

**MARCH 2024**



**Adult Social Care and Prevention**

# **Working Together Plan**

**Our approach to consultation,  
engagement, co-design, and  
co-production**

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**Front cover image:** Our Community Connectors – find out more about their work on page 12!

## How has this plan been made?

This plan has been shaped by people who came to co-design workshops we held in January 2024 and by people who filled out activity packs. People who access adult social services, carers, council colleagues, voluntary sector colleagues and volunteers have helped make this plan.

### **Thank you to those who came to our workshops and filled out activity packs to shape the plan:**

Alistair C, Andrea, Andrea M, Angie S, Annette W, Betty, Billy R, Bob S, Chatty, Clare L, Daryll A, Dorothea, El B, Emily Y, Emma B, Geof E, Jacqui M, Jay C, Jennifer T, Jola B, Jon T, Julia M, Julie I, June M, Karen I, Kerry P, Kristy N, Laura C, Louise M, Louise T, L Smith, Maria F, Mariana O, Matthew, Michael F, Michael W, Nadeem A, Neil Q, Pauline A, Pauline S, Peter M, Rachel E, Richard W, Sally H, Sandra R, Sarah D, Sarah L, Simon L, Stacey C, Stewart C, Tapiwa S, Tara F, Vicki E, Vicki S, Vivienne, Wayne, Zabeen A and others who wished to remain anonymous.

### **The following organisations were represented:**

Autism Matters Newcastle, Disability North, Elders Council, Healthwatch, KD Care Services, Livability, Newcastle City Council, Newcastle GP Services, NHS, PROPS, Search Newcastle, Skills for People, Tyne Group, Visiting Angels.

## Introduction

Welcome to the Adult Social Care and Prevention Working Together Plan. This Plan sets out how the Council and local people will work together to make sure everyone is supported to live their best lives in our city.

In Newcastle, everyone should be able to have happy, comfortable, and safe lives with the chance to do the things we care about.

Like the rest of the Council, Adult Social Care and Prevention is facing financial pressure and increasing demand for services, so we need to think differently about how we work.

Stories and research, both from Newcastle and across the Country, shows that sharing power and working together with people who access services helps make services that work well for everyone.

The plan explains why working together is important, our values for working together, and how we will make this happen.

In this Plan you will find real examples of work we have already done, work that is ongoing, and work that we want to do together in the future.

We really value the voice, views, and wisdom of the people we serve, and this plan will take us ever closer to a place where those ideas and feedback shape everything that we do.

It is also important that we work well with our wonderful partner organisations, who play a role in championing the voices of people accessing services.

We would like to thank everyone who has generously given their time and energy to developing this plan, and everyone who will help make it happen.

# Part one: what is our approach?

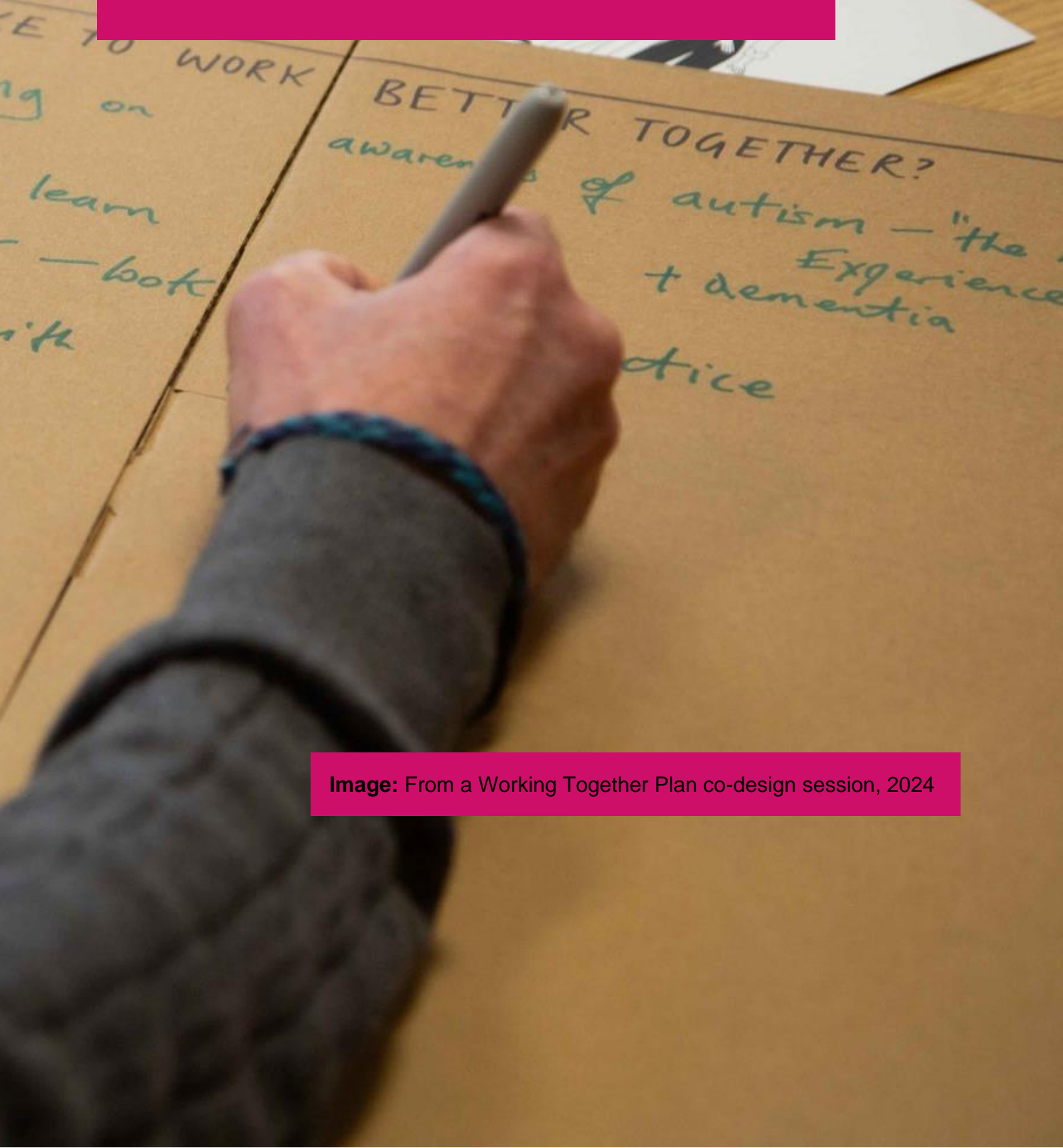


Image: From a Working Together Plan co-design session, 2024

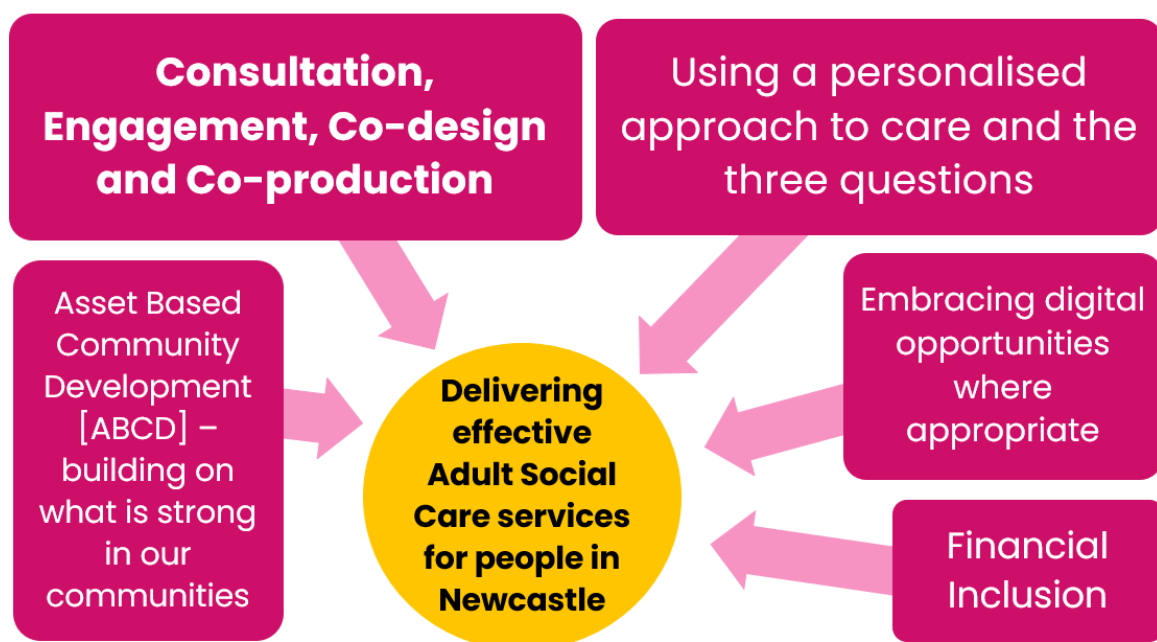
## What is Adult Social Care and Prevention

Adult Social Care and Prevention is part of Newcastle City Council. We look after social care support and information for adults living in the city.

All our teams work together to ensure adults in the city are safe, supported, and can live a fulfilling independent life, while preventing, reducing, and delaying need. Through our focus on building people's assets, we work closely with partners to look at a person in their whole context.

Where people already have needs that they require support with, we seek to help them regain independence and control through a variety of services.

We are moving towards more of a personalised approach to care, as well as focusing on an Asset Based Community Development model of working. This means that we look at what is good in our communities and how we can build upon this and connect groups of people and resources.



For more information of what we do, look at our Local Account, [bit.ly/ASCLocalAccount](https://bit.ly/ASCLocalAccount) and our Directorate Plan, [bit.ly/ASCPDirectoratePlan](https://bit.ly/ASCPDirectoratePlan).



## Why is doing more participation important?

Participation is important because it helps us to provide care, support, and information that most closely offers what local people want. When people are involved in shaping services, those services are more likely to offer what will make the most positive difference to people's lives.

There is already some great participation happening across Adult Social Care and Prevention, and we have put examples in this Plan, but we want to do more. Participation can be with individuals, for example when co-producing care plans, or with groups of people to improve services. We show examples of both types.

A planned approach to how we do different types of participation will give our colleagues confidence to do more of this. It will make it easier for people to access our services and to get involved in designing them.

When we were making this plan, some people told us that the Council doesn't always communicate clearly or in an accessible way. This shows that we must work on how we 'inform' people and partner organisations about what we provide and how they can get involved. We need to ask what methods of communication work best for everyone and be flexible and multi-modal with the ways we offer information.

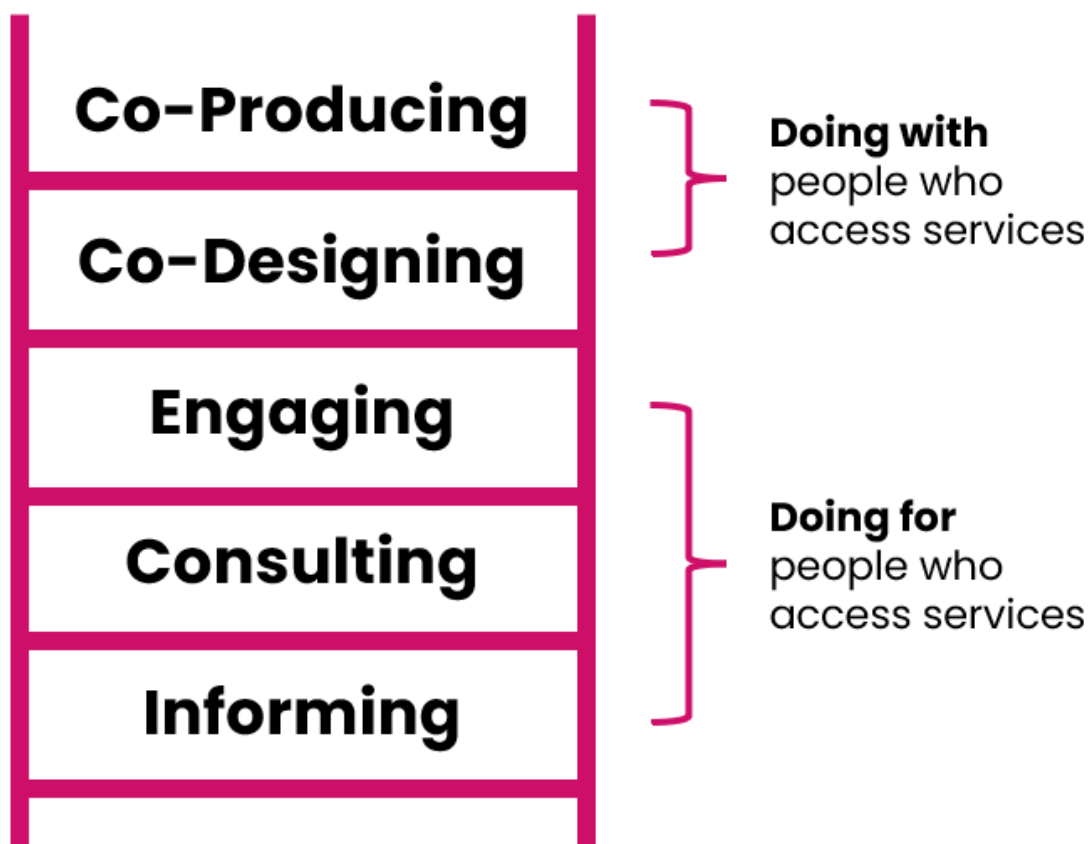


**Image:** Newcastle Carers Conference, 2023

## What types of participation are there?

Participation is how we involve people who access services in our work. It can mean lots of different things to different people. There are different ways to define participation, and different ways to do it depending on the situation.

We have chosen to use the [Think Local, Act Personal](#) 'Ladder of Participation'. This sets out the different types of participation as:



Starting at the bottom, **Informing** is when people who deliver services tell people who access them about the services and explain how they work. [Adapted from [Think Local, Act Personal](#)]



**Consultation** is giving people a say in decisions that affect them before we change how we deliver services.

**Working Together story: mental health supported living ‘step up step down’ consultation.**

Service area: **Commissioning and Procurement**

Participation type: **Consultation to improve services**



**“Without a forum for the people supported to share their views and experience we wouldn’t have been able to capture this vital information and take this forward.”**

As part of creating a new contract for a supported living service, people accessing the current service were consulted on their experiences. People’s experience of feeling stigma around the place they lived, due to how the building was branded on the outside, led to a change in the contact going forwards.

**Engagement** is when we work together with groups of people to tackle issues affecting services they access or areas they live in. As part of this, we build relationships between the Council and our local communities to support community action.

Working Together story: **Neighbourhood Networks**  
Service area: **Community Wellbeing**  
Participation type: **Engagement to improve services**



“It was FAB! Nothing beats proper human connection. Every single person I spoke to had something to say, can’t wait for the next one!”

As part of our Newcastle Neighbourhoods approach, we have been working alongside others to find and build on the assets and connections that could support health and wellbeing. Our networks are open to everyone living, working, or volunteering in that area and they offer space and time for people to come together and connect and learn from others.

To learn more about Neighbourhood Networks and sign up to their mailing list, email [newcastleneighbourhoods@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:newcastleneighbourhoods@newcastle.gov.uk).

**Co-design** is when people who access services are involved in designing those services. They have genuine influence but are not involved in 'seeing it through'. [Adapted from [Think Local, Act Personal](#)]

Working Together story: **Residents meetings at Connie Lewcock Resource Centre**

Service area: **Care Services**

Participation type: **Co-Design with individuals**



**“It is a relaxed environment when holding residents’ meetings,” they “involve everyone in discussions” and the meetings “allow us to have our say”.**

People are asked how they feel about the time they spend at Connie Lewcock. This includes what they think about the food and designing the activities for the next week. It also checks that health and safety procedures are being followed and that people are getting access to physiotherapy to help them regain their independence.



**Co-production** is an equal relationship between people accessing support and the people delivering services. They work together, from design to delivery. Decision-making about policies, and decisions about the best way to deliver services is fully shared. [Adapted from [Think Local, Act Personal](#)]

Working Together story: **Community Connectors**  
Service area: **Learning Disability and Autism**  
Participation Type: **Co-Production with individuals**



**The Peer Community Connectors have said:** "I have really enjoyed getting people connected and helping improve their independence by breaking down goals into manageable steps" **and** "I have been able to use my lived experience of being autistic to help people through their own struggles."

**People accessing support have said:** "It's been really good for my confidence, and I am not as worried about coming here or leaving the house to walk here." **and** "I feel happy when I come here, it's relaxed, and I feel life is better now."

Skills for People and Newcastle City Council have been working together to deliver support for local people with a learning disability and/or autism (aged 18+) who require a relatively low level of support. Skills for People is an organisation based in the East End of Newcastle which supports people with learning disabilities and/or autism and their families.

The Peer Community Connectors, Thomas and Michael, are people with lived experience based at Skills for People. They work with

Community Connectors based at the Council to jointly help people make the most of the support, activities and places available in their community.

By taking a strengths-based approach, the team works together to ensure people are offered a range of tailored opportunities. This means people are not restricted to what can be offered by a personal assistant or day service support, but that they can access a much wider range of supports in their community. By working with the individual and personalising the service to their needs and wants, the Community Connectors team improves life chances and opportunities for people with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism.



## Our vision and values

Across our work, people told us about the values that are important to them when we work together. We have pulled these into the shared values we will use when we participate with people. They relate to our directorate values, as set out in our Directorate Plan on the Council website.



### Trust

**“Show us the results. How have you responded to them? ASK if they meet our needs.”**

Outcomes must be clear so that people can see impact from their input. We also need to be honest about what we can do and explain when and why we can't do something. It is crucial that everyone feels valued, and that there is mutual respect. Everyone must be respectful and understanding of other people's views.



### Clear planning and communication

**“We take time to join up the dots”.**

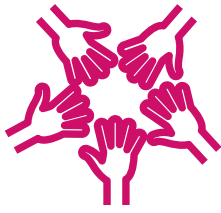
Shared goals need to be set at the beginning of any participation work. People should be clear on the role they are playing in the participation work. We need to value trial and error and accept that participation work, particularly co-design and co-production, can be messy. We need to work with flexibility to include people who access services in decision making.

Communication must be **“culturally informed using a range of styles and approaches”**. We need to check we have understood what people have told us correctly. Information needs to be correct and up to date.



### Active listening

**“All views are valid”**. Everyone has a responsibility to actively listen and a right to be listened to. Making sure that all views are valued, everyone gets a chance to speak and included in decision making. Creating spaces which encourage **“open, challenging conversations.”**



## Inclusivity and recognition of individual and collective strengths

There needs to be a **“want AND a need to work together”**.

Everyone involved needs to feel valued. Making sure everyone feels like they can bring something to the table be it soft skills, lived or learned experience, or technical skills. People are more than their label as a ‘service-user’ or ‘council officer’ or ‘carer’. It is important that we respect the views of others.

We must try and remove power imbalance. We need to be compassionate and have empathy, focusing on what is strong not what is wrong.



## Including seldom heard voices

We need to work on reaching out to and including people from seldom-heard groups. We need to be inclusive in how we communicate and invite people to work alongside us. We need to be diversity aware and be welcoming to help people feel included.



## Meaning and Enjoyment

**“Being curious and enjoyment of the process”**. When we do it well, participation is enjoyable and exciting. We all need to work towards a shared vision. We need to make sure that our outcomes are meaningful.

Everyone involved needs to take ownership and invest care into the project. It is important to understand the context of the project, people, and places we are working with.



# Part two: what are the steps we will take to get there?

What matters to me when we work together?



PLAN:  
TASK - DISTRIBUTION - COSTS  
FAIRNESS - DELIVERY - TIME  
CELEBRATE REFUGEE WEEK.

WORKING WITH OTHERS  
EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING  
NEEDS OF 'SERVICE USER'...  
A PERSON: TREATING HOLISTICALLY  
FULL CONTEXT: DILIGENT.  
TO HELP WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT.

VOLUNTEER - POLITICAL ALLY  
WAYS OF WORKING SUPPORT  
HONEST REFLECTION OF STRENGTHS/  
LIMITATIONS/IMPROVEMENT.  
TRIAL + ERROR ... REFLEXIVE.

Image: From a Working Together Plan co-design session, 2024



## Working Together story: **awarding Organisations of Sanctuary panels**

Service area: **Active Inclusion**

Participation type: **Engagement to improve services**



**“I have been involved in the Newcastle City of Sanctuary... I have been able to share my experiences... I feel respected and was listened to.”**

Sanctuary Awards celebrate organisations and institutions who go above and beyond to welcome people seeking sanctuary – asylum seekers and refugees. Each Sanctuary Application is appraised by a panel which includes at least one person with lived experience of migration and asylum. The panel provides feedback and recommendations and ultimately decides if the application is successful and awarded.

Read more about our City of Sanctuary strategy here:

[bit.ly/NCCSanctuaryStrategy](https://bit.ly/NCCSanctuaryStrategy)

## What could decision making look like?

People who came to the sessions and those who filled in the activity packs thought that if we did more participation, **our services could look like...**

We would value lived experience by including the voice / participation in recruitment, commissioning services and decision making.

Relationships would be reciprocal:  
**“I am not always a ‘recipient’! I have agency too!”**

We would **“have informal sessions where people feel comfortable.”**

Digital by default isn't for everyone! We would be **“multi-modal.”**

We would have **“candid, good, meaningful consultations.”**

Our work would be based on strong relationships that recognise everybody's voice, goals, and aspirations.

**“Happy people!”**

**“You said so we ALL did.”**

The directorate would be open and honest about what we can (and cannot!) do.

We would capture what is not working from people who it isn't working for and be proactive about getting feedback at all stages of someone's journey accessing our services. People would be listened to and valued.

We would work in a place-based way, valuing local and community knowledge. **“If council staff could come and visit us, this could be at [PARTNER ORGANISATIONS] [we would have] better direct contact.”**

We would think very carefully about how we phrase things and the language we use, making sure we always work with an inclusive approach.



## Good participation means we need to...

... be **creative** with the way we use resources.

We need to have a better cross-council and cross-organisation understanding of resources available. We need to take time to understand the ways we could use resources to meet changing needs.

... make sure we work to **involve seldom heard voices**.

Groups who take part in shaping services need to reflect Newcastle's diverse population. The same people often take part in participation work every time. We will work to involve a diverse range of people in participation work.

... improve our **connectivity** and cross-organisational working.

We need to share best practice and information across organisations. We need more “**small, accessible meetings in community venues and informal chats over tea / coffee**”. The Civic Centre can be a “**daunting**” place and holding in-person events in community settings make them seem more “**friendly and available**”.

... improve participation **training** for staff and use participation in recruitment of new staff.

We should push to involve people who access our services in recruitment, especially when we hire senior positions such as Directors and Heads of Service. We need to offer training to staff to give them the confidence to embed participation in their day-to-day work.

... make sure we are working **accessibly**.

The language we use needs to be clear, in Plain English and follow accessible communications guidelines. We need to be clear that information can be requested in different formats and languages. We need to avoid using jargon and acronyms. We must make sure we are offering a range of ways to get involved in participation work. When required, we should create personalised ways for participants to get involved. Online and offline, real time, and non-real-time options need to be available.

... make sure we are being **honest** and **accountable** in our actions and outcomes.

**“People with lived experience should be included in every step of the way. A deadline for any plans should be set and a follow up meeting arranged to see how plans have gone”.** We need to be accountable for the actions we promise to take. We need to manage expectations and be realistic about what we can do.

... work to **share power and control.**

**“Really listen to what is important to people – not what fits to council plans”.** We need to acknowledge and challenge power imbalances. We need to create safe spaces for feedback and to address power imbalances. On an individual level, encouraging people to consider Direct Payments, if right for them, helps people have control over their care.

... recognise and **celebrate lived experience.**

**“Don’t have an agenda before you start to sway people in the direction you want them to go.”** There are concerns we approach people with a ‘finished product’ and only ask for feedback as a ‘tick-box exercise’. Instead of making assumptions about what people want, we must work with people who access services. Making more examples and personal stories about services is helpful.

... **communicate clearly.**

There needs to be more clarity of information about services available to support residents of Newcastle. Our prevention website [informationnow.org.uk](http://informationnow.org.uk) is a great resource – but we must improve on the offline methods of communication we use as well. This includes developing a better Front Door service. Before embarking on co-design and co-production, we need to get better at informing.

A person wearing a purple hoodie is seated at a light-colored wooden table. Their hands are visible, resting on the table. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a blue wall. A large pink rectangular box is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing white text.

# Part three: How will we know when we are getting it right?

**Image:** From a Working Together Plan co-design session, 2024

Working Together story: **Carers Conference**

Service area: **Prevention**

Participation type: **Engagement to improve services**



The best part of the day was “[talking with] carers and hearing first-hand what they need, what could be better and what's working well. Crucial to hear it directly from carers and be led by them.”

The conference helped determine how carers in the city are engaged with. It looked at areas of good practice, and areas for improvement. It lays the foundations for a carers strategy for the city and to improve outcomes for unpaid carers.

## How will we know we are getting it right?

We will know we are participating better when local people tell us they have a strong voice in shaping local services, we hear from a diverse range of people, and many local people actively engage in participation opportunities.

We will measure this through:

- Collecting examples and personal stories
- Evaluating project work against our values
- Direct feedback and conversations during longer-term participation work, such as during co-production.
- Compliments and complaints
- Monitoring people who access our services' satisfaction in:
  - How easy they feel it is to access information.
  - How much involvement they feel they have in decisions made about their care.

We will get this right by embedding our values in our participation approach.



### Trust

To build trust, we must be clear about why we are doing participation work and how information will be used. When we are co-designing and co-producing, we will take the time to build trust between participants and

understand everyone's motivation for being there.

We will ensure we are publishing the outcomes from our participation work and sharing them directly with people that have been involved. We must also say when and why some actions cannot be taken.



### Clear planning and communications

We will give people plenty of time to respond to consultation or get involved with co-design and co-production work so they can prepare. We will build this into project timeframes.



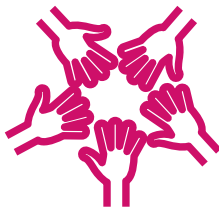
When we co-produce, everyone working on the project must have input and agree to the plan, outcomes, and timelines.

We will ask people how they prefer to communicate and get involved and accommodate everyone's access needs.



## Active listening

We need to make sure that participation work allows participants to offer their opinions in a free form, rather than prescriptive way. If we are co-designing and co-producing, we must make sure people with lived experience are initiating projects based on what matters to them. We need to introduce the principles of active listening to everyone working together on projects and offer training where appropriate.



## Inclusivity and recognition of individual and collective strengths

We must work with appreciation and empathy. Being inspired by others who have overcome adversity but recognising for many, conversations around Adult Social Care, especially their own experiences, may be emotional and draining. Have you built sufficient time into your project for trust and relationship building, as well as aftercare?

When undergoing co-design and particularly co-production work, we need to take we taken significant time to get to know each other and share everyone's experiences, skills, and strengths.

When we are co-producing with people with lived experience, we need to make sure we are paying people both expenses, and for their time.



## Including seldom heard voices

For all participation work, we must think about the specific groups we want to work alongside and ask them the ways for working together that suits them. We need to make sure that we are going to the places that groups tend to visit, such as community hubs, places of worship, and organisations' that work directly with specific groups. This is better than expecting people to come to us.



## Meaning and Enjoyment

Is there a clear point and purpose to the work we are doing, rather than just to 'tick a box'? Have we made this clear to everyone participating? When doing co-design and co-production, we want people to leave the work feeling invigorated and excited about what they have achieved together.

Working Together story: **Homecare ABCD model**

Service area: **Commissioning and Procurement, Social Work**

Participation type: **Co-design with individuals**



Dorothy is 76, registered blind and has anxieties about leaving the house. She lives with her husband but has felt increasingly disconnected from others. Through asking Dorothy what she wants from her care, she expressed a love for dogs but can't care for one. She was connected to 'Wag&Co', a charity who brings dogs round to Dorothy's house for her to spend time with.

We take a person-centred approach to home care with co-designed care plans. This links into our Neighbourhood approach – growing people's strengths and assets in their own communities. We work with providers to ensure that they value people who access services' strengths and what they enjoy and care about.



# Part four: How can you get involved?

**Image:** From a Working Together Plan co-design session, 2024





Here are some ways people who access our services or interact with Adult Social Care and Prevention can work with us to help shape our services.

For online information, guidance and events going on in Newcastle, you can visit [informationnow.org.uk](http://informationnow.org.uk).

We use our website **Let's Talk Newcastle** to highlight consultations that people can get involved with. You can head to [www.letstalknewcastle.co.uk](http://www.letstalknewcastle.co.uk) to look at current and past consultations held in the city. You can filter Social Care and Support consultations specifically.

If you volunteer or work for an organisation in Newcastle, getting involved with **Neighbourhood Networks** is a great way to learn more about what is going on in your area.

There are many organisations that work with the Council to express the voices of people living in the city. These include:

- **Skills for People**, for people who learning disabilities and/or autism and their families.
- **Healthwatch Newcastle**, who express the views of people who access health and social care services.
- **The Elders' Council** for people who are over the age of 50.
- **Newcastle Carers** which is an organisation which provides support to carers and allows them to be heard.

And many more. For more information on groups in Newcastle, have a look at [www.informationnow.org.uk/organisations](http://www.informationnow.org.uk/organisations).

As we start to do more engagement, co-design, and co-production work, we will share opportunities to get involved directly with people who access our services.

You can also keep up to date on Newcastle City Council's social media accounts or look at our dedicated webpage:

[www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/adults/adult-social-care-strategies-and-plans/adult-social-care](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/adults/adult-social-care-strategies-and-plans/adult-social-care)