

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Policy and Oversight Board

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Subject: Update on Finance & Corporate Services Co-Production Activities

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SUMMARY

H&F sees co-production as an important way to make change happen, removing the barriers that prevent our residents from having great lives. Co-production gives life to our commitment to 'Doing things with residents not to them' and is a core council value. The council defines coproduction in its internal guidance to staff as: 'Co-production means residents and decision makers are working together in an active way to plan, design, and review policy and services to get rid of the barriers we face.'

This is a commitment to **all** our residents. Whilst H&F started locally with disabled residents, as our Disabled People's Commission found that disabled people were the furthest away from decision-making, our co-production approach now includes a mix of all residents including those across all protected groups. We know why co-production is important to how we work, and how we can make it happen in a way that more residents make contributions and decisions.

There is a strong and rich history of working in this way to develop new policy, change services and the borough so residents' lives are improved. The council's passion and approach has been widely recognised both locally, nationally, and in Europe.

This report briefly sets out the progress made to date on the council's commitment to co-production with residents within Finance and Corporate Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Committee to note and endorse the report.

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how your work on co-production aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	By co-producing with residents, the Council ensures that the community's diverse needs are met, fostering a more inclusive and prosperous environment.
Creating a compassionate council	The council's commitment to co-production demonstrates its dedication to compassion and inclusivity. These efforts show the council's focus on understanding and addressing the challenges faced by its residents, thereby creating a more compassionate and supportive community.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Central to the report is the principle of co-production, where residents and decision-makers work together to design and implement policies and services. This collaborative approach ensures that residents have a direct say in the decisions that affect their lives.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	By involving residents in the design and evaluation of services, the council can create more effective and efficient solutions that better meet the community's needs.
Taking pride in H&F	The council's co-production initiatives have received recognition both locally and internationally, showcasing the borough's commitment to inclusive and innovative governance. These achievements reflect the council's pride in its community and its efforts to create a positive and inclusive environment.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	The co-production approach ensures that environmental strategies are inclusive and consider the needs of all residents.

Background

1. H&F Council committed to co-production with disabled residents in December 2017 following the 'Nothing about Disabled people Without Disabled people' report from the Disabled People's Commission (DPC). The report called for a

'new way of working' with residents that would transform local decision making by co-producing policies and services with the community.

2. The council has provided staff with a coproduction checklist to inform them how to engage residents to coproduce. It sets out a definition of coproduction, why coproduction is important, how to find residents, get senior support with coproduction, fund coproduction, and find out what activity is already underway. It also sets out training, identifying barriers, setting up resident groups, making information accessible, and measuring and sharing success. Our external website highlights that there is not a widely and commonly shared definition of coproduction for all. It means many different things in different sectors and is practically implemented in different ways for different projects. This must translate into how we develop specifications.
3. Following a recommendation from the Policy & Oversight Board, each department will report annually to its Policy & Accountability Committee setting out its co-production work with residents. This is the first report for Finance & Corporate Services.

SERVICE CO-PRODUCTION SUMMARIES

1. Corporate Co-production

The co-production team are based in Finance & Corporate services which reflects that it's work is cross-council and enables the team to work across the council in a more strategic way, supporting services to deliver against the objective. The team is headed up by the strategic lead for co-production and is supported by the co-production officer and a support officer. It's extremely important that the team are based in corporate services as they also have a strong working relationship with the co-production co-ordinator linked to the Resident Experience & Access programme (REAP) within Resident Services.

There are now seven issue focused resident led co-production groups, two of these are in Finance & Corporate Services, the Digital Accessibility Group and Co-production Matters which is the board which manages overall co-production activity across the Council and reports separately. Each group is co-chaired by a resident and a councillor or senior officer. Each group has a Terms of Reference, co-produced with group members setting out its remit, ways of working and member role and responsibilities.

2. Resident Services, Digital Accessibility Group

The Digital Accessibility Group (DAG) consists of 12 borough residents and 18 council officers working in co-production to improve digital inclusion in Hammersmith & Fulham. The group focuses on their lived experience of

accessing services or information online and works with officers to identify barriers to accessing services digitally, like language, or compatibility with assistive technology. The group offers a constructive critique of web pages and forms and considers solutions to create a more digitally accessible borough.

The DAG includes residents that are disabled and non-disabled. The participants reflect a wide variation of age, ability and device use, all of whom either live or work in the borough. The DAG also includes officers working in Resident Services, Digital Services, Communications, Housing and Adult Social Care as well as elected members. The two parts of the group are working in co-production; that is residents have the same power as council officers to influence the design and refinement of services. This forms part of the council's mandate to work with residents, not do things to them.

Key successes to date

The DAG has accomplished several key initiatives to enhance digital inclusion. Their work includes developing a Digital Inclusion Strategy and establishing resident evaluation measurements through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). They have also implemented Signposting Tools Evaluation and improved the accessibility of critical web pages on the H&F website. These pages cover important services such as Council Tax, Permits, Waste and Recycling, Accessible Transport, and Report It pages.

Additionally, the DAG has conducted a review of the LBHF homepage and enhanced accessibility for services related to Waste Collection, Crisis Prevention, Pest Control, and Business Support. The DAG is currently co-producing the council tax general enquiry digital form, which has gone through several iterations. Their efforts ensure that digital resources are accessible and inclusive for all residents.

Future plans

- Digital Signposting
The DAG is working in co-production with members of the Signposting Alliance, which includes Council officers and third-sector organisations, to design and implement the newly acquired Signposting tool from Ayup Signposting Agency.
- Digital Strategy Implementation
The DAG will play a pivotal role in its implementation and delivery.
- LBHF Website Accessibility Improvements
The ongoing work involves a thorough review and enhancement of numerous pages on the council's website to ensure they are accessible. This includes revising and optimising the various forms available on these pages to improve user experience.

- REAP Reignite

We now have approval for the REAP Reignite proposition and our priority is to develop a business case for the technical solutions to deliver the programme. As part of this work, we have been undertaking early market engagement activities with a wide range of suppliers and have been discussing with them our co-production approach and hearing about work they have already produced with other customers. We will be incorporating this as a requirement in our specification when we go out to procurement for the required solutions.

- User Research

We want to augment the co-production approach with a variety of user research methodologies, including online surveys and focus groups, that will allow us to engage with a larger pool of residents to understand their lived experience of our digital services and information to allow us to refine and iterate our offer.

3. Cost of Living Programme

Launched in October 2021 Household Support Fund (HSF) allocated funding that would form part of council's Cost of Living (COL) response. Intended to support resident's experiencing financial crisis, the COL programme has utilised support both across the organisation and externally, to amplify what is already available.

The HSF grant allocations aimed to enhance community-based support in areas of need. A boroughwide, coproduced response was developed through the strategic formation of a Cost of Living (CoL) Alliance, leveraging the expertise and knowledge of our voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners about our H&F communities.

By adopting this innovative approach to maximise the use of funding, networked organisations have significantly enhanced their ability to advocate for and to assist residents, amplifying the reach of available support.

COL Schemes – contributions and impact

Led by the Cabinet Member Lead for Cost of living, the Alliance has helped coproduce a range of schemes intended to address key socioeconomic and systemic drivers of hardship: food insecurity, fuel poverty, debt, and financial exclusion. Collaboration and partnership have been central to the way in which we have worked with our VCS partners. Examples include creating referral pathways for residents to obtain food and fuel vouchers through various VCS community-based contact points, the Cost of Living (CoL) webpage, and the CoL Advice Line.

In 2023/24 the COL Alliance coproduced the provision a small amount of funding to community organisations to host Warm Welcome sessions, located at areas of higher need and used by 2790 residents. Our partners were instrumental in ensuring that COL support met the needs of our residents. Winter Ready Homes (2023/24) our home energy efficiency offer, helped 1854 residents install small, energy saving measures to help reduce energy bills. Delivery of the Winter Support Fund, a small grant scheme for the VCS, and the annual Cost of Living (CoL) booklet, were all shaped and informed by the contributions and insights of our VCS partners.

Within the broader COL Programme, the council has collaborated closely with the VCS in the operational delivery of various schemes. Specialist debt advice and support services were commissioned to assist residents facing significant utility, housing rent, and council tax arrears through referrals. The development and implementation of our Crisis Prevention Fund was informed by insights provided by our VCS partners. This is an application-based crisis support scheme, supported by H&F Foodbank and which helps their beneficiaries submit applications for assistance.

H&F Community Compass

A key priority for the COL Alliance was to focus on preventative, upstream approaches by promoting early intervention. Providing the right help before individuals reach crisis point and could significantly help reduce demand on acute services, avoiding an escalation or deterioration in circumstances. Digital signposting helps to provide reliable information and can empower both small and large voluntary and community organisations to offer early support to residents. The pioneering H&F Community Compass digital signposting platform, a co-produced initiative, will facilitate easy access to service information and enhance the visibility of VCS partners' work. The Alliance Signposting Advisory Group, which oversees this project, includes members from both the VCS and disabled residents. This borough-wide community resource exemplifies the council's commitment to collaborating with our communities and coproduction values.

4. People & Talent

People & Talent work alongside our Strategic Co-Production team in collaboratively supporting delivery of several initiatives to help remove barriers, the following is an overview of some of those initiatives:

Disability, Equity and Inclusion to all H&F staff (2-year roll out)

Stage 1 aims to educate and increase knowledge, skills and understanding.

Stage 2 is designed to be a reflective session to reflect, embed and apply the

learning from Stage 1. Designed in conjunction with Inclusion London and key stakeholder, the training will provide staff with the key principles to disability inclusion and equality based on the Social Model of Disability as key approach for inclusion and embedding the learning from Stage 1 through discussion and reflection on the social model 'removal of barriers' approach to inclusion and its impact. Exploration of different potential barriers and ways we can reduce/remove them, including top tips on how to approach conversations about access and adjustments. Applying the knowledge through 'real life' case studies based on staff testimony and action planning to embed the approach.

Other training

Alongside the Disability, Equity and Co-Production Training, People and Talent facilitate 'manager essentials' training on absence management and which incorporates modules on reasonable adjustments and complements the Disability, Equity and Co-Production training programme. People & Talent are currently consulting on refreshed policies for absence management, reasonable adjustments, carer's leave, flexible working and the introduction to wellbeing passports and training will be developed to support the roll out of these policies once finalised.

The Council's mandatory inclusive recruitment training includes learning on inclusive recruitment campaigns and People & Talent have developed an EDI dashboard to help us monitor campaigns from application through to onboarding.

The Council's Learning Zone provides a comprehensive suite of online learning modules which are available for all staff and are aimed at raising awareness of equalities across all protected characteristics.

Events

Under the umbrella of Equality, diversity and inclusion there have been several events and Wellbeing Wednesdays throughout the year with a focus on raising awareness of Disability – themes include 'autism & neurodiversity, dementia, sickle-cell, mental health and co-production.

Share not Declare

People & Talent are collaborating with the Disability Equity Network on a campaign to encourage staff to 'share not declare' improve on our ratio of staff declaring if they have disabilities.

EDI Board

The Council's next EDI Board will focus on the work that the Disability Equity Network and People & Talent are doing and will be doing to further enhance

awareness of the support that is available for staff and the Council is applying for 'Level 3, Disability Leader'.

Guidance for co-production reimbursement

People & Talent have also been leading on the development and issue of the new guidance for reimbursement to residents who are actively supporting the Council with co-production activities.

Specialist workplace adjustments

The Council currently partners with Microlink, a specialist workplace adjustment provider that helps mitigate the impact of any health condition or Disability at work, ensuring that staff have the support they need to work without additional barriers to carrying out their role. Additionally, there is collaboration with Digital Services both in terms of workplace adjustments and accessibility.

People & Talent are proud of the collaborative approach with our Disability Equity Network and Co-Production and will continue to work closely to further enhance our offers to staff which will in turn benefit residents of the borough.

5. Procurement

The council has successfully engaged residents in coproducing new service models, shaping specifications for its procurement activities for services or works, involved resident representatives in evaluation of specific resident questions, and in ensuring some of our contracts run as they should. Successful coproduction has been seen at different stages ahead of and during procurement processes:

- Use of the coproduction checklist by commissioners or commercial leads when developing new business case for supplies, services, and/or works, ahead of procurement strategy with new service models for delivery tested and then reflected in the service specification.
- Coproduced design for buildings which are reflected in architects plans and inform construction contract specifications such as the Civic Campus.
- Coproduction at evaluation stage, where possible under the regulations, focussing on a specific question relevant to resident experience of a contract. Examples include Early Intervention for Children and Young People, Repairs, and Public Health Substance Misuse.
- Coproduction of service models through market engagement. As part of its duties under the Procurement Act 2023, public sector authorities are encouraged to undertake pre-market engagement activities to inform and

design procurement. This provides further opportunity for H&F to build on its current co-production by seeking feedback from the market, including local businesses, on its proposed procurement approach, specification, and any potential barriers to local and/or Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

- Coproduced contract management with residents directly involved in ensuring suppliers understand what works and what needs to improve. An example of this is our young inspector programme for semi-independent living.