



The Scottish
Government

Evaluation of Local Housing Strategies Co-Production Pilots with Disabled People



EVALUATION OF LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGIES CO-PRODUCTION PILOTS WITH DISABLED PEOPLE

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The authors would like to thank all the community and local authority members of the co-production groups in Argyll and Bute and North Lanarkshire for their participation in the pilots and the evaluation. The community members committed a considerable amount of their own time to the co-production process, and the evaluation process required them to give even more time to the researchers. Their time commitment, and honesty and openness in the evaluation means that the lessons learned from the pilots can be used to develop national guidance for the benefit of other communities and disabled people across Scotland.

Thanks also go to the support organisations Inclusion Scotland and Scottish Disability Equality Forum, the Independent Living in Scotland Project and the Research Advisory Group for their input and advice as the evaluation progressed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Government, in partnership with COSLA, NHS Health Scotland, Independent Living in Scotland (ILiS) and Disabled People's Organisations identified two local authorities, North Lanarkshire and Argyll and Bute, to take part in a project piloting co-production as a method of working with disabled people to ensure their needs are addressed in their respective local housing strategies (LHS).

Aims, objectives and research methods

Co-production is an approach that recognises the value of partnership between disabled people and public authorities in developing services, policies and strategies. The aim of the evaluation is to assess how the co-production process has worked in practice and, in practical terms, what its use has delivered. Co-production is a relatively new concept in Scotland and so these pilots were designed to create experiences so that lessons could be learned, and inform the development of co-production guidance that will subsequently be developed by the Independent Living in Scotland Project.

The specific objectives of this study set by the Scottish Government were to:

- attempt to establish what co-production added to the LHS development process that would not have been achieved through other means
- assess its impact on the decision making process
- map and evaluate the process that each of the local authorities applied to set up and manage the co-production approach
- identify the key characteristics of the approach that were used
- identify the resources needed to deliver co-production
- identify areas of best practice in relation to co-production
- identify any unintended consequences of using this approach
- assess whether co-production could usefully be applied in a wider context by local authorities

The research approach was defined through an evaluation framework (Appendix 1), which specified the research questions to be explored, indicators and how evidence was to be gathered. Evaluation methods included group observation, document review, comparative research (considering other LHS approaches and co-production experience), telephone interviews and a self-assessment exercise with group members to determine the distance travelled or progress achieved through the pilot process.

The co-production groups were recruited in September 2010 and started meeting between October and December 2010. The original timescale for completion of the evaluation and the pilots was six months to March 2011.

At an early stage in the research, the evaluation team identified a number of issues with progress of the pilots and the impact this had on the evaluation. The issues were around the lead in time it took to recruit the group members and to get the work of the groups started – this was exacerbated by severe weather conditions late in 2010. There was an emerging tension between the tight timescales of the pilots work

and completion of the evaluation, and the time required for the co-production groups to develop. Early in 2011, it was agreed that the pilot and evaluation period should be extended to June 2011, with reporting in August 2011. This would allow the groups to properly form, and give them a better opportunity to work through their agendas. This would also ensure there would be more co-production activity on which to base the evaluation.

The evaluation involved a literature review to consider the co-production approach in more depth and understand how it is applied in other sectors. This showed that co-production is best described by its underlying principles and values rather than by a precise definition. The term refers to the empowerment of service users and frontline staff to achieve an agreed outcome or service, usually, but not always, within a social care context. Services are developed 'with' and 'by' people rather than 'for' them, and the engagement should be from beginning to end of the process. Essentially the process is about building relationships between different groups in order to share information, knowledge and experience, and come to consensus decisions. It is not just about having service users join committees. A number of local examples are provided in the report on how co-production can work in practice.

The research compared the pilots approach to the LHS development process in four other Scottish local authorities and explored how they have engaged with, involved and assessed the needs of disabled people in developing their strategies. Overall, it was found that the comparator local authorities take a consultative approach, rather than what could be described as a co-productive or participative approach. Research into needs and demands did involve some qualitative methods to explore housing needs, but these tended to be through health, social work and representative organisations, rather than speaking directly with disabled service users to obtain information from them, and understand their experiences right from the start of the process. One local authority officer concluded that developing ongoing relationships with disabled service user groups (like that achieved through a good tenant participation approach) would be a 'real' and more effective way of understanding needs and improving services on an on-going basis, than a one-off consultation process.

Findings from the pilots

The membership of the co-production pilots in Argyll and Bute and North Lanarkshire were very different – one was large in size (up to 20) and included a mix of professionals and disabled people (although in the minority), while the other was much smaller (up to 5) and by design only included disabled service-users/community members. Ideally, a number somewhere between these two examples may have been more effective to ensure a breadth and range of perspectives, and cater for turnover and competing time commitments. 'Committee'-sized groups (e.g. over 10) should be resisted as some service users may be less inclined to contribute with larger numbers. Findings from the pilots suggest the core group members should be service users and the staff involved in delivering / developing the service or strategy. While there may be a role for intermediaries or professionals, their contribution must be clearly understood, and be different to that of service users (for example bringing a particular expertise, rather than representing

service users' views). It is very important that these people do not dominate discussions and the work of the group.

The different conceptions of co-production in the two pilots shaped the style and progress of the groups. Both groups determined the key housing issues or priorities, but thereafter the workplans differed.

An important issue in sustaining the groups was the nature of information provision, what was provided and how. This includes the style of meetings and the approach of local authority staff. There were examples where shifting of power towards service users was difficult, and inadequate delegation was available for the staff involved in the groups to allow consensus to be achieved. One of the key features of co-production is that senior managers have to delegate control to the staff involved in groups, and these members have to be willing to use it.

In both the pilots the commitment and enthusiasm of the lead officers and staff involved was clear. But both pilots had training and support needs. Members in both pilots (local authority staff, professional and community group members) thought that more training and support would have been useful at the start of the process. The evaluators' conclusion is that training and support should be focused on group relations and capacity building input.

Linked to the pilots' overall understanding of co-production was the lack of clarity over the specific roles of group members. This was worked through and there was some evidence of team working and equal status to varying degrees. But it was clear that more development time and capacity building is required for a more active role to emerge from community members. Capacity building is also required amongst local authority staff – to change from the norm of leading and presenting to an audience, to acting as an equal partner, albeit with a particular championing role within the group. Key to the role definition is discussing constraints and boundaries to decision making at the beginning of the process. Financial limitations should also be understood, which is particularly relevant in the context of current funding cuts in the public sector.

This all requires active management and leadership. While co-production brings with it a change in roles, it still requires leadership: sometimes the move to co-production can result in group members or the 'champion' organisation being reticent to take a leadership role as others may see it as 'taking over'. But management and leadership is required to make sure that group members understand roles, ensure delegated authority is provided to the group, and that resources are in place to enable the group to achieve their objectives.

The evaluation has shown that the groups did achieve some influence over decision making. This is evident in different ways - in one area it is shown through the content of the LHS draft document, which reflected the group's priorities and discussions (at least to some extent), and in the other area in more practical service development areas where the local authority was listening to service-users experiences and planning for ways to incorporate views into strategy implementation / specific service improvement. However, in terms of co-producing the actual LHS document, the process was more consultative than it was co-productive.

A key question is whether the groups' work has added value to the LHS process. It is concluded that the co-production process has added a genuine service-user perspective to the LHS development process in both areas. Even if the groups have added value to the LHS production, the most critical question is probably over resources and cost effectiveness. The evaluation has revealed that co-production is time consuming, especially when it is a new approach when people are learning and building capacity. This has resource implications in terms of time, and financial resources for capacity building and support. This is not unprecedented in the public sector, particularly in the housing and regeneration sectors where considerable resources are directed to tenant participation and wider community development. As capacity develops and familiarity with co-production increases, then cost-effectiveness should be evident as service users are involved at the beginning the strategy or service development process, which in turn should cut out inefficient, ineffective and unwanted services.

The final questions to be answered were: When is co-production most valuable, compared to consultation? Is it appropriate for LHS development? Does co-production have wider application? The conclusion is that co-production and consultation are not mutually exclusive – they can be legitimately pursued at the same time. However, it is also concluded from this evaluation that co-production does not suit short-term or very urgent pieces of work, especially if a new group is formed, and/or members are new to co-production approaches. Groups need time to form, establish roles and remits, and start functioning properly as a group before they can start making decisions. The exception will be where there are established co-production groups suitable for the purpose, or those experienced in co-production who can quickly mobilise and consider an issue. If co-production becomes a more established way of working, this may become more common.

The evaluation also shows that LHS development may be possible through co-production, although it is more difficult than service development where discussion of service issues are more tangible and directly relevant to service users, and the service-user perspective is important for the service provider in understanding what changes and improvements are required.

In terms of wider application, a body of evidence has gradually been built up describing examples of co-production in a wide range of settings and covering a wide range of target groups. Use in the social care field is considered to be particularly relevant. Findings from this evaluation do not dispute this research evidence, but its application in service development is probably more relevant, efficient and effective for both service users and co-production champions.

Perhaps a more useful form of co-production for housing strategy development would be to have an established (although dynamic) group to identify the housing needs and service requirements of disabled people, and also to monitor strategy implementation and service development on an ongoing basis. This may represent something that is based more in reality, rather than being asked to commit to a short-term task of producing what some might see as a theoretical document (as they may not see or be told about the final outcomes). The local authority could then take the

intelligence regularly provided through the group into service and strategic planning processes and documents.

1 INTRODUCTION

Policy Context

Local Housing Strategies

- 1.1 This report sets out the Evaluation of Local Housing Strategies Co-production Pilots with Disabled People.
- 1.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to prepare a local housing strategy (LHS) supported by an assessment of housing need and demand.
- 1.3 The role of the LHS is for local authorities to set out the strategic direction to tackle housing need and demand and to inform the future investment in housing and related services in the local authority area for a five-year period. The remit of an LHS is wide reaching. It should bring together the local authority's response of the whole housing system: requirements for market and affordable housing and so closely link to the Development Plan¹; prevention and alleviation of homelessness; meeting community care and housing support needs; addressing fuel poverty and climate change; tackling housing conditions across tenure; and, set out the role of the private rented sector in meeting housing need and demand.
- 1.4 Revised Scottish Government guidance (2008) links the production of local housing strategies to the preparation of Development Plans. Reflecting Development Plan timescales, LHS submissions to the Scottish Government are expected up until the end of 2012. The majority of local authorities are currently in the process of developing or consulting on new strategies.

Co-production

- 1.5 As discussed later in this report, co-production is best described by its underlying principles and values applied to joint working, rather than by a precise definition. For the purposes of the LHS co-production pilots, the Scottish Government and the Independent Living in Scotland Project defined co-production as an approach that recognises the value of partnership between disabled people and public authorities in developing services, policies and strategies.
- 1.6 The approach is summarised² as:
 - a method of working together from the very outset, to achieve an agreed outcome;

¹ Development Plans are the documents that set out what type of development should take place where, and which areas should not be developed. It sets out the best locations for new homes and businesses and protects places of value to people or wildlife. See <http://scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Policy/themes/dev-plan>

² Definition provided by the Scottish Government and Independent Living in Scotland in an outline letter to local authorities introducing the concept of co-production.

- everyone involved is valued as an equal;
- where the ‘trading’ of skills, experience and knowledge is respected and employed to its maximum, in all directions;
- positioning the perception and aspirations of the end-user as the main driver.

Independent Living in Scotland

- 1.7 Independent Living is the Scottish Government’s overarching policy commitment on disability equality and disabled people’s human rights. In 2009, the Independent Living in Scotland Project (ILiS), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and the Scottish Government co-signed a vision for independent living in Scotland. NHS Health Scotland later joined the partnership, and signed the vision statement in October 2010. This set out the shared approach to developing and delivering the principles of independent living for disabled people in Scotland. The Independent Living in Scotland project is steered by disabled people, charged with supporting disabled people to have their voices heard, and strengthening and growing the disabled people’s Independent Living Movement in Scotland.
- 1.8 During 2010, the Scottish Government, CoSLA, the ILiS and local and national disabled people’s organisations worked together to instigate testing of co-production through the development of local housing strategies. Two pilots would test co-production as a method of working together, sharing knowledge and developing solutions to ensure that their local housing strategies took full account of the needs of disabled people in their areas. The invitation for participation also stated the intention to use lessons from the pilots to illustrate the benefits of co-production to wider public services and other groups of disabled people.

Aims and objectives of the research

- 1.9 The aim of the evaluation is to assess how the co-production process has worked in practice and, in practical terms, what its use has delivered.
- 1.10 The specific objectives of this study set by the Scottish Government are to:
- attempt to establish what co-production added to the LHS development process that would not have been achieved through other means
 - assess its impact on the decision making process
 - map and evaluate the process that each of the local authorities applied to set up and manage the co-production approach
 - identify the key characteristics of the approach that were used
 - identify the resources needed to deliver co-production
 - identify areas of best practice in relation to co-production
 - identify any unintended consequences of using this approach
 - assess whether co-production could usefully be applied in a wider context by local authorities.

The LHS Co-production Pilots

- 1.11 The co-production pilots were included in the Independent Living in Scotland Project work plan in 2010/11 in order to help inform the development of co-production guidance. The Scottish Government and ILiS invited expressions of interest to pilot co-production from all 32 Scottish local authorities. The two pilot areas selected were Argyll and Bute and North Lanarkshire. The basis of the choice of these areas was the existence of networks and structures for disabled people, and the different geographies and service delivery approaches that they may present. Disabled person organisations (DPOs) supported disabled people participating in the pilots: the Scottish Disability Equality Forum in Argyll and Bute, and Inclusion Scotland in North Lanarkshire.
- 1.12 The pilots ran between September 2010 and July 2011, with the evaluation fieldwork running over the same period, concluding in July 2011. This timescale was extended from the original completion target of March 2011: this was due to various issues that emerged during the process which determined that an extension was required (discussed further in section 2). By the end of the pilot and evaluation period, both LHS documents had reached draft consultative stage.

Structure of the report

- 1.13 This report is structured as follows:

Section 2 – Research Approach: sets out the methodology, limitations and adjustments that were made to the pilots and evaluation approach as the projects progressed.

Section 3 – Co-production and local housing strategy approaches – a discussion around the philosophy of co-production, and how some other local authorities currently involve disabled people in developing their LHSs.

Section 4 – Findings from the pilots:

- Mapping the process
- How the pilots developed
- Sustaining the groups
- Training and support for the groups
- How did the groups work together?
- The role of group members
- Were the Local Housing Strategies co-produced?
- What impact the groups had on decision making?
- What has co-production added to the LHS development process?
- Resource needs.

Section 5 – Summary, conclusions and recommendations.

2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Evaluation framework

- 2.1 The research approach that was originally proposed was refined through an initial research phase when evaluation themes were explored through observing meetings, interviewing co-production group participants and document review. From this a full evaluation framework was developed, as set out in Appendix 1, which specified the research questions to be explored, indicators and how evidence was to be gathered. Evaluation methods included group observation and group work, document review, comparative research (considering other LHS approaches and co-production experience) and telephone interviews with group members.
- 2.2 This research used qualitative methods, focusing strongly on gathering the perceptions and experiences of those involved in the co-production pilots. Qualitative research provides rich information about people's views, attitudes and behaviors. Researchers interviewed a large number of people involved in the pilots, and the information gathered was reviewed and analysed in a robust manner. This involved identifying areas of shared or different understanding, and evaluating the strength of views. Reporting reflects the main themes emerging, rather than individual experiences. Inevitably, perceptions may be different between individuals, and as the evaluation has taken place over nine months, it may mean that perceptions change over time with the change of individuals involved.
- 2.3 The evaluation themes were those set out in the original research brief:
- Is the LHS being 'co-produced'?
 - What has co-production added to the LHS development process?
 - What impact has the group had on decision-making?
 - Map and evaluate process – how has the pilot developed?
 - Identify the key characteristics of the co-production group
 - Identify resource needs
 - Identify best practice
 - Identify unintended consequences.
- 2.4 Within this overall evaluation framework, the good practice themes explored in the evaluation were taken from the Scottish Government's Resource Guide to Engagement Standards³. These were:
- Commitment – going beyond the regular consultees?
 - Capacity building – to what extent did this take place?
 - Independence – the role of intermediaries
 - Appropriate level – was the engagement mechanism pitched appropriately?
 - Communication style – was there an open and honest exchange of views?

³ 'A Resource Guide to Engagement Standards, Guidance and Toolkits'; Lucy Johnston Research and Quarriers, Scottish Government 2009

- Consultation methods – were appropriate methods used?
- Valued input – did all stakeholders feel there was respect amongst those involved?
- Feedback – were there feedback systems in place?
- Outcome orientation – to what extent were outcomes clear from the outset?
- Continuous learning – were/are there systems for sharing learning across stakeholder groups?

2.5 The full evaluation framework is in Appendix 1 in Table A.1 and the full table of good practice themes and how these relate to the community, service providers and intermediaries is in Table A.2.

Role of the Research Advisory Group and other parties

2.6 The evaluation team reported to a Research Advisory Group including representatives from the Scottish Government (Research, Housing Investment Division, Equalities Unit,), ILiS and the wider Independent Living Movement.

2.7 The pilots were part of the wider Independent Living programme, but there was also a Project Management Group established to take strategic decisions on delivery, support and timelines (involving the ILiS project team and Scottish Government officials) and an Independent Living Co-production Pilot Group focused on the development of the two pilots (bringing together local authority housing officials, DPOs and the Project Management Group). The researchers were not involved in this management structure, but were provided occasional feedback on matters that affected the evaluation, and provided updates to these groups via the Scottish Government research project manager.

Fieldwork experience and amendment to the methodology

2.8 The co-production groups were recruited in September 2010 and started meeting between October and December 2010. However, due to severe weather conditions in November and December work did not get underway in earnest until the start of January 2011. The original timescale for completion of the evaluation and the pilots' activity was set at March 2011 (six months in total).

2.9 At an early stage in the research, the evaluation team identified a number of issues, namely:

- the very early stage of development of both pilot groups;
- the lead in time it took to recruit participants and get the work of the groups started – this was exacerbated by poor weather conditions late in 2010;
- the emerging tension between the tight timescales of the pilots work and completion of the evaluation, and time required to develop the co-production groups.

- 2.10 Early in 2011, it was proposed by the evaluation team and agreed that the pilot and evaluation period should be extended to June 2011 (with reporting in August 2011). This would allow the groups to properly form and give them a better opportunity to work through their agendas. This would also ensure there would be more co-production activity on which to base the evaluation.
- 2.11 Comments received from the Research Advisory Group also suggested that there should be a greater emphasis on a participative research approach. The methodology was therefore adjusted to put greater emphasis on observation and group work at meetings, and to include a self-assessment, in addition to regular telephone interviews with group participants. The self-assessment enabled group members to give their views at the beginning and end of the pilot process, and so provide their own assessment of change achieved through the co-production process.
- 2.12 The scope to conduct group discussions was limited by the length and frequency of the main co-production meetings. It was the intention to add group discussions on to the end of existing meetings, to avoid over-burdening participants with additional meetings. In both pilot areas, meetings were already up to three or four hours in length so it was not practical to keep participants for long after the meeting. In Argyll and Bute, some 'drop-out' of participants meant that their feedback was limited to their views on the start of the process, and in North Lanarkshire the small numbers of participants meant that group discussion was not appropriate at all the meetings where evaluators were present. The result in both pilots was that meeting observations occurred in four meetings, and group discussions were held after two meetings. The remaining fieldwork consisted of post-meeting telephone interviews. Some participants also chose to provide email feedback due to work or other time commitments.
- 2.13 A self-assessment form exploring the main principles of co-production was completed by participants at the February meeting in Argyll and Bute, with a re-visit form completed during the final fieldwork in late June. Since the attendance at the final two meetings in June was low and these meetings were also long, these forms were administered by telephone or email. In Argyll and Bute, 13 forms were completed at the 'baseline' stage and 10 forms were completed at the re-visit stage. This exercise was not undertaken in the same way in North Lanarkshire due to the small number of participants at the beginning of the process. Instead, views on the progress of the pilot over time were established through the group discussion at the final observation meeting.
- 2.14 When reading this evaluation, it should be born in mind that co-production is a relatively new concept in Scotland. These pilots were designed to create experiences so that lessons could be learned, and inform the development of co-production guidance that will now be developed the Independent Living in Scotland Project. This objective has been achieved, with both groups providing valuable insights that will assist in the promotion of co-production across Scotland. The evaluation shows there has been range of differing views on how the pilot processes worked, but it is clear that the co-production groups achieved many positive outcomes, with the both groups now

proposing to continue their work for the benefit of disabled people in their areas.

3 CO-PRODUCTION AND LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY APPROACHES

- 3.1 The evaluation involved a literature review to consider the co-production approach in more depth and understand how it is applied in other sectors. The research has also included comparative research, considering the LHS development process in four other Scottish local authorities and exploring how they have engaged with, involved and assessed the needs of disabled people in developing their strategies.

What is co-production?⁴

- 3.2 A full discussion of co-production, its definition, benefits and challenges are set out in Appendix 2. Co-production is best described by its underlying principles and values rather than by a precise definition. The term refers to the empowerment of service users and frontline staff to achieve an agreed outcome or service, usually, but not always, within a social care context. Services are developed 'with' and 'by' people rather than 'for' them, and the engagement should be from beginning to end of the process. It follows that there cannot be a prescriptive methodology that is universally applicable: ground rules need to be established within and by the group itself and constantly reviewed. Essentially the process is about building relationships between different groups in order to share information, knowledge and experience, and come to consensus decisions. It is not just about having service users join committees.
- 3.3 Many argue this shared ownership of a task is better than 'mere' consultation. In practice there is a spectrum of user involvement and authority, with consultation sometimes being more appropriate than the more radical approach of co-production. Also, co-production is already taking place in many areas without it being formally named as such (e.g partnership working, joint working, inter-agency collaboration etc.), and for some the term 'production' feels strange, and does not sit comfortably within the care context.
- 3.4 While there is evidence⁵ that this way of working leads to good results, there are many challenges to overcome. The approach is not part of the public sector culture, except perhaps in 'therapeutic communities' within the mental health field. Developing genuine trust and respect for differing skills (or what may be seen as lack of skills) takes time, which is often not available. Constraints and boundaries are real and some things cannot be devolved to service-users due to financial, legal and policy accountability. While some negotiation may be possible, these constraints need to be discussed and acknowledged, which may in turn lead to conflicts about trust and confidentiality. This context is important and one which commissioners and co-production group members should be aware from the start of any project.

⁴ A wider discussion of co-production and a bibliography is included as Appendix 2

⁵ See Appendix 2

Practice examples

- 3.5 Boyle et al (2010) provides a useful account of practical lived experiences of using co-production, with quotes from participants, giving a sense of the enthusiasm and practicalities of working in this way. There are many excellent examples of established co-production work, with Family Nurse Partnerships and Time-Banking perhaps the best well known. Family Nurse Partnerships support first-time mothers and children in low-income families by partnering them with registered nurses until the child is two. The aim is to coach them to develop a sense of capability and encourage them to support each other. Time-banking enables people to come together to help others and help themselves at the same time. Participants 'deposit' their time in the bank by giving practical support and help to others and are able to 'withdraw' their time when they need some help themselves.
- 3.6 Some local examples of co-production principles include:

Health and Well-being in Later Life

- 3.7 Small projects were commissioned across Scotland with a little money and external support to improve health and well-being in later life, with the proviso the projects must be multi-agency and involve older people as equals.
- 3.8 Example 1. Facilitating rather than delivering
A local front-line worker engaged with older people to encourage them to restart an older people's forum that had fallen by the wayside. This was achieved and they discussed issues of isolation. It transpired that one source of stress was the lack of a bus stop near the cemetery. Encouraged to do something about it the forum contacted the bus company who were persuaded to erect the bus-stop.
- 3.9 Example 2. Mutuality and reciprocity
On being consulted on an older people's strategy at a facilitated workshop, one group said they had enough of telling people what to do and nothing happening. They said yet another strategy wouldn't help in practice with the specific issues that concerned them. They were encouraged to express this to the very senior person accountable. A meeting was then held jointly with the people responsible for each of the services complained about, who were understandably anxious and defensive. It turned out that bringing together these managers for very different services led to creative solutions and mutual support. The older people not only felt empowered but so did the senior managers.

Race Equality

- 3.10 A two and a half year project sought to improve access to some primary care services for older Chinese people and was managed through a logic modeling process using a Community Development Approach that placed Chinese older people at the centre of the work. Logic modeling is a process of working to agree desired outcomes with commissioners, then planning backwards

from these to determine objectives and clarify what is under direct control, what the group can only influence (and how). It makes clear what resources (not only money) are available and what activities need to be undertaken to meet the objectives. From the start assumptions are made that are transparent, so that if they are proved wrong then contingencies have already been discussed about alternatives.

A Chinese community development worker was recruited, Chinese older people were involved in all aspects of the work (including the Steering Group) as were staff from local Chinese support centres. Deciding on the name of the project and practical aspects was joint, although in practice the Chinese participants were the experts and their views determined the action. Discussing less tangible strategic issues was more difficult, but by the end of the project the objectives were on the whole fully met. Having to work through interpreters themselves gave the staff a direct insight into the difficulties experienced by the monolingual Chinese elderly. The biggest difficulty was in persuading staff to change established practices in the light of feedback from the Chinese people.

Community asset building

- 3.11 A three year international project based in Scotland aims to help bridge the gap for people with severe mental issues between statutory services, voluntary organisations and broader civil society for people with severe mental health issues. A Community Fair was arranged to welcome the foreign visitors and introduce them to service users and other stakeholders at the same time as providing music and entertainment. The planning was joint, but led primarily by voluntary organisations and service users, who managed to mobilise resources through work and personal networks to achieve a highly successful day at no additional cost.

Approaches to LHS development with disabled people

- 3.12 Comparative research was undertaken with four Scottish local authorities. This involved document review and interviews with key officers leading the LHS development process. They were selected on the basis of their stage of strategy development – two that were fairly well developed and at consultative draft phase, and two that were at the early stages of research and development.
- 3.13 Table 1 below sets out a summary of the approaches that the comparator local authorities used at various stages of the LHS development – housing need and demand assessment; identifying strategic priorities and action planning; consultation; and, monitoring implementation. It should be noted that none of the comparator local authorities had reached implementation stage, but were able to reflect on previous LHS experience, and proposed approaches for their strategies once approved. The approaches are listed in order of frequency of methods used.

- 3.14 Overall, the comparator local authorities take a consultative approach, rather than what could be described as a co-productive or participative approach. Research into needs and demands did involve some qualitative methods to explore housing needs, but these tended to be through health, social work and representative organisations, rather than speaking directly with disabled service users to obtain information from them, and understand their experiences right from the start of the process. This approach is repeated when identifying priorities and action planning.
- 3.15 The exception is through engagement with existing social housing tenant participation structures. Two local authority officials discussed that, if used properly, tenant participation arrangements can involve service users setting the agenda right from the start with the service providers, and then involve working through service improvement options drawing on tenants' experience. However, it was admitted that these did not always include disabled people, and that it is more difficult to engage for strategy development than for service delivery.

Table 1 – Summary of LHS development approaches

Housing need and demand assessment	Identifying priorities and action planning	Consultation	Monitoring implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary data analysis including use of prevalence rates, housing register data, disabled person housing services data, Social Work / Occupational Therapy services data. • Focus groups and workshops including housing associations and representative organisations (health, older people, disabled people and carers). • Household surveys • Community care housing needs assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering groups and sub-groups organised by themes of LHS (either including and excluding representative organisations). • One-off / ad-hoc focus groups, workshops, use of existing tenant participation structures, away days and face to face meetings (either including or excluding representative organisations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LHS consultative draft and executive summaries / topic papers distributed by email and hard-copy for comment within specified date. • Summaries with response questionnaires (hard-copy or online) • Focus groups, stakeholder group discussions and workshops including tenant participation groups, seminars, open days, drop-in events / displays. • Meetings and presentations to discuss the LHS (one example with accessibility /disabled forum). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering groups and sub-groups organised by themes of LHS (none currently including disabled people or representative organisations).

- 3.16 In terms of formal consultation on the strategies, the usual approach is to set out the evidence of need and demand, and the priorities and action plan and then ask for comments. The methods vary from being passive – consultative drafts and summary papers being sent out with a response questionnaire, to

more proactive – approaching specific groups and asking for discussions on the proposals.

- 3.17 There was one example provided where meetings had taken place with accessibility and disabled forums. The local authority had sought these meetings as responses to questionnaires had been very low. They took the form of 'round-table' discussions about the priorities and outcomes for the LHS. The meetings were described as very useful with the defining aspects being that the local authority was asking the forum members for advice, listening to their views and building a relationship. While the momentum had not been maintained due to competing priorities, the officer involved stated that the local authority may seek to re-establish the relationship to work on the on-going implementation of the strategy, and perhaps wider service development.
- 3.18 None of the local authorities consulted had disabled people involved in the steering / core groups that had responsibility for oversight for the development of the strategy, and its implementation. However, all of them stated that they wished to extend the membership of these groups and hoped that this may include disabled people or their representatives.
- 3.19 A common theme from the comparator local authorities was that it is difficult to achieve service user involvement in strategy development. It is easier in service development or improvement work where the benefits are often more obvious for service users, and are achieved more quickly. The problems identified included low interest levels, poor attendance from service users at meetings, staff turnover and limited resources. This results in the inability to build up relationships and continuity. The exceptions cited are where healthy and well-established tenant participation arrangements and relationships exist, where the council tenants and the local authority work in partnership.
- 3.20 One officer concluded that the local authority should be more proactive in understanding customer and service user views on an ongoing basis, rather than expecting service users to make all the commitment and effort in providing views to the local authority in a one-off, formal consultation process. It was thought that developing ongoing relationships with disabled service user groups (like that achieved through a good tenant participation approach) would be a 'real' way of understanding needs and improving services.

4 FINDINGS FROM THE PILOTS

- 4.1 The findings from the pilots are presented under the main headings of the evaluation framework and good practice themes. These are ordered first by the stages of the process, and then move onto the influence that the groups had over decision-making and the LHS production.

Mapping the process

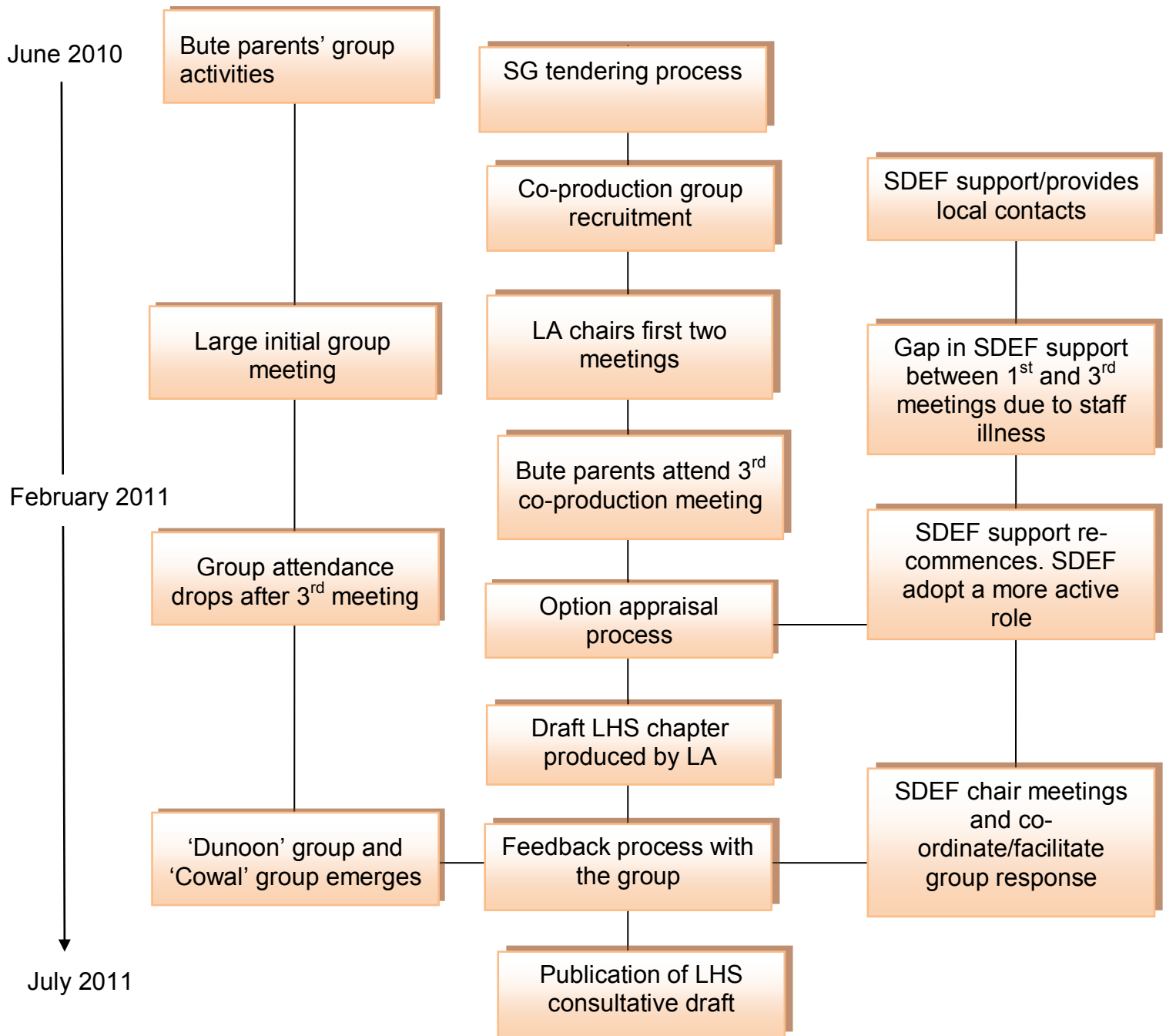
- 4.2 Flow diagrams are set out below for each pilot summarising how the process developed in each area.

Recruitment and group membership

- 4.3 The two pilot areas adopted very different approaches to recruiting participants. The results were also very different, although neither succeeded in involving people entirely new to consultative and representative activities.
- 4.4 In **Argyll and Bute**, the local authority decided to pilot the approach in Bute and Cowal, one of their broad housing market areas. This area encompasses the island of Bute and the Cowal peninsula. It was decided to have alternate meetings in Rothesay (on Bute) and in Dunoon (on the Cowal peninsula).
- 4.5 The inspiration for Argyll and Bute Council to bid for co-production pilot status was partly taken from the existence of a group of parents with children with disabilities on Bute. The group had previously become involved with the Housing Service due to their concerns about the lack of accommodation on Bute for their children to move to as they entered adulthood.
- 4.6 Once pilot status was confirmed, the mechanism for recruitment of the co-production group members was to compile a list, in consultation with SDEF, from existing groups after discussion with social work and health colleagues. That list included the Chair of the Bute parents group. However, despite this (and possibly because the first two meetings were held in Dunoon) it was suggested that the way the group were engaged with appeared to 'push aside' their concerns.
- 4.7 This recruitment strategy resulted in a large co-production group with more than 20 people on the delegate list, including community representatives, community workers and professionals representing a wide range of disability and community organisations. The pilot was managed by a Council Officer, with support from two senior managers. Members of the Scottish Government policy team also attended some pilot group meetings.
- 4.8 With hindsight, the local authority staff felt that the co-production group could have involved the community in a better way, and more effort was needed to engage directly with disabled people. A number of group participants confirmed this view, and felt that the group was overly 'professional'. Some of the representative organisations had encouraged community members to attend the group or had canvassed the views of their service users. The local authority felt that the group were happy with the membership and set-up

initially and had offered an independent chair. They also felt that it had been made clear that service users were welcome to attend. This is an area that might have been a 'lost opportunity' for SDEF to offer more proactive involvement early in the co-production pilot to support engagement activity at the community level. Encouraging and enabling attendance and active involvement requires more than an invitation but also pro-active approaches, capacity-building and support.

Argyll and Bute process

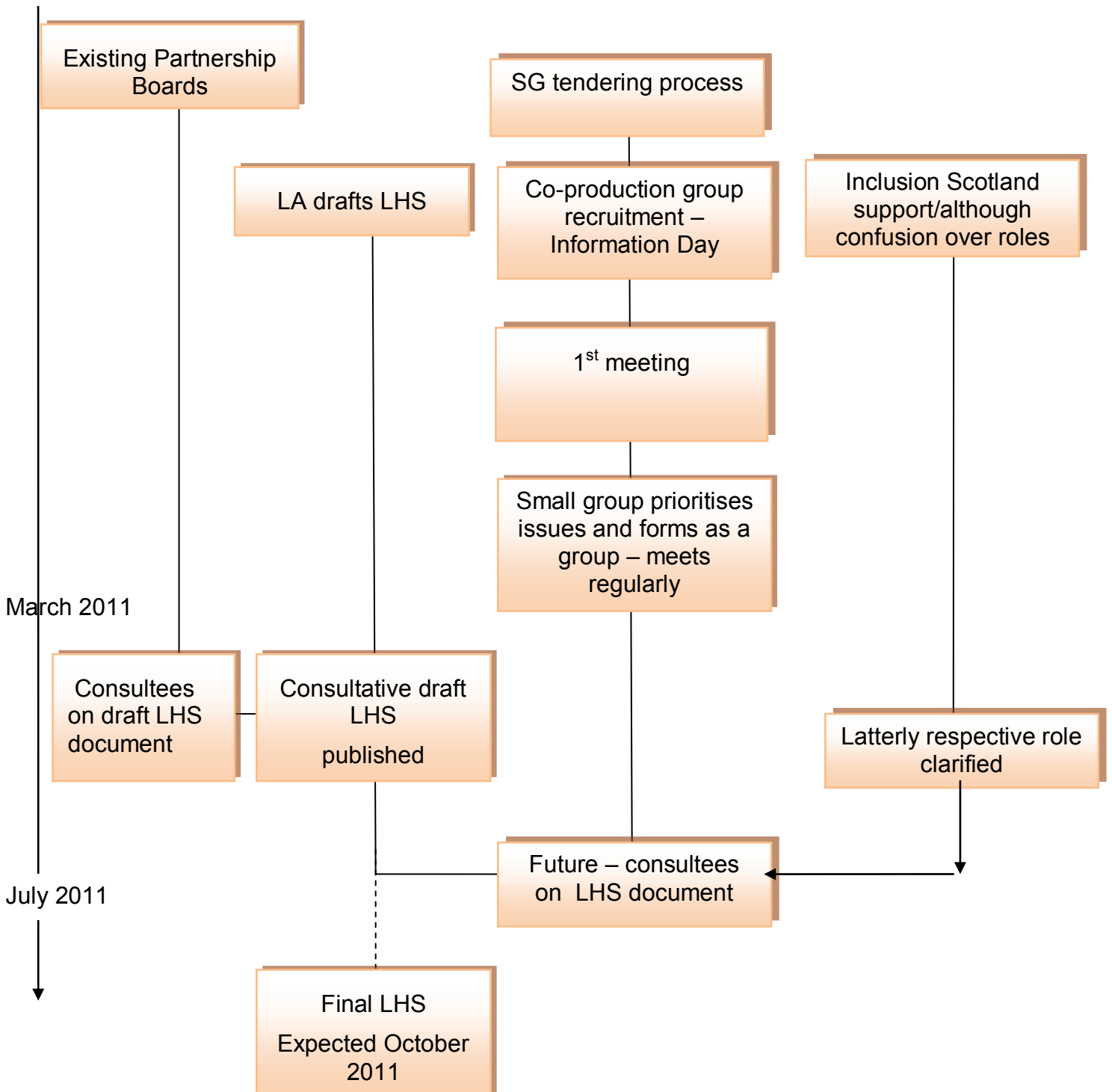


- 4.8 The **North Lanarkshire** pilot status was approved partly on the basis of pre-existing social work and health structures operating in the area. These groups, or Partnership Boards as they are called, cover issues such as older people and aids and adaptations amongst others. There was a view that this experience would provide a starting point in forming a co-production pilot.
- 4.9 However, the Partnership Boards are generally health or social work led, and although service users are also represented this tends to be through intermediaries. From the outset, this was not the route which the North Lanarkshire officers pursued for the formation of the co-production group. In contrast to Argyll and Bute, it developed a sharper, or 'purist' focus in terms of who should be involved in the process. The local authority's understanding of co-production was that it represented a partnership between officers and disabled people. The role of intermediaries was important as a means of recruiting and supporting individuals but intermediaries were not viewed as co-production partners.
- 4.10 Similarly, while carers were viewed as valuable stakeholders, they would be likely to have their own perceptions of the issues. Therefore, the decision was taken not to involve carers in the process in their own right (although some do attend to support participants and it should also be noted that disabled people can also be carers). This was not from a desire to 'exclude' different interests but rather a very literal interpretation of what co-production stood for – a joint approach between disabled people and officers delivering a service.
- 4.11 The decision was taken to promote the pilot through an Information Day seminar which took place on 22 September, 2010. The event was facilitated by North Lanarkshire Council and Inclusion Scotland and explored what was meant by co-production (through Inclusion Scotland) and the Local Housing Strategy (through North Lanarkshire Council). It was attended by nine participants – lower than anticipated. One reason for this was the lack of time allowed (two weeks) for intermediary agencies to inform and engage their members.
- 4.12 There was a limited response following the seminar and the North Lanarkshire pilot has, from the beginning, been small-scale (usually involving up to five participants). It is chaired by North Lanarkshire Council and supported by two members of the Development Team in Housing and Social Work.
- 4.13 As a result of the small numbers involved, the group hasn't always reflected a wide range of needs and aspirations. It is to the community participants' credit that they have recognised this (as well as the officers involved) and sought to involve others – for example wheelchair users, those with mental health issues and learning disabilities. More recently a few of these gaps have been filled with some success.
- 4.14 Almost all of the participants have been involved in other local forums. However, what is clearly different about this group is that:

- most community participants feel greater control over the agenda than they do in other forums – the agenda is less ‘professionalised’ and participants feel that their own experiences are a valid source of information;
- this group is the only ‘housing-focused’ group the participants are involved in allowing them to raise issues of importance which cannot be readily raised in other forums.

North Lanarkshire process

June 2010



How the pilots developed

- 4.15 As outlined above, the pilots each adopted very different ‘visions’ of co-production from the outset. These conceptions played a key role in shaping the subsequent manner and progress of the pilots.
- 4.16 **Argyll and Bute** meetings were generally held monthly between October 2010 and June 2011. The first of four observation meetings attended by the evaluator took place in November 2010, and the last was attended in June 2011.
- 4.17 In the first meeting in Argyll and Bute, the local authority explained to the large group what the LHS is and the SDEF representative explained what ‘co-production’ is. There was then an open discussion of what the group wanted to talk about – their priorities and concerns. This was followed by a presentation on the local Housing Need and Demand study, which had been completed before the pilot was underway, by the consultants who completed that work. This is a lot of material to cover in the first meeting. Most participants found that first meeting to be a useful means of getting their views and priorities across. However, feedback from one participant felt that this initial meeting was very disappointing because it was very ‘professional’ and not at all ‘co-productive’.
- 4.18 An important phase for the Argyll and Bute group was after the initial group meeting, between November and February, when the group was without support from SDEF, due to staff illness. There were also delays due to the cold weather conditions and resulting transport issues. The local authority chaired the second meeting – a further open discussion of the six emerging priorities in more detail. This helped develop the ideas of the group into the beginnings of a ‘structure’ for the LHS and to begin thinking about an ‘Option Appraisal’. The second and third meeting followed a format of the local authority preparing the agenda, facilitating the discussion and producing minutes.
- 4.19 The third meeting is critical as it directly involved the Bute parents for the first time. It also involved members of staff from other local authority departments and agencies invited to answer questions about their services. SDEF also attended this meeting and asked group members what sort of role they would now like SDEF to have. The set of priorities agreed during the first two meetings were presented at this meeting, for discussion of the ‘next steps’. These were:
- **Information and advice services** – letting people know what services are available, how to access grants for adaptations, and help/advice for owners (e.g. mortgage to rent/equity release)
 - **Adaptations** - the need for and lack of adaptations and the length/complexity of the process of applying
 - **Transport issues** – recognising the issue of remote rural properties, to see social needs alongside housing need
 - **Joint working** - The need for better joint working between Housing, Health, and Social Work

- **Support services** - for young people with particular needs making the transition to independent living
 - **Housing Options** generally and for older residents in particular. There was an identified need for flexibility in using sheltered housing for younger service users with support needs.
- 4.20 Feedback during a discussion between the co-production group, SDEF and the evaluators after the third meeting raised a number of concerns about the membership of the group, the format of the group, the type of information provided and the way in which contributions from the group had been dealt with. After this meeting, SDEF's staffing issues were resolved and it was able to take an active role in working with the group to produce the agenda, chair meetings and produce minutes.
- 4.21 The attendance at meetings fell significantly after the third meeting, with a separation along geographical lines. The first meeting attracted 13 community representatives and organisations. The number of attendees fell slightly at the second meeting to eight participants. The third meeting had the highest attendance overall (as more professionals were invited) including 11 professionals and 10 co-production group members. After this, meeting attendance fell more significantly. SDEF tried to convene a 'pre' meeting in advance of each co-production meeting to talk through what the group wanted to achieve at the 'main' meeting but there tended to be a lack of consistency in attendance, with those attending the 'pre' meeting being different from those attending the 'main' meeting. The meetings in April and May saw attendance drop to as little as three or four attendees.
- 4.22 The final two meetings involved two entirely different groups of community participants, so there was a lack of continuity between the people who had sat down with SDEF to comment/feed back on the draft LHS chapter and those discussing that feed-back with the local authority at the main co-production meeting. The final outcome of the feedback process and how much participant's views had been taken on board in revising the LHS was not yet clear when the evaluation team conducted the final fieldwork in Argyll and Bute. On balance, the consultation draft shows that the local authority has taken a lot of the views of participants on board but some areas have not been changed, such as the absence of transport or a discussion of the removal of adaptations from vacant properties. These were two areas that group members felt strongly about.
- 4.23 At the last meeting the SDEF worker asked group members whether they wished to continue with the co-production group and confirmed its continuing support role if they did wish to continue meeting. Some members suggested that they were keen to continue. The local authority has stated it is also keen to continue, but it is also considering how best this would be achieved in the Argyll and Bute context.
- 4.24 In **North Lanarkshire** the group initially met every two weeks, and continued at least monthly from December 2010. The first of the four observation

meetings attended by the evaluator took place at the end of January 2011 and the final observation meeting was attended in July 2011.

- 4.25 Initially in North Lanarkshire there was a degree of misunderstanding between the Council and Inclusion Scotland over roles in recruiting and on-going engagement with community members. The result was that the first meeting held after the Information Day was not as well co-ordinated as it might have been. The essence of the problem was a lack of clarity⁶ around the role of Inclusion Scotland and whether this went beyond promoting and facilitating the Information Day to be a more proactive one, actively identifying and engaging individuals who might have been interested in becoming involved.
- 4.26 Another barrier to participation in the co-production group in North Lanarkshire was felt to be the existence of so many other representative and consultative structures (one of the reasons why the initial bid for pilot status was successful) which meant that potential recruits were already engaged in other forums. The result was that for the majority of the North Lanarkshire process, participation numbers have been very small (with an average community attendance of three including one carer, two Council Officers and a representative of Inclusion Scotland). It should be noted that the number of community participants has increased slightly as the process has developed and there are now around five or six attenders.
- 4.27 Initially progress was slower than anticipated in part because of the time gap between the Information Day and the first meeting of the Co-production pilot. This first proper meeting involved revisiting the nature of co-production and the LHS.
- 4.28 An early exercise was a prioritisation process where the Council Officers and participants identified and prioritised the issues to be considered by the group and the timescales needed. One defining feature of this group was the scale of their agreed workplan, and the appetite and willingness of a small group of people to investigate each issue in great depth. The priorities included:
- **Adaptations**; including the review of quality control procedures, matching people to housing and advice and information
 - **Kitchen and Bathroom Replacement Programmes**; and the information received by disabled people
 - **Accessibility Standards**; including the review of internal standards and the external environment in new housing developments
 - **Welfare Reform**; assessing the impacts of this upon disabled people
 - Other '**lower priority**' issues (in terms of timescales); including Housing Options, antisocial behaviour and equality impact assessment.
- 4.29 One of the key differences between the Argyll and Bute and North Lanarkshire approaches was the actual work undertaken by the groups. The Argyll and Bute process was focused on identifying needs and priorities and then commenting on sections of the LHS document which the local authority had produced. In contrast, the North Lanarkshire group discussed priorities

⁶ *An issue which has since been resolved*

and then discussed each of these issues in-depth, sharing information and experience. But the North Lanarkshire group was not involved specifically in contributing to, or commenting on the LHS document itself. However, local authority staff are of the view that many of the issues that the group raised would shape implementation of the strategy.

- 4.30 In North Lanarkshire a number of presentations and visits to housing development sites were arranged. These proved effective in retaining and stimulating the interest of participants and building knowledge and capacity of the development process. There was also input from other organisations on occasion such as Lanarkshire Housing Association, Margaret Blackwood and Social Work (Aids and Adaptations). Questions were raised and issues explored. Time was allowed for this in meetings and, as a result, the original timescales proved ambitious.
- 4.31 The site visits helped to cement participant commitment to the group and capture the interest of others. More recently new participants have joined the process and at the last of the observation meetings attended (in July 2011) there were five community participants, very actively involved.
- 4.32 Discussions have begun to take place around the group's future. A Head of Service attended the June meeting and signalled the Department's commitment to continuing the process. No formal discussion has taken place at group level around its future but the indications are that there is a commitment amongst most participants to continue the work programme until, at least, the end of the current financial year.

Sustaining the groups

- 4.33 The two pilots have contrasting experiences of sustaining member involvement. An important issue identified is the nature of information provision to the participants and what is provided and how. This can have an influence on whether interest is sustained.
- 4.34 Due to falling attendance, the wide range of groups represented at the beginning of the **Argyll and Bute** group was not represented at the final LHS drafting stage. This is despite SDEF trying to maintain telephone and email contact with participants. The main reasons given behind the falling attendance (in a survey conducted by SDEF and in qualitative interviews conducted by the evaluation team) was the location of the meetings, the time the meetings took and having other commitments. A couple of participants were very frustrated that they had not been able to contribute more time to the group.
- 4.35 A couple of other participants felt that support for the Argyll and Bute group had dropped off in a similar way to other community involvement exercises. These were community representatives who had been involved in trying to engage people in the past in other community groups. They felt that it was quite typical for people to come along and 'say their piece' but it was challenging and difficult to keep them engaged for a longer period. Another participant felt that people were not properly 'briefed' about what the group

was for and what was involved, so came to the group with a 'lobbying' position. That participant felt that having a smaller group of people who were prepared to take a longer-term view would work better.

- 4.36 The format and scope of some of the meetings in Argyll and Bute may have also have been off-putting for some people. This view came across in feedback discussion after the third meeting and in the surveys collected at that meeting. The first and third meetings both involved Power-point presentations from the local authority or other professionals and later meetings involved discussing large sections of text from the draft LHS chapter. One participant felt that more contribution from the community representatives might have been more interesting and engaging than the 'professional' format.
- 4.37 Another participant felt that, although far better than other consultations, the 'meeting' format of the group still limited the involvement of community members. Community members spoke far less than 'professional' members of the group. A couple of group members had experience of very participatory techniques, with very intensive training or support for community engagement. They felt that the group as a whole would have benefited from more intensive work on negotiating what the roles of the group and individual group members were.
- 4.38 Some participants thought that the information provided to the group by the local authority was in 'organisational' language that was dense and difficult to understand. Even the term 'co-production' seemed unclear as a way of describing an activity that people would want to be involved in.
- 4.39 The attempt to involve community groups and representatives in Cowal and Bute together has been a major hurdle to the group's continuity. It is not the cost of travelling to the other community but rather the time involved. The meetings are long, at about four hours, so take a whole day to attend due to the timing of ferries, public transport etc. In fact, Argyll and Bute staff acknowledged that the geography of the area is one of the main barriers to adopting the co-production model across the local authority area. The local authority plan to develop Independent Living forums to help maintain community involvement in delivering the housing strategy. However, local authority staff acknowledged how difficult it was to engage with two communities in just two of their nine housing market areas. The practicalities of rolling out a similar approach across the local authority area, in terms of officer time alone, are considerable and this is an issue the authority is still grappling with.
- 4.40 In **North Lanarkshire** there have been smaller numbers of participants. One evaluative observation meeting, for example, was attended by one community participant although the average has been three. In spite of this, interest has been maintained and interest in the group would appear to have grown. Certain approaches have worked well in North Lanarkshire and these include:
- the use of presentations and site visits has brought the LHS to life
 - the paperwork is generally well presented and concise, although

- the minutes are detailed, which is important because people feel that their views have been recorded.
- 4.41 Information provision has largely been the responsibility of the Council Officers and this has presented a learning curve. One participant is visually impaired and it was a surprise to the Council Officials to learn that audio translations were needed rather than braille. The willingness of the Council to use audio translation services was regarded by the group as a sign of its commitment to the process.
- 4.42 Sometimes apparently ‘small acts’ have been important. One participant, for example, felt more valued as part of the process because one of the Council Officers always came to meet them in reception prior to the start of the meeting.

Case study – Sustaining involvement (North Lanarkshire)

The North Lanarkshire Co-production Group used a variety of techniques to present information and to engage participants. These included:

- presentations by external stakeholders to the process (e.g. on aids and adaptations)
- site visits to housing development to explore building standards for new housing.

Discussions with the community participants confirmed that these were enjoyed and valued. The fact that the community participants were able to influence which sites were visited also helped to demonstrate that this was a ‘shared enterprise’ – that they ‘had a say’ in how the process was delivered.

Allowing participants to visit development sites provided a different means of engagement. Some participants are comfortable with written materials but others appreciated the first-hand access which site visits allowed. The visits may also have had the effect of bonding the Group (as not everything went according to plan!).†

The opportunity to ask questions of those involved in the development process helped to raise the knowledge and understanding of participants which they then used in subsequent meetings. It was reported that for the Officers involved, meeting the consumers of their services helped give them a different perspective on their own role. Many development professionals still do not get that opportunity to meet those for whom they provide housing.

Another unanticipated benefit was that the site visits may have helped stimulate interest beyond the existing group membership. Word of mouth helped reinforce the idea that co-production was not a ‘dry, desk-bound’ process.

Training and support for the groups

- 4.43 In both the pilot areas, the commitment and enthusiasm of the lead officers involved was clear. Both pilots, however, identified additional training and support needs.
- 4.44 Both SDEF and Inclusion Scotland stated that they did not have adequate briefing at the outset to provide them with specific guidance on their roles. There appears to be a difference in opinion on this issue between the DPOs and Scottish Government with the result being that there was a gap in understanding and expectations for the support role. The local authorities also had very limited guidance on how they might proceed with co-production. Inevitably, in both areas the local authorities and the group members learned as they went along.
- 4.45 In **Argyll and Bute**, staff felt that they had not been equipped to engage effectively with disabled people. They also felt that if more work had been done to support the group initially, they could have involved more people at the community level. Evidence from meetings also showed that more knowledge and support was required on the co-production approach e.g. the first few meetings involved 'presentations' to the group or an activity led by the local authority, which inevitably positioned power within the group so that the group members started off being an 'audience' rather than a 'participant' or 'producer'.
- 4.46 As noted above, there was lack of clarity and misunderstanding between Scottish Government, SDEF and Inclusion Scotland, and the local authorities over the specific roles of the DPOs, and tasks they were expected to perform. In Argyll and Bute, this was exacerbated by the lack of staff continuity at a critical time. Given the number of groups involved and the geography of Argyll and Bute, SDEF's role was extremely difficult. SDEF did manage to delay the Option Appraisal a little so that participants could understand the process better. With hindsight, SDEF would have benefited with far longer to work the large number of community groups to help them to understand and agree their roles, the LHS process and what 'housing strategy' is.
- 4.47 A few of the participants in Argyll and Bute felt that the group would have benefited from more involvement from SDEF at an earlier stage as they valued the facilitating role that they adopted. In the later stages of the pilot, when more engaged with the group, SDEF performed a difficult task well. The SDEF worker tried to sustain the group, encourage people along to meetings and offered a facilitating role in meetings. The facilitating role involved chairing and recording meetings, dealing with travel expenses and assisting group members in providing feedback to the local authority. However, the timing of the LHS deadline limited the scope to slow the process down to ensure that group members were fully supported and to try and re-engage some of the 'lost' participants. It also limited the extent to which SDEF were able to facilitate and support a shifting of power and responsibility from the local authority to the group.

- 4.48 Even at the end of the process, a few of the Argyll and Bute participants admitted that they were still not clear about the purpose of the group. A couple of participants involved in more generic community organisations felt that whenever the group discussed housing options more broadly (such as housing allocations) this was 'lost'. One participant had not understood why the group were focusing on the disability/particular needs section of the Local Housing Strategy rather than the strategy as a whole. This suggests that in the early meetings there needed to be more discussion and agreement about what the group was for, what aspects of the strategy they would cover and what involvement people would have. It is this area of 'role agreement' that suffered as a result of the lack of training and support available to the group, including the local authority staff involved.
- 4.49 In **North Lanarkshire** no training was undertaken in advance of the pilot by either staff or community participants. Most information was provided by Independent Living Scotland and Scottish Government as part of the original bidding process. The local authority officers identified a need for more 'case study' learning – examples of where co-production had been used in other contexts. Examples of co-production used as part of a strategic process would have been particularly welcomed.
- 4.50 The Information Day was intended to provide some basic information on co-production and the LHS process to community participants. However, some felt the process for organising the Information Day was rushed (due to the pressure of pilot timescales) which reduced the opportunity for buy-in and input by local disabled people's organisations.
- 4.51 Most participants felt, however, that they had 'learnt as they went along' – although the contribution of Inclusion Scotland as an information provider was valued. The presentations and visits appeared to be an effective means of increasing knowledge and community participants have been very comfortable in seeking information from the Council Officers.
- 4.52 Inclusion Scotland has played a role in informing participants throughout the process. It is possible, however, that training and support for both officers and community participants could have been better thought through by the funders as part of the pilot process. One possibility might have been for Inclusion Scotland to have been formally contracted to source and facilitate support for both staff and community participants as the process unfolded, although this clearly has resource implications for the funders. However, the DPOs were grant funded by Scottish Government to enable support and provide financial assistance (for example, for travel expenses) for participants.

How did the group work together?

- 4.53 As might be expected, the very different composition of the two pilots resulted in differences of tone and manner. Change was also evident over time (and continues to change) as the work of the pilots progressed. Indeed, it might be appropriate to describe both groups as 'work in progress'.

- 4.54 In **Argyll and Bute**, some of the group members knew each other, which was partly due to the small geographies involved and the nature of the two communities. The discussion was quite open and frank. The community members spoke a little less than the community representatives and professionals and more work might have been useful to ensure that these members of the group felt happy contributing.
- 4.55 Although most meetings were quite open and participants recognised that the group was 'different', there was some evidence of the local authority holding on to power. In the first four months of the Argyll and Bute pilot, the local authority chaired meetings and set the agenda and timing of the tasks, though defended this as the need to stay within the LHS timetable. Thereafter, SDEF provided independent support to the group which changed the dynamics of the group. Once the LHS had been drafted, the opportunity to offer feedback was a little strained at times. Responding to feedback in this way is new for the local authority and although the local authority felt they took a fair amount of the group's views on board, some people in the group felt that they had not. The local authority expressed the view that the group represents just two of nine housing market areas and the LHS needs to cover the whole area and, for this reason, 'enhanced consultation' might have been the best that could be achieved.
- 4.56 In **North Lanarkshire** the tone and manner of the meetings was very positive from the outset. The interviews with those involved and small-group discussion with community participants reinforced this impression. A number of community participants remarked on the tone of the meetings finding them enjoyable and informative and feeling comfortable in raising issues and asking for more information when necessary. Two features were very evident:
- the community participants although small in number were confident and articulate individuals with the capacity to both understand and challenge some of the barriers involved
 - the Council Officers, although having to lead the process in a way that they had not anticipated, succeeded in creating an atmosphere where participants felt confident in raising issues of importance to them and shaping the content of the work programme in partnership with the Council.
- 4.57 Later meetings were in fact less 'agenda driven'. Although the Council Officers set the agenda items, discussion was wide-ranging and led as often by the concerns of community participants as it was by the Council. This would appear to have been increasingly evident, possibly reflecting the growing confidence of the officers in the value of community perspectives.

Case study – Valuing the community perspective (North Lanarkshire)

One of the characteristics of the North Lanarkshire pilot was that the personal experience of participants was valued. This was evident throughout the process as those involved, community and professional alike, grew in confidence.

It was never more evident, however, than during the final observation meeting attended by the evaluator. The Local Housing Strategy document was reviewed and discussion moved, at the community participants' prompting, to the issue of care packages for disabled people.

Several of those involved provided powerful examples of poorly designed care packages based on service provider needs rather than those of the individuals concerned. The participants also drew upon their knowledge of friends and neighbours to inform the discussions.

It is often easy for professionals to 'write-off' individual experience as anecdotal but this was not the case with the North Lanarkshire pilot.

What emerged was an increasing awareness that issues cannot be 'compartmentalised' into 'housing' or 'health' or 'social work'. A more holistic approach is needed. While this was increasingly recognised by the Officers involved it leaves open the challenge of developing a co-production process which goes beyond service provider boundaries.

The role of group members

- 4.58 The role of participants remains limited in both pilot areas. More development time and capacity building is required if a more active role is to emerge.
- 4.59 In **Argyll and Bute**, there was no agreement that group members should take responsibility for leadership of meetings, or for any tasks outside of meetings although they had read materials between meetings. Initially the local authority took the task of setting the agenda, chairing and taking minutes before SDEF took on this role with the agreement of the group.
- 4.60 Observing the meetings initially suggested quite a 'formal' approach to the tasks rather than the development of a 'team' approach involving equal participants. There was no discussion of the roles of group members or what assets they brought to the team. There was some discussion of what format meetings might have and what information people needed initially but more work could have been done to develop these themes. These are areas where the support organisation could have had more of a role earlier on.

- 4.61 In the latter stages of the group, those attending meetings had a very active role in reviewing the text of the LHS draft chapter. However, because by the later stages different people attended the alternate meetings in Rothesay and Denoon, the ability to work as a 'group' was limited by the lack of meeting continuity.
- 4.62 In **North Lanarkshire**, the initial Information Day had set out the anticipated roles of groups members, and the anticipated relationships that would develop between the Council and group members.
- 4.63 Council Officers have undertaken all of the key management and support tasks related to the pilot. This was not anticipated as the Council had assumed that Inclusion Scotland might play a more proactive role in helping participants influence the group over time. However, it may be the case, given the timescales and the specific requirements of the LHS, that it needed to be officer-led and that there is greater scope for community participants to play a more prominent role in terms of the monitoring and implementation of aspects of the LHS.
- 4.64 Observation at meetings shows that there was a team approach to discussions, and that members and Council Officers treat one-another as equals. As noted above, community members were increasingly taking the lead in discussions and the group shows strong potential to moving to a co-production approach.

Case study - Information (Argyll and Bute)

In order to participate in LHS strategy development, the group needed a range of information. At the outset, there was little knowledge amount group members about (1) co-production or (2) the LHS process.

The initial meeting of the group involved a great deal of information, in the form of a number of presentations. This involved:

- a presentation about the LHS from the local authority
- a presentation about co-production from SDEF and
- a presentation about the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA).

The first meeting also involved a fair amount of sharing of insights from the community and representatives themselves about their experiences and priorities.

At times, some of the group members have felt that the information provided to the group has been a little jargon-filled, using terms such as 'market solutions' and 'person-centred' services.

To their credit, the local authority have responded to suggestions about wording and clarification well. This including strengthening wording – e.g. 'encourage' and 'commitment' instead of 'enable' and removing some jargon. The draft LHS Chapter was re-drafted to take many of the views of the co-production group on board.

SDEF also played an important facilitating role in information provision. SDEF provided summary tables comparing the original LHS draft chapter alongside the group's comments and LA feedback so that the group was clear about how the information had progressed.

The experiences of the group suggest that information needs to be provided in as concise and straight-forward a way as possible, using simple language. Summary tables are a useful way of presenting information to ensure that it is brief, clear and to the point.

One or two participants interviewed towards the end of the pilot period felt that the local authority had not taken the group's views on board enough when re-drafting information. Others said they were not yet sure whether they had or would. Ongoing, concise, feedback will be useful to the group, as will an involvement in discussions about the role and scope of the planned 'Independent Living' forums, modelled on the co-production group.

Were the LHSs co-produced?

Moving from consultation to co-production?

- 4.65 A distinction can be drawn in terms of the LHS production in that there is the process of developing it and then the process of implementing and monitoring its delivery. In both areas, in terms of LHS development, the approaches adopted fell short of representing co-production. At this stage at least, it might be more accurate to describe the role of the pilots as a consultative group.
- 4.66 In **Argyll and Bute** the process undertaken may be described as 'enhanced consultation'. A few group participants expressed negative views, suggesting that the group was not a co-production group because it did not involve the community on an equal footing with staff, was too professional and that feedback had been ignored in meetings and in the drafting of the LHS. Members of staff felt that the group had got 'hung up' on some aspects of wording while some of the group found the language used in the LHS too 'woolly'. There is certainly evidence from some group members' reflections in the final interviews that decision-making is not entirely shared.
- 4.67 Although not 'pure' co-production, some group members felt that the opportunity was far better than any other consultation that they had been involved in with the Council. One respondent contrasted the LHS co-production starkly against the consultation on the Argyll and Bute school closure plan. Those involved were keen to receive feedback on the LHS and to be involved in seeing the LHS put into action.
- 4.68 In **North Lanarkshire** the process itself is moving closer towards a co-production model in that the agenda is increasingly a shared one. At the moment the nature of the strategic process and the timescales involved have precluded the emergence of a true co-production approach. There is little evidence, therefore, of the co-production group having much influence on the LHS as a formal document.
- 4.69 However, what the evaluation would suggest is that a more collaborative process is emerging in North Lanarkshire. While the influence of the co-production group on the LHS itself may be limited, there is scope for the group to play a more influential role in the delivery of some aspects of the LHS. This would be a positive outcome although more time is needed to assess whether this does indeed emerge.

Case study – Responding to Community Priorities (North Lanarkshire)

The North Lanarkshire Co-production Group has been increasingly effective in creating an atmosphere in which community participants are able to shape the agenda around their priorities.

One of the keys to this has been allowing participants the time needed to ask questions and explore issues that aren't necessarily on the formal meeting agenda.

In one instance the Group had heard a presentation by North Lanarkshire Council Social Work Staff on Aids and Adaptations. The issue of aids and adaptations had already been identified as a priority by community participants during an earlier prioritisation exercise.

The presentation had been valued by those attending the Co-production Group but a number of questions remained. At the subsequent meeting of the group several questions were asked of the aids and adaptations process to enhance understanding.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion, led by community participants, around the aids and adaptations process which took up most of the meeting time. A number of issues were explored around the priorities for delivery as well as the delivery process and the capacity of disabled people to access information and advice about aids, adaptations and other equipment.

One idea which emerged quite strongly was the need to introduce a sharper client focus or 'customer redress'. The community participants identified a gap in terms of how aids and adaptations were currently delivered in that it was difficult for disabled clients (and their carers) to express dissatisfaction with the service or to seek changes in the service or equipment installed.

The Council Officials recognised the importance of the issue to community participants. It was agreed that the issue would need further consideration and would be revisited.

What impact has the group had on decision-making?

- 4.70 While in both instances the process was officer-led, there was still evidence of community influence of decision-making within the groups. This became more evident as the groups developed.
- 4.71 Evidence suggests that in **Argyll and Bute** the group did influence and shape aspects of the LHS. Early in the process, discussion was quite open and involved a prioritisation of issues and concerns, and 'scoring' was undertaken on how well the local authority currently performs on a range of issues. Later, the group actively worked on the LHS drafts which meant that they were involved in a quite hands-on way in the drafting. However, the dynamics over how the feedback was given and taken, and negotiation on drafting changed the feeling of the relationships in the group.
- 4.72 This later stage of the process was more iterative than co-productive, with the group asking for changes and the local authority deciding which to make and not make. This was not helped by a lack of continuity in attendance, with none of those having agreed or suggested the changes being at the final co-production meeting. It was also clear at the final meeting that there were people making decisions about the draft – senior managers – who were not part of the group. Staff acknowledged that they had difficulties explaining the LHS process and its limitations. This experience provides a very good example of the need for all co-production group members to acknowledge the constraints and limitations of co-production upfront – those 'in charge' must delegate and everyone must be clear on the boundaries. Community members should be clear on when they have to stop lobbying to reach consensus.
- 4.73 The community participants have had a significant and increasing role in shaping the agenda in **North Lanarkshire**. The initial prioritisation process was carried out in an open and consensual manner and the priorities probably reflect both Council and community priorities (as might be expected of a co-production effort).
- 4.74 The pilot has adopted a flexible approach, allowing time within meetings for the community participants to identify and take forward their own agendas. The focus on the personalisation agenda, for example, emerged out of a discussion about the access criteria for sheltered and very sheltered housing but individuals amongst the group had very strong experiences of unsuitable care packages resulting in a decision to revisit this issue.
- 4.75 Other issues have emerged from the Council. The Housing and Social Work Service intends to review Housing Options and the value of involving the group in exploring issues such as allocations, access to sheltered accommodation and medical need has been identified. Although led by the Council, the issues raised are clearly of importance to the community participants.

Case study - Transport (Argyll and Bute)

From the outset, transport was an important issue in Argyll and Bute, due to the unique geography of the area, which encompasses a number of Islands and otherwise hard-to-reach communities.

Transport emerged in the first meeting as an important issue for the co-production group. It was one of the six priorities that were explored in each of the three early meetings.

In the second meeting, which looked at current performance, the local authority admitted that a score of 'zero' on how well they deal with transport would be fair, as it had not been tackled within the housing context.

Transport also affected the sustainability of the group itself, since the two communities became largely split into the 'Bute' and 'Cowal' groups as time went on. This was mainly due to the inconvenience rather than the cost of travelling.

The availability of travelling expenses was raised at each meeting and the project paying for travelling costs was appreciated by the participants. Ferries in particular are expensive and funding travel expenses will have resource implications for future engagement across wider areas.

The removal of the references to transport within the draft chapter of the LHS which the group focused on caused some concern within the group. The local authority felt that transport was acknowledged/dealt with elsewhere in the LHS. However, at the end of the pilot there appeared to be a lack of understanding within the group about this.

Transport will continue to be critical for the roll-out of the 'co-production' model through the planned Independent Living forums across Argyll and Bute. The time and travel costs needed for staff and community to engage across a larger area means that smaller, more local groups may be more sustainable. However, more groups would need more staff to be involved at a local level, which may have training/support costs.

What has co-production added to LHS development process?

- 4.76 The LHS process is on-going in both pilot areas and it is premature to give a definitive account of the co-production influence. The influence of the groups on the LHS document is more evident in Argyll and Bute than it is in North Lanarkshire. There are also plans afoot in Argyll and Bute to recruit Independent Living forums across Argyll and Bute to monitor the implementation of the LHS. At the stage of reporting the role and geographical coverage of these groups was still being considered, in consultation with the co-production group.
- 4.77 Views were mixed about the extent to which the group had added to the development of the **Argyll and Bute** LHS. One participant felt that the local authority had not taken comments fully on board and so had effectively selected the feedback from the group that suited the local authority. Most participants felt that the LHS was better because of the involvement of the group and that you could 'see' the views of the group in the priorities, chapter sub-headings and action points. A few participants were reluctant to say what impact the group had, since they had not seen the final version of the LHS or wanted to see what was delivered at an operational level.
- 4.78 A few of the group members and the local authority staff took a longer-term view of the co-production group as being the start of a process. A few members of the group also expressed the need for the local authority to provide feedback in future about progress on the LHS and next steps since so many consultation exercises end without that feedback.

Case study - Process management (Argyll and Bute)

From the outset of the pilot, everyone in the co-production group was learning about co-production, the LHS and community engagement.

The management of the pilot process was at first in the hands of the local authority. SDEF offered guidance in the early stages of the process including group recruitment. An independent chair was offered but refused and the local authority chaired initially.

The local authority felt that the style of working between the earlier and later SDEF staff involved was very different. With hindsight, they felt they would have benefited with more pro-active support in the early stages, as received in the later stages of the pilot.

The timetable for the LHS influenced the management of the process. The opportunity to agree an alternative management/leadership arrangement was limited. With more time, group members might be able to have more of a role in influencing what the group does and how activities are organised.

In the early stages of the group, it was agreed to concentrate on one chapter of the LHS - supporting people to live independently. This was agreed in the first meeting, with SDEF agreeing. However, some members of the group were not clear about why the group were not able to discuss wider housing issues such as allocations. Having more time initially could have allowed the group a meeting to discuss the role of the group in influencing the LHS - i.e. broad discussion with less detail or focused with more detail, power in terms of decision-making.

The local authority sent out minutes and the agenda to the group and designed a 'process' for the group – facilitating the group setting priorities, scoring the work of the LA, bringing wider LA staff to the group to answer questions, an option appraisal and finally, reviewing the draft LHS Chapter.

During the period between the first meeting in October and the second meeting in January, winter weather caused a meeting to be cancelled. This, alongside Christmas, affected the process slightly. At a practical level, beginning a pilot in Winter has had an impact on the process.

After the February co-production meeting, SDEF took a more active role in the administration of the group and were able to influence the process of the group, with the agreement of the group. They suggested delaying the Option Appraisal discussion to provide more time for the group to understand the LHS.

Choosing to focus on the detail of one chapter has meant that the group can clearly see where they have influenced the LHS. Group members were involved in shaping the re-drafting through suggested wording changes. However, not all group members have felt that the re-drafting had or would take the groups views fully on board.

4.79 In **North Lanarkshire** the Council Officers came to a view quite early on that the co-production process was a means of shaping the *implementation* of the strategy rather than its development. What co-production has added, quite effectively, is a community perspective on the issues of importance with regards to implementation. Two examples of this include:

- the community participants identified weaknesses in the aids and adaptations process, particularly with regard to quality assurance, and have identified this as an issue they would wish to return to
- the community participants successfully recognised the links between housing, care packages and the personalisation and independent living agendas and have argued that these issues need to be addressed more holistically resulting in an agreement to revisit this issue.

4.80 The community participants recognised the importance of seeing the above issues 'in the round' and succeeded in helping the Council Officers to appreciate the need for a cross-service perspective. This sometimes came about as a result of very powerful personal experiences conveyed by the participants. In one instance the personal experiences of inappropriately designed care packages reflecting service provider priorities rather than those of clients was the key to achieving a shift in perspective of the Council officials.

4.81 In summary, the co-production process in North Lanarkshire has added a genuine community, service-user perspective which would otherwise have been missing through a traditional LHS consultative approach. It is possible that this might not have emerged as clearly as it did had there not been an emerging relationship between the Council Officers and the community participants. There is a commitment to the process and willingness to maintain the co-production group until at least the end of the financial year in order to develop some issues in greater detail.

Resource needs

4.82 In both instances the pilots have demanded considerable time input from both officers and community participants – more than anticipated. This is a lesson that future co-production projects need to take account of. It also poses questions over opportunity costs – when is co-production most valuable/cost effective, and when is consultation more appropriate?

4.83 In **Argyll and Bute**, the time demanded of the group members was considerable. Many of the group members were well-networked, skilled community representatives which meant they had a lot of competing roles. They are volunteers who are often fighting for the survival of their own organisations due to funding issues. The meetings took the whole day, factoring in travel times and the four hour meeting itself. Not everyone was able to commit a day or two each month to attend all the meetings, or other meetings clashed with the proposed meeting dates.

4.84 Participants felt that holding the meetings across the two locations was good in some respects, to provide insights and networks in a different community.

However, it was practically very difficult, involving a ferry crossing which adds to the already long day. The geography effectively created two co-production groups, with SDEF mediating between these two groups.

- 4.85 The inconvenience of travelling and having prior commitments were the two main reasons given for not attending meetings. The cost of travelling was mentioned by a couple of participants earlier in the project, so SDEF took over the role of dealing with travel expenses and flagged this up when sending meeting details to participants.
- 4.86 The senior management team in Argyll and Bute were committed to the process and hope to see the approach used more widely. They are keen not to lose the momentum they have with those involved. However, senior managers did not generally attend the co-production meetings and the lack of senior management presence on the group meant that the group could not conclude decisions. The local authority view on this is that decisions could not be concluded without wider consultation across the Argyll and Bute area of the whole LHS. This is, again, something that should have been covered in an early discussion of the role of the group. This aside, a practical model to roll-out across Argyll and Bute, cannot feasibly rely on senior management involvement in every group. That means the parameter and role of the group needs to be clear.
- 4.87 There are resource implications to effectively engaging community participants – training staff, re-writing documents and supporting participants. Some participants felt that the format of the meetings and the type of information provided may have put some people off, either because they did not understand what they were being asked to do or felt that the group was too ‘professional’.
- 4.88 Some participants also provided examples of other community engagement they had been involved in where the resources expended were far greater – where participants went on residential training or had very intensive work with specialist support workers. Having more time and more funding obviously impacts on what could be achieved and those involved, particularly staff, know that co-production ‘done properly’ would be done in a less time-constrained way and be funded to enable intensive support and capacity building.
- 4.89 SDEF had a significant role in the support and administration of the group. They possess skills that most local authority staff would not have and also have an important role in shifting the balance of power. This resource is a consideration in the future roll-out of the approach. Can local authority staff be trained as facilitators or will support organisations always be needed to ensure the sharing of power?
- 4.90 The local authority acknowledged the time that co-production takes. Staff would be involved in consultation as part of the LHS process but looking at rolling out the model over smaller geographies so that groups are more sustainable and can tackle local issues. However, the local authority acknowledge that having more local groups would reduce the travel costs for

participants but require more staff input and, potentially, more staff travelling. If the local authority had decided to have two groups instead of the Bute and Cowal group, that would have doubled the staff time required. This is set within the context of a 20% budget cut which will impact on how realistic it is to roll-out co-production in Argyll and Bute without additional funding. Argyll and Bute are certainly planning to implement the model in the Independent Living fora and have an information and consultation budget but how many groups they will be able to involve and how best to do this needs further consideration.

- 4.91 Inclusion Scotland's role in **North Lanarkshire** has been more limited than that of SDEF's in Argyll and Bute. There was, initially, confusion between Inclusion Scotland and North Lanarkshire over respective roles with the Council having anticipated more direct support in recruiting participants. Nor has Inclusion Scotland seen its role as one of leading the agenda, but rather that of supporting community participants to make a contribution.
- 4.92 Initial misperceptions, however, have largely been addressed. Inclusion Scotland has succeeded in identifying new participants and supporting those involved in the co-production process. The agency has identified a specific worker to support the process and their role has included:
- providing telephone support to participants between meetings;
 - identifying and encouraging the uptake of community capacity building opportunities including training events on 'partnership working' and specific events on co-production.
- 4.93 The Council Officers in North Lanarkshire have therefore taken on more of the support tasks than they originally envisaged. This includes the production of agendas, minutes, audio interpretations and the organisation of meetings, presentations and site visits. The production of a detailed minute, incorporating the full range of opinions expressed, has contributed to the inclusiveness of the group and there has been a willingness on the Council's part to redraft materials where issues have been raised (e.g. explaining acronyms in the Equalities Impact Assessment). The commitment of the Council Officers to the process has been very positive.
- 4.94 There has also been a commitment on the part of the small number of participants who have been actively involved throughout the process. This was particularly evident in the initial period when numbers were smaller and the Group met twice a month. Most participants are involved in other forums but have made time available for the Pilot. Inclusion Scotland plays a role in contacting participants prior to meetings and promoting attendance.

Best Practice

4.95 The evaluators have identified a number of 'do's and don'ts' practice lessons. The co-production participants were asked what had gone well and what could have been done better and this also highlighted some valuable lessons. Many of these lessons are not exclusive to co-production but they are relevant in this context:

Co-production do's:

- There needs to be clarity from the outset as to what is meant by co-production and who is involved – there is no 'right' model but how it is defined affects the nature of the process
- Staff involved in co-production need training and support from the outset, particularly on how to engage and how to share power
- In-depth training for participants prior to starting is beneficial; what the LHS is; how is it delivered; budget issues; what can the group influence? is needed
- Roles need to be agreed; what is the group's purpose; what skills/assets do members bring; what is expected? etc
- Prioritise early because issues will take longer to develop than anticipated
- Building relationships is important and continuity can be an issue – plan how to respond to changes in staffing
- Longer timescales are needed to build relationships – probably more than a year for an LHS process
- Consider the group's communication needs from the outset – avoid assumptions about how people want to be informed
- Information needs to be short and easy to understand and accompanied by explanatory notes
- 'Between meeting' contact and communication is important to maintain the group and to encourage people to re-join the group if they miss a meeting or two
- Small things count e.g. how participants are greeted and escorted to and from venues
- Be creative – use interactive presentations and visits to engage
- Allow time during discussions for participants to ask questions and to develop their own priorities
- Those not attending need information about how things are progressing to keep them engaged and committed
- Provide feedback to participants – publish and actively disseminate the LHS and feedback on what happens next.

4.96 The pilots also highlighted some practices which should be avoided. These are highlighted below.

Co-production don't's:

- Understand that personal experience has value – do not write it off as ‘anecdotal or unrepresentative’
- Participants can be overwhelmed by excessive paperwork – think carefully about how information is presented
- Be careful to avoid ‘parachuting-in’ priorities which are those of the service provider rather than those of the group – what can be seen as important by officers might have less relevance in ‘real world’ situations
- Avoid adopting ‘formal’ approaches to meetings, based on a practitioner or service provider models. Using graphs, other data and Powerpoint presentations limit group involvement and can be off-putting.
- The role of the group members can evolve during the process, to include taking more control over the agenda. The group should avoid ‘fixed’ or inflexible roles, to allow the group members to change their role as confidence grows.
- The views of the group should not be ‘lost’ through poor minute-taking or the ‘paraphrasing’ of agreements or next steps.
- The potential role of the group needs to fit the timetable available for the work or the scope of the work needs to adjust. There is a danger of spreading the effort of the group too thinly, to cover lots of issues in a superficial way.

Unintended consequences

- 4.97 There have been unanticipated consequences in both areas. Similar unanticipated consequences have arisen in both pilots.
- 4.98 The main value in participating in **Argyll and Bute**, other than making a contribution or having your view heard was having the opportunity to hear about the perceptions and priorities of a wide range of other community groups. Although many of those involved were on different groups and some knew each other, they valued the perspective on the world that they got from the group.
- 4.99 For those group members who were less well-known and well-networked, the group offered access to networks in another geographical area or in a different organisation. Some organisations have been able to expand their area of influence/operation into another locality.
- 4.100 At a practical level, a few of the organisations were not aware of the SDEF and valued the chance to meet and become aware of their work. One member was actually being assisted by the SDEF on another matter as a result of being involved in the pilot.
- 4.101 A less positive impact of the pilot in Argyll and Bute is the potential damage involvement in the pilot has had on some relationships. Some of those involved in the pilot have not seen it as a positive experience and this has influenced their view of some of the organisations involved in the pilot. That might discourage their involvement in future. There was also the recognised risk that participants may have wasted the large amount of time they have invested in the process and that there will be little positive impact, in terms of the LHS in the short-term or service delivery in the longer term.
- 4.102 The unanticipated consequences in **North Lanarkshire** have generally been positive and of a varied nature. These are:
- Community participants have valued the opportunity to meet with each other and share information e.g. at a recent meeting one participant expressed an interest in attending a meeting of the North Lanarkshire Access Panel
 - Inclusion Scotland are now known to North Lanarkshire Housing and Social Work and it is possible that more might come of these links
 - Real practical improvements – for example, during a visit to a Local Authority Co-production Group members noted the absence of a dropped kerb in a parking area which would have reduced access for people in wheelchairs and this has now been addressed by another department in the Council. This shows the influence can extend beyond the housing or other sponsoring department's remit.
 - The involvement of the Housing Service in the pilot has provided the community participants with a link to a service with whom prior links were limited – the housing service is a 'little more accessible than it seemed before'.

The 'distance travelled'

4.103 At an early stage of the pilots, the evaluation team issued questionnaires to group participants in Argyll and Bute in order to assess their perceptions of the process so far. This was repeated again towards the end of the pilot to enable a comparison of the self-assessed scores. Participants were asked to rate the following statements from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). In Argyll and Bute, where there were more participants, it has been possible to produce an 'average score'. Around two-thirds of the participants completed both forms but due to the discontinuity of meetings and some 'drop-off' of participation, not everyone did.

4.104 Most improvement has been felt in terms of information provision, the input of SDEF, feeling that views are valued and feeling able to be open and honest. However, participants felt less clear about what the group was trying to achieve than initially and less confident that the LHS would be better as a result of their involvement.

Table 2 – Self-assessment scores in Argyll and Bute (baseline and re-visit)

Statement	Average (base-line)	Average (re-visit)
I am clear about what the group is trying/tried to achieve	3.8	3.4
I have had enough information to participate	3.4	4.4
The information provided has been easy to understand, in a suitable format, etc.	3.5	3.9
I have the support I need to be fully involved	3.6	4.0
I have found the support from Scottish Disability Equality Forum helpful	3.4	4.3
I feel I have been able to make a positive contribution to decisions	3.4	3.8
My views are valued by others in the group	3.3	4.0
The group has drawn on my experience/knowledge	3.2	3.7
I can be open and honest in the group	3.9	4.6
Issues raised by participants are addressed	2.9	3.5
I am confident that the LHS will be/is better as a result of the involvement of the group	4.0	3.7
I can see how my experience has influenced the LHS	3.1	3.3
The 'benefits' of being involved in the group have been greater than the 'costs' invested (time, effort, etc.)	3.5	3.5
Base	13	10

4.105 In North Lanarkshire, this quantitative approach to the change over time was not possible due to the small numbers of participants at the baseline stage. Discussions at the final meeting revealed positive feelings about the process and how it has progressed. Similar to Argyll and Bute, participants feel that their input has been valued and that the group has been open and honest about their feelings. In contrast to Argyll and Bute, people felt confident that the housing strategy (whether in a document or in its implementation) would be better as a result of the group's influence. Members also felt that the benefits of involvement in the group have been greater than the cost (time and effort) of involvement.

5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Co-production is about building relationships between different groups in order to share information, knowledge and experience, and come to consensus decisions on service development. Engagement should start at the beginning of the process. One of the early conclusions in this evaluation was that while the term 'co-production' may be relatively new in Scotland, in practice it has been ongoing for some time in different settings, and under different labels to improve and develop services. The approach seems to be less common in strategy development.
- 5.2 The norm in the development of Local Housing Strategies is to use a range of quantitative, qualitative research and consultative methods to understand the needs and priorities of service users. The research found no experience of working with disabled service users from the start of the LHS development process to understand needs, scope the strategic priorities and monitor strategy implementation.
- 5.3 The most relevant experience that local authorities have in engaging directly with service users in the housing sector is through social housing tenant and community participation structures – there are certainly parallels in this approach where genuine tenant participation should involve service-users right from the start of service development, including agreeing the actual issues/agenda to be discussed. This is enshrined in statute through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.⁷ However, even the most established and effective tenant participation arrangements sometimes struggle to attract interest in 'strategy'.
- 5.4 The membership of the co-production pilots in Argyll and Bute and North Lanarkshire were very different – one was large in size (up to 20) and included a mix of professionals and disabled people (although in the minority), while the other was much smaller (up to 5) and by design only included disabled service-users/community members. Ideally, a number somewhere between these two examples may have been more effective for this task, to ensure a breadth and range of perspectives, and catering for turnover and competing time commitments. 'Committee'-sized groups (e.g. over 10) should be resisted as some service users may be less inclined to contribute with larger numbers. In line with previous research evidence, findings from the pilots suggest the core group members should be service users and the staff involved in delivering / developing the service or strategy. While there may be a role for intermediaries or professionals, their contribution must be clearly understood, and be different to that of service users (for example bringing a particular expertise, rather than representing service users' views). It is very important that these people do not dominate discussions and the work of the group.

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2001/10/contents>

- 5.5 The different conceptions of co-production in the two pilots shaped the style and progress of the groups. Both groups determined the key housing issues or priorities, but thereafter the workplans differed. One went through a formal option appraisal process to feed into the LHS and then the group provided feedback on the LHS document. The other embarked upon an extensive workplan to consider each of the priority issues in detail to share information, knowledge and experience. In this instance the LHS drafting was ongoing by the local authority as a parallel process, but the group was not involved in providing feedback on the LHS draft contents.
- 5.6 An important issue in sustaining the groups was the nature of information provision, what was provided and how. This includes the style of meetings and the approach of local authority staff. There were clear examples provided where shifting of power towards service users was difficult, and inadequate delegation was available for the staff involved in the groups to allow consensus to be achieved (whether this was an issue of giving or taking the responsibility). One of the key features of co-production is that senior managers have to delegate control to the staff involved in groups, and these members have to be willing to use it.
- 5.7 However, in both the pilots the commitment and enthusiasm of the lead officers and staff involved was clear. But both pilots did have training and support needs. Members in both pilots (local authority staff, professional and community group members) reflected that more training and support would have been useful at the start of the process. Instead both pilots learned as they went along. The role of the support DPOs was unclear in both pilots. The evaluators' conclusion is that training and support should be focused on group relations/action research input. Where group members are unused to community development approaches, perhaps support and capacity building could be provided around the 10 Essential Shared Capabilities (outlined in Appendix 2) or similar community engagement toolkits.
- 5.8 Linked to the pilots' overall understanding of co-production was the lack of clarity over the specific roles of group members. This was worked through and there was some evidence of team working and equal status to varying degrees. But it was clear that more development time and capacity building is required for a more active role to emerge from community members. Capacity building is also required amongst local authority staff – to change from the norm of leading and presenting to an audience, to acting as an equal partner, albeit with a particular championing role within the group. Key to the role definition is discussing constraints and boundaries to decision making at the beginning of the process. This is particularly relevant in large institutions such as local and central government organisations where there is bureaucratic and legal control which can be inflexible. Financial limitations should also be understood, which is particularly relevant in the context of current funding cuts in the public sector. This all requires active management and leadership. While co-production brings with it a change in roles, it still requires leadership: sometimes the move to co-production can result in group members or the 'champion' organisation being reticent to take a leadership role as others may see it as 'taking over'. But management and leadership is required to ensure

that group members understand roles, ensure delegated responsibility is provided to the group, and that resources are in place to enable the group to achieve their objectives.

- 5.9 The evaluation has shown that the groups did achieve some influence over decision making. This is evident in different ways - in one area it is shown through the content of the LHS draft document, which reflected the group's priorities and discussions (at least to some extent), and in the other area in more practical service development areas where the local authority was listening to service-users experiences and planning for ways to incorporate views into strategy implementation / specific service improvement. However, in terms of co-producing the actual LHS document, the process was more consultative than it was co-productive.
- 5.10 A key question is whether the groups' work has added value to the LHS process. First, it should be remembered that both pilots' activity is work in progress. Second, the LHS is not a one-off stand alone document – it should be used as dynamic strategy which adjusts over time according to changes in needs, demands and market conditions. While there were certainly challenges in the process in both areas (including recruitment, relationship building and role definition), it is concluded that the co-production process has added a genuine service-user perspective to the LHS development process in both areas, but in different ways:
- In Argyll and Bute there were differing opinions between the local authority and community group members over whether their work has made a difference. But the evidence is that the group has added value – it has provided a service-user perspective in defining priorities and actions and in shaping the actual content of the LHS draft. The evaluators do not believe this would have been achieved through a typical consultative approach where consultees would be asked to comment remotely on a pre-determined set of priorities, actions and outcomes, with no guarantee that responses would be taken on board. The co-production approach has provided an opportunity for developing mutual understanding, and direct dialogue to develop the strategy.
 - In North Lanarkshire, while the approach and outcomes of the process differed, here too it can be concluded that the group has added value – a number of issues and topics have been highlighted to the Council of which it was not previously aware and which have strategic importance. The local authority intends to tackle these through strategy implementation/ service improvement.
 - Whether the aspirations and desired outcomes of both groups and the overall strategies will actually be achieved is unknown, and is clearly outwith the remit and timescales of this evaluation.
- 5.11 Even if the groups have added value to the LHS production, the most critical question is probably over resources and cost effectiveness. The evaluation has revealed that co-production is time consuming, especially when it is a new approach when people are learning and building capacity. This has resource implications in terms of time, and financial resources for capacity building and

support. This is not unprecedented in the public sector, particularly in the housing and regeneration sectors where considerable resources are directed to tenant participation and wider community development. As capacity develops and familiarity with co-production increases, then cost-effectiveness should be evident as service users are involved at the beginning the strategy or service development process, which in turn should cut out inefficient, ineffective and unwanted services.

- 5.12 The final key questions are: When is co-production most valuable, compared to consultation? Is it appropriate for LHS development? Does co-production have wider application?
- 5.13 The evidence from literature and the pilot findings suggest that co-production and consultation are not mutually exclusive – they can be legitimately pursued at the same time. However, it may be concluded from this evaluation that co-production does not suit short-term or very urgent pieces of work, especially if a new group is formed, and/or members are new to co-production approaches. Groups need time to form, establish roles and remits, and start functioning properly as a group before they can start making decisions. The exception will be where there are established co-production groups suitable for the purpose, or those experienced in co-production who can quickly mobilise and consider an issue. If co-production becomes a more established way of working, this may become more common.
- 5.14 The evaluation also shows that LHS development may be possible through co-production, although it is more difficult than service development where discussion of service issues are more tangible and directly relevant to service users, and the service-user perspective is important for the service provider in understanding what changes and improvements are required. This was particularly evident in the North Lanarkshire pilot where there was a considerable amount of rich information provided by the community members on their service experiences, much of which the local authority did not know about.
- 5.15 In terms of wider application, a body of evidence has gradually been built up describing examples of co-production in a wide range of settings and covering a wide range of target groups⁸. Use in the social care field is considered to be particularly relevant. Findings from this evaluation do not dispute this research evidence, but as discussed, its application in service development is probably more relevant, efficient and effective for both service users and co-production champions.
- 5.16 Perhaps a more useful form of co-production for housing strategy development would be to have an established (although dynamic) group to identify the housing needs and service requirements of disabled people, and also to monitor strategy implementation and service development on an ongoing basis. This may represent something that is based more in reality,

⁸ SCIE Research briefing 31: Co-production: an emerging evidence base for adult social care transformation

rather than being asked to commit to a short-term task of producing what some might see as a theoretical document (as they may not see or be told about the final outcomes). The local authority could then take the intelligence regularly provided through the group into service and strategic planning processes and documents. This model perhaps describes the one which appears to be developing in North Lanarkshire.

APPENDIX 1 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND GOOD PRACTICE ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Table A.1 Evaluation Framework

Question	Indicators
Is the LHS being 'co-produced'?	Views of participants
	Is/has the LHS being/been 'co-produced'? Why do they think it is/isn't?
	How are service users being involved?
	Is there/was there still scope for participants to contribute/focus/re-focus/offer ideas?
	Are participants taking responsibility for choices/priorities? Are there discussions of how to prioritise within constrained budgets?
	Documentation
	What evidence of user involvement is there in the document?
	What evidence is there of choices/priorities?
	Observation
	What evidence is there of 'co-production' in meetings?
	Are service user groups taking on responsibility?
What has co-production added to LHS development process	Views of participants
	Where has the LHS got to at the moment?
	Do they feel able to contribute their ideas/thoughts? Were you able to be honest/frank?
	Is the LHS better than when you started out? How?
	How were/are service users identified to participate?
	Who is involved in the co-production process? Who was invited/asked but chose not to take part? Why was that?
	Are any service-user groups 'missing' from the co-production group? Who?
	Documentation
	How has the LHS progressed?
	What are the main differences between the previous LHS and the new draft LHS? How is need and demand being assessed?
	What are other LAs doing to assess need and demand in the absence of co-production?
	Observation
	Do service users contribute views?
	Do service users respond to ideas or put ideas forward?
	What role do Inclusion Scotland/SDEF take/have?
	Are members absent from meetings?
Impact on decision-making	Views of participants
	How 'involved' do/did they expect to be?

	Who makes decisions?
	How do different members of the group influence this?
	Is the way decisions are made 'fair'? Why/not?
	What benefits has co-production had on the LHS so far?
	Documentation
	Are policies/priorities in the LHS referenced to co-production groups?

Impact on decision-making	Can items in the LHS be linked to discussion in the co-production meetings?
	Observation
	Are there opposing views? How is conflict resolved?
	Are service users responsible for 'action points'?
	Are decisions made? Are issues left un-resolved?
	Is there evidence of activity outside the main co-production meetings?
Map and evaluate process	Views of participants
	At what stage did they get involved with the group?
	How has the group been formed/evolved?
	Is it the 'same old faces'? Have wider groups been involved?
	Are any service providers missing from the group?
	Are any service user groups missing?
	Time is clearly tight. How has this affected what is planned/what is being done?
	What do they/did they expect co-production to involve?
	What is the role of Inclusion Scotland?
	How has the process worked so far?
	What training/support is available for group members (staff and clients)?
	How is involvement sustained and supported? (e.g. – work between meetings, peer support, location/time of meetings)
	How has input from participants been managed?
	What meetings/activities are planned?
	How is drafting/re-drafting organised?
	How are decisions fed back to the group?
	Documentation
	What pattern/path does co-production tend to have? How does the LHS development compare with this?
	What evidence is there of development and progression in the LHS drafting process?
	Observation
	Is attendance consistent – are the same groups there each time?
	How does the confidence of group members appear across time?
	How does the meeting dynamic change over time – balance of talking time, extent to which issues are resolved/shelved, ability to stick to the agenda, level of dis/agreement?
Identify key characteristics	Views of participants
	Were members of the group already working together/known to each other?

	Is the group fully-formed now? Who are they still trying to engage with?
	How would they describe the group? What kind of people are involved? (e.g. geography, needs groups, experienced activists...)
	Does the profile of the service-user groups reflect the local area?
	How would they describe how decisions are made? Probe re. key characteristics of co-production (e.g. respecting diversity, equality in decisions, decisions owned by users)
	Documentation
	Does the profile of the service-user groups reflect the local area?
	What evidence is there that the key characteristics of co-production are being met (in minutes, draft LHS)

Identify key characteristics	Observation
	What evidence is there in meetings of the key characteristics of co-production being met (e.g. respecting diversity, equality in decisions, decisions owned by users)
Identify resource needs	Views of participants
	How do they feel about the time/travel/logistics?
	Are there financial costs of participating? Are these allowed for? Are/should participants be paid?
	Has staff time been adequately provided for?
	Are the right staff involved? Would more junior/senior input be better?
	What level of administrative/other support is there for co-production? Is that more than would be available for the LHS anyway?
	Do they feel that everyone is able to contribute to the meetings? What might help?
	Is there anything else that could be done to support the co-production process?
	Documentation
	What evidence is there of the additional costs of co-production?
	What financial support is there for members? Travel expenses? Is participant time paid for? What happens elsewhere?
	How does this differ from the experiences in other LAs?
	Observation
	What evidence of resource constraints is there in the meetings (e.g. non-attendance)
	What evidence is there of how participants' and staff time is being used/managed?
	Is there enough time for people to do what is required? How does the lack of time impact on the process?
Identify Best Practice	Views of participants
	What has worked well in the co-production process so far?
	What has not? What could have gone better?
	What have they learned about involving local groups?
	What have they learned about how to do (or not do) co-production?
	What would they do differently next time?
	Are there examples from other local projects/initiatives of groups working well together?
	What would they suggest to people embarking on co-production elsewhere?

	Documentation
	Evidence of how and why co-production has worked elsewhere
	How is co-production sustained?
	Is co-production inevitably time-limited?
	Observation
	Evidence of effective working during meetings or between meetings?
	How is on-going participation maintained?
Identify unintended consequences	Views of participants
	How have they benefited from involvement?
	Have they learned anything new?
	Have they developed a wider network of contacts as a result of being involved?
	Has anyone been involved that would not have been involved without co-production?
	Have there been any negative impacts of being involved?

Identify unintended consequences	Documentation
	Any evidence from the LHS or best practice analysis of potential wider impacts?
	Observation
	Is there evidence of group participation beyond the LHS?
	What evidence is there of development/progress of the group and individuals? (Skills, confidence, role development)
Assess wider application	Views of participants
	To what extent do they think the co-production experience they had reflected the local area? (e.g. geography, socio-economic issues, remoteness, local groups)
	How dependent was the impact and outcomes on individual 'personalities' within the group?
	Would co-production work anywhere? Did it work here? Why/not?
	Documentation
	What evidence is there from the draft LHS and other LHS production on the wider application of the method?
	Observation
	What evidence is there of local 'unique' factors in the co-production group?

Table A.2: Good practice analysis

Good Practice Theme	<i>Tested through sampling with.....</i>		
	Community	Service Provider	Intermediary
Commitment – going beyond the regular consultees	To what extent were new members involve	How did they go about seeking new consultees	
Capacity building – to what extent did this take place	What support did they receive prior to starting	What training/information did staff access	What role did they play in capacity building
Independence – the role of intermediaries			What role did they play
Appropriate level – was the engagement mechanism pitched appropriately	Were the right service providers involved	What mechanism was chosen and why	
Communication style – was there an open and honest exchange of views	Did they feel this was the case		Did they feel this was the case
Consultation methods – were appropriate methods used	How effective were the methods used	What methods were adopted and why	Was a range of techniques adopted
Valued input – did all stakeholders feel there was respect amongst those involved	Did they feel respected and valued	Was there understanding of their role and the constraints involved	Was their advice heeded
Feedback – were there feedback systems in place	Did they receive feedback on their input	What systems did they put in place	
Outcome orientation – to what extent were outcomes clear from the outset	Were they clear about outcomes	Did they set clear outcomes	Were they clear about outcomes
Continuous learning – were are there systems for sharing learning across stakeholder groups	What lessons have they learn and how	What review and reflection systems did they establish	What lessons have they learn and how

APPENDIX 2

CO-PRODUCTION

Background

Co-production aims to redress the imbalance of power and put more authority and accountability into the hands of those who use the services working alongside those who directly provide services. It is not a new concept. The term was coined in the 1970s by Elinor Ostrom (a Nobel laureate economist) who researched the reason why crime in Chicago was reduced when there were more officers on the beat. It was not only that greater police visibility potentially acted as a deterrent, the relationships built up with members of the public made policing more of a shared responsibility.

The movement developed with the independent living movement, time-banking and co-operatives, but during the 1980s and 90s this collaborative community engagement approach was overtaken by a market philosophy combined with targets and standards. The co-production idea has now come to the fore again with endorsement at the highest political levels. There is recognition of the limitations of top-down control and an understanding of the significant contributions to be made by service users and the general public in planning and providing local services. The development of the service user movement is another factor. People have been increasingly consulted about their services, but 'consultation fatigue' has set in about multiple requests for opinions and feedback, but with minimal evidence of concrete change and benefits.

One of the difficulties (or strengths) of co-production as a term is that there are many similar but different definitions of co-production. Some organisations and activities meet the criteria, but do not use the word. Some definitions emphasise one particular aspect, for example changing the balance of power away from professionals. Furthermore 'co-production' is overlapped by similar concepts such as 'community asset building' and increasing 'social capital'.

In essence co-production is the collaborative relationship between people who use services and the formal service provider, jointly sharing tasks and responsibility. It emphasises that people are not passive consumers of services and have assets and expertise that can help plan, develop and improve services. People are not to be identified on the basis of a problem or a need, but as people with assets and strengths. Thus a person with a disability will bring invaluable experience of what makes an environment enabling.

Who should be involved?

Sometimes co-production partnerships are based on the pairing of individuals, as in the highly successful Nurse-Family Partnerships, which support first-time mothers and children in low-income families by partnering them with registered nurses until the child is two. The aim is to coach them to develop a sense of capability and encourage them to support each other. Collective forms of co-production are generally seen as more beneficial than individualised forms, however, because of

the involvement of multiple stakeholders and because of the greater number of assets and skills that can be shared to create a synergy in the group.

A small co-production group is unlikely to have full capacity to undertake complex tasks. Being open to new inputs and ideas (an 'open system') means there will be a willingness to seek out extra inputs and new ideas to fill perceived gaps. One of the added values of having a broader range of people involved in the work is access to broader networks and sources of knowledge than traditional professional hierarchies and organisations.

Rarely does co-production arise from bottom-up, at least in the statutory sector. It usually is commissioned and championed at a higher level, with the choice of participants the delegated to local leads. The core group in a co-production process should involve service users and front-line staff, although voluntary organisations that campaign for or provide services to the relevant group are often equal members as carers may be and in some cases members of the general public. One of the first tasks is to decide who should be included, although some of these decisions will take place when the group establishes itself. It is often more common to have difficulty recruiting than to limit membership. Numbers, however, influence the form of communication and meetings. Committees are not the optimal way to changing patterns of interaction.

Numbers involved will reflect the circumstances of the work with geographical and equality issues to be borne in mind. One assumption to be cautious about is the expectation that membership will remain constant. Time commitments and other priorities can have a major impact. In the present circumstances with major organisational stresses in both the statutory and voluntary sector it is possible that the community participants become the culture carriers.

Other people will clearly be involved to greater or lesser degrees, such as commissioners, line managers, a project group, training, research and evaluation personnel. All can contribute, but it can help to be clear about the different roles. Important too are other community participants and representatives, who can offer an additional perspective.

Organisational and role clarification

Taking forward co-production requires a champion (or preferably champions) of the approach, high level buy-in and consistent support with considerable learning on all sides. There is no check-list and few short-cuts.

Part of the initial task is therefore to clarify and acknowledge the boundaries and constraints of the work. If co-production is going to change the balance of power and put community participants at the centre of things rather than being mere recipients of a service, honesty about the current reality of the spheres of influence should be transparent. This is particularly important when large institutions are involved, in particular local authority and health structures (voluntary organisations tend to be more flexible, with less central bureaucratic control).

The constraints will not just be those of entrenched attitudes, but also relate to finance, law, confidentiality and competing priorities. Where are decisions finally made? Who or what group has responsibility and accountability? One of the aims of adopting a co-production approach is to challenge many of these boundaries and tolerate greater risk, but unrealistic expectations can lead to disillusionment and drop-out.

Negotiating such issues is difficult and participants can call on a range of tools and supports to facilitate the work, none specific to co-production. For example the use of a logic modeling approach is a way to help structure such discussions, although in some flexible situations it may be too structured and become an end in itself. Logic modeling is a process of working to agree desired outcomes with commissioners, then planning backwards from these to determine objectives and clarify what is under direct control, what the group can only influence (and how). It makes overt what resources (not only money) are available and what activities need to be undertaken to meet the objectives. From the start assumptions are made that are transparent, so that if they are proved wrong then contingencies have already been discussed about alternatives.

Challenges

Time

Working in this manner requires a lot of commitment and a lot of resources, especially at the start when there may be a need for training or group relations/action research input. One major resource is that of time. People will not only have to attend meetings, but research, consult and carry out additional tasks in between. If the work is self-contained then this is easier, but many people (community participants as well as professionals) have additional commitments and priorities, perhaps especially at senior levels when there is a broader span of responsibility.

Relationship building

Co-production involves the development of trust between equals, who may not be accustomed to being valued in this way. The following generic capabilities are required:

being able to work together from the very outset, to achieve an agreed outcome;
valuing everyone involved as an equal;
'trading' skills, experience and knowledge with respect; and
ensuring that the views and hopes of the person with disability are at the centre of planning and service delivery.

People will need time to build these relationships, for instance learning when consensus is more important than maintaining conflicting positions. It is a major challenge if these relationships have to be established quickly in the often unrealistic time pressures of commissioning agencies.

There is a process of 'unlearning' as well as 'learning' to be gone through by all concerned, at every level. Although developed in the context of mental health service development, the 10 ESCs (Essential Shared Capabilities) and the toolkit for

developing them could be adapted for training in situations where a community engagement and community development approach is unfamiliar.

ESCs

- Working in partnership
- Respecting diversity
- Practising ethically
- Challenging inequality
- Promoting recovery
- Identifying people's needs and strengths
- Providing service user centred care
- Making a difference
- Promoting safety and positive risk taking
- Personal development and learning

The process of participating in co-production in itself develops such capabilities.

Power shifts

The process of developing these relationships requires empowerment on all sides. Service users have more power to make decisions and contribute instead of being consulted. Professionals lose some authority, but are empowered by their seniors to move outside the traditional constraints and be creative. Senior managers have to deal with the stress of delegating what was previously under their control. Institutional resistance may occur despite the commitment of individuals, with the possibility of endorsing the status quo.

Research

A body of evidence has gradually been built up describing examples of co-production in a wide range of settings and covering a wide range of target groups⁹. The overall conclusion is that co-production is of central importance to the personalisation and transformation of adult social care services. It is relevant to all sectors (including the voluntary and independent sector providers) and for all kinds of people who use social care services.

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