

INVOLVE Coordinating Centre News



We are delighted to welcome Laura Young to the INVOLVE Coordinating Centre team. Laura is providing support and assistance to the Office Coordinator & Director's PA organising meetings and travel and to the Knowledge and Communications Manager editing and updating the INVOLVE and NIHR websites, and producing newsletters. Laura is a talented graphic designer, and she has also been refreshing and rebranding existing publications and creating infographics.

Co-production: Old wine in new bottles or vintage PPI?

Introduction

Co-production is a concept which has been used to describe a partnership between public and service providers as they jointly design and/or improve health and social care services.

For some the principles of co-production offers the opportunity to evolve and improve PPI in research. With its emphasis on equity of power in the relationship, and the blurring of boundaries between professional and public/patient, it may be vintage PPI. For others, however, it is just old wine in new bottles. A new word to describe collaboration.

This article reports on the outcomes from a round table event, attended by public and NIHR staff to explore various views, thoughts and opinions on the question of 'what is co-production in research?' The round table event forms part of a wider project.

The project

INVOLVE is leading on a project to identify how the discourse, elements and principles of co-production could be used to evolve and improve patient and public involvement in research.

This project has four phases. This round table event is part of phase 1. Phase 1 is about identifying learning points from co-production; the emphasis in this phase is on ensuring conceptual clarity between the discourses of co-production and PPI in research. The focus of phase 2 is on testing the application of these learning points in practice. Phase 3 will be about the implementation of these learning points across the NIHR. And phase 4 will be an evaluation of the project.

Capturing the 'essence' of co-production

Below are nine draft statements, which emerged from the round table discussion, and which are the beginnings of an attempt to capture the 'essence of co-production in research'. The statements are in no way an 'official' position on co-production – indeed, as the project progresses the statements are likely to be refined, lost and/or added to.

1. Co-production is more than 'good' collaboration

Co-production has a richer and more descriptive vocabulary than that associated with collaboration and consultation - and this provides us with an opportunity to evolve and improve public and patient involvement in research. At its heart some may say co-production of knowledge for practice represents one of the most powerful forms of involvement.

2. Co-production is about 'equality of power' between those involved in a research project

In collaboration it is often the researchers who determine when a member of the public should be involved. And usually this means at particular stages when the researchers think it relevant. It follows that in collaboration, and indeed consultation, the power still lies with the researcher. Co-produced research provides an opportunity to redress that power imbalance.

Continued >>

3. Co-production is about 'joint ownership of key decisions'

Co-production does not require that all people are involved in every aspect/decision of the research. But it does require 'joint ownership of key decisions'. So co-production would involve a joint decision on who should be involved at any given stage or any given decision – it is not for the researchers to solely determine.

4. Co-production involves the public being involved at an early stage of a research project

Co-produced research is a joint venture. If there is to be joint ownership of a project then it follows that members of the public, ideally, need to be involved at an early stage of a project - not invited in to give views once a proposal has been developed but to be 'around the table' at the beginning, helping to design and shape the project. And it should not be forgotten that research ideas can originate from members of the public.

5. Co-production involves creating a 'level playing field'; it requires investment in, and cultivation of, public members

Creating a 'level playing field', so that all actors can contribute, will usually require an investment in and cultivation of public members. Patients/public need to be supported and enabled to contribute.

Sometimes this will be beyond the means of a single research project. For co-production to occur then it is likely that research organisations need the appropriate architecture in place in terms of the culture on the one hand and processes and procedures on the other that will underpin co-production. The processes in place to support people and enable them to get involved might include training and payment processes. The culture requires that the knowledge and assets of all people in the team are respected and valued.

6. Co-production is not just about patients and the public – it includes all members of the team

Co-production involves the inclusion of all the relevant stakeholders/agencies involved in a piece of research.

7. Co-production is about respecting and valuing the knowledge and assets of all those involved.

If there is to be a level playing field, in terms of the power relationship, it follows that the different knowledge bases and perspectives of all those involved in a co-production team must be given equal respect and value.

8. The processes and culture must support and enable all stakeholders to be involved.

Co-produced research should be proactive in promoting diversity and inclusion. The processes and procedures used in a research project must facilitate the involvement of different stakeholders.

9. Co-production involves all members of the research team taking ownership of the production of knowledge

The interpretation of findings and knowledge however is usually developed by the researchers. Co-production, as well as involving patients/public in the research process, also involves patients/public in the development of knowledge.

What next?

Colleagues from the RDSs in London and East of England will be looking at literature and interviewing researchers and public involved in co-produced research to develop further the key elements/principles of co-production in research. If you have any comments or would like further information please contact: Gary Hickey. Email: gary.hickey@nihr.ac.uk

Roundtable attendees: Gary Hickey, Senior Public Involvement Manager (SPIM), NIHR INVOLVE; Doreen Tembo, Senior Research Manager (PI) NIHR NETSCC; Prof Gill Green, Director RDS East of England; Kate Sonpal, SPIM, NIHR INVOLVE; Dr Sophie Staniszewska, RCN Research Institute, University of Warwick; Dr Kati Turner, researcher Population Health Research Centre, St George's, University of London; Katalin Torok, PPI Senior Programme Manager, NIHR Central Commissioning Facility.

Additional contributors: Sharmila Soekhoe, Senior Programme Manager, NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre; Tina Coldham, NIHR INVOLVE Advisory Group public member.