

# Guide and Charter for Partnerships on Applying Co-Production

## 1. About this Guide and Charter

This Guide focuses on how community planning partnership bodies can apply the principles of co-production in carrying out their functions.

It has been designed by Community Places to help strengthen partnership working and developed with the support of the Carnegie UK Trust's [Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland](#) Project.

The initial idea for the Guide arose out of discussions with community planners in Derry City and Strabane area about their [Strategic Growth Plan](#) outcome: “*Work in partnership with communities (via local community planning) to co-design and develop services aspiring to achieve a co-production model*”. However, the Guide has been designed for use across the whole region by partnerships tasked with contributing to delivering community plan outcomes through the application of co-production principles.

## 2. How to Use this Guide

We recommend that each Partnership within the community planning framework adopts the Guide and that each partner representative commits their organisation and personally to the Charter. We also recommend that the Partnership as a whole and individual members assess annually the Partnership's progress in fulfilling the Charter commitments.

### 3. Effective Partnerships

It is hoped that this Guide will improve the effectiveness of Community Planning Partnerships and help them to take forward the Audit Office [Making Partnerships Work](#) recommendation on communication:

“Effective communication arrangements should be established at the beginning of the partnership. Identifying the target audiences, developing clear messages and communicating them effectively will increase the likelihood of initiatives and their outcomes being accepted and successful. Good communication not only keeps people informed about what is going on, it promotes trust and a friendlier and satisfying working relationship; creates a more productive environment; helps to avoid conflict and helps partners achieve their objectives.” (NIAO: Making Partnerships Work 2019)

The Guide will also help Partnerships to follow the Audit Office “Tips on Managing Conflicts”:

#### Tips on managing conflicts

- Create a sense of **interdependency** among partnership members.
- Provide regular **information** to all partners to create a sense of being well informed.
- Work continuously to maintain a high degree of **trust** among partners.
- Create a process of decision-making that is perceived as **fair and open** by all partners.

Members of Partnerships may also find it useful to consider the characteristics of ‘good partners’



## 4. Defining Co-Production

This Guide has drawn on a [symposium](#) on Co-Production in 2019 facilitated by Community Places. It included an overview of [definitions and principles](#) promoted by the Department of Health and organisations in Wales, Scotland, England and the Republic of Ireland<sup>1</sup>. The following definition draws on the symposium materials and discussion and reflects the specific role of the Community Planning Partnerships:

**“Co-Production means building on the assets of communities of place and interest to deliver better wellbeing outcomes for all by sharing responsibilities and power equally between service users and those who advocate on their behalf and service providers across all sectors.”**

## 5. Charter of Co-Production Commitments

It is recommended that each Partnership and partner adopts the following **TOGETHER**<sup>1</sup> Charter:

**T**eamwork when developing options and taking decisions

**O**penness to all ideas and discussion

**G**enuine communication across all partners

**E**quitable opportunities to participate within context of imbalances in capacity and resources

**T**rust building across sectors pro-actively facilitated

**H**onesty in sharing information and views

**E**ngagement of people impacted by issues under consideration

**R**espect for all views

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<sup>1</sup> See also [Cheshire East Council](#)

## 6. Applying the Charter – 12 Steps

In applying these commitments to the overall work of the Partnerships and during meetings all partners will:

1. Come to meetings prepared to participate - having read and considered papers in advance;
2. Present information in readily accessible ways and avoid overuse of jargon;
3. Focus on discussing agenda issues within time agreed for each item;
4. Actively contribute to all discussions – including on issues outside of partner body’s direct responsibilities;
5. Encourage others to contribute and be respectful of different views;
6. Contribute to ensuring decisions made are clear with responsibility for action identified;
7. Respect confidentiality where appropriate to allow sharing of information and views;
8. Seek consensus where possible while not avoiding differences of opinion being acknowledged;
9. Value both community knowledge and professional expertise;
10. Be represented by people who have the authority to contribute fully and reach agreements;
11. Work collectively to secure the resources (people and finance) needed to implement decisions;
12. Contribute to discussions and evaluations on improving the meetings and the overall work of the Partnership.

## 7. Evaluating Progress

It is recommended that the Partnerships undertake formative and summative evaluations. At the end of each meeting those attending should complete the feedback table below and leave it with the minute taker who will prepare a collated table of scores for the following meeting. Every agenda should include feedback as a final item. During this item the collated table should be discussed briefly with suggestions for improvements shared and considered.

Annually, the Partnership should hold a workshop to evaluate progress and plan ahead. This should be independently facilitated and informed by the collated results from the feedback tables.

**Evaluating Progress: Date of Meeting** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Scoring: Yes – 3 Points Needs Improvement – 2 Points No – 1 Point</b>		
<b>Please give your feedback by writing Yes (Y), Needs Improvement (NI) or No (N) beside each of the following:</b>		
<b>We are working well together</b>		
<b>We are sticking to our agenda</b>		
<b>People are being respectful of one another</b>		
<b>We take and implement decisions</b>		
<b>We are being frank and open about issues</b>		
<b>We are gradually achieving what we set out to do</b>		
<b>Overall, we are implementing our TOGETHER Charter</b>		
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	

*Please add any comments or suggestions for improvements here:*