

# Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

*Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested<sup>1</sup> and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.*

*This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.*

## Issue: Co-Production in Adult Social Care

**Lead Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr Tim Bearder, Cabinet member for Adult Social Care

**Date response requested:**<sup>2</sup> 22 April 2025

### Response to report:

*Enter text here.*

### Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council should, during the 2025/26 municipal year, require all staff within Children's Services and within Adult Social	Partially Accepted	The Level 1 Co-production training is a foundational, in-person course designed to introduce the four underpinning and practice of co-production. Participants receive the booklet " <i>Working</i>

<sup>1</sup> Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

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<p>Care to complete the Level 1 Co-production training.</p>		<p><i>Together – getting started with co-production</i>” as a companion resource.</p> <p>This training programme has been running for a few years and colleagues can book their session Via the Learning Zone or by emailing <a href="mailto:coproduction@oxfordshire.gov.uk">coproduction@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>. The training is actively advertised in Council’s staff Engagement Forums and via ‘Co-pro Hour’.</p> <p>A high number of colleagues across the Council including Adults and Children’s Services have already completed the course to date and they are encouraged to attend the training.</p> <p>Requiring all staff to complete the training in the current financial year needs careful planning with OCC HR and Training teams to ensure the Council has the capacity and availability to deliver and colleagues to attend the training. We will continue to work with them to achieve this.</p>
<p>2. That the Council should encourage all councillors to complete the Level 1 Co-production training during the 2025/26 municipal year.</p>	<p>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>Co-production is part of the wider training programme for councillors as detailed in the <a href="#">OCC Councillor Welcome Pack</a></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>	<p>The Co-production Advisory Board serves as an advisory body composed of individuals with lived experience of services in Oxfordshire. Its core functions are providing advice and feedback on council projects that would benefit from co-production and supporting the Council in embedding the principles of Access, Equality, Diversity, and Reciprocity across services.</p> <p>The Board meets monthly. All members must complete co-production training and induction. It is made up of people with</p>

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	<p>lived experience in areas such as older people's services, learning disabilities, mental health services, domestic abuse, homelessness and SEND. Currently, membership is shifting away from representatives of organised groups toward individuals from seldom-heard communities.</p> <p>The Co-production Advisory Board is one of the shared platforms OCC have to hear the views of people with lived experience of council services.</p> <p>We disagree with the proposal due to risks and considerations below:</p> <p><b>1. Risk to Independence and Governance Integrity</b> Advisory boards are designed to provide <b>independent advice</b> to officers and decision-makers. Including councillors, who are themselves elected decision-makers, can blur the lines between advice and influence, undermining the board's neutrality. This concern is echoed in national governance commentary, which warns that councillor involvement may lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Perceived or actual lobbying behind the scenes.</li><li>• Pressure on officers or fellow councillors to adopt certain positions (please see <a href="#">Guidance on Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct   Local Government Association</a>)</li><li>• A dilution of the board's role as a critical friend, especially if members feel constrained by political dynamics.</li></ul> <p><b>2. Conflict with Scrutiny and Oversight Roles</b> Councillors already hold formal roles in scrutiny committees, cabinet, and full council. If they also sit on advisory boards, it can create:</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts of interest, especially when the board’s advice feeds into decisions councillors later scrutinise.</li> <li>• Duplication of oversight, reducing the distinctiveness and value of advisory board contributions.</li> <li>• Reduced trust from community members, who may see the board as politically influenced rather than community-led.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Undermining the Lived Experience Model</b>  The Co-production Advisory Board’s strength lies in its composition: people with lived experience of services, supported by officers. Including councillors as members may risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shifting the power dynamic, making it harder for community members to speak freely.</li> <li>• Compromising the board’s ethos of equality and reciprocity, which is central to co-production.</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Legal and Structural Boundaries</b>  Advisory boards are not statutory decision-making bodies. Councillors, by contrast, are legally accountable for decisions made in council. Mixing these roles can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create ambiguity in accountability.</li> <li>• Lead to misinterpretation of advice as policy.</li> <li>• Breach the principles outlined in the <a href="#">Oxfordshire County Council Governance Handbook 2025</a>, which emphasises clear thresholds and separation of powers.</li> </ul>
<p>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</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>The proposal to develop the charter is supported by the Advisory Board and its members are already working on this action. The charter contents will be drafted over the summer months by the board.</p>

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<p>municipal year, the Council will, as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) require all staff within Children's Services and within Adult Social Care to complete the Level 1 Co-production training, and</li><li>b) encourage all councillors to complete the Level 1 Co-production training during the 2025/26 municipal year, and</li><li>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.</li></ul>		<p>The directorate's response to the elements of set out by scrutiny can be found in the relevant section of this document.</p>
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