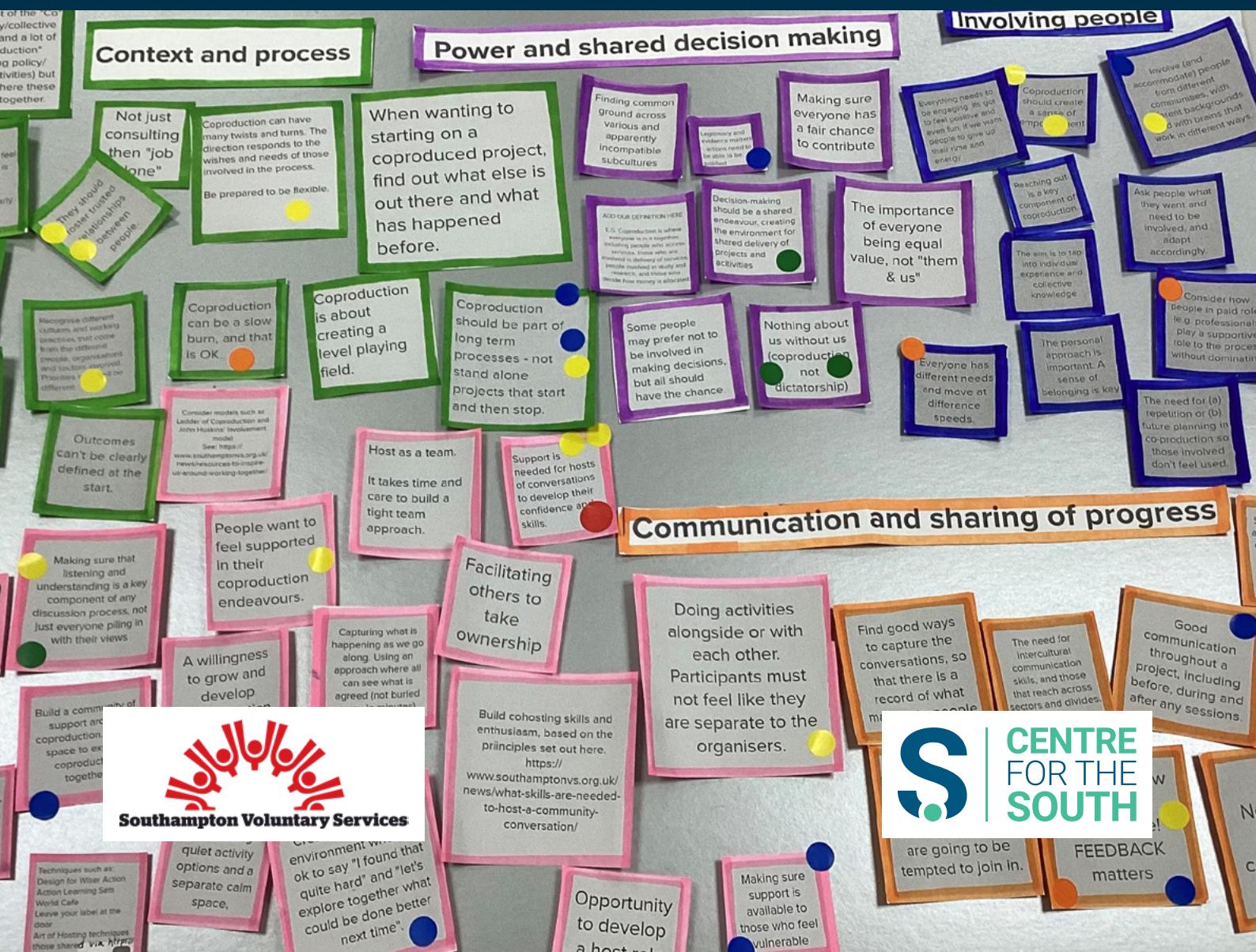


Making Coproduction Meaningful

Report and recommendations for
Southampton and beyond

November 2024



Context and process

- Not just consulting then "job done"
- They should foster trusted relationships between people
- Coproduction can have many twists and turns. The direction responds to the wishes and needs of those involved in the process. Be prepared to be flexible.
- Recognise different cultures and working practices that come from the different people, organisations and sectors involved. Practices may well be different.
- Coproduction can be a slow burn, and that is OK.
- Coproduction is about creating a level playing field.
- Outcomes can't be clearly defined at the start.
- Consider models such as Ladder of Co-production and John Hunter Improvement model. See: www.southamptonnvs.org.uk/news/resources-to-inspire-us-around-working-together
- Making sure that listening and understanding is a key component of any discussion process, not just everyone piling in with their views
- Build a community of support and coproduction space to explore coproduction together
- A willingness to grow and develop
- People want to feel supported in their coproduction endeavours.
- Capturing what is happening as we go along. Using an approach where all can see what is agreed (not buried in minutes)
- Facilitating others to take ownership
- Build cohosting skills and enthusiasm, based on the principles set out here. <https://www.southamptonnvs.org.uk/news/what-skills-are-needed-to-host-a-community-conversation/>
- Techniques such as: Design for Wiser Action Action Learning Sets World Cafe Leave your label at the door Art of Hosting techniques those shared via: <https://>
- quiet activity options and a separate calm space, environment where it's ok to say "I found that quite hard" and "let's explore together what could be done better next time".

Power and shared decision making

- When wanting to starting on a coproduced project, find out what else is out there and what has happened before.
- Finding common ground across various and apparently incompatible subcultures
- Legitimacy and evidence must be actions need to be able to be justified
- Making sure everyone has a fair chance to contribute
- The importance of everyone being equal value, not "them & us"
- Nothing about us without us (coproduction not dictatorship)
- Everyone has different needs and move at different speeds.
- The personal approach is important. A sense of belonging is key
- Consider how people in paid roles (e.g. professionals) play a supportive role to the process without dominating
- Ask people what they want and need to be involved, and adapt accordingly
- Involving people
- Involve (and accommodate) people from different communities, with different backgrounds, with brains that work in different ways
- Reach out is a key component of coproduction.
- The aim is to tap into individual experience and collective knowledge.
- Everyone needs to be engaged its got to feel positive and fun, if we want people to give up their time and energy
- Coproduction should create a sense of empowerment
- Consider how people in paid roles (e.g. professionals) play a supportive role to the process without dominating

Communication and sharing of progress

- Find good ways to capture the conversations, so that there is a record of what happened
- The need for intercultural communication skills, and those that reach across sectors and divides.
- Good communication throughout a project, including before, during and after any sessions
- Centre for the South
- Feedback matters
- are going to be tempted to join in.

Southampton Voluntary Services

Our coproduction approach

Southampton Coproduction Corner is a network of people who want to share knowledge and support each other in coproduction. Initiated in 2023 by **Southampton Voluntary Services**, we developed a research project with the University of Southampton.

We are grateful to everyone involved in Southampton Coproduction Corner so far. This includes community-minded individuals; local community organisations, including **Veracity Life, Monty's Community Hub, Board in the City, Owl XL CIC** and **Southampton Voluntary Services**; public sector partners **Southampton City Council** and local NHS Trusts (**University Hospital Southampton, Solent** and **Southern Health NHS Trusts**) and; researchers from the **University of Southampton**; and various others.



Image: In July 2024, we held a workshop to explore issues to do with teenage girls, parks and wellbeing



Our process

We spent time discussing what matters to people about coproduction. We focused on experiential learning through a series of eight workshops using coproduction techniques.

We explored the barriers to involvement in coproduced projects and investigated what makes a welcoming, safe, and brave space to ensure people can participate and share their thoughts. We tested out different coproduction techniques and hosted a Coproduction Showcase. We worked together to identify a series of recommendations.

About the Centre for the South

This project was funded by the Centre for the South (CftS), a policy institute founded under the University of Southampton.

The CftS uses equitable approaches to stimulate cross-sector collaboration across the Central South, mobilising knowledge and using evidence to drive more informed place-based decision making, for mutual prosperity. www.centreforthesouth.co.uk/

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Our starting point

Coproduction is all about working together as equals to develop policy, design and deliver services.

We wanted to ensure that coproduction was not used as a “tick box” term. We built a community to explore coproduction together.

Recommendations

Informed by discussions involving about 85 people, we make the following recommendations to policy-makers and those involved in coproduced projects:

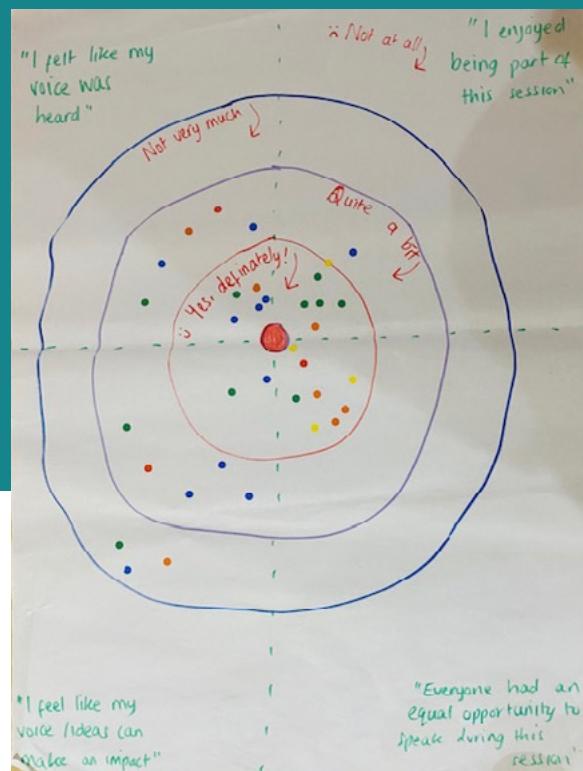
1. Recognise that coproduction is part of a long-term process that takes time and trust

For coproduction to be done well, the right people must be involved. Connect with communities and ensure that people with real-life experience are involved from the start. Provide space and time to develop mutual trust, understand expectations, plan collaboratively, be open and transparent about what is happening, and be willing to learn and adapt as the process unfolds.

“Coproduction is too important not to invest in.”

2. Foster meaningful interactions

Projects should plan welcome, safe and brave spaces to ensure people feel included as equals. See the ideas and resources on our website for more information.



During a workshop with teenage girls, participants shared their feedback on the session

3. Plan carefully how resources are allocated

Coproduction is not a ‘free’ activity. It’s important to have shared conversations about how resources are allocated. There should be a culture of sharing gifts, such as food, direct payment, training and other resources.

4. Train and support coproduction skills, through the continued development of Southampton Coproduction Corner

This will help people find others to collaborate with, further develop people’s confidence, training and skills to host coproduction conversations and provide a continued environment for peer support and learning.

5. Build strong ethics processes into the work

Focus on developing safe and respectful processes and spaces. Ensure ethics processes don’t become overly bureaucratic or discourage people from engaging in ethics conversations.

6. Focus on impact and “so what?”

People will be reluctant to participate in coproduction work if they feel they won’t be heard and nothing will change. Once involved, they need to see what difference their input is making and what has changed. Evaluate and communicate the impact and embed learning into future policy and projects.

Case studies

We looked to explore two topics of interest that linked with health and care issues, as chosen by our Southampton Coproduction Corner network:

Teenage girls and how parks and open spaces can improve their wellbeing

We connected with local community organisations **Monty's Community Hub**, an intergenerational community hub in Sholing, and **Veracity Life**, a project breathing new life into Veracity Recreation Ground. Together, these community organisations hosted a workshop for teenage girls to explore their perspectives on parks and wellbeing.

We then drew together a group of wider stakeholders to explore the issues, with young people's voices as a central component.

We are publishing a report of the findings on our website and undertaking an evaluation, which will inform future work of this nature. Initial learning includes:

- People won't want to engage unless they feel it will be worth their while and change will happen. As you can see from the picture, "I feel like my voice/ideas can make an impact" is something the girls were less sure about.
- Agreeing on how we work together is important, especially for projects involving people from different perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, and sectors.
- Current University ethics processes do not fit well with coproduced approaches.
- Building coproduction processes into longer-term community activity is welcome rather than one or two standalone conversations or workshops.

How trauma victims are integrated within communities and can have a voice in a safe, welcoming environment

We have developed a format for exploring these issues with **Board in the City**, a local board games café. This social enterprise welcomes people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, including those who have lived experience of trauma. The topic is both sensitive and important to all those with personal experience of trauma, and the people involved were keen to do a really thorough job of collecting perspectives. We are now looking for additional resources to do this work to the standard that we feel is appropriate and necessary.

Next steps

We are continuing to develop Southampton Coproduction Corner, widening our community of practice to involve more and more people. We wish to see meaningful coproduction processes embedded throughout the Southampton area, including in city planning, the health and care system, economic approaches and placemaking.



Find out more

Visit www.southamptonvs.org.uk/coproduction



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Cover image: During our July 24 workshop, we reflected on the issues raised so far through Southampton Coproduction Corner and voted for those that mattered most.