Engagement and Co-Production with People with Lived Experience of Prison and Probation:
A synthesis of the evidence base.

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In recent years there has been mounting interest in the role of user engagement and co-production within public services, encouraging more voices to be heard and in doing so to improve service delivery. Whilst not yet as well-established within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) as in other fields such as healthcare,[1] the CJS has placed greater emphasis on engaging, involving, and empowering individuals and communities to shape and influence the services they receive.[2] This has been motivated by an interest in creating the right conditions for calm, constructive environments, characterised by trusting and respectful relationships that enable and reinforce positive change.

User engagement within the CJS has been defined as 'a participatory and collaborative approach between citizen consumers of services, policy makers and professionals to the design, delivery and evaluation of criminal justice policies, services and practices.'[3] Co-production can be regarded as an extension of user engagement, defined as 'the public sector and citizens making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes and improved efficiency'.[4] The aims of co-production have been described as:[5]

- perceiving the people who use services as equal partners with something valuable to give,
- breaking down barriers between people with lived experience and professionals,
- building on people's capabilities,
- developing peer support networks,
- facilitating services to become agents of change, and,
- ultimately, improving service outcomes.

The terms engagement and co-production will be used interchangeably within this article. Also, the term 'people with lived experience' will be used to describe those people who have experience of either spending time previously or currently in prison, or with experience of being on probation through serving a community sentence or a period on licence.

There are many ways in which engagement and co-production can be applied within the CJS as shown in the table below. Whilst there has been significant increase in these sorts of activities, most schemes have been local or ad hoc rather than collective or led at an organisational level.[6]

1. Freeman, L. R., Waldman, M., Storey, J., Williams, M., Griffiths, C., Hopkins, K., Beer, E., Bidmead, L., & Davies, J. (2016). Working towards co-production in rehabilitation and recovery services. *The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and practice, 11,* 197-207.
2. Weaver, B. (2018). Co production, governance and practice: The dynamics and effects of User Voice Prison Councils. *Soc Policy Admin, 53,* 249-264.
3. Weaver, B., & McCulloch, T. (2012). *Co-producing Criminal Justice Executive Summary.* Scottish Government Social Research. www.sccjr.ac.uk.
4. Clinks and Revolving Door Agency. (2016). *A guide to Service user involvement and co-production.*
5. Weaver, B., Lightowler, C., & Moodie, K. (2019). *Inclusive Justice. Co-producing change. A practical guide to service user involvement in community justice.* University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.
6. See footnote 5: Weaver, B., Lightowler, C., & Moodie, K. (2019).

Type of Engagement and Co-production	What does this look like?
Consultation and feedback	Gathering feedback from people with lived experience via questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, workshops, suggestion boxes, complaints procedures etc. Gathering the voice of people with lived experience in this way helps in feeding back what has been heard into service design and delivery.
Forums, councils, or panels	Involves a group of people with lived experience coming together to discuss a topic or policy. This engagement can be used as part of a one-off consultation process or as an ongoing route for hearing the voice of prisoners or people on probation. At some, prisons senior staff may use the council as a means of sharing information or setting out the rationale for different decisions. At other sites, the council is a place for more collaborative working in which prisoners are actively engaged in decision-making processes and reform.[7]
Peer-led work	Involving people with lived experience in the communication, education, and skills development of others; the provision of social, emotional, or practical support provided and received by people with similar experiences; developing supportive relationships with others; or helping to connect, support, and engage people with similar attributes or experiences to them with health and welfare services.
Service design and delivery	Involving people with lived experience in the design and delivery of services or one-off projects.[8]
Recruitment and Governance	Involving people with lived experience in the selection and recruitment of staff and trustees or sitting on the organisation's board or management committee.
Participatory action research, quality assurance and monitoring	Involving people with lived experience in the evaluation and research of services or projects, or supporting quality assurance processes and monitoring of the implementation of services to ensure they meet the needs of users.
User led-organisations	Involvement of organisations (such as User Voice and Unlock) which are led by people with lived experience and intend to access, hear, and act upon the experiences and insights of those with lived experience. These organisations often conduct research and engage in consultancy and advocacy work and create space for the expression of interests and views to diverse audiences.

In this article, we aim to summarise the peer reviewed literature on engagement and co-production within prison and probation settings, as well as in other settings. A thorough literature review was conducted using EBSCO and Google scholar. This article will outline the ways in which engagement and co-production are thought to improve outcomes and explore whether these activities achieve this, as well as to identify some of the reported barriers to engagement and co-production. We will also draw together the evidence on how best to deliver these types of activities, in ways which are most likely to achieve positive outcomes. We can do so with some reliability although more work needs to be done to establish causal links between different types of engagement and better outcomes.

The theory behind engagement and co-production. Why might this practice make a difference?

The intention of engagement and co-production is to provide benefits to everyone involved — to the

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7.   Solomon, E. & Edgar, K. (2004). Having Their Say: The work of prisoner Councils. London: Prison Reform Trust.
8.   Morris, J., & Knight, V. (2018). Co-producing digitally enabled courses that promote desistance in prison and probation settings. Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice.

people subject to prison and probation and their families, to staff across prison and probation and to our partners in different agencies and to the wider public. It is proposed that such engagement supports several different outcomes which are set out below.[9]

1. Desistance from offending and social integration

Involvement in activities that contribute to the well-being of others (such as peer mentoring, peer support or other volunteering activities) can change the way people see themselves, and how others see them, resulting in a shift in identity (towards a pro-social identity) alongside the benefits being delivered to others. There is good evidence that activities that enable people to 'do good' can reduce antisocial and risk-taking behaviour among young people, and some evidence that this can support desistance from crime.[10] Being involved in these activities can also support the development of new social networks and can increase peoples' social capital.[11]

Providing people with opportunities to shape change, drive direction, and improve outcomes can be an important component of supporting desistance. These opportunities also have the capacity to promote civic reintegration, to build trust and respect and can contribute to a sense of social inclusion and community.[12]

2. Promoting citizenship and social justice

Engagement and co-production can be regarded as examples of active citizenship, enabling people to engage with, and have access to, public services and resources.[13] Such activities can promote social cohesion providing equal opportunities for participation and mitigating circumstances that might otherwise permit exclusion or discrimination.

3. Increasing effectiveness, compliance, credibility, and legitimacy

Using the experience and expertise of those with lived experience to inform the development and delivery of services can enhance the credibility, meaning or legitimacy of those services for users, and potentially make them more fit for purpose and more effective.[14] Evidence suggests that engagement can improve the delivery of services both in operational terms but also in relation to outcomes, such as supporting compliance, and perceived improvements in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and confidence.[15]

4. Improving relationships and culture

Co-production can also encourage collaborative practices between people with lived experience and professionals supporting the development of positive relationships.[16] For example, prison councils have been described as a conflict management tool aiding greater understanding between staff and people in prison, through discussion and negotiation.[17] Co-production also sits well within the model of a 'rehabilitative prison', in which the environment, the staff and everyday processes all aim to create the right conditions for calm, for hope and for positive change.[18]

What does the evidence tell us about different methods of engagement and co-production?

Six systematic or narrative reviews relating to engagement and co-production were found.[19] Although not all were related to the CJS they provided helpful sources of learning on the topic. Much of the evidence was qualitative in nature. There was some promising evidence that community engagement and co-production has a positive effect on a range of health

9.   See footnote 5: Weaver, B., Lightowler, C., & Moodie, K. (2019).
10. Intravia, J., Pelletier, E., Wolff, K. T., & Baglivio, M. T. (2017). Community disadvantage, prosocial bonds and juvenile reoffending: A multi-level mediation analysis. Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 15, 240-263.
11. Maruna, S. (2001). *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts reform and rebuild their lives.* Washington DC: American Psychological Association Books.
12. See footnote 3: Weaver, B., & McCulloch, T. (2012).
13. See footnote 3: Weaver, B., & McCulloch, T. (2012).
14. See footnote 3: Weaver, B., & McCulloch, T. (2012).
15. Clinks (2011). *A review of service user involvement in prisons and probation trusts;* Robinson, G., & McNeill, F. (2008). Exploring the dynamics of compliance with community penalties. *Theoretical Criminology, 12,* 431-449.
16. Weaver, B. (2018) Co production, governance, and practice: The dynamics and effects of User Voice Prison Councils. Soc Policy Admin, 53, 249-264
17. See footnote 7: Solomon, E. & Edgar, K. (2004).
18. Mann, R. E., Fitzalan Howard, F., & Tew, J. (2018). What is a rehabilitative prison culture? *Prison Service Journal, 235,* 3-9; Mann, R. (2019). Rehabilitative Culture Part 2: An update on evidence and practice. *Prison Service Journal, 244,* 3- 10.
19. O'Mara-Eves, A., Brunton, G., Oliver, S., Kavanagh, J., Jamal, F., & Thomas, J. (2015). The effectiveness of community engagement in public health interventions for disadvantaged groups: a meta-analysis. BMC Public Health; Lloyd, N., Kenny, A., & Hyett, N. (2021). Evaluating health service outcomes of public involvement in health service design in high-income countries: a systematic review. *BMC Health Services Research, 21,* 364; Boswell, N., & Woods, K. (2021). Facilitators and barriers of co-production of services with children and young people within education, health, and care services. *Educational & Child Psychology, 38,* 41-53; Sicilia, M., Sancino, A., Nabatchi, T., & Guarini, E. (2019). Facilitating Coproduction in Public Services: Management Implications from a Systematic Literature Review. *Public Money & Management, 39,* 233-240; Clifton, J. (2020). ICT-enabled co-production of public services: Barriers and enablers. A systematic review. *Information Policy, I,* 1-24; Rosenberg, D., & Hillborg, H. (2016). Systematizing Knowledge of User Influence – A study of user advisory boards in substance abuse and mental health services. *Social Policy and Administration, 50,* 336-352.

behaviours and psychosocial outcomes. However, as engagement was often part of a wider intervention, it proved difficult to attribute better outcomes to that one element alone, or to determine the magnitude of these improvements due to inadequate descriptions of study design and poor levels of reporting.

Forums, Councils or Panels

We found several research studies on the utility of councils or forums. A survey of English and Welsh prisons found that the voices of people in prison are most often heard through forums such as prisoner councils,[20] which provide a platform to share proposals, review practices and listen to concerns.[21] Studies were largely UK-based and qualitative, although findings from studies that took mixed method approaches, or used a comparison group complemented the qualitative findings. This body of evidence suggested that prison councils and forums were valued by both staff and people in prison. Prison councils can aid the development of mutual and stronger relationships between people with lived experience and professionals.[22] For instance, staff reported that positive engagement with people in prison improved job satisfaction. Those with lived experience spoke of becoming ambassadors for others through their participation, in councils, by creating fairer and safer systems for all, and empowering others also to make positive changes. This encouraged wider participation enabling quieter voices within the population to be heard, and for senior prison staff to understand the impact of policies and areas of concern more fully.

A UK service evaluation found that councils helped build trust between staff and people in prison.[23]

However, there was a mixed picture in terms of any links between the use of prison councils with metrics such as assault rates, complaints, or numbers of adjudications in comparison to similar prisons without such councils — and the research could not isolate the specific impact of prisoner engagement from other influences on these outcomes.

Further research indicates that forums may have the potential to reduce rates of recidivism. An American study explored the effects of Project Safe Neighbourhood (PSN) forums on the rates of recidivism of men on licence with convictions for violence.[24] The aim of the forum was to strengthen connections between people on licence and professionals within the CJS, to promote desistance. The researchers reported that forums (incorporating principles of procedural justice into a wider crime reduction framework) impacted on rates of recidivism. It was found that forum groups effectively lengthened the amount of time a person spent in the community with rearrest rates 30 per cent lower than the comparison group. These positive results were attributed to the characteristics of the forum and improved perceptions of legitimacy.

Peer Led Work

Several theoretical papers propose that peer-led work can aid desistance by providing good role modelling to others, building resilience, supporting people to learn to cope with criminogenic factors, providing hope, connecting people with services, enhancing social capital, and developing more positive and trusting relationships with others.[25]

A number of evaluations of peer-led projects have found peer support to be beneficial for both the person delivering the support and the person receiving the

> Those with lived experience spoke of becoming ambassadors for others through their participation in councils, by creating fairer and safer systems for all, and empowering others also to make positive changes.

20. Levenson, J., & Farrant, F. (2002). Active Citizenship and volunteering by Prisoners. *Probation Journal, 49,* 195-204.
21. See footnote 7: Solomon, E. & Edgar, K. (2004).
22. Weaver, B. (2018). Co production, governance and practice: The dynamics and effects of User Voice Prison Councils. *Soc Policy Admin, 53,* 249-264; Schmidt, B. E. (2013). User Voice and the Prison Council Model: A summary of key findings from an ethnographic exploration of participatory governance in three English prisons. *Prison Service Journal, 209,* 12-17; Schmidt, B. E. (2020). *Democratising Democracy: Reimagining prisoners as active citizens through participatory governance.* Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.
23. Barry, M., Weaver, B., Liddle, M., Schmidt., & Renshaw, J. (2016). *Evaluation of the User Voice Prison and Community Councils. Final Report.* University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.
24. Wallace, D., Papachristos, A.V., Meares, T., & Fagan, J. (2016). Desistance and Legitimacy: The Impact of Offender Notification Meetings on Recidivism among High Risk Offenders. *Justice Quarterly, 33,* 1237– 1264.
25. See Freeman, J. R., et al. (2016); Lenkens, M., Nagelhout, G. E., Schenk, L., Sentse, M., Severiens, S., Engbersen, G. et al. (2021). 'I (really) know what you mean'. Mechanisms of experiential peer support for young people with criminal behaviour: a qualitative study. *Journal of Crime and Justice, 44,* 535-552.

support.[26] Peer support has also been found to reduce reoffending and to improve the quality of life for those released from prisons (although again it is difficult to isolate the influence of the peer mentors from other parts of the service).[27] The Listeners scheme within prisons is probably the most widespread peer-led approach, and there is growing evidence of the positive impacts this can have on those involved in the scheme.[28]

Service Design and Delivery

A small number of qualitative studies relating to the use of engagement and co-production in service design and delivery were found, but very few of these were within the context of the CJS.

Outside of the CJS, one study exploring co-production with vulnerable young people through digital storytelling stressed the importance of mutual learning between professionals and young people.[29] The aim was to make the organisation more responsive to the needs of the young people by giving them the chance to take on the role of educator thereby improving communications within formal childcare meetings and decision-making forums. A similar study echoed these findings — mutual learning and operating within the comfort zones of young people were described as key features in securing young people's involvement.[30]

Research has also been conducted within the prison setting. People with lived experience described

> The participatory approach allowed the development of empathy among the young people and a desire to help other members of their newfound community.

co-producing a UK digitally enabled offending behaviour programme (Timewise) in prison as being a transformative and rehabilitative experience.[31] The study concluded that involving people in prison in this work created legitimacy as well as increased the chances that the user needs were understood and met during programme design.

Further, it was reported in a recent report by HMI Probation that staff surveyed felt positive that engagement and co-production activity led to improvements in service delivery and skill development for those with lived experience.[32]

Participatory Action Research

We could find only a few studies involving people with lived experience in evaluating services or interventions, but these studies do indicate that the involvement of people with lived experience in research can lead both to new knowledge and personal transformation. Studies report a sense of increased agency, self-worth, and confidence for co-researchers.[33]

In an evaluation study of an American prison education program Think Tank (an inside-outside model in which members meet regularly on a voluntary basis to facilitate learning community focused work) it was found that participation provided opportunity for growth, skill development, social capital and facilitated identity transformation.[34] And in a further qualitative study involving young people in prison with care experience,[35]

26. South, J., Bagnall, A., Hulme, C., Woodall, J., Longo, R., Dixey, R., Kinsella, K., Raine, G., Vinall, Collier, K. & Wright, J. (2014). A systematic review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of peer-based interventions to maintain and improve offender health in prison settings. *Health Services and Delivery Research, 2(35).* ISSN 2050-4349; Whyte, B. (2011). Evaluation of the Routes Out of Prison: Final Report. The Wise Group.

27. Pro Bono Economics. (2001). St Giles *Trust's Through the Gates: An Analysis of Economic Impact.*

28. Stone, R. (2016). Desistance and identity repair: Redemption narratives as resistance to stigma. *British Journal of Criminology, 56,* 956-975. Perrin, C., & Blagden, N. (2014). Accumulating meaning, purpose and opportunities to change 'drip by drip': The impact of being a listener in prison. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 20(9)*, 902-920.

29. Heron. G., & Steckly. L. (2020). Digital storytelling using co-production with vulnerable young people. *Journal of social work, 20,* 411-430.

30. Franklin, P., Hossain, R., & Coren, E. (2016). Social media and young people's involvement in social work education. *Social Work Education, 35,* 344-356.

31. See footnote 8: Morris, J., & Knight, V. (2018).

32. HMI Probation. (2019). Service user involvement in the review and improvement of probation services. *Research and Analysis Bulletin, 2019/03.*

33. Haarmans, M., PAR Team (Aaron, Dean, Iain, KT, Lee, Paul, Stefan, Steven), Perkins, E., & Jellicoe-Jones, L. (2020). "It's Us Doing It!" The power of participatory research in prison: A contradiction in terms? – Phase 1. *International journal of Forensic Mental Health, 20,* 238-252.

34. Allred, S. L., Boyd, C., Cotton, T., & Perry, P. (2020). Participatory Evaluation in a Prison Education Program: Meaning & Community Building within Inside-Out Think Tanks. *Corrections: Policy, Practice and Research, 5, 6- 27.*

35. Hartworth, C., Simpson, D., & Attewell, H. (2021). Coproduction, participation and empowerment: A participatory evaluation of a young care leavers project in prison. *Probation Journal, 68*, 107-115.

the research team suggest that co-production and the participatory approach allowed the development of empathy among the young people and a desire to help other members of their newfound community.

Research also supports the use of participatory action research in probation settings. A recent User Voice research study within Leicestershire and Rutland Probation areas reported that both staff and people who used their services recognised the value of having people with lived experience contributing to the design, evaluation, and delivery of services; although all recognised that developing this agenda further would require investment, time and commitment from both users and service providers and commissioners.[36]

Summary of key findings

The small body of evidence we found indicates that there are many potential benefits to engaging with people with lived experience and to collaborate on co-production including:

- enabling voices and enhancing a sense of fairness
- improving relationships amongst peer groups and with professionals
- influencing culture change
- role modelling and reinforcing citizenship
- giving hope and autonomy
- creating opportunities to support processes of desistance
- demonstrating an inclusive and responsive approach in using different methods, channels, and media for different group

What does 'good' look like?

The evidence we have reviewed indicates several factors which are more likely to bring greater success in engagement and co-production activities. These include:

> Responsivity is important; listening to what people want to get involved in, and how, is critical to success.

Clear structure and routines: Taking the necessary steps to prepare and planning to embed activities, having a clear strategy and action plan for developing engagement are more likely to lead to successful outcomes.[37] Providing continuous leadership and promoting opportunities for learning and skill development is important.[38] Clear roles and structures also help establish legitimacy of the activities.

Accessibility: Making sure everyone can contribute is important, as is ensuring diversity in participation. In one study which examined people in prison's understanding of co-production, it was seen by many as a 'tick box' exercise and not a real way for them to contribute, demonstrating the importance of setting up these activities well and making sure they are accessible.[39] In another study many felt that to be able to actively engage in co-production they had to no longer be dealing with issues of mental health, addictions, or literacy etc. In this way, practices of co-production may not always involve a fully representative group of those in prison. However, successful co-production within the CJS requires involvement from all members of the community, including from underrepresented and/or rarely heard groups.[40]

Design schemes to meet the needs of the people in prison or on probation:[41] Responsivity is important; listening to what people want to get involved in, and how, is critical to success. This may be achieved by focusing on individuals' strengths;[42] thus building confidence through peoples' strengths as experts in their own experience. Evidence from outside of the CJS also highlights how the use of digital technology can be used to enable co-production activities, particularly for younger people.[43]

Leadership, buy in and resources: Success of engagement and co-production is more likely when there is buy-in from Senior Management Teams (SMT) as demonstrated within a large prison-based UK study.[44]

36. User Voice. *Involving Service Users in Probation. Developing a continuum of staff and user support in Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Service.*
37. See footnote 4: Clinks and Revolving Door Agency. (2016).
38. See footnote 1: Freeman, L. R., et al. (2016).
39. McCulloch, T. & Members of Positive Prison? Positive Futures (2016). Co-producing justice sanctions? Citizen perspectives. *Criminology and Criminal Justice, 16,* 431– 451.
40. Weaver, B. (2011). Co-producing Community Justice: The transformative potential of personalisation for penal sanctions. *British Journal of Social Work, 41,* 1038-1057.
41. See footnotes 1 and 5: Freeman, J. R., et al. (2016); Weaver, B., et al. (2019); Edgar, K., Jacobson, J., & Biggar. (2011). *Time well spent: A practical guide to active citizenship and volunteering in prison.* Prison Reform Trust.
42. De Leon, N., Mager, B., & Armani, J. (2018). Service Design in Criminal Justice: A Co-production to Reduce Reoffending, *Irish Probation Journal,* 15, 139-147
43. See footnote 30: Franklin, P., et al. (2016).
44. See footnote 7: Solomon, E., & Edgar, K. (2004).

In this study, SMT support (for councils) ensured that any issues raised were quickly responded to. Within these establishments prison councils were also more clearly at the centre of prison life, suggesting buy-in from the staff and prisoners. Protecting time and resource in the prison day for these activities is important.

Effective and regular communication: Timely and relevant information from the early set-up stage and through to recruitment is essential, as is creating feedback loops and being transparent in decision making. Providing reasoning for why recommendations have been actioned or not is also more likely to lead to sustained change, build trust and promote legitimacy of the initiative.[45]

Positive relationships: Research indicates that empowering, trusting, non-punishing, nurturing and reciprocal relationships which aim to build people's confidence, capacity, self-worth and purpose, aid positive co-production. Allowing space and time for relationships to form and processes to embed will make a difference.[46]

Consider influence of hierarchical structures:[47] Acknowledging professional and hierarchical attitudes will be helpful, as will finding ways to mitigate barriers so that everyone feels encouraged to contribute and to share their knowledge.

Procedural justice: Related to all the aforementioned factors the research suggests that to fully progress co-production and engagement within the CJS we need to further improve the perceptions of our systems as fair,[48] inline with the theory of procedural justice.[49] Applying the four principles of procedural justice (neutrality, respect, voice, and trustworthiness) in engagement and co-production activities, has found to boost levels of engagement, energy, and connectedness, as well as mitigated some resistance and promoted diversity in the voices heard.[50]

Whole system approach: Ensuring that the policies, procedures, resources, support, activities, opportunities, skills, and knowledge are in place to enable people in prison or on probation to become involved is critical. Making sure that the structures are in place to embed this within the organisation, that any activity is sustainable,[51] and ensuring evaluation systems are in place to monitor, review and evaluate practices are also key.

> Allowing space and time for relationships to form and processes to embed will make a difference.

What are the barriers to effective engagement and coproduction activities?

A number of studies highlight some barriers to successful implementation of engagement and co-production activities. These include:

Culture and trust: The increased use of engagement and co-production within prisons can represent significant shifts in more traditional ways of working and communicating. In several qualitative studies,[52] researchers found that the process of co-production was negatively affected when prison officers felt themselves to be overlooked by management, particularly during periods of turmoil and rapid change. If there is no platform for staff voices to be actively heard, then there is likely to be much less support for engagement with the people in their care.

A large-scale UK study found that prison environments that hold onto or revert to more traditional cultures in times of adversity, are difficult places for prisoner engagement and co-production to flourish, as resistance, perceptions of injustice, and 'us and them' attitudes prevail. Further, even when councils have been established, poor standards of delivery can be detrimental to creating a more positive culture for staff and prisoners.

A further UK study monitored the Measuring Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) survey data at two prisons across a 3-year period.[53] It was found that 'traditional prison culture' (negative/unhelpful attitude towards people in prison and management) impacted negatively on the function of the councils and attempts made to implement purposeful change. Prisons with a higher rating of 'traditional culture' showed greater resistance to councils, although the nature of the study meant they

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45. See footnotes 1 and 19: Sicilia, M., et al. (2019); Freeman, L. R., et al. (2016).
46. See footnote 33: Haarmans, M., et al. (2020).
47. See footnote 19: Rosenberg, D., & Hillborg, H. (2016).
48. See footnote 39: McCulloch, T. (2016).
49. Fitzalan Howard, F., & Wakeling H. (2020). People in Prisons' Perceptions of Procedural Justice in England and Wales. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour. 47,* 1654-1676.
50. See for example, footnotes 2, 7, and 29: Solomon, E., & Edgar, K. (2004); Weaver, B. (2018); Heron, G., & Steckly, L. (2020).
51. See footnote 5: Weaver, B., et al. (2019).
52. See footnotes 22 and 23: Barry, M., et al. (2016); Schmidt, B. E. (2013).
53. See footnote 22: Schmidt, B, E. (2020).

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could not establish direct links between council activity and positive change.

Lack of motivation for participation: It can be hard to motivate people, both staff and people in prison or on probation, to get involved in co-production activities.[54] This may stem in part from negative attitudes towards activities, or from a lack of trust.[55] Additionally, people may drop out of initiatives, or move on from that area/site, so services will want to anticipate this and build in means of sustaining engagement activity and maintaining strong communication channels to attract engagement.

Lack of time, commitment, managerial support and resources:[56] When co-production is undertaken inefficiently or ineffectively this is often through lack of coordination, lack of investment, lack of skills or over-regulation.[57] Commitment at every level is critical — aligning engagement with the core values of that institution.[58]

Lack of training: For some co-production activities, particularly those involving the generation of research, a lack of knowledge about conducting research can be problematic. Providing digital training to develop or advance technical skills is also helpful particularly when engaging with older people and women (as reported in a systematic review examining the barriers of information and communications technology enabled co-production of public services).[59]

Lack of good quality evidence: Co-production is often localised, small in scale, and unfortunately often not robustly evaluated. This makes it difficult to understand what works, with whom and how best to implement these activities.[60] We require a stronger agreed understanding of co-production and a stronger evidence base to enable those activities that make a real impact for all involved.[61]

Conclusion

The evidence base for engagement and co-production activities within the prison and probation settings is still developing — there is certainly a need for more robust studies that more clearly demonstrate the value of collaboration and co-production in different areas of HMPPS services. Much of the research is exploratory or qualitative in nature although has the advantage of being predominantly UK-based. Most of the research we found relates to co-production and engagement in the prison setting; little research was found within probation settings. As the evidence grows so too will our confidence in the various benefits for people across various outcomes.

One review on prisoner engagement concluded that without co-production, and the associated signals of trust and respect for the people in our care, effective and safe management of prisons would be under threat.[62] And indeed, the evidence reviewed in this article signals those activities which promote the voices and engagement of people with lived experience have the potential to support HMPPS' purpose. But further robust research is needed to determine the mechanisms that work best and to further understand the impact for different groups of people. At present the evidence suggests that co-production and engagement could be beneficial for people with lived experience and prison and probation staff, and may improve relationships, develop services which better meet the needs of those they are designed for, support a learning culture, develop more positive and rehabilitative cultures in prisons and generate feelings of hope and citizenship. But to enhance the potential of co-production and engagement several elements need attention. This includes ensuring support from leadership, protecting time and providing the right training and resources, ensuring we are responsive to all, and focusing on good communication and positive relationships. A summary of the key findings from this review are shown in Figure 1.

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54. See footnote 1: Freeman, J. R., et al. (2016)
55. See footnote 19: Clifton, J. (2020).
56. See footnote 19: Clifton, J. (2020).
57. Loeffler, E., & Bovaird, T. (2019). Assessing the impact of co-production on pathways to outcomes in public services: The case of policing and criminal justice. I*nternational Public Management Journal, 23,* 205-223.
58. See footnote 1: Freeman, J. R., et al. (2016).
59. See footnote 19: Clifton, J. (2020).
60. McCulloch, T. (2015). Beyond compliance: Participation, co-production and change in justice sanction. *European Journal of Probation, 7,* 40-57.
61. Boyle, D., & Harris, M. (2009). *The Challenge of Coproduction. How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services.*
62. See footnote 41: Edgar, K., et al. (2011).

Figure 1: Engagement and co-production with people with lived experience of prison and probation evidence review: summary of findings and recommendations

ENGAGEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION WITH PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PRISON AND PROBATION

The evidence base for engagement and co-production is still developing. Evidence indicates that there are **several factors** more likely to bring **greater success** in engagement and co-production activities. *What does good look like?*

Leadership, buy in and resources creates trust that co-production activities are for the benefit of all

- Protect time and resource for co-production activities.
- Raise awareness of the potential benefits of co-production and engagement activities.

Accessibility

- Provide a continuum of opportunities to secure engagement and promote inclusiveness.
- Be responsive to 'individuals' needs' to secure contribution from everyone.

Clear Structure and Routines help to establish legitimacy

- Take steps to prepare and plan.
- Ensure that roles are defined and that there is clear organisational structure.
- Build in routines for collaborative practices.
- Promote opportunities for learning and skill development.

Consider influence of hierarchical structure

- Acknowledge professional and hierarchical attitudes and how they may influence engagement and co-production activities.
- Demonstrate respect and appreciation of varying cultures, knowledge, and experiences.

Evidence suggests that engagement activities contribute to the development of a calmer, more rehabilitative culture creating the conditions necessary to support desistance.

Design schemes to meet the needs of the people in prison or on probation

- Actively listen to what people want to get involved in, and how.
- Build confidence through a 'strengths-based approach'.
- Consider the most appropriate medium for co-production activities.

Effective and regular communication is more likely to lead to sustained change

- Provide timely and relevant information about the purpose, need for and importance of engagement and co-production activities.
- Set up communication routes from the early set-up stage and through recruitment.
- Demonstrate how views have been acted upon providing explanation for in-action or non-intervention.

A whole system approach

- Create a culture and ethos by putting co-production approaches into action.
- Consider whether the correct policies, procedures, resources, support, opportunities, skills, and knowledge are in place to enable people with lived experiences to actively contribute.
- Ensure evaluation systems are in place to monitor, review and evaluate practices.

Positive relationships

- Identify opportunities to empower people, provide support and show appreciation.
- Consider ways to develop reciprocal relationships which aim to build people's confidence, capacity, self-worth, and purpose.

Applying the **four principles of procedural justice (neutrality, respect, voice and trustworthiness)** when delivering engagement and co-production activities can **boost levels of engagement, energy, and connectedness,** mitigate **potential resistance,** and promote **diversity in the voices heard,** maximising the chances of **success.**

Brought to you by the Evidence-Based practice Team, part of Insights group **insights**