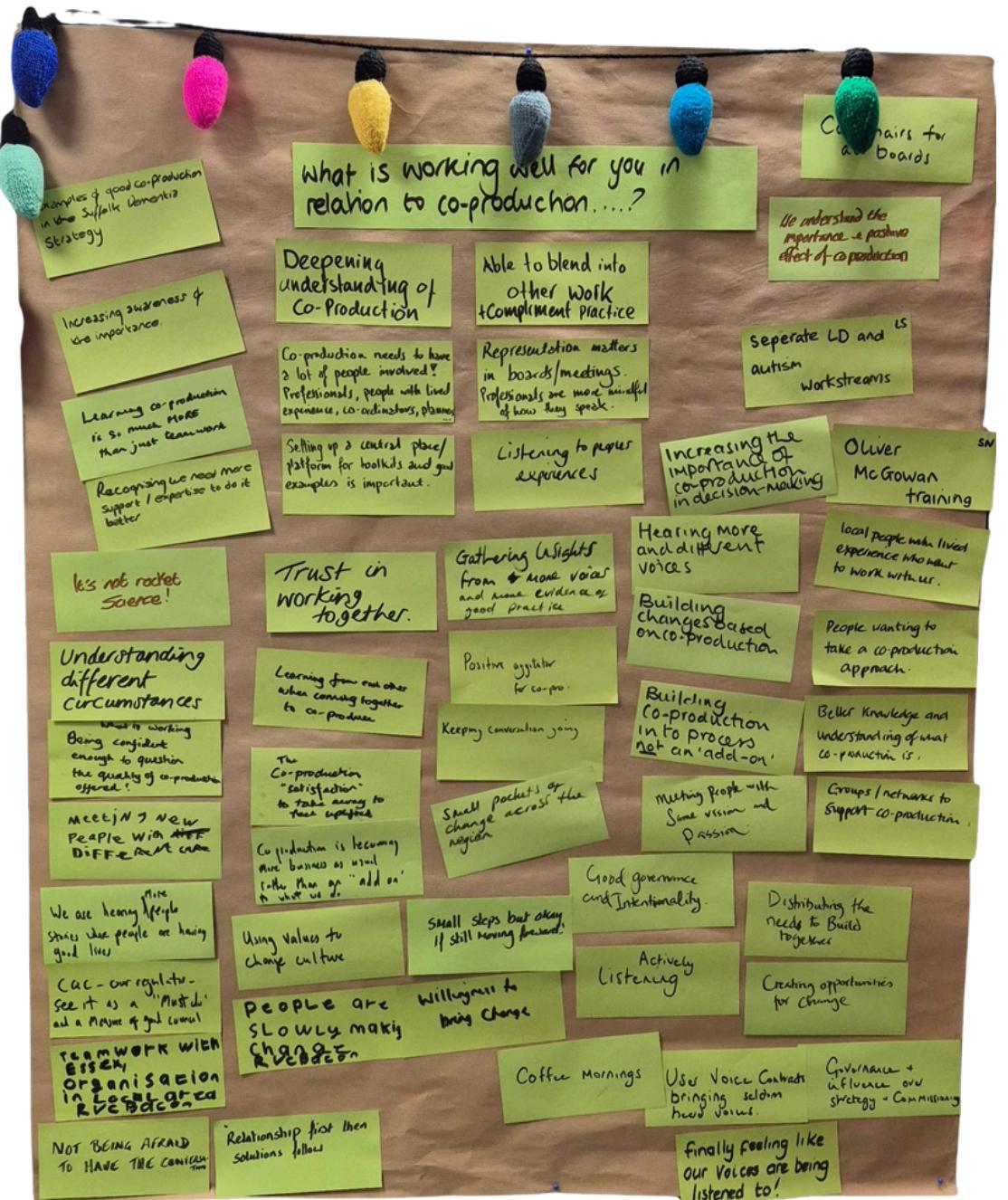
## 2 - Strong relationships

## 3 – Valuing all voices

## 4 - Tools and practical support

## 5 - Co-production embedded in everyday work

# 6 - Momentum and change - even if slow!



# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



***Co-production is becoming more business as usual rather than an 'add on' to what we do***

## 1 – Growing understanding of Co-production

People are gaining a better understanding that co-production means more than working together, it should be part of everyday practice, not an extra task. It requires clear goals, inclusion, and shared values.



**Increasing awareness of the importance**

***Oliver McGowan  
training***

***Learning co-production is so much more than just teamwork***

***Being confident enough to question the quantity of co-production offered***

***It's not rocket science!***

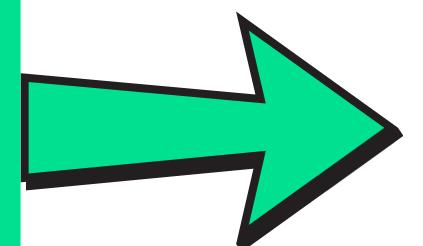


# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?

## 2 – Strong relationships

Strong relationships and trust are key to making co-production work well. Many said that relationships must come first. Professionals are becoming more respectful and inclusive of lived experience.

Meeting others who care about co-production brings energy and a shared sense of purpose, helping to keep things moving in a positive direction.



***Trust in working together***

***Representation matters in boards/meetings, professionals are more mindful of how they speak***

***Relationships first, then relationships follow***

***Coffee mornings***



# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?

## 3 – Valuing all voices

Listening to people's real-life experiences is a huge part of co-production.

More diverse voices are now being included in meetings and decisions. People appreciated hearing more personal stories, especially positive ones about living good lives.



**Hearing more and different voices**

**Meeting new people with different care**

**Local people with lived experience who want to work with us**

**We are hearing more people stories where people are having good lives**



# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



## 4 – Tools and practical Support

Having the right tools and systems is beneficial in making co-production work well. A central place to share toolkits, resources, and good examples would help people work together more easily.

Groups and networks are important as they support people, keep things going, and help co-production grow.



**Good governance and intentionality**

***Setting up a central place/platform for toolkits and good examples is important***

***CQC – our regulator see it as a 'must-do' and a measure of good council***

***Co-chairs for all boards***

***Separate LD and autism workstreams***

***Groups/networks to support co-production***

***Governance and influence over strategy and commissioning***



# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



***Able to blend into other work  
and compliment practice***

## 5 – Co-Production becoming embedded in work

Co-production is now becoming a natural part of everyday work, not just an add-on. It's starting to shape big decisions, like strategy and commissioning, which is a big step forward.



***People wanting to  
take a co-  
production  
approach***

***Using values to  
change culture***

***Examples of good co-  
production in the Suffolk  
Dementia strategy***

***Building co-  
production into  
process, not an 'add  
on'***



# WHAT IS WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?

## 6 – Momentum and change – even if slow

Attendees felt hopeful about change. They were open to honest discussions and saw the value in being “positive agitators” to keep co-production moving forward.

Small changes have been made in parts of the region and people agreed that even slow progress matters.




**Positive agitator for co-production**

**People are slowly making change; willingness to bring change**

**Keeping conversation going**

**Finally feeling like our voices are being listened to**

**The co-production ‘satisfaction’ to take away to feel uplifted**

**Small pockets of change across the region  
Small steps but okay if still moving forward**

**People are slowly making change; willingness to bring change**



# WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?

We also asked the group what they thought was NOT working well in co-production.

The following themes emerged:

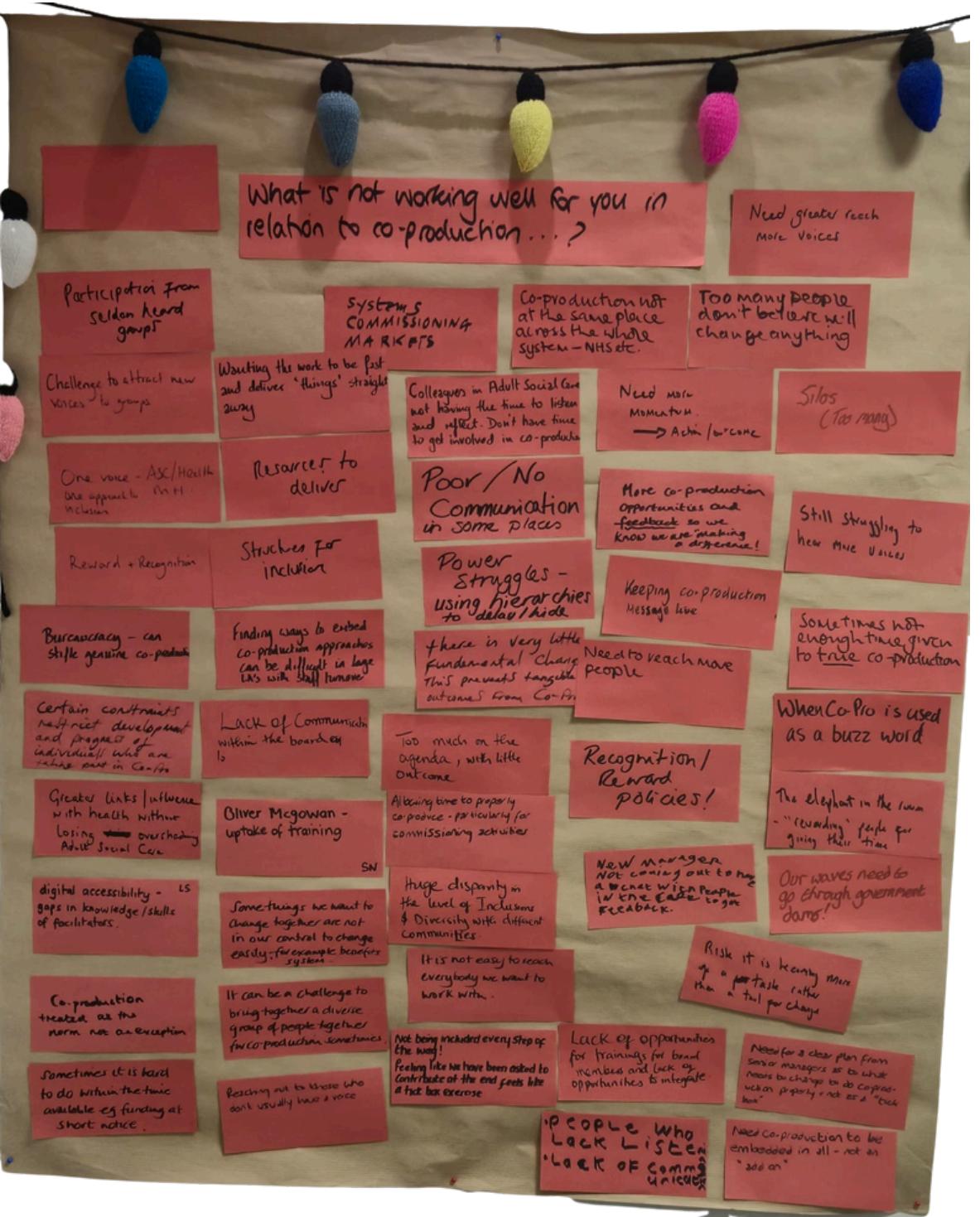
1 – Limited representation

2 – Lack of time, resources, and capacity

3 – Gaps in communication

4 – Systemic barriers

5 – Need for recognition and training



# WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



# WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



## Resources to deliver

**Sometimes it is hard to do within the timing available e.g., funding at short notice**

### 2 - Lack of time, resources, and capacity

People feel that co-production is often rushed or not given enough funding, time, or staff to do it properly. There's often pressure to get things done quickly, which makes it difficult to go into enough depth with co-production.



**Wanting the work to be fast and deliver 'things' straight away**

**Colleagues in Adult Social Care not having the time to listen and reflect. Don't have time to get involved in co-production**

**Sometimes not enough time given to true co-production**

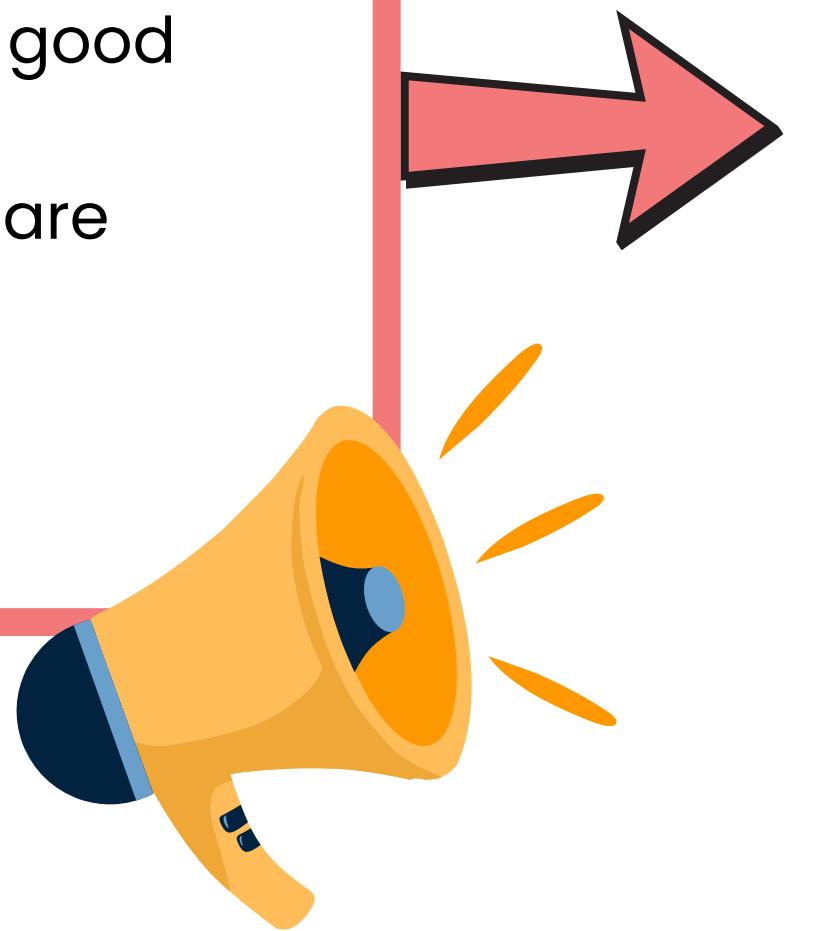


# WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



## 3 – Gaps in communication

Some people feel there isn't enough good communication within and between teams, boards, and services. People are often left out of the loop or don't get feedback, which makes them feel disconnected and undervalued.



**New manager not coming out to have a chat with people in the cafe to get feedback**

**People who – lack listening, lack of communication**

**Lack of communication with the board**

**Poor/no communication in some places**

**More co-production opportunities and feedback so we know we are 'making a difference!'**

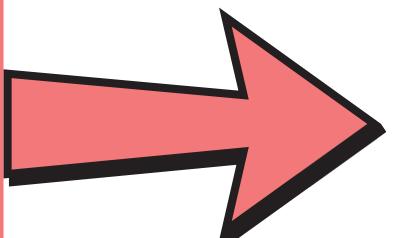
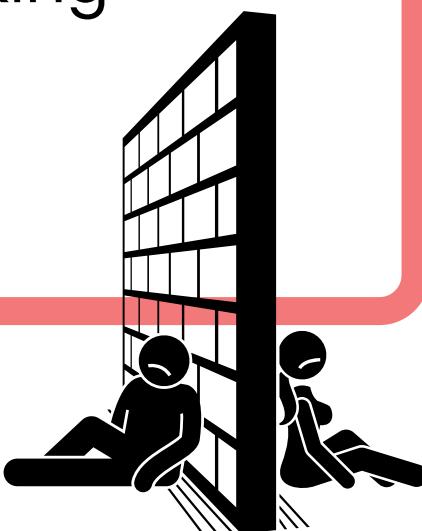


# WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



## 4 – Systemic barriers

Big organisations and complicated systems can make it hard to keep co-production going. This is often because of red tape, how services are set up, and teams working separately instead of together.



**Systems commissioning markets**

***Our waves need to go through government dams!***

**Silos (too many)**

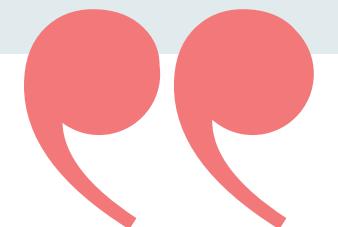
***Bureaucracy can stifle genuine co-production***

***Some things we want to change together are not in our control to change easily for example, benefits systems***

***Finding ways to embed co-production approaches can be difficult in large LAs with staff turnover***



# WHAT IS NOT WORKING WELL FOR YOU IN CO-PRODUCTION?



**Oliver McGowan – uptake of training**

## 5. Need for recognition and training

People's time, effort, and contributions to co-production are often not recognised or rewarded. There are also missed chances to help people, especially board members, learn new skills and gain knowledge on co-production.



**Lack of opportunities for trainings for board members and lack of opportunity to integrate**

***The elephant in the room  
'rewarding people for giving their time'***

**Recognition/reward policies!**



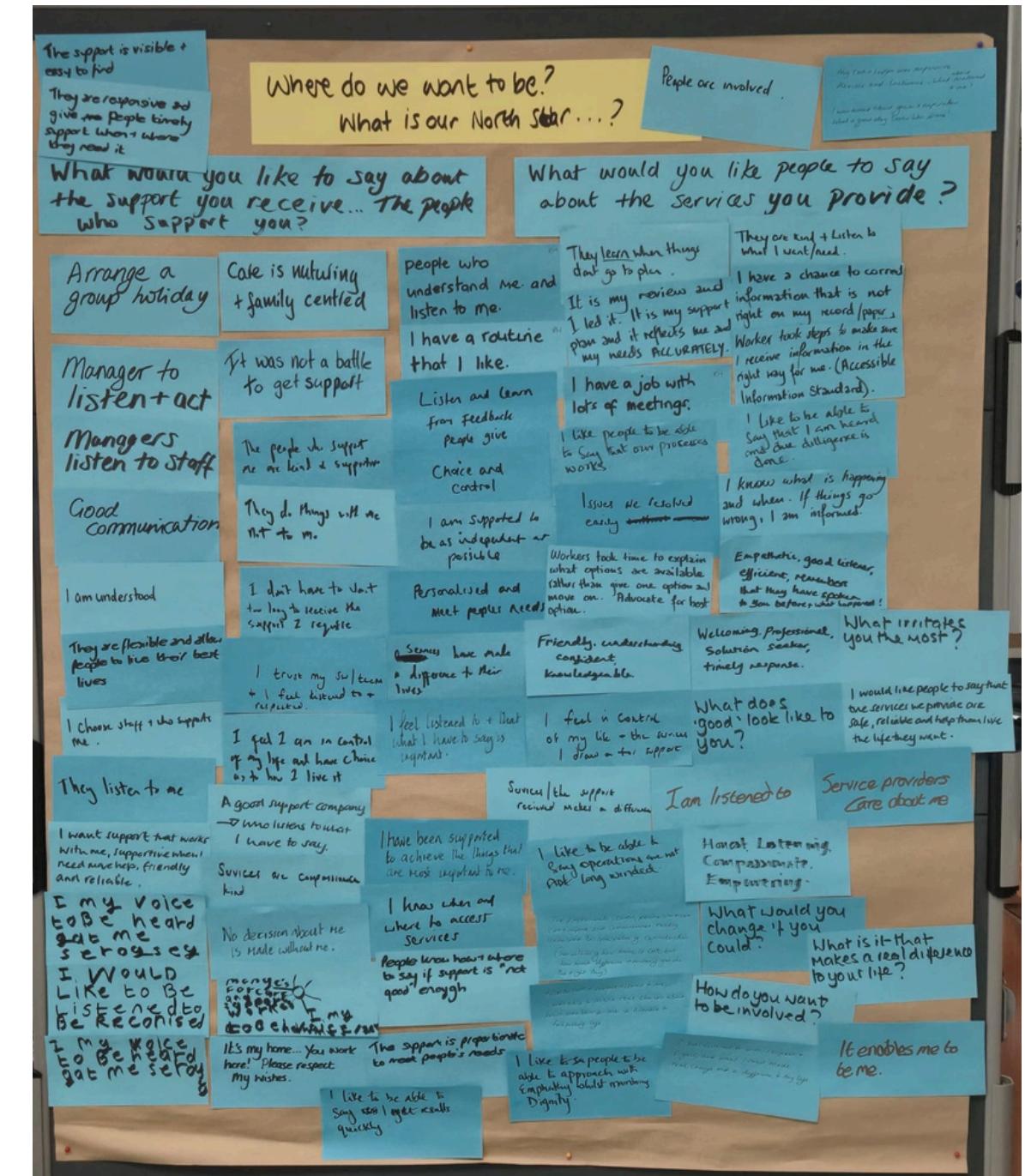
# WHAT DO WE WANT PEOPLE TO SAY? A VISIONING ACTIVITY

Participants were asked to answer one of the following questions:

- **What would you like to say about the support you receive... the people who support you?**
- **What would you like people to say about the services you provide?**

The following themes emerged:

- 1 - They listen and respect me
- 2 - They are kind and caring
- 3 - I have choice and control
- 4 - Support is quick and easy to find
- 5 - Services make a real difference
- 6 - Processes are clear and helpful
- 7 - They support my everyday life
- 8 - They ask me good questions



# VISIONING ACTIVITY

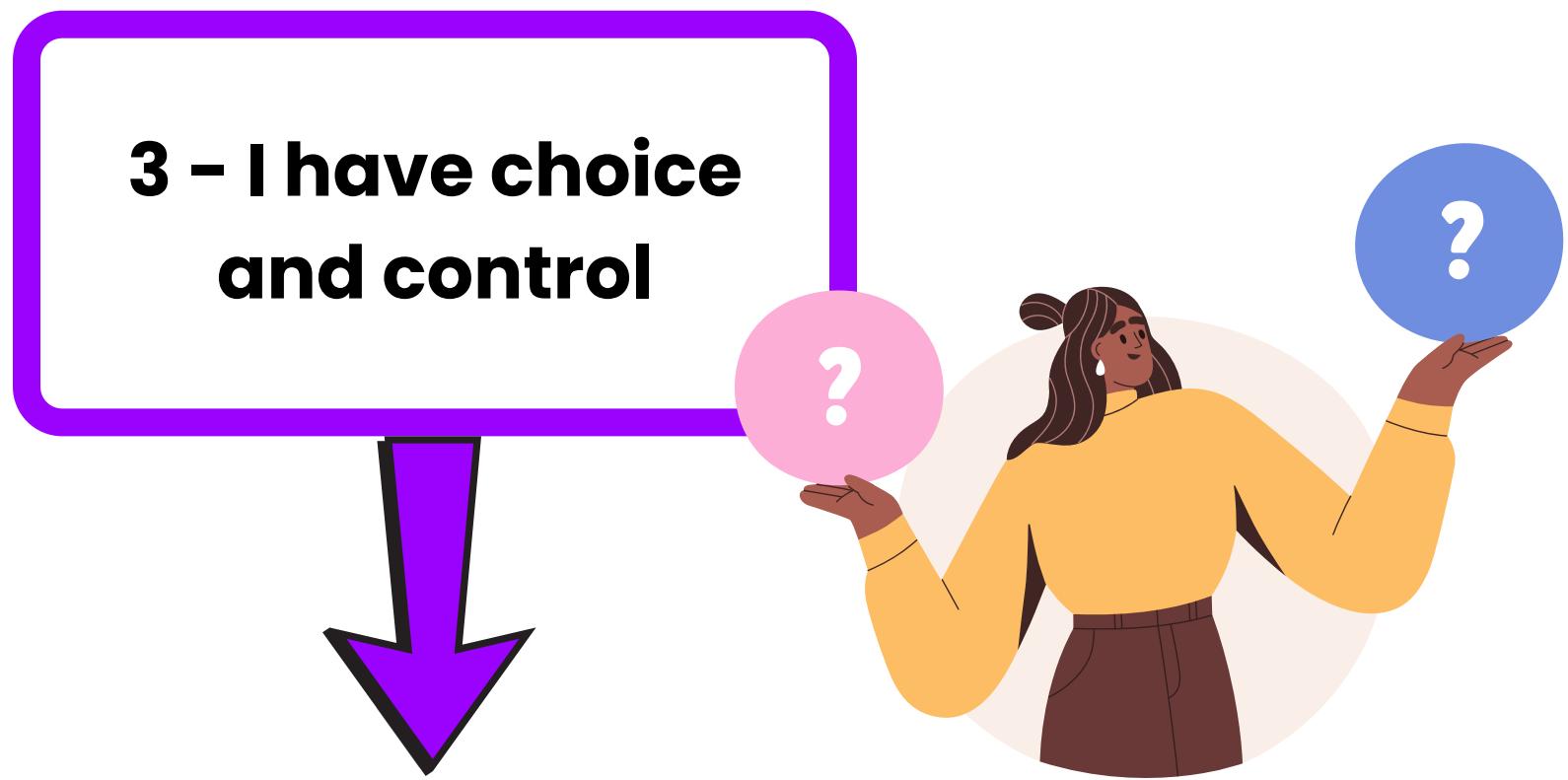


- ***“Managers and staff listen to me and act on what I say.”***
- ***“I am understood and taken seriously.”***
- ***“My feedback is heard and used to make changes.”***
- ***“I feel respected and valued.”***



- ***“The people who support me are kind and compassionate.”***
- ***“They do things with me, not to me.”***
- ***“Staff are friendly, professional, and respectful.”***
- ***“The service feels welcoming, like family.”***
- ***“I am treated with dignity and empathy.”***

# VISIONING ACTIVITY



- ***“I can choose who supports me.”***
- ***“I am in control of my life and decisions.”***
- ***“No decisions are made about me without me.”***
- ***“I am supported to be independent.”***
- ***“My plans and reviews reflect my real needs and wishes.”***
- ***“I can correct information if it is wrong.”***

- ***“Support is easy to find.”***
- ***“I get help at the right time and place.”***
- ***“I don’t have to wait too long.”***
- ***“I know when and where to access services.”***
- ***“If things go wrong, I am told what is happening.”***
- ***“Support is flexible and meets my needs.”***

# VISIONING ACTIVITY

## 5 – Services make a real difference



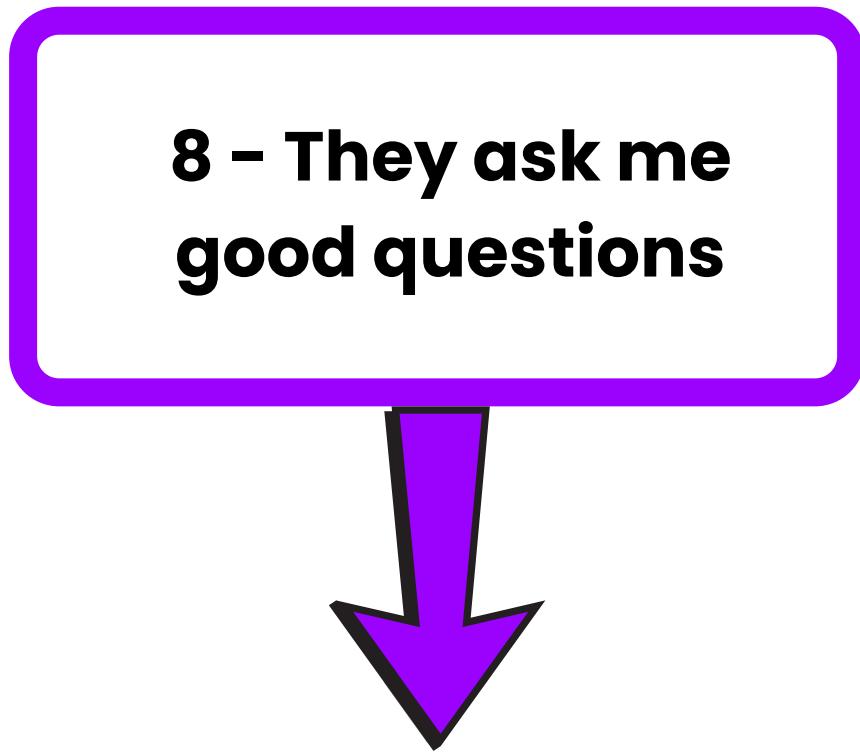
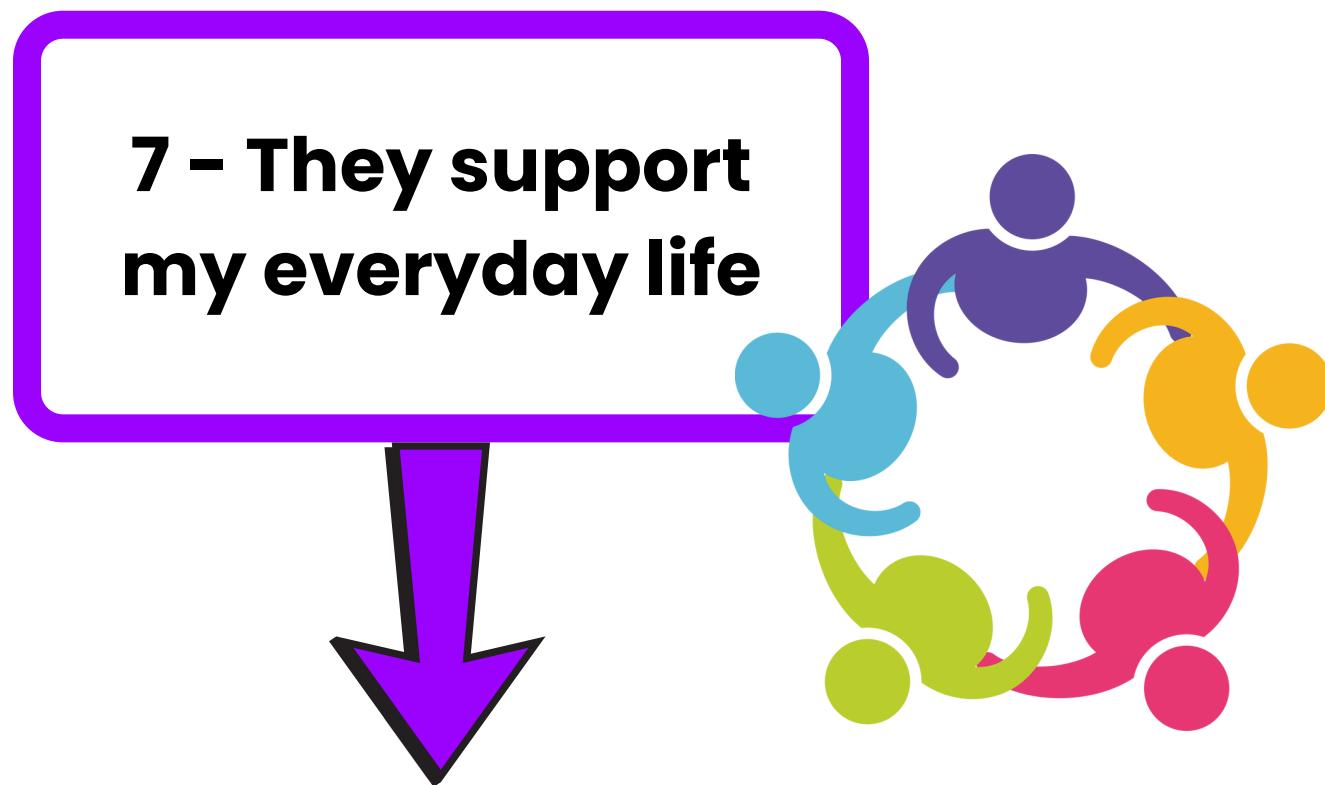
- ***“The support has made a difference in my life.”***
- ***“I am supported to achieve what matters most to me.”***
- ***“I am asked about my goals and dreams.”***
- ***“People know what a good day looks like for me.”***
- ***“The services are safe, reliable, and help me live the life I want.”***

## 6 – Processes are clear and helpful



- ***“Workers explain all the options, not just one.”***
- ***“Problems are solved early.”***
- ***“Processes are simple and work well.”***
- ***“I get information in the right way for me.”***
- ***“The service learns when things go wrong.”***
- ***“Everyone understands the true value of co-production.”***

## VISIONING ACTIVITY



- ***"I get fair money for care and support."***
- ***"I can do things like go on group holidays."***
- ***"Support fits around my work and daily life."***

- ***"They ask me how I want to be involved."***
- ***"They ask me what I would change if I could."***
- ***"They ask me what irritates me the most."***

# THE COLLAGE – The Wave Tool

## The Wave Tool



We used the wave tool in the afternoon to think about:

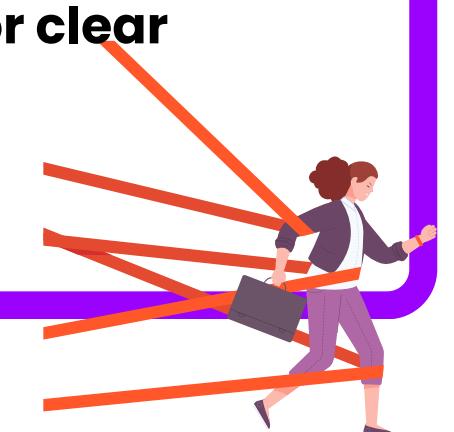
- How we get from where we are now, to where we want to be (Aspirations)
- What helps us to do this (Enablers)
- What is getting in the way (Barriers)

Everyone was very creative in adding their ideas to the collage. The next page has the things that people added to the collage typed up in the three sections.

# THE COLLAGE

## BARRIERS (things that get in the way)

- People do not have enough time
- Negative words and attitudes
- Some people feel stuck
- Too much jargon (complicated words)
- Long processes and bureaucracy
- Meetings not always easy to get to (toilets, transport, access)
- People not always listened to
- Stories and feelings not valued
- Not enough training or clear information



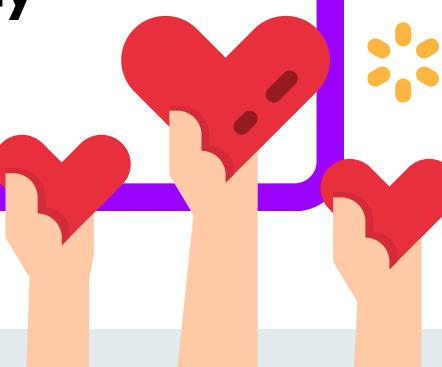
## ENABLERS (Things that help us move forward)

- Teamwork and trust
- Sharing skills and ideas
- More people taking part
- Co-production (working together as equals)
- People with lived experience on panels
- Leaders giving time and resources
- Clear, easy information
- Good planning and space to think
- Values like kindness, love, and ethics
- Resting, reflecting, and trying again



## Aspirations (Where we want to be)

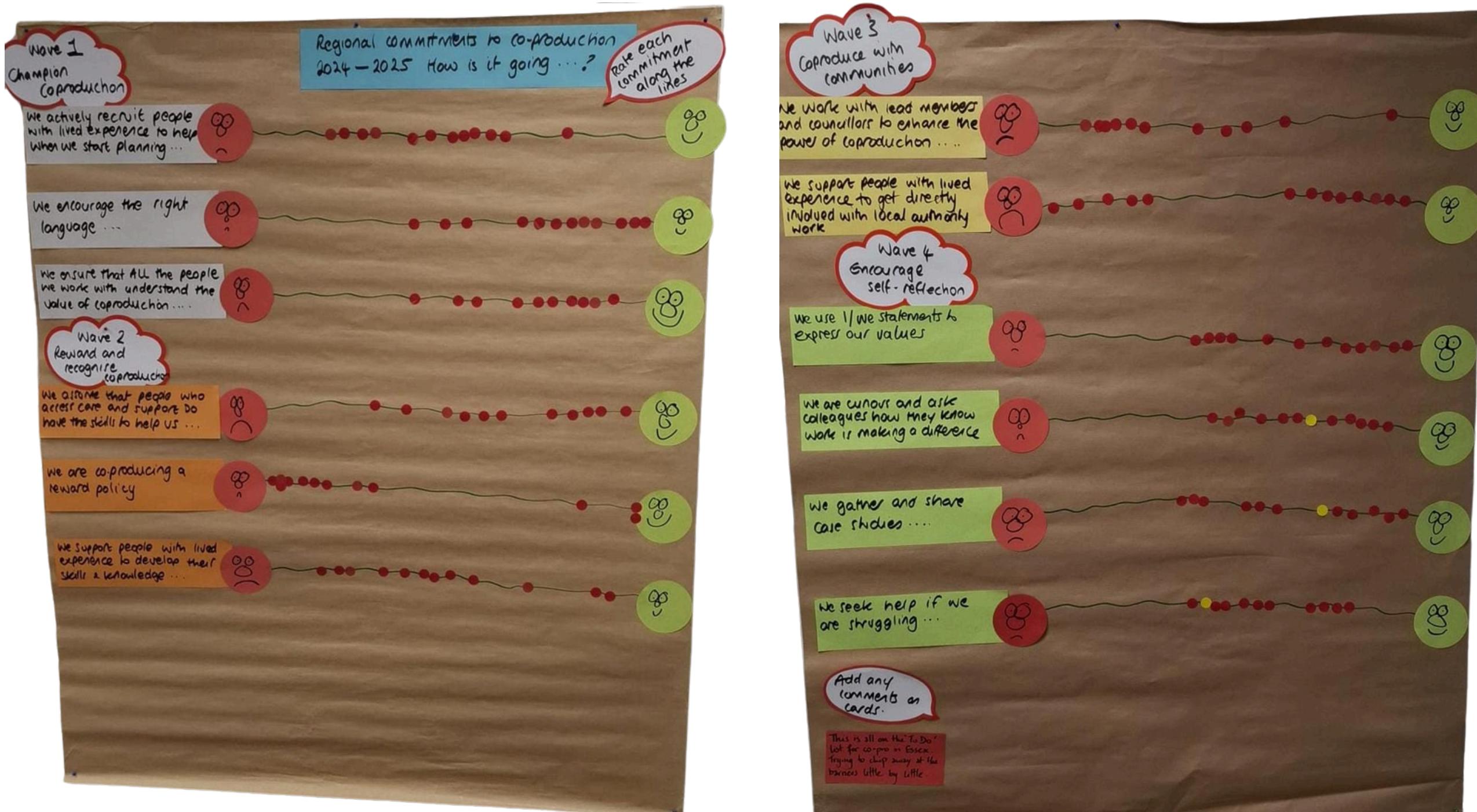
- People feel listened to
- Decision makers listen and act
- Everyone included (LD, autism, mental health, diversity)
- Hope, happiness, inspiration, and connection
- A culture of co-production everywhere
- Creative ideas and new ways of working
- A journey we travel together
- A future built on trust, kindness, and shared responsibility



# RATINGS ACTIVITY

**We asked people to rate how they felt they were doing in relation to the co-production commitments that were agreed after the Sept 2024 gathering.**

**This shows where some progress has been made, in particular around use of language, understanding the value of co-production, but there is still work to be done to make sure people are paid for their time, and involved in co-production activity right from the start.**



# COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE GROUP DURING THE SESSION

4 people committed  
to **enable people with  
lived experience to  
attend f2f events**

2 people committed  
to **run their own Over  
a Brew**

6 people committed  
to **Invite and  
encourage social  
work folk to attend  
Over a Brews**

3 people committed  
to **reach out and seek  
peer to peer  
support**

4 people committed  
to **promote OAB on  
social media**

7 people committed  
to **nurture, grow and  
promote inclusive  
language**

6 people committed  
to **share best  
practice on co-  
production with  
PPATH**



## **OTHER COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE GROUP DURING THE SESSION**



# Regional showcasing and learning

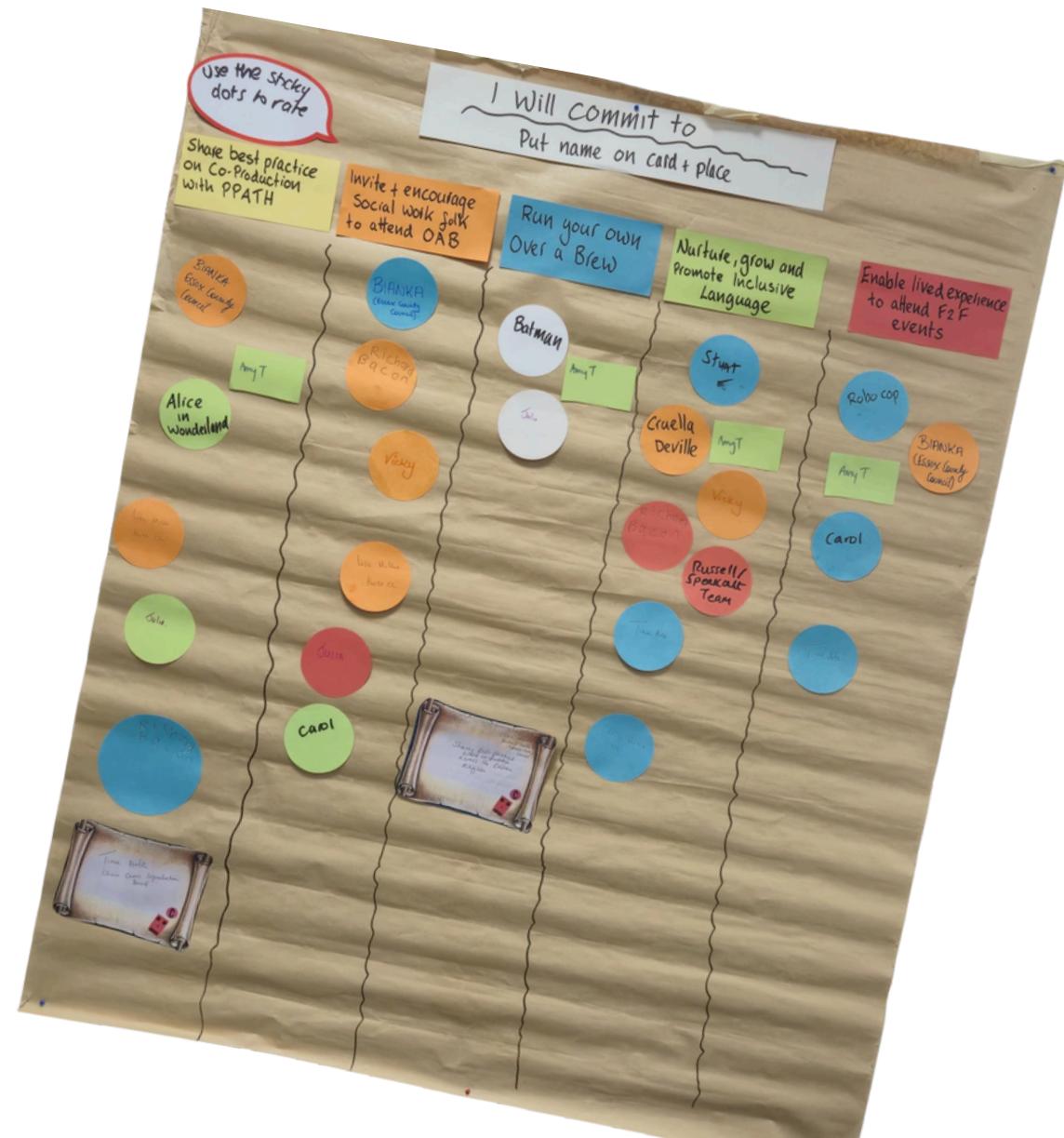
- *Regional - regionally showcase local examples of good co-production on social media*
- *Regional - Learning from CQC reports - Feed them into the Over a Brew's to create themes = driving improvements*

# Mapping and representation

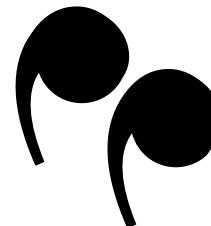
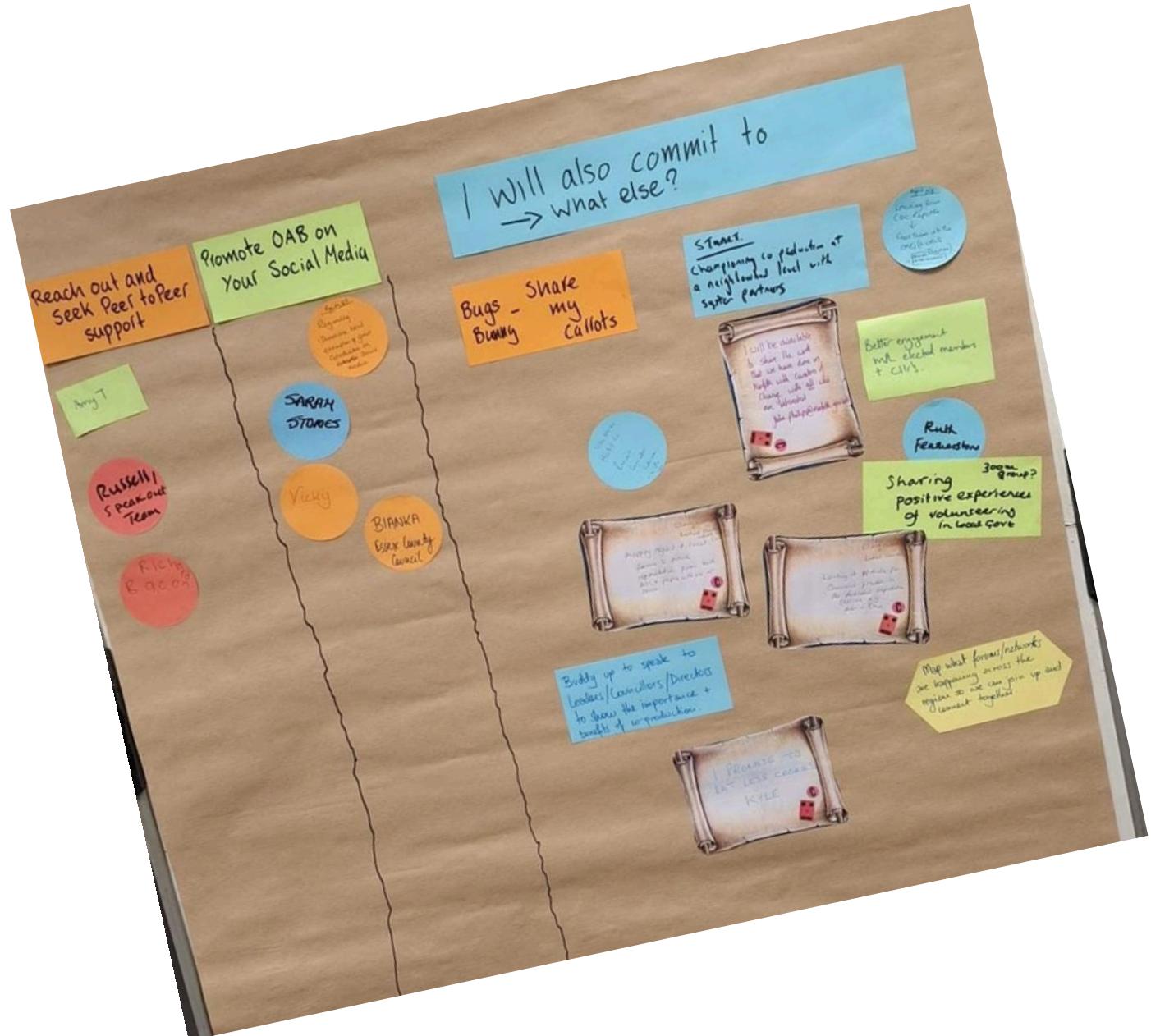
- *Map what forums/networks are happening across the region so we can join up and connect together*
- *Mapping regional and local forums to ensure representation from both ASCC and people who access services*

## **Over A Brew and co-production practice**

- *Looking at opportunities for commissioned providers to do dedicated co-production sessions – e.g., Over a Brew*
- *Championing co-production at neighbourhood levels with system partners*



# OTHER COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE GROUP DURING THE SESSION



## Engagement and influence

- *Buddy up to speak to leaders/Councillors/Directors to show the importance and benefits of co-production*
- *Better engagement with elected members and councillors*
- *Sharing positive experiences of volunteering in local government*
- **Sharing and visibility**
- *I will be available to share the work that we have done with Curators of Change with ALL who are interested*

## Light-hearted commitment

- *I promise to eat less cookies*

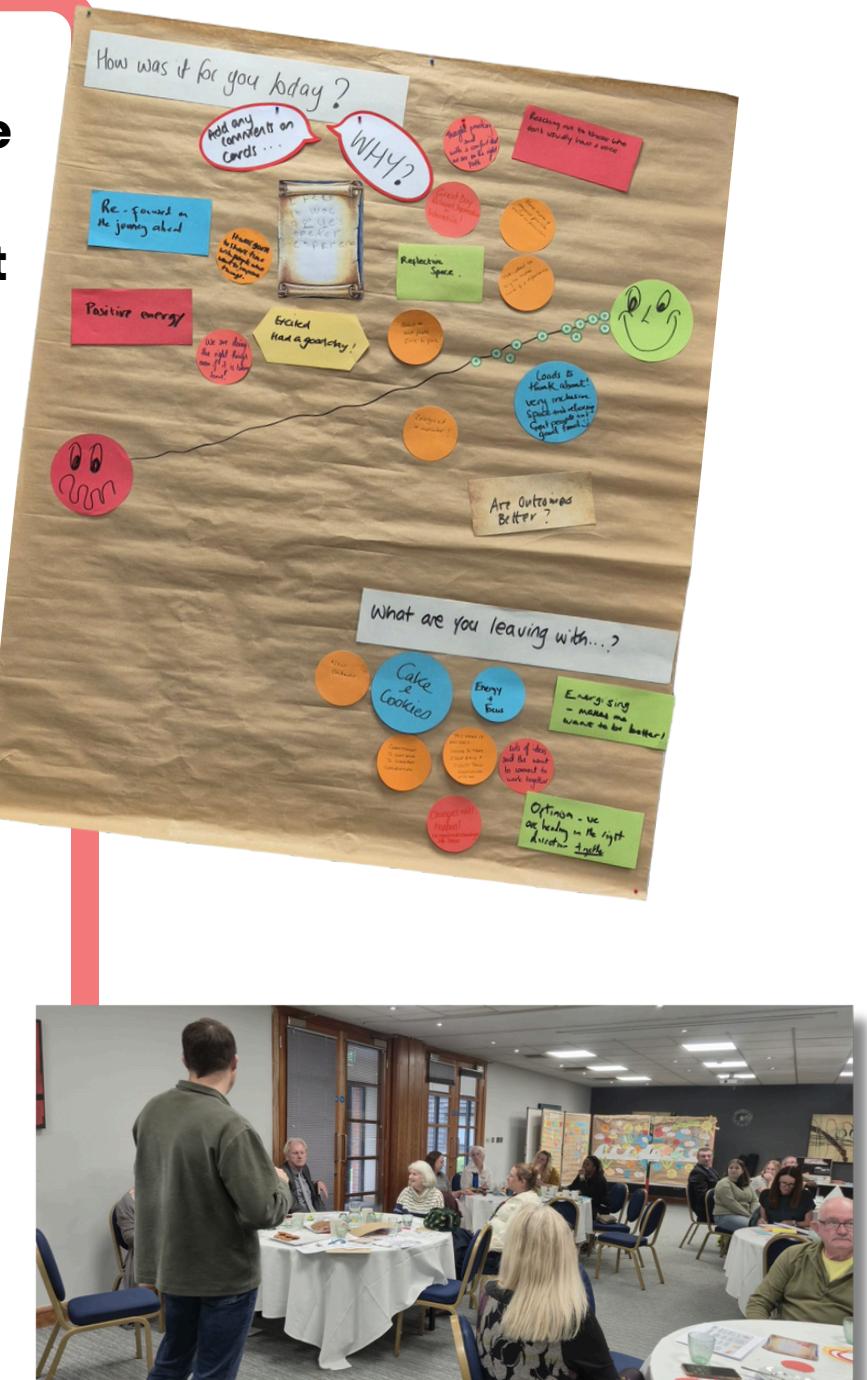


# HOW ARE PEOPLE LEAVING THE SESSION?

We asked people how they were leaving the sessions. People said they were feeling re-energised, optimistic, and motivated about the journey ahead. Many described a renewed focus and comfort in knowing they're on the right path, even if progress takes time. The space was seen as inclusive, reflective, and thought-provoking, sparking ideas and a strong desire to collaborate and improve.

There was a shared sense of commitment to champion co-production and continue making a difference, despite acknowledging the challenges and emotional demands of the work.

Overall, people left feeling hopeful, more connected, and ready to keep pushing forward together.



**Optimism - we are heading in the right direction together**

**We are doing the right things even if it is taking time!**

**Commitment to continue to champion co-production**

**Re-focused on the journey ahead**

**More aware of regional priorities around co-production**

**Motivated to try to make more of a difference**

# FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM ADASS EAST



**"If decisions are already made, it's not co-production – lived experience needs power, not just presence"**

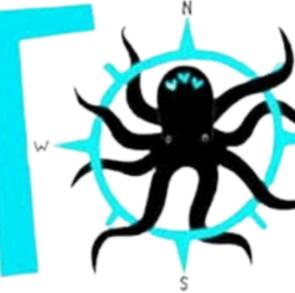
We truly enjoy each September when the Over a Brew Crew and the Putting People at the Heart of Care and Support Working Group meet to discuss progress on co-production, there is always so much energy, enthusiasm and commitment in the room which is further supported by local people who access care and support working equally alongside us all.

The Curators of Change team has diligently and passionately maintained alignment with their core values and vision throughout this work and will continue to ensure it reflects the priorities of the Putting People at the Heart of Care and Support Working Group, this has included having two members of the Crew co-chair our PPHoCS Working Group alongside Stuart.

While the work began regionally as a model, "Over a Brew" has now been adopted in local co-production efforts, building upon progress already made and improving further. We have seen a huge step change in culture and also the language being used across the region. Everyone in the room really wants to strive to improve and make a difference.

We've made solid progress together in recent years from "Ripples to Waves" but we know there is more to do. We're now ready to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of our work through 2026/27.

# CURATORS OF CHANGE



Thank  
You!

directors of  
**adass**  
adult social services  
eastern region  

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**connecting innovating improving**