Working Together Checklist

Swindon Borough Council

Adult Services

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This Working Together Checklist is designed to offer prompts and questions that will support you in designing and delivering effective working together practices.

This template has been adapted from [Hampshire County Council's Lets Go with Co-Production](https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adultsocialcare/coproduction#:~:text=Co%2Dproduction%20in%20Hampshire,our%20main%20co%2Dproduction%20forums.) materials. The Hampshire template was co-designed by people with lived experience. The website has further templates and helpful documents which we encourage you to look at.

## Planning for working together

### Identifying who we need to work with

Before starting any *working together* exercise, you will need to have identified who your key stakeholders are - i.e., those who may be impacted by the action, decision or change you are exploring.

These will be the people, partners and services you will need to work with.

Stakeholders may include:

* Local people already receiving support or accessing a certain service, relevant to the action you are exploring;
* Local people who could potentially receive the relevant care or support in the future;
* Families and unpaid carers;
* The wider community;
* Health and Care professionals in the Council and local ICB (consider impact on children and adult services);
* Professionals from other directorates or organisations (e.g., public health or housing);
* Providers of care and support;
* The Voluntary and Community Sector (that may not be known commissioned services of the Council)

Drawing on your identification of stakeholders, list who are likely to be impacted by your project:

Add your list of identified stakeholders here using the above suggestions as subtitles, if useful

### Feasibility of working together

Before contacting your identified stakeholders, including local people, it is important to confirm the scope of your working together arrangements.

Answering the following questions will support you to plan your *working together* arrangements, and which approach will work best for you and your stakeholders.

What is the objective of working with stakeholders? What decisions are being made?

How much scope do the stakeholders have to influence your project?

Tick / Circle the relevant response

1. Little scope to comment or influence the decisions that are being made, but we want to explain and inform people what is happening;
2. Little scope to influence but we can work with people on what happens next
3. Some scope to influence the decision and we are open to alternatives or new ideas
4. A lot of room to share the decision, and what it is we are deciding on
5. The decision or action is open for discussion or change, and there is potential to work in equal partnership with our stakeholders

What aspects of the project can be either co-produced or co-designed?

This will help you identify whether all aspects of the project can be co-produced or co-designed (Swindon's Adult Services ambition), only some of it can be co-produced or co-designed, or none of it can

Where elements cannot be co-produced or co-designed, what else can you do to engage your stakeholders?

How much time do you have to work together with your identified stakeholders?

Consider any Council deadlines or timeframes you are required to follow - e.g., Boards for decision sign off, procurement timelines.

The time needed for working together projects vary depending on the nature and scale of the project. Anything less that 6-12 months may not be enough to support co-production or co-design approaches. You may need to request more time from your project sponsor / senior colleagues to ensure we get this right.

Will you need specialist support to work with certain stakeholders?

For example, children and young people, particular faith or ethnic communities, or people with additional communication needs

Has a sufficient budget been identified for this project?

For example to pay for people's time or expenses, sourcing venues or providing information in alternative formats if required

Are there any legal issues that may impact your working together plans?

For example, pre-election periods or potential conflicts of interest

Have you considered how you will ensure compliance with data protection legislation?

You may need to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment to consider the sensitively and personal nature of the information you are collecting. A privacy notice may be required

### Recognition and payment for individuals involved

If people are giving up their time to contribute to the shaping, design and review of services, they should be acknowledged, paid or incentivized for their participation. Professionals and providers are often being paid for their time at such events, so why not local people? This not only demonstrates the value they are bringing to the table, but also demonstrates the equal partnership that our Working Together plan is based on.

Financial incentives for paying individuals involved in our working together work could include:

* Being employed by the Local Authority or similar, paid via an hourly rate
* Paying for travel and subsistence expenses
* Bank Transfer
* Vouchers
* Donations to charities of their choice
* Payment towards care (e.g., payment of personal assistants, or respite for carers)
* Time Credit Schemes (such as Time Tempo Credits) which transfer time into tangible benefits (e.g., cinema or gym access)

There are also examples of non-financial incentives that can be used to acknowledge and thank individuals for their time and contributions:

* Thank you, events, – such as days out, or award ceremonies / acknowledgement ceremonies
* Thank you cards or letters
* Social events for the group
* Inclusion in Service’s Team Events – such as Christmas Lunch – to demonstrate they are part of the team
* Training and development opportunities
* Progression to formal volunteer roles

How this is managed will be at the local discretion of your project sponsor, and will depend what type of working together activity you are undertaking, but it is recommended that this is considered and agreed prior to any activity taking place.

## Inviting Participants

Once you feel confident you have addressed the areas set on in Section 1, and planned the most appropriate working together exercise as a result, you will want to start inviting people to take part.

You may already have existing networks for which to invite people, but remember it is important to ensure you offer this opportunity to as many people as possible who may be impacted by your potential decision / action to take part, so it may be important to explore additional networks/ options with other colleagues (e.g., any established service user or carer groups or forums, and via any contacts in local community organisations, such as faith groups or grassroots organisations).

When inviting people to participate, you will need to be clear about the purpose and scope of their involvement.

Have you designed an invitation or briefing note to your stakeholders which outlines the purpose of the exercise, and their scope for influencing the outcome?

As above, a Privacy note may also be required

Ensure this invitation considers accessibility and format requirements for the people you are working with - e.g., translation or easy read requirements.

Have you considered more than one methodology for working with your stakeholders to ensure you get a wide range of experiences and voices, when inviting people to get involved?

E.g., An anonymous survey, as well as an in person event. Verbal vs. written responses.

## Arranging a Working Together event

### In Person or Virtual Event?

You will want to consider if your event should be offered in-person, virtually, or both.

The following questions will support you to plan your event:

What is the preferred method of the people you are working with?

Will you reach more people online, in-person or through a mixed 'hybrid' approach?

Do you have any budget restraints which impact your ability to meet in-person?

Will you be able to engage more meaningfully with people in-person or online?

How will you ensure everyone can contribute online vs. in-person?

Are there any barriers to people participating online / in-person and are you able to mitigate these?

### Accessibility and practical matters

Regardless of whether meetings are in-person or online, it is important to ensure that everyone has access to the relevant information and support that will support them to work with us, as equal partners where possible. Points to consider:

Have I given people enough notice to participate?

A minimum of 4 weeks is recommended, but this also needs to be practical and built into your project timescales. Too much notice can also be challenging for people so it is a balancing act.

Do I know / have I asked the participants what they need before, during and after the meeting to support their participation and can these needs be met?

This could relate to mobility and access, communication methods, ability to access materials, need for advocacy support or dietary requirements

What additional resources might be needed to help people understand and meaningfully contribute to the event?

e.g., cards that people raise when they do not understand or need the speaker to slow down

What information do I need to send in advance?

This may include anything relevant to the decisions being taken, the venue, technology, accessibility, hearing loops etc. Some participants may benefit from a pre-briefing to maximise their input

Has information been produced in a format that is clear and accessible for all?

You may need to build in time and resource to provide alternative formats or it may be appropiate to consider providing advocacy support to enable participation.

When does information need to be sent?

People may need time to absorb and understand information to be able to participate meaningfully. Information should be provided at least a week in advance

Have you considered the needs of individuals for breaks and time out?

This may be particularly relevant for longer or more complex meetings. Refreshments may be needed

#### Accessibility Considerations

Additional considerations for your event include:

Physical in-person events:

* How far is the venue from the participants, and are there good public transport links?
* Is there disabled parking available, and how many spaces?
* Is there disabled access to the building and the event, such as ramps and lifts?
* Is there a quiet room, if required?
* Are the toilets accessible?
* Is the room laid out in an accessible and supportive way? (e.g., lights, size of the room)
* Are refreshments required and are there any dietary requirements?

For online events:

* What is IT literacy of your group, ensuring everyone has a fair opportunity to join if they wish to? Do people need training or support?
* Do people have the right equipment to access the meeting?
* How you will offer additional support to individuals should they require it?
* How will you manage privacy issues regarding individual’s names and email addresses?

Accessibility of the materials

* Have you worked and agreed with your group / individuals what format they would like to receive information / materials in that will be most helpful to them?
* Are your materials available in easy read or within other helpful formats such as large print, plain text and images / videos?
* Are your materials adapted to support individuals with colour blindness?
* Have you asked if anyone has any additional requirements, such as dyslexia, and arranged for additional support and time for such individuals to get involved?

Accessibility of verbal communication

* Do you have access to language translators if required, ensuring any non-English speakers (or for whom English is not their first language) have the opportunity to take part in the exercise?
* Do you have access to sign language interpreters, including the use of Makaton, if required?

#### Accessibility options

Listed below are some example population groups that may have been less likely to be engaged with in the past due to assumptions about their ability / capacity or marginalization, and some potential options or advice around how to support them. Please note, this list is not exhaustive.

* Older people and those with dementia
  + Potential option – [Dementia Care Mapping](https://www.bradford.ac.uk/dementia/training-consultancy/dcm/)
* Those with poor mental health
  + Potential option – [Mind’s Influence and Participation Toolkit](https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/influence-and-participation-toolkit/)
* Learning Disability
  + Potential option – [Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust Co-production Panel](https://suffolkordinarylives.co.uk/about-us/working-co-production/)
* Homeless population
  + [Support from Homeless Link (2017)](https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Co-Production_Toolkit_-_Commissioning.pdf)
* Transitioning from children to adult social care services
  + [NICE guidance](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng43/chapter/recommendations#personcentred)

#### Other key considerations

You may also wish to consider the following when planning your event:

* Who will provide the administrative support of the meeting?
* If there is disagreement or an unresolved dispute, is it clear who will be the ultimate decision maker, and has this been agreed by the group?
* Do you and the team have the relevant skills to facilitate meetings?
* Is the group covered by a Terms of Reference, and if not do these need to be created or ground rules established to guide meetings?
* What forms and paperwork might be needed? E.g., briefing papers, copies of the agenda and presentation, event feedback forms.

## Hosting a Working Together event

Creating the right atmosphere of the event is central to supporting constructive and supportive working together events. Here are some top tips to set the right tone from the start:

* **Be approachable** - don't be afraid to give people a bit of insight into you as a person. If this is the first of a series of meetings, it may be worth devoting some time to activities which encourage people to talk informally.
* **Create an atmosphere of equality** - show that you are personally invested in the project and if running the session with colleagues, spread yourself around the room so you are not all grouped together
* **Having contacted people in advance about what they need to access the session** - take a moment to make sure these needs are met and people can fully participate.
* **Establish ground rules or agreements for the way people will conduct themselves and treat each in the session** - Make sure everyone present is involved in this so they sign up to and own what is agreed. Agreements need to be directly linked to the principles of working together (e.g., treating each other with respect, as equals (if this is the case for your working together approach)
* **Particular attention should be given to confidentiality** - It is good practice to have a clear statement on this issue which also covers the safeguarding responsibilities held by professionals
* **Establish the goal of the group and the specific session –** Ensure everyone present is involved in this and understands why they are there and what direction the project is going in
* **Establish the values and purpose of working together –** Using the vision, values and principles outlined within the Working Together Plan
* **Establish shared definitions / meanings –** Don’t assume everyone has the same understanding of a word or phrase. Where possible, work out a shared definition as a group; where this cannot happen, be clear what definitions are being used. Once a definition has been agreed / presented, have it available as a reminder and point of reference for people in each session
* **Be open and honest about the limitations of power and influence –** Be clear about what influence people actually have on the final decision, what can’t be changed and why this is the case

## Providing feedback, reflecting and improving after a working together event

Working together should be a continual process - we need to know how well we are doing it, and whether we could be better (and how). Reflecting on working together events and asking for feedback is key to doing this.

How will you feedback to your participants following your event(s)?

*It is critical that you keep people informed. Relationships you have taken time to build can break down quickly if people feel ignored or left in the dark. Options for keeping people informed include the circulation of any minutes or actions agreed, a ‘you said, together we did’ document or poster, follow up events to share the outcome of their contributions or views, letters, emails or phone calls to each participant outlining what has happened since you last met. If there are delays or issues with progressing the project, let your group know and the reasons behind this.*

How will you ask participants to feedback their own experience of the working together event(s)/ work?

Complete feedback forms or similar, explaining to people why feedback is important to helping you to learn and improve

What will you do with this feedback?

For example, where does it need to go? Who will see if? How will you learn from it? How will it be used to inform future practice? Where will it be stored?

Have you and the team completed a debrief and agreed how to share any learning with your wider team and directorate?

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