

## **Divisions Affected – All**

### **CABINET 22 April 2025**

#### **Co-production in Adult Social Care Report of People Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
  - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
  - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

### **REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND**

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

### **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

3. At its meeting on 20 March 2025, the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on Co-production in Adult Social Care.
4. The Committee regretted that the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care was unable to attend but was grateful to officers for attending to present the report and to answer its questions. The Committee welcomed Karen Fuller, the Director of Adult Social Care, Fulya Markham, Strategy Lead: Age Well, Live Well, Marc Borja, Commissioning Officer, and Megan de Cruz, Commissioning Support Officer, as well as Carole Stow, Engagement and Consultation Manager.

## SUMMARY

5. The Director reminded the Committee that the Local Government Association had conducted a Peer Challenge of the Council in April 2024. This had provided external challenge and scrutiny of the Council's preparations for the Care Quality Commission's Assurance process. The Committee had received updates since then and this report provided an overview of co-production and its progress since the Peer Challenge had identified its green shoots of success. The Director set out that the Oxfordshire definition of co-production is:

*'...the process where providers and/or professionals and stakeholding citizens equally share a whole-life responsibility for the creation and delivery of products, services or knowledge. Co-production is underpinned by the principles of equality, diversity, access and reciprocity.'*

6. This was not a definition unique to Adult Social Care but was one used across the Council and it was explained that co-production is intended to be a collaborative process where public services and people work together in the design, delivery, and evaluation of public services.
7. The Director and other officers engaged in a wide-ranging discussion with the Committee. Topics explored clarity of language and the need for plain English; different needs of different demographic and geographic groups and the resultant need for differentiation of approach; clear and timely communication; resources for embedding co-production across the Council; how the Council monitored the success of co-production; the Co-Production Advisory Board and its membership; co-production training; relationships with the NHS and other system partners.
8. The Committee makes four recommendations. One is about officer training and is made to the Head of Paid Service as there is a recognition that it is largely an operational matter; one is about member training; the third is about members sitting on the Co-Production Advisory Board to offer a different perspective and insight. The fourth ties the three together into a single, overarching recommendation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The Committee established that the co-production training organised and delivered by the Co-production team was available to both members and officers as well as to partners, including staff of the Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (the BOB-ICB) and the Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum. The training had previously been available through online sessions but there had been a more recent move to face-to-face training as it was considered that, particularly in light of the importance of relationships for successful co-production, this provided a more satisfactory environment.

10. Since the LGA Peer Review in April 2024, there had been a roll-out of Level 1 training courses across the Council. This training seeks to introduce the fundamentals of the approach, to explain what co-production is (and to compare and contrast it with other forms of collaboration and engagement), and to provide clarity of how co-production is understood within Oxfordshire. There was currently capacity to train 500 people by the end of the first quarter of 2025.
11. The Committee commended the work of the Commissioning team that provided the training and recognised its importance. It noted that the report set out that staff engagement on Co-production continued to be praised throughout the Council as a positive influence. The Committee noted that the team recommended that new starters in children's services and adult social care complete the Level 1 training with those in particular roles progressing to Level 2 and/or Level 3 training where deemed appropriate. Level 2 training builds on the learning from Level 1 and advances techniques, ideas, and models to support the development of co-production. It considers how the commissioning cycle might be reconsidered. Level 3 concentrates on how experts might be recruited to a project group and how, with everyone working together, a workstream might be taken from conception to conclusion.
12. The Committee considered that if the principles, values, and practices of co-production were to be truly embedded across the organisation then the Council should go further than this. In order to highlight the importance of co-production, the Council should make completion of Level 1 Co-production training mandatory for all staff within both children's services and within adult social care in the same way as the Council makes some training courses compulsory for all staff. The Committee recognises that some of the compulsory training sessions are currently required because there are legal, financial, or reputational issues which would arise were the lessons of the training not to be heeded and that is why they are compulsory. The Committee is of the view that the importance of co-production is such that its principles and practices should be known and understood further across the Council.
13. The Committee considers that the simplest way of achieving this is for that training to be compulsory within the most relevant services. That does not preclude the Council making it compulsory wider than those within children's services and adult social care and the Council may consider it would be appropriate to roll that compulsion out further. The Committee recognises that it would be arguably inappropriate and certainly overly resource-intensive to require all relevant staff to complete Level 2 or Level 3 training and that should probably only be the case for staff in certain roles.
14. The Committee recognises that this might be considered to stray into operational matters but it considers that, on balance, this is a strategic recommendation. It is one that would further embed and strengthen the Council's commitment to effective and efficient co-production and thus it is appropriate for the Committee to recommend.

15. The Committee heeded the Director's advice that the implementation of this recommendation would be beyond the competence of the Adult Social Care service and that considering and responding to it would be for the Council as an whole. As a result of this, the Committee makes this recommendation to the Head of Paid Service rather than to Cabinet but would welcome Cabinet's endorsement of the recommendation.

***Recommendation 1: That the Council should, during the 2025/26 municipal year, require all staff within Children's Services and within Adult Social Care to complete the Level 1 Co-production training.***

16. The Committee noted the Director's reminder that such training was also available to elected members. The Committee recognised the value of members undergoing this training but also that, other than for sitting on committees with statutory responsibilities, members could not be compelled to attend any particular training. Nonetheless, especially looking towards the impending election and new Council term, the Committee recommends that all members – both new and returning – are encouraged to take part in the Level 1 Co-production training so that they can understand the Council's approach and enable them to encourage the Council to follow it.

***Recommendation 2: That the Council should encourage all councillors to complete the Level 1 Co-production training during the 2025/26 municipal year.***

17. As well as training, the Committee is keen that members should engage with co-production more widely. The Co-production Advisory Board is made up of officers and other, external stakeholders and the Committee explored whether it would be appropriate for members to sit on it too. The Committee is of the view that, in order to reflect the unique contribution members can make in terms of both democratic mandate and engagement with residents' concerns, there is a case for them to sit on the Board.
18. Whilst the above applies to all members of the Council, the Committee considers, given their representative role in representing members in order to engage with Adult Social Care, that it would be most appropriate for the Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to sit on the Board, with the Chair's place being taken by the Deputy Chair in the event that the Chair is unavailable.

***Recommendation 3: That the Council should arrange for the Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to sit as a member of the Co-production Advisory Board, with the Deputy Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, being permitted as a substitute.***

19. All three of the above recommendations are intended to encourage and enable the Council to further embed the principles and practices relating to co-production which services have been seeking to deliver over recent years. Members and residents, as well as officers, have been keen to see the 'green shoots' the LGA identified grow and thrive. Accepting and implementing the

above would support that ambition. As a summary of that and indicative of the Council's wholehearted commitment to fruitful co-production, the Committee calls on the Council to adopt a Co-production Charter setting all this out.

***Recommendation 4: That the Council should adopt a Co-production Charter committing itself to systemic and whole-hearted co-production across Children's Services and Adult Social Care and, as part of that, during the 2025/26 municipal year, the Council will, as a minimum:***

- a) require all staff within Children's Services and within Adult Social Care to complete the Level 1 Co-production training, and***
- b) encourage all councillors to complete the Level 1 Co-production training during the 2025/26 municipal year, and***
- c) arrange for the Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to sit as a member of the Co-production Advisory Board, with the Deputy Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, being permitted as a substitute.***

## **FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

20. The Committee will not consider co-production against during this municipal year. Its members hope that their successors will do so during the next.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

21. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.
22. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

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Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

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