Hidden work

Co-production by people outside paid employment

David Boyle, Sherry Clark and Sarah Burns

This report explores partnerships between public sector professionals and community members (co-production), in particular those involving people outside paid employment.

The debate on the future of public services is increasingly looking to the participation of ordinary people alongside professionals. This is the first comprehensive research in the UK to investigate co-production as a possible way of capturing and developing the vital contribution to their neighbourhoods played by people outside paid work.

The study explores the extent to which co-production can improve individual lives, improve social cohesion, broaden public services, and develop the relationship between public service institutions and the communities they serve. It investigates a range of projects that are using co-production to support and enable their clients to play an active role in enhancing their own lives as well as supporting their community.

In keeping with the concept of co-production, people outside paid work in each of the local communities received training which enabled them to work as researchers on this project. Their findings highlight the benefits, but also the challenges, in applying co-production to large-scale public service institutions.

This report will be of interest to policy makers and service providers in the public and voluntary sectors.

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About the authors
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Summary

This research studied a range of projects that broadly met the definition of co-production, in London, Glasgow and the Welsh Valleys, led by the new economics foundation (nef), together with three research partners which recruited people outside paid work as researchers. Co-production itself is a term with a variety of related beginnings, but which has been developed most recently by the Washington civil rights lawyer Edgar Cahn. It describes the process whereby voluntary organisations or public services involve their ultimate beneficiaries as partners in the delivery of services, with the intention of improving their lives and also 'lengthening and strengthening' the basic services, so they can reach out to the community in a broader way.

The research looked at organisations in the public and voluntary sector that are using co-production in various ways, supporting and enabling their clients and beneficiaries to play an active role in their recovery and that of their neighbours. Activities in practice included mentoring, advising, befriending, doing repairs for, shopping for, tutoring each other and a range of other activities as well. They are intended to be valuable in their own right, but also a means to an end – more social cohesion, better recovery and a changed relationship between public service institutions and the communities they serve.

Background

The vital importance of social capital in the maintenance of public health, tackling crime and other social imperatives is supported by a growing volume of literature, which demonstrates that it can inoculate neighbourhoods against the kind of disintegration that so many have experienced. This need for active engagement by people to make society work is particularly relevant for the work of public service professionals. Co-production has emerged as a general description of the process whereby clients work alongside professionals so that professionals can be more effective. It is the missing factor – labour from the consumer – that is required in every sphere of social endeavour.

The danger is that, without engaging this support, modern welfare systems and philanthropic programmes tend to impact more effectively on the day-to-day symptoms than on the underlying causes. There is also a danger that, without engaging the co-operation and confidence of clients or patients, professionals will tend to create dependency, convincing clients they have nothing worthwhile to offer

and undermining what systems of local support do still exist. Co-production is designed as an approach that reverses this process and redefines clients as assets, with life experience, the ability to care and many other valuable skills.

Co-production

This research came to two major conclusions about the spread of co-production. First, that we had been studying two overlapping categories:

■ what we might call 'generic' co-production, the effort to involve local people in mutual support and the delivery of services

■ 'institutional' co-production of the kind advocated by Cahn.

Both are clearly different shades of one spectrum, and there is an emerging co-production sector, though it may not be aware of itself as such.

The second conclusion is that generic co-production is both widespread and probably a natural part of human life. There are thousands of projects already happening that embody many of the principles of co-production, even if they are not all engaged in quite the same way, but co-production projects tend to be recognisable by some or all of the following characteristics. They:

■ provide opportunities for personal growth and development to people who have previously been treated as collective burdens on an overstretched system, rather than as potential assets

■ invest in strategies that develop the emotional intelligence of people and the capacity of local communities

■ use peer support networks instead of professionals as the best means of transferring knowledge and capabilities

■ reduce or blur the distinction between clients and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way services are developed and delivered. Services seem to be most effective here when people get to act in both roles – as providers as well as recipients

■ allow public service agencies to become catalysts and facilitators rather than central providers themselves

- devolve real responsibility, leadership and authority to 'users', and encourage self-organisation rather than direction from above

- offer participants a range of incentives – mostly sourced from spare capacity elsewhere in the system – which help to embed the key elements of reciprocity and mutuality.

These should also serve, not so much as a definition of co-production, but as a picture of what organisations look like when they use co-production successfully.

The difficulty is that an innovative voluntary sector has been using co-production to improve health, housing and education, and to reduce crime, but generally entirely outside the auspices and systems of the nationally funded services that are supposed to achieve this, and usually despite – rather than because of – welfare and administrative systems inside public services.

The public service institutions that we studied had been experimenting with co-production usually because of the enthusiasm of specific individuals inside the organisation. Their work implies that funding might be forthcoming eventually from public services, simply because co-production approaches are effective. But there also seems to be a danger that the whole concept could be subsumed into a more utilitarian public service agenda, aimed at reducing expenditure and the efficient pursuit of targets. This would undermine the human-scale nature of co-production, and the ability to define as assets almost any human capability. There is a need therefore to recognise that working in neighbourhoods is valuable in its own right. It must remain an end in itself as well as a means to other ends, and our interviews with outside practitioners stressed that repeatedly.

Individuals

This research confirmed the vital importance of social networks as a prerequisite for support for people outside paid work. Participants we interviewed confirmed that the projects had helped them extend their social networks and the range of opportunities open to them. They reported improved self-esteem and confidence, and often improved health. They enabled people to work together to achieve common goals, and to draw on resources contained within the group of participants.

The researchers found that the work the participants were doing was worthwhile and important, even though they were outside paid work. That implied that any official objective of full employment – one that regarded paid employment as the only

acceptable status for healthy adults of working age – that undermined this local effort was liable to be counterproductive, undermining social cohesion and other vital goals.

These benefits are more valuable both to individuals and their wider communities, and more sustainable, than participation that goes no further than committee-sitting and consultation. Our research suggests that co-production networks are helping to build capacity in communities in a more meaningful way – increasing awareness and understanding of community issues, bridging social divides and encouraging a willingness to challenge authority.

It also implies that there are enormous assets among people outside paid work, that these are human skills rather than trained ones and that engaging these skills in a reciprocal way, so that they are recognised – often through time banks – seems to be able to broaden the social reach of the projects.

Communities

All the projects emphasised empowering the participants and valuing their contribution, and those that were most successful seem also to have been those where reciprocity and mutuality were most prominent. One project, on the other hand, began with an emphasis on community leadership but, when it came to be led mainly by paid staff, seemed to lose much of its energy. Most of the projects were organised as time banks, which have reciprocity built into the basic design, and – although there were inevitably different ways of organising the details of reciprocity – this does seem to have allowed them to attract hard-to-reach groups more successfully.

It seems likely that some form of reciprocity can have stronger, wider and more lasting effects than conventional participation. The exact balance of rewards that is effective in different situations needs further investigation.

Institutions

The research findings also suggest something of a paradox. On the one hand, co-production projects can help break down institutional barriers; on the other hand, they require some barriers to be blurred already to have any chance of success. This seems to be an important problem, because there is no doubt that, in the prevailing climate and under existing administrative systems, breaking down enough institutional barriers is difficult.

Co-production seems to work, where it does work, largely through the efforts and inspiration of a few managers who can see the benefit, and often despite the best efforts of the system as a whole. This implies that the role of professional staff needs to change. If co-production is to be more mainstream, their basic task must shift from being fixers who focus entirely on problems to catalysts who focus on abilities.

The research also reflects the central importance of front-line staff in delivery and empowerment. To these ends, staff need more interpersonal, facilitative skills – rather than just having a rigid, delivery focus. To achieve this, staff morale is as important as client morale – in practice, the participation that they are asked to extend to clients is often not extended to them. Developing staff capacity is as important as developing the capacity of people outside paid work.

Part of the necessary management shift will be in the way institutions measure and evaluate their own progress because they will need to find ways to incentivise the asset-based model, and this will not be possible unless they are evaluated against broader well-being indicators. The current regime of narrow target-setting and technocratic commissioning systems does not encourage innovation and is deeply wasteful of the assets represented by clients. Time banks, on the other hand, are an effective method of valuing people's informal efforts, as long as they – or projects like them – can be tolerated by the current target-driven controls.

The capacity of communities to take on responsibility also seems to be related to the capacity of institutions to 'let go'. There is a dilemma about how to catalyse social energy without overformalising it, as well as the need for a new approach to risk that does not stifle much of what ordinary people do for themselves. This requires more space to experiment for staff, providing them with a sense of possibility, rather than reinforcing the sense that they are working in vast structures in which they have little power to change anything.

Government

The key issue for government here is the narrowness of the current model of public service delivery, incentivised by throughput rather than long-term recovery, managed by targets that often bear little relation to real people and blind to the assets that their clients represent. While services are managed in this way, the scope for embracing co-production as a mainstream idea – rather than as parallel production – is limited. Yet there is evidence of public services, and especially key enthusiasts inside public services who would like to do more – and want to find new ways of engaging clients as partners in the delivery of services in every area.

One area that clearly needs reform is the benefits system, so that welfare officials can positively encourage engagement with social networks. This requires a new official focus on volunteering and participation, not necessarily as a step towards paid work, but as a way of carrying out the vital work that is necessary for a healthy society and economy.

That means that informal, self-help activity has to be positively encouraged for people outside paid work. Policy makers need to develop an acceptable way of allowing people on benefits to be recompensed for their effort in the community, without them losing money, and to reform Incapacity Benefit regulations so they stop discriminating against effective methods of rehabilitation.

Yet simply extending benefits to cover these areas of non-paid work may also undermine the very energy of the sector by seeking to define it, regulate it and strip it of its vital informality. It is important that this new category of 'work' is rewarded in such a way that participants can earn the basic necessities of life, as anyone carrying out vital work to society deserves. But this must be done through local intermediary agencies – which may often be properly resourced time banks – which can manage it but defend its informality.

Conclusions

■ There is an emerging co-production sector – both inside and outside public services – where service users are regarded as assets, involved in mutual support and the delivery of services. But, because there has been no way of describing these projects to distinguish them from mainstream volunteering, they have not hitherto been categorised or studied together.

■ Co-production, where it has been happening successfully, has generally been outside the auspices and systems of the nationally funded services that are supposed to achieve this, and usually despite – rather than because of – administrative systems inside public services.

■ Public and voluntary institutions that successfully involve their users, as well as their families and neighbours, are likely to be recognisable by a range of co-production characteristics (see above), which include an understanding that people who have previously been treated as collective burdens on an overstretched system are actually untapped potential assets.

- Co-production projects can help those involved to extend their social networks and friendships, and the range of opportunities open to them.

- The official objective of 'full employment' – an overemphasis on paid employment for everyone of working age – threatens to undermine the vital work that people outside paid work are doing in their own neighbourhoods.

- Some kind of reciprocal relationship between users and organisations seems to be able to broaden the social reach of the projects, and time banks are an effective – though not the only – way of valuing their contribution.

- Organisations that want to develop co-productive ways of working will need to focus not just on clients' problems but also on enabling their abilities.

- Co-production project co-ordinators can be isolated and overstretched, even based inside public services, and developing staff capacity is as important as developing the capacity of people outside paid work.

- The benefits system needs to be able to provide incentives for those outside paid work to get more involved in their neighbourhoods. This new category of 'work' must be rewarded in such a way that participants can earn the basic necessities of life, but this should be done through local intermediary agencies – which may often be properly resourced time banks – which can manage it but defend its informality.

1 Introduction

> It's not about money. I meet people who can help me if I'm in great
> trouble – it's like a friendship.
> (London time bank participant)

Sue is a single mother living in a run-down and inaccessible estate in the Welsh Valleys. She is unemployed, but not inactive. She helps to run and raise money for the local youth club – the only facility of its kind anywhere near. She has helped to launch a local community garden and is among those who run the local adopt-a-station scheme for the local railway station.

This is worthwhile work, and some of it extends the scope and effectiveness of traditional public services. Local police, interviewed as part of this research, said that her adopt-a-station scheme had reduced vandalism and continues to save them time and money. Yet current government policy would very much prefer her to be in paid employment, in one of the few probably repetitive and low-paid jobs that are available locally.

Her role – in an unofficial category between unemployment and employment – is the heart of this study. The research allowed us to look at three sites where other people like Sue find themselves at 'work' in this way, not so much as volunteers or even 'participants' in the accepted official sense, but working reciprocally with public services and others for non-financial awards, and to improve the neighbourhoods where they live.

This may be a sub-category of traditional volunteering and it may be a sub-category of formal work, but it has come to be known on both sides of the Atlantic as 'co-production'. This co-production – often, but not exclusively between people without paid work and voluntary organisations and public services – where it is emerging, how beneficial it is, and how it might be extended if it is beneficial, is the subject of this report.

In particular, the purpose of the research was to look at how the participation of people outside paid work could have an impact on the effectiveness of mainstream service delivery, the nature of the collaboration between these individuals and the institutions they are working with – and what kind of relationship worked best. We used a broad definition of co-production to select projects for study. Those projects that took part were all characterised by:

■ an asset-based approach to participation – seeing local people or service users as assets, and as an integral part of the research design and delivery

■ an obvious and intentional 'social network approach' where the creation of networks and building of social capital was seen as an essential indicator of success.

Many of the projects were time banks, but not all of them. All were organisations in the public and voluntary sector that are using co-production in various ways, supporting and enabling their clients and beneficiaries to play an active role in their recovery and that of their neighbours. Activities involved included mentoring, advising, befriending, doing repairs for, shopping for, tutoring each other and a range of other activities as well.

Research methods

Our research methodology, in keeping with the concept of co-production, aimed to recruit and train field researchers from the study population – people outside paid work. This was challenging and added significantly to the time taken.

Each of the three research sites developed its own approach within an agreed framework. Co-ordinators developed training programmes (see Appendix 5) and recruited and trained local people from some of the projects to become community action researchers. The teams used a range of approaches including face-to-face interviews, paper-based questionnaires and focus groups to assess the impact of a co-production approach in terms of whether and how it:

■ affected participants' self-esteem, confidence and well-being

■ strengthened social capital and social networks

■ generated new opportunities for personal development.

In total, 65 local residents were interviewed across the three sites. On-site co-ordinators also interviewed 41 front-line staff and local professionals to get their perspective on the impact of a co-production approach on their work. At the same time, staff at the new economics foundation interviewed a range of high-level policy makers and academics about their views on the merits of a co-production approach, and barriers to its implementation.

The research methods used were primarily those of 'interpretative phenomenological analysis', which meant listening to people telling their own stories, comparing them and analysing them – with elements of focus from checking those conclusions with those who have been involved with the research at every level (Reid *et al.*, 2005).

Recruiting and training some of the target population as researchers was one of the most innovative aspects of the research. It also gave us a better insight into the difficulties faced by those outside paid work. When benefits officials discovered what one of the researchers was doing – even though they had been encouraging him to access official training and to get work experience – it led to a series of investigations into his benefits status, which are still continuing.

For the others, there was some evidence that involvement had improved their life in other ways. One ended up in paid employment at one of the research sites. The research team in South London is likely to be involved in other evaluation work in local time banks. Other researchers agreed that it had helped them overcome problems like depression or stress and had made a 'huge difference' in their lives.

There were, of course, implications for the research of using techniques like this. We chose to use lay researchers who were involved in the issues because they seemed likely to get to the heart of the issues better in their interviews than outsiders, and because previous research efforts in this area using more statistical and more objective approaches have, we felt, often missed some of the subtleties of co-production and community development of this kind. They have certainly been unable to reach clear conclusions about causality. But, obviously, there was a danger that the personal experiences of the researchers might colour the interviews, and the interpretation of the stories they have uncovered has had to be done with care – feeding back findings, discussing implications and comparing interviews from different sites to establish objectivity.

The main pitfall about this kind of research is that, because it avoids numbers, it is hard for the findings to come as a surprise to researchers. The extent to which this is still possible is a measure of how successfully objective it is. There were aspects of these findings – perhaps most notably the difficulty that big public service institutions have with co-production – that were surprising, even disappointing. But the findings are also fascinating, and we hope some of that fascination with what might nonetheless be possible is clear from this report.

Case study sites

The three study sites were similarly excluded socially and economically, but their social mix was extremely diverse, though with particular common issues related to public health. Each one also provided access to a range of linked projects.

South-East London

South-East London is densely populated, multicultural: almost a third of the population is Black African and Black Caribbean. Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham – the boroughs involved – are among the poorest in the UK. Of the 13,350 on Incapacity Benefit in Lambeth, 10 per cent are under 30. A third of the population also lives alone. The research partner in South London was the South London and Maudsley (Slam) NHS Trust, which provides mental health services from 82 sites across four London boroughs. Projects covered included:

■ *Rushey Green Time Bank* (based in a doctor's surgery)

■ *Cares of Life project* (managed by Slam and aimed primarily at the black and minority ethnic population).

Welsh Valleys

The Welsh Valleys are semi-rural with very poor transport links. As many as 40 per cent of the working population of Caerphilly have no qualifications. Merthyr Tydfil and Neath have 30 per cent of the population with chronic health problems. Nearly half of all households have one or more people living with a limiting lifelong illness. As much as 99 per cent of the population is white. The research partner was the Wales Institute for Community Currencies at the University of Wales, Newport. Projects interviewed included:

■ *Rhymney Time Bank*

■ *Blaengarw Time Centre*

■ *Dinas Time Bank* (all three time banks attached to community centres).

Gorbals

Gorbals Initiative, the research partner in Glasgow, was established in 1991 to lead the regeneration of this historic inner city district. Unemployment rates have fallen significantly in recent years (including a 50 per cent cut in long-term unemployment since 1999) but rates of economic inactivity or 'worklessness' remain a problem. There is a substantial group of young people who are not in education, employment or training on leaving school, and a high proportion of residents on long-term health- or sickness-related benefits. Only 44 per cent of the Gorbals population of working age were in work in 2001, compared with a Scottish average of 65 per cent. While many of the projects studied were time banks, in Glasgow we studied a wider variety of initiatives, as follows:

- *Gorbals Time Bank* (community-based time bank)

- *Peer tutoring project* (based on a programme originally tested in the Chicago schools system)

- *Patch* (self-help group for lone parents)

- *Seal* (healthy living network, focused on – but not restricted to – the promotion of healthier eating in the Gorbals)

- *Peer advocacy project* (helping to welcome and settle refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow)

- *Roots* (refugee community organisation involved in a range of local activities, including social enterprise).

Summary

Co-production has various meanings, but all of them relate to the critical issue that professionals need clients, their families or their neighbours to play if they are to succeed. It is 'work' that is not paid – at least not with conventional money – but does not quite fit into the category of traditional volunteering or formal work. This co-production – often, but not exclusively between people without paid work and voluntary organisations and public services – where it is emerging, how beneficial it is, and how it might be extended if it is beneficial, is the subject of this report.

Our research was designed particularly to look at how the participation of people outside paid work could have an impact on the effectiveness of mainstream service delivery, the nature of the collaboration between these individuals and the institutions they are working with – and what kind of relationship worked best. Those projects that took part were all characterised by:

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Our research methodology, in keeping with the concept of co-production, aimed to recruit and train field researchers from the study population – people outside paid work. The research methods used were primarily those of 'interpretative phenomenological analysis', which meant listening to people telling their own stories, comparing them and analysing them.

We looked at a number of different projects that broadly came under the category of co-production. Most of these were time banks, using various different models, but some measured and rewarded people's efforts in other ways. They were across three sites – in Gorbals in Glasgow, in the Welsh Valleys and in the London boroughs of Southwark and Lewisham.

Blaengarw Time Centre

The Time Centre at Blaengarw is based in the local Workmen's Hall, built in 1894, and was, until the closure of the mines in the 1980s, at the heart of community life for the mining communities in the Garw valley. Now in 2005, as the base for the community work of the Creation Development Trust, it has been revitalised. It is a huge space with numerous smaller rooms and a large central hall, and it acts as host to many local community groups and activities.

Blaengarw itself is the remotest village in the Garw valley, Bridgend. The Workmen's Hall had always been somewhere where people could get involved in community life, but it suffered from the closure of the mines. It was part of the centre of the community in Blaengarw, a focal point for social and educational activities.

Continued

The time bank in Blaengarw uses the 'Time Centre' model and officially began in April 2004, with its base in the Hall. This allows people to pay in time credits for attendance at social events in the centre, such as bingo, salsa classes or a New Year's Eve party. They can earn the time credits by doing 'voluntary' work in the Hall or in the surrounding community. People are also able to build up a small debit, which can be repaid by doing voluntary work in the Hall at a later date. The Time Centre works on an hour-to-hour basis, in that one hour of community work allows one hour of attendance at an event.

Pen Dinas Flats, Dinas, Rhonda Cynon Taff

Approximately 30 minutes' drive away from Blaengarw is a block of 66 flats called Pen Dinas. The Pen Dinas Flats consist of five blocks – six of the flats are home to families who have lived there for the last 25 years. Unemployment among residents is high.

A Valleys Kids' Community Development Worker began her post in 2002 and is based at Flat 54, Pen Dinas, a community space that is intended to serve the people in the flats and the wider Dinas community. The Dinas community flat is made up of two large rooms and a kitchen, plus a long corridor with storage space and a small, safe patio garden, which has recently been renovated to a high standard.

The project has been running after-school clubs over the last three years, together with mural painting, fairs, river cleans-ups and litter picks.

The time bank in Dinas began in May 2004 with the aim of bringing in more of the people who live in Pen Dinas to help with or get involved in projects in and around the flats. The time bank model in Pen Dinas has won Awards for Participation and currently there are three main adult volunteers who come to the community flat on a day-to-day basis, thus accruing a large number of time credits.

Other adults are involved, but on a less regular basis. Again, people earn one time credit for one hour of community work, which could include cleaning the community flat, planting plants in the community garden, or helping out at an after-school club. These time credits can then be exchanged for an award.

One of the most popular awards for which these have been exchanged are driving lessons, although one of the volunteers is using her time credits for hiring

a maths tutor for her daughter. There are also one-off groups who get involved with, for example, River Tidy Up, and there are those from a younger age group who run evening groups for young people. These younger people have been awarded with trips. In this model, the time credits and awards are currently managed by a project worker with input from volunteers in terms of ideas.

Rhymney Time Bank, Caerphilly Borough

Half-an-hour's drive from Pen Dinas is Rhymney, a small town of about 7,000. The Time Bank was introduced as a way of re-engaging young people, with longer-term volunteers giving some of their time credits to younger people on the agreement that trips would also be run for them, as a token of appreciation for their work. It is thus significantly different from other projects, as it is specifically trying to bring in young people in an area where their involvement has been difficult.

The time bank model in Rhymney is 'Awards for Participation' using trips as awards – examples include the video project where young people earned time credits for designing, producing and acting in a drug education video, and an Open College Network (OCN) youth training course where young people used time credits to do the training and, as a result of some of the voluntary work they did, also managed to go on a residential weekend using their time credits.

2 Background to co-production

> We're ordinary lay people. Sometimes if we want to do something, we
> might not be allowed to.
> (Interview with volunteer in Wales)

This chapter looks at the idea of co-production, where it came from and the various ways in which it is used. It also looks at the emerging co-production sector and the issues it seeks to address.

The history of a concept

> Clients are acted upon. Co-production implies that citizens can play an
> active role in producing public goods and services of consequence to
> them.
> (Ostrom, 1996)

The vital importance of social capital in the maintenance of public health, tackling crimes and other social imperatives is supported by a growing volume of literature. The concept remains controversial in economic circles, but it is clear that there is some element – whether it is trust or another kind of social cohesion – that can inoculate neighbourhoods against the kind of disintegration that so many have experienced (Putnam, 2000).

In fact, a vast array of vital civic work and citizen engagement – much of it essential to a democratic society – is undertaken on an unpaid basis, and in many ways the social support provided by families and neighbourhoods underpins everything else in the economy (Etzioni, 1997; Cahn, 2001). Studies like the ground-breaking research into different neighbourhoods in Chicago concluded that 'collective efficacy' – the 'shared willingness of residents to intervene and social trust, a sense of engagement and ownership of public space' – was by far the biggest determinant of low crime (Sampson *et al.*, 1997).

This need for active engagement by people to make society work is particularly relevant for the work of public service professionals. Co-production has emerged as a general description of the process whereby clients work alongside professionals in order to make public services more effective. It is the missing factor – labour from the consumer – that is needed in every sphere of social endeavour. The danger is that, without engaging this support, modern welfare systems and philanthropic

programmes tend to impact more effectively on the day-to-day symptoms than on the underlying causes. There is also a danger that, without engaging the co-operation and confidence of clients or patients, professionals will tend to create dependency, convincing clients they have nothing worthwhile to offer and undermining what systems of local support do still exist (Cahn, 2001). Co-production is designed as an approach that reverses this process and redefines clients as assets, with life experience and the ability to care.

There are at least three different but related ways in which the word was originally used. The term 'co-production' began as a way of describing the critical role that service 'consumers' have in making it possible for professionals to make a success of their jobs. It was originally coined at the University of Indiana in the 1970s by Elinor Ostrom and other academic sociologists to explain why neighbourhood crime rates went up in Chicago when police stopped walking the beat and lost their vital connections with local community members (Ostrom, 1973).

It was used also in the UK in the 1980s by Anna Coote and others at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the King's Fund to describe the reciprocal relationship necessary between professionals and individuals to make positive change concrete (see, for example, Coote, 2002). It has been a word that relates particularly to the necessity of a two-way relationship between doctors and patients, but could apply equally well to other public services.

The concept has also been deepened and put into a broader context by the work of the civil rights lawyer Edgar Cahn (2001), who emphasises the involvement of the wider neighbourhood of families and neighbours as well. Cahn has urged that the credibility of co-production depends on the following values.

- *Assets:* every human being can be a builder and contributor.

- *Redefining work:* work must be redefined to include whatever it takes to rear healthy children, preserve families, make neighbourhoods safe and vibrant, care for the frail and vulnerable, redress injustice and make democracy work.

- *Reciprocity:* the impulse to give back is universal. Wherever possible, we must replace one-way acts of largesse in whatever form with two-way transactions between individuals, as well as between people and institutions.

- *Social networks:* humans require a social infrastructure as essential as roads or bridges. Social networks require ongoing investments of social capital generated by trust, reciprocity and civic engagement.

This diversity of origin, and variation in meaning, has been a complicating and challenging factor in this project. We used Cahn's model to inform the research throughout, but there was inevitably a gap between his objective and reality on the ground, and that led to debate among those we worked with about where co-production begins and ends. Co-production as an ideal is clearly not passive participation in decision making, or community representation. Nor is it exactly volunteering, though it does involve the ethos of volunteering. It is active and rewarding yet unpaid work, though it has also become clear in this study that the boundaries between these categories tend to blur considerably.

On the other hand, this research took place in the context of enormous innovation in community participation of all kinds – some of it traditional volunteering whereby an individual is helped, but most of it moving in some senses towards the ideal of mutual support and self-help, and regarding those outside paid work as valuable assets in themselves. This leads us to conclude, first, that elements of co-production – a reciprocal relationship between people, professionals and each other – is actually the natural state of affairs, but has been undermined in recent generations by overprofessionalisation and dependency. Second, it leads us to conclude that there is a considerable co-production sector in the making. This includes many of the insights emerging from generations of community activists and government funding schemes, from City Challenge to the Big Lottery.

We have been very aware that we were studying only a small part of these. But, because there was no word that described them, as distinct from mainstream volunteering for example, they have not generally been considered together as one phenomenon.

The emerging co-production sector

The past three decades have produced a number of successful examples of co-production in action. The squatter camps of Orangi in Karachi successfully provided themselves with drainage and mains water faster and at a far lower cost than the more accepted top-down method. Habitat for Humanity has made houses more affordable by including work building other people's homes into the mortgage payments. Some programmes – notably the Bolsa Escuela scheme in Brazil, which pays mothers to make sure their children attend school – have made direct payments to clients or their families to recognise the efforts they are making.

The time banks movement in the UK and time dollar movement in the USA are explicitly aiming at a co-production approach by building alliances with local public

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services. Indeed, they provided many of the detailed case studies in this report. Time banks use a 'time credit' system to measure and reward the efforts people make – often very small contributions like phoning neighbours or helping them face-to-face – and gives them limited spending power for what they need. Around the world, these time credits can variously be used to access food, clothing, computers, legal services, health-care services, housing, rides to the shops and even enrolment in college courses.

But there are clearly other projects that might be described as co-production that take a different approach, from Manningham Housing Association in Bradford to the first 'extended school', Mitchell High School in Stoke-on-Trent (Burns, 2004). The 'club house' movement in mental health rehabilitation also hands responsibility to recovering patients in a similar way, as have the latest innovations at the Design Council. The Expert Patient scheme in the NHS is clearly an example of co-production (see Appendix 5), as is the 'Social Model' that lies behind the idea of independent living in the disabled people's movement. There is also a strong tradition in community development literature that recognises the resources that individuals represent. Yet the idea of co-production has received very little attention around the world, except as individual projects.

There has also been some research on these projects in a way that recognises the common elements and what they can achieve. Research at the Elderplan Social Health Maintenance Organisation (HMO) in Brooklyn has shown that time banks can have a considerable impact on retention of clients (Metropolitan Jewish Health System, 2003). Other research in London shows there are clear links between involvement in time banks and reduced levels of medication and hospitalisation (Harris and Craig, 2004). Time banks in the UK have been shown to be able to reach the sections of society – older people, young, minority ethnic communities and those with a record of mental health difficulties – when these are not accessible to other social systems like conventional volunteering (Seyfang and Smith, 2002). These have not emphasised the relationship with other co-production approaches, yet it is clear that a body of practice that has some common elements that this research has helped to identify is emerging.

Opportunities for co-production

> We have lost that part of our culture that says people can do things together. We have disempowered people. We need a change from that culture, to say that we do it together. Now people are advocating this idea of co-production.
> (Interview with Valleys Kids staff member)

If clients are *assets* even though they may be too young, too damaged, too old or too unstable to get a job in the market, it implies they are still needed to play a useful role. The difficulty is that, in many ways, our welfare systems and philanthropic bodies are geared in the opposite direction – that people are defined primarily by what they lack and the administrative systems tend to expect them to be very grateful, but passive, when that is provided. To get more help they primarily have to display more problems.

This is particularly relevant to the future of public services, as various arms of government are considering how to find the resources for social care with a rapidly ageing population (see Department of Health, 2005). There is a growing consensus, emerging from many of the interviews conducted for this research, that the Government will not be able to meet demands unless more responsibility is delegated to users and more mutual forms of delivery are developed. There is also a recognition that 'bridging social capital' – the term that describes the links across racial or socio-economic divides – is vital to improving public service outcomes, but is also the most elusive and the hardest to build.

Yet we have become increasingly reliant on a service delivery model for public services that takes no account of these issues. It is detached from the community by the professional nature of the services, the hierarchical structure of organisations and the increasingly technocratic systems of delivery. The disengagement from social networks by service professionals is mirrored by a chronic lack of trust in monolithic national institutions among their users. This gives a double disadvantage to socially excluded communities.

Over time, relationships between community members and 'helping professionals' have become more detached and distanced. Often that means that the user has to fit the service rather than the service fit the user or their family and that the demands of the organisation and its systems are more important than the needs of individual users (Bailey, 2005).

As part of the research, and specifically to explore this context, we commissioned three essays and held seminars to discuss them with opinion formers in each of the three areas. These were as follows.

■ *The downside of full employment:* discussing whether official emphasis on getting people back to paid employment was undermining the contribution that those outside paid employment were making, and could make in the future.

■ *Can the NHS go beyond illness?:* looking at the structural reasons that the NHS was failing to involve its patients – and especially those on Incapacity Benefit – as co-producers of health.

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■ *Natural resources:* arguing that older people outside paid work were a vital resource in a whole range of areas.

The seminars, and the broader research that they informed, confirmed that public policy is feeling its way towards the questions at the heart of this report. What kind of public service professionals can maximise self-help and independence? How can social networks be rebuilt through public sector agencies? Why is it so hard to mainstream innovative programmes of mutual support? These are issues that policy makers increasingly find themselves struggling with, and which this report seeks to address.

Summary

Co-production has emerged as a general description of the process whereby clients work alongside professionals in order to make public services more effective. The danger is that, without engaging this support, modern welfare systems and philanthropic programmes tend to impact more effectively on the day-to-day symptoms than on the underlying causes. There is also a danger that, without engaging the co-operation and confidence of clients or patients, professionals will tend to create dependency, convincing clients they have nothing worthwhile to offer and undermining what systems of local support do still exist. Co-production is designed as an approach that reverses this process and redefines clients as assets, with life experience and the ability to care.

But exactly where co-production begins and where it ends is harder to pin down. We have concluded, first, that elements of co-production – a reciprocal relationship between people, professionals and each other – is actually the natural state of affairs, but has been undermined in recent generations by overprofessionalisation and dependency. Second, we believe there is a considerable co-production sector in the making. This includes many of the insights emerging from generations of community activists and government funding schemes, from City Challenge to the Big Lottery.

But there are policy challenges. If clients are *assets* even though they may be too young, too damaged, too old or too unstable to get a job in the market that implies they are still needed to play a useful role. The difficulty is that, in many ways, our welfare systems and philanthropic bodies are geared in the opposite direction – that people are defined primarily by what they lack and the administrative systems tend to expect them to be very grateful, but passive, when that is provided. To get more help they primarily have to display more problems.

These are the issues that lie behind this project.

Gorbals Time Bank

Gorbals Time Bank was established in 2000 to encourage Gorbals residents to share their time and skills. A range of skills is shared among the 95 members, although it is a smaller group of 60 that are most active. Members earn *liptons* for their time, and are able to exchange these periodically for second-hand computers and vouchers. The project is guided by a small 'kitchen cabinet' of members, who organise social events and influence the shape of the project.

Peer tutoring

Peer tutoring is run by a local ecumenical project, Bridging the Gap, in association with Holyrood Secondary School. Originally conceived as 'Gorbals Youth Bank', and run by the Gorbals Initiative, the project trains fifth-year students to support younger pupils making the transition to secondary school. The project rewards the tutors with residentials, vouchers and training. The project has been running for two years.

Seal

Seal is a community health project, offering alternative therapies, a fruit *barra* with reduced-price fruit and vegetables, counselling and a range of other services to the local community. The group has a very active body of volunteers, some of whom have now become staff members. Volunteers are offered training, free alternative therapies and oils, etc., and are supported in bringing their own ideas to fruition. A number of volunteers are also active members of the management committee. Staff are highly committed to enabling volunteer participation. The project has been running for ten years.

Roots

Roots is a small asylum seeker/refugee-led group. Although the group meets regularly, it does not yet have a base and is therefore waiting to develop its funded activities. It plans to open a community shop selling second-hand textiles, which will be refurbished by volunteers. Volunteers will be offered training in sewing skills, as well as access to support and welfare advice. They also receive expenses in return for time contributed to the project.

The project was established by volunteers, in order to meet the humanitarian and social needs of local asylum seekers and refugees. Volunteers offer each

other a lot of personal support – particularly in the current climate of racial attacks. They seem to derive the majority of their personal support and social networks from the group. The project does not employ any paid staff. It is actively supported by a Community Development Worker from Gorbals Community Forum.

Peer advocacy

Peer advocacy is a project based at the Gorbals Initiative, which has been running for the past year. The project offers support, integration and orientation for asylum seekers and refugees who have been settled in Glasgow. It provides three main elements: training for advocates, support for asylum seekers/ refugees and a community training initiative to educate organisations who are in contact with asylum seekers on current issues.

Volunteers are involved in both the advocacy of asylum seekers and the training initiative. In return for time, volunteers are offered training on relevant issues (group and individual training is offered) and are reimbursed expenses.

Patch

Patch is a group of Gorbals parents of children under five years old. The object of the group is to support parents to enable young children to have the best possible start in life. The group meets twice a week, offering activities for parents and children, support and advice for parents, and a free healthy lunch. Volunteers/group members receive training and childcare, food, entertainments and activities for children and visits in exchange for the time they give to the management committee, supporting other parents or organising activities and catering for other group members.

The group has been constituted since 1998 and, during that time, a number of parents have moved through the project into employment and education. At times the project has been a victim of its own success, as experienced volunteers have moved on and left the project, and it has re-entered a development phase while it supports less experienced participants in decision making and management of the project. The project employs two full-time staff: a co-ordinator and, more recently, an administrator. Both staff are themselves local parents who have been involved with the group prior to employment.

3 Co-production and individuals

> It doesn't have to be a big thing like getting a job in a new area of work or something. Just the little things where you see the changes in people that they have got that extra bit of confidence or their English has improved that bit more or whatever it is. It's just really wonderful to be able to help people to get to that point, and they are really supportive of each other and – it's just lovely!
> (Glasgow refugee peer advocacy project staff)

There is no doubt that involvement in the projects we studied was having an impact on the lives of those taking part, in increased health, well-being, confidence and social networks and largely as a by-product of the efforts they were making for other people. There was no 'control' group in this study, so it is hard to pinpoint whether this would have been any different in a traditional volunteering project. Yet the links between these projects and public services and other groups, as well as the social reach that these projects have, suggest that it is these aspects that particularly make a difference.

The other overwhelming sense from the research was that the changes that take place are often extremely subtle. Their ripple effects may make them important to the individual outside paid work, but in themselves may be hard to pinpoint and hard to categorise for the purpose of public sector targets.

Self-esteem, confidence and well-being

> Something that someone would do is a really big thing, but, for another person, it wouldn't be because they are quite capable of doing that. Like the young girl who couldn't look at you – actually her looking at you and having a conversation is something.
> (Glasgow peer tutoring project staff)

Most of those taking part in the projects that we looked at had been suffering from depression and low self-esteem to some degree, often associated with unemployment, loss of status, relationship breakdown and so on. The main area of unambiguous success was in this area – almost all the participants we interviewed reported improvements across the board in self-esteem, confidence and well-being. These benefits were strongly correlated with being able to meet new people, and a

sense that their contribution to the project was valued and worthwhile. This is hardly surprising given that so many mentioned isolation and loneliness as problems. One retired psychiatric nurse from London put it like this:

> I just sat at home sleeping before. Just going on walks or window shopping. Now I'm fully occupied with computer lessons and I go to the library to read the *Nursing Times*. I did an introduction to counselling. My skills help with Cares of Life Project, encouraging people to talk – I'm happier now – it takes me back to the days I was working on the wards.

Loss of confidence was also mentioned – often the result of being a parent outside paid work, being made redundant, retirement, the loss of friends or relatives, or chronic physical health problems or depression. The recovery of confidence seems to have been a result of the activities that people are involved with, from their own achievements and through the feedback they receive from staff and others. It seems likely that users of traditional health services or other aspects of welfare find that these can sometimes undermine people's capacity to attribute improvement in their conditions or circumstances to their own efforts, and co-production projects seem to provide some element of an antidote to that. As one Wales participant put it:

> If it wasn't for Jo and Andrew and Becky *[time bank staff]*, I don't think I would have done it.

Involvement might not have impacted directly on their basic underlying problems, but often seems to have allowed them to see them differently, as something they could tackle. Those are very subtle shifts, though significant ones, and may not emerge from more formal figures. One participant described themselves as more patient after their involvement in the research.

Some of the improvement was attributed to widened horizons. This alone seems able to make people feel better about themselves, like the Kosovan men who were referred to one London time bank through the traumatic stress unit at Slam:

> They were seen as 'doing nothing'. They had been severely traumatised by their experiences and hated how they were perceived. All they knew was farming – working with the soil and growing things. So we have linked them to gardening schemes, they can grow food and feel useful. They can't work but at least they can help feed their families. We are planning an allotment now.
> (Staff of a London time bank)

The research implies the value of increasing opportunities to learn by experience and to learn informally rather than just being required to attend formal training. Although there was considerable evidence of co-production projects building confidence and esteem by recognising people's skills, some projects were clearly better at this than others. There was some evidence that, as projects became more professionalised – with more paid professional staff – there was less commitment to looking at users as assets and asking them for help. Also the projects that were not explicitly designed as time banks were not recording how far those involved were being asked for help.

Health

> There wasn't much *[participation]* last year, but there's more of it now – like the food co-op we've got now: 167 bags requires participation big time. But that's not just physical, it's psychological as well.
> (Staff member at time bank in Wales)

Participants across all sites experienced a range of significant health problems and often cited the multiple benefits of social interaction on their health and well-being. Some reported improved fitness and energy levels as a result of getting out and about by involvement in the projects. In many cases, physical health had been positively affected by the activity ('gets me out of the house' and 'less likely to smoke or drink'). One London participant with severe ME, who now uses tutoring and literacy skills to help neighbours through local time banks, put it like this:

> I am very isolated. I might even have to pay someone to do the cleaning in order to have contact with someone. Having someone to see on a regular basis makes me physically less tense, as does exercise like walks in the park. Stress affects my health to a certain extent, so having regular contact and conversation in small doses can actually give me energy rather than tire me out.

But health promotion activities were also being delivered by many of the participating projects, though rarely supported by statutory agencies responsible for health improvement initiatives (the exception as far as this research was concerned was Slam). These included fruit and vegetable co-ops (all sites), healthy walks, gym buddies (Downham), diabetes support group (Rushey Green), healthy eating advice, stop smoking groups, stress management (Gorbals) and salsa classes (Blaengarw Time Centre). These also seem to have had an impact:

> I walk more and I go to a gym, an hour's swimming and an hour's gym a
> week. I eat more healthily now – well it's because I am a diabetic and
> have to eat more healthily … because through fruit barrows and all that
> you are promoting health, so you want to do that.
> (Glasgow participant)

It is hard to pinpoint precisely what the intervention was that lies behind these
changes to physical health, but it is easier to make the link with improvements to
mental health. There were high levels of depression, loneliness, anxiety and
negative stress across all sites. It is well documented that getting involved in
volunteering of all kinds can have an impact on this, and this was certainly confirmed
by the interviews. There seems to have been a positive feedback here as well.
Involvement in the projects gave people better access to social networks, but often
also direct access to alternative therapies, self-management training and self-help
activities. Then, by earning time credits for their efforts, they could also 'buy' other
services like training through Slam.

There was considerable interest among mental health professionals in these kinds of
approaches. Their difficulty is the need to provide peer networks for patients, and the
need to tap into families and communities for people with severe mental health
problems. For one senior mental health manager, the purpose of the service must be
to give people their lives back and support them through the journey of recovery.
'Keep your life' is one of the new commitments announced by Slam.

The question here, and with other stories about the effect of co-production on
individual participants, is whether any volunteering activity would have had the same
effect. At the other extreme, one NHS professional said they believed that all
successful interventions are already co-produced and front-line staff are well aware
of the importance of taking this approach to secure successful outcomes.

Skills and work

> Now I'm prepared to get up and have a go myself and I feel a lot better
> for it. I'm chuffed to the bone actually – that I can handle a computer and
> put it on. My goal is to get through the course.
> (Participant in Wales)

Economic gains to participants were less immediately obvious, but were talked about
in many cases. Financial gains were particularly difficult to quantify. Few participants
were willing or able to put a monetary value on contributions made or received, and

(with the partial exception of the time banks) projects did not generally attempt to collect this information. It was clear, however, that such direct benefits as there were – typically expenses, excursions and other incentives in kind – were not always the motivation for getting involved. This is no doubt in large part due to the potential impact on participants' entitlement to welfare benefits. It is true, though, that young people found driving lessons particularly attractive. These acted also as an entry point to a world with greater self-confidence, through gaining new skills to increased job potential and, crucially, an exposure to the world of volunteering, to which they may return in later life.

There was some evidence that participation allowed people to do things that they could not otherwise have done because of financial constraints – providing mothers with driving lessons, for example, especially in Dinas where the bus service was rare and unreliable. But this was not usually seen as financial gain, though one participant with ME said she spends less on taxi fares now that her time bank membership enables access to people with cars who take her on outings, shopping or medical appointments. There was also evidence that people took part in outings (Wales) when they would not otherwise have done, simply because they had earned them as a reward:

> Perhaps I wouldn't go otherwise. If I really, really wanted it, I would pay for it, but, if I sort of liked the idea and I had to pay, I would think, 'oh I don't know if I'll go'.
> (Dinas Time Bank volunteer)

But, even if there had been little or no direct material improvement in their lives, people frequently began to consider new options for personal development because of the boost in confidence associated with participation. Many had been able to gain free access to formal training courses in a wide range of subjects, from computing to first aid. Others had benefited from informal learning opportunities, such as stress management, and organisational and communication skills. Many of the projects had made arrangements with training partners so that participants could access wider training with 'time credits', including first aid, health and safety, IT, food hygiene, committee skills, presentation skills, sign language, alternative therapies, driving lessons, time management and assertiveness training.

Taken together, these findings indicate that co-production has the potential to achieve significant improvements in employability for some of those furthest from the labour market. Several of those interviewed had used the projects as a stepping stone back into work, and a few had moved into further or higher education. Frequently, these moves represented a change of career or new direction for the individual concerned – participation led to a step change in ambition and prospects.

In some cases the skills that were improving were softer ones, including life and coping skills. Sometimes it was simply raised aspirations for themselves or their families, though – because poor self-esteem and life skills can be a major barrier to employment – and this is important (Craig, 2003). A Patch participant in Glasgow said:

> Maybe I have just grown up a lot in the time that I have been going to Patch. I find it easier to sit down and talk to women about whatever … also as well, a while back, some asylum seekers started coming to Patch and they did not get a very good response from some people and I thought that was not great, so we spoke about it at the board meeting and now we are getting some flyers printed up, trying to be more welcoming. Yeah, now I would have the confidence to go over and speak to anybody.

Many of them mentioned the strong positive impact of informal encouragement, support and coaching by staff and other participants to attend training, build skills and try new things. A staff member from Patch in Glasgow put it like this:

> There are wee pockets of success – of parents having the confidence to go on and go to college or do a course, or participate in the Positive Parenting Programme. They say: 'Oh, that's not for me', and the next thing you know, they are doing it.

Many of the interviewees were, at best, on the margins of being able to do paid work but some did access paid employment after their involvement – admittedly, some as staff at projects where they previously participated as members. Some participants mentioned that their activities had improved their employment prospects, and had positively affected their confidence, outlook, knowledge of community work, building a network of contacts, getting 'a taste of working', references, motivation and people skills. Some mentioned an increased awareness of new opportunities, which could lead to employment. It is hard to attribute this to involvement categorically, but there is no doubt that it played a part.

Staff at the refugee peer advocacy project in Glasgow talked about one volunteer who was very unsure of herself:

> She slowly built up her confidence to go on and she has realised what she can do. She has become involved in other activities with us, and now she's got at least one other volunteer placement for herself and is looking for more. She is useful to people. You can see an enormous change in

> her. It's wonderful. She could speak English. Not brilliantly, but well, but she lacked confidence in her abilities to do it. So much so that she was able to co-present a seminar at a conference with an audience of maybe 15 people – which she actually did twice. She didn't think she could do it. She did it. It was just a great thing.

Social reach

> Crucially for me, what do you get if you ask for volunteers? You get people who have the confidence to give time, those that would have in the past gone to Chapel. Time banks gives a mechanism to get those people who you must get in to make community development work. (Valleys Kids staff member, Wales)

The debate inside the research team about the precise distinctions between conventional volunteering and co-production was also reflected in interviews with front-line staff. Different projects had different attitudes towards this, seeing themselves either as alternatives to volunteering or 'value-added' volunteering, or sometimes little more than volunteering. Originators of the idea suggest that the difference, if any, lies in the reciprocal payback to participants to recognise what they do, and in the changed relationship between users and professionals in public services, or between volunteers and the people they help.

It is hard to be certain that similar improvements in self-esteem or health might not happen with any kind of social activity. What seems to be peculiar to these co-production projects is their ability to engage people from particularly excluded groups, and it may be that the reciprocal aspects provide a clue about why they manage to reach into parts of the community where volunteering is relatively rare – many of them service users who might in other circumstances expect attention from volunteers themselves. Unlike ordinary volunteering projects, any asset-based project will have to attract excluded groups or their rhetoric becomes meaningless.

Most staff and participants noted that co-production approaches seemed more able to attract those people least likely to spontaneously participate in volunteering activities. There are other advantages to the mutuality implicit in the projects.

■ *Broader source of potential solutions:* the other reason these approaches seem to work is that they mix issues and partners, which means that the chances are – with a range of participants with different languages, experiences and ages – there will be somebody available to match what is needed.

- *Peer group support:* there is something about a network of peer support that seems to be more empowering than support from a traditional volunteer or professional.

- *Ownership:* since young people in the Wales projects had been involved in litter projects, which they had run themselves, they also found themselves involved in trying to prevent litter being dropped in the first place.

- *Deeper involvement:* interviews with staff members in Wales suggest that, while participants might have been involved in other projects, the reciprocal way this was managed encouraged them to be involved deeper than they would have been otherwise.

- *Meeting needs:* the fact that people had earned some rights to ask did seem to break down a little of the reluctance to ask for help where necessary.

Reciprocity and rewards

Co-production literature emphasises reciprocity as one of the key elements distinguishing this approach (Cahn, 2001). In practice, we found that a majority of participants considered themselves as volunteers in the traditional sense, citing well-established reasons for taking part, such as wanting to do something for the community. Most were aware that there were reciprocal benefits – for example, for their own sense of worth ('if it wasn't for this, I'd be stuck in the house') – but it seldom seemed to be a major motivation. In fact, most of the time banks found it hard to persuade people to ask for help in return. Interviews with Slam staff suggested that some individuals found the idea of reciprocity more enticing than others. Even so, people's desire to do something to help other people still seemed to be the strongest motivating factor for most participants:

> I think the volunteers do seem to be very driven by just wanting to use
> their skills to help other people. People want to use their time in a useful
> way, so this is really how they seem to see it.
> (Gorbals refugee peer advocacy staff member)

On the other hand, there was evidence that awards were effective – especially for young people – at drawing people into the projects in the first place. Interviews in Wales suggested that the awards were an attraction for younger participants and that they changed attitudes to what was being done – a way of rewarding and

acknowledging the contributions made by community participants that had, previously, been undervalued or overlooked:

> When Geoff and John came to talk to us about time banking I really struggled to think what the difference was. We had always had an inclusive view of volunteers … But the credits and having a system for valuing what people do, that's what is different.
> (Valley Kids staff member, Wales)

Yet even this could cause difficulties. One Wales time bank co-ordinator reported that, when an attempt had been made to offer awards in exchange for time credits, some participants carried out a mental conversion of the value of their work and the value of their reward, and concluded that they were not receiving a fair rate. But, when awards that did appear to have a real market value were offered (driving lessons), participants stopped using their credits to pay for community activities and chose these instead, and attendance at social events fell away.

One of the complicating factors was that few of the large institutions involved were interested in providing awards. The major exception was the Gorbals Initiative, which provided cash for vouchers and refurbished computers to the time bank and peer projects. Other organisations made arrangements with local shops or sports centres to provide deals to participants, but – in the case of the optician in Glasgow – most participants were on benefits and got cheap entry and reduced-price eye tests anyway.

Other projects preferred to make the rewards more intrinsic – more friends or new skills and the chance to give something instead of receiving things – and these also seem to have been effective as a way of recruiting participants. Some participants commented specifically in terms of what they got: 'something to do to get experience', 'positive response from people', 'just something enjoys doing', 'if it weren't for them, I'd be sitting in the house':

> I listen to her problems and sometimes I help her with her spelling and literacy problems. This is empowering for me by enabling me to make a contribution and use my intelligence. I no longer feel like a passive receiver.
> (London participant with severe ME)

All the projects emphasised empowering the participants and valuing their contribution, and those that were most successful seem also to have been those projects where this approach was most prominent. Whereas one project, which

began with an emphasis on community leadership but came to be led mainly by paid staff, seemed to lose most of its energy. It seems likely that some form of reciprocity – beyond the rhetorical – can have stronger, wider and more lasting effects than conventional participation, but the exact balance of rewards that is effective in different situations needs further investigation.

Tax and benefits

Tax and benefits regulations seem to have been a constant problem for the projects interviewed. The awards they were offering were constantly undermined by benefits regulations, usually because they threatened people's benefits and sometimes because they were potentially taxable. Occasionally, the problem was that cheap deals at local businesses – this was the problem in the story of the Glasgow optician – were already available to anyone on benefits anyway.

One organisation that recognises the vital contribution of people who are not conventionally employed is Macmillan Cancer Care, which has been trying to turn its clients into co-workers to help it deliver its services – not just because their contribution is important to the services, but also because it is a crucial part of the cancer recovery process.

Many users move through a cycle that starts with being overwhelmed and progresses to joining a support group, then feeling in control of their own treatment – and from there to wanting to give back and share the experience with others who it might benefit. That involves delivering training, fund-raising, volunteering in shops, providing user expertise and much else besides, and returning to paid work is often not an option anyway. The difficulty is that the emphasis on maximising paid employment in government policy is undermining their attempts to recognise and value this unpaid contribution:

> We're being forced away from more innovative forms of user involvement back towards more traditional volunteering – and consequently disempowering people – because the basis of working with users is valuing their expertise and we can't find a way of effectively doing this. (Interview with Macmillan staff member)

The involvement of one of the researchers in this project – who were themselves outside paid work – triggered an investigation into their benefits position, which implied that, whatever the regulations are, self-help is extremely risky for many of those on welfare.

Summary

The projects we studied did seem to have an impact on the lives of those taking part, in increased health, well-being, confidence and social networks, and largely as a by-product of the efforts they are making for other people. There was no 'control' group in this study, so it is hard to pinpoint whether this would have been any different in a traditional volunteering project. Yet the links between these projects and public services and other groups, as well as the social reach that these projects have, suggest that it is these aspects that particularly make a difference.

The other overwhelming sense from the research was that the changes that take place are often extremely subtle. Their ripple effects may make them important to the individual outside paid work, but in themselves they may be hard to pinpoint and hard to categorise for the purpose of public sector targets.

The findings also indicate that participation has the potential to achieve significant improvements in employability for some of those furthest from the labour market. Indeed, several of those interviewed had used the projects as a stepping stone back into work, and a few had moved into further or higher education.

It is hard to be certain that these improvements might not happen with any kind of social activity. What seems to be peculiar to these co-production projects is their ability to engage people from particularly excluded groups, and it may be that the reciprocal aspects – the recognition of the effort people make in some way – provide a clue about why they manage to reach into parts of the community where volunteering is relatively rare.

All the projects emphasised empowering the participants and valuing their contribution, and those that were most successful seem also to have been those projects where this approach was most prominent. Whereas one project, which began with an emphasis on community leadership but came to be led mainly by paid staff, seemed to lose most of its energy. It seems likely that some form of reciprocity – beyond the rhetorical – can have stronger, wider and more lasting effects than conventional participation, but the exact balance of rewards that is effective in different situations needs further investigation.

Partly because of this, tax and benefits regulations seem to have been a constant problem for the projects interviewed. The awards they were offering were continously undermined by benefits regulations, usually because they threatened people's benefits and sometimes because they were potentially taxable.

Jane's story, Patch, Glasgow

I got involved by coming along as a parent that had come out of work being pregnant and not wanting to go back into the same work. I got involved through other parents. They said come along – a new baby, you must be demented. I am a single parent anyway so I did not have that other avenue to go down where daddy could take the babies, so it was up to me to do something to change my life … One of the main things about Patch is that it offers childcare for any training that you do. That was one of the biggest things for me because I didn't have anyone that I could say – oh look, brother, sister, mother! They were all at work and I was on my own, not knowing anyone or anything.

They also opened up other avenues, in the sense that you maybe get to the stage of life that I was at and I had done almost every job you could think of from the lowest, like cleaning jobs, to managing shops and things like that over my lifespan and I thought I need to do something different and something that is going to stimulate my brain. But I could not actually pinpoint what I wanted to do and Patch opened avenues and there was training in this and training in that.

They offered training and other wee things like therapies and stuff that helped you relax and basically meeting other parents and getting involved with them, some of them are now friends. Through that and going on training, I eventually got this job … Some parents will say they are sad they got a job, but glad about the support of Patch. It's like a legacy – they help that person develop, but it reflects on the family life as well: more income, proper childcare and the future of that family.

4 Co-production and communities

> I've been coming to events in this hall for 20 years – I've grown up with it.
> It was previously owned by a community arts group. But now it has
> become a bustling community centre again.
> (Time bank staff member, Wales)

All the projects had fostered strong links both with other community groups and with some professional agencies working in the area. For example, mothers attending the Patch network in Glasgow would be provided with drop-in sessions by the local economic development company about job opportunities and by the healthy living network on diet. As a result, participants considered themselves to be better informed about their community and about the opportunities available to them. Many reported that they were becoming active in more than one community group, while several gave examples of a new-found confidence to take more control of their own lives and, where necessary, even to challenge those in authority.

Many older people report a good quality of life in spite of multiple forms of disadvantage linked to low income and poor neighbourhoods (Social Exclusion Unit, (2005). For those who do not, poor family and social relationships feature strongly as negative influences. Social networks are likely to be critical to designing more mutual systems of support for an ageing population and certainly this research confirms this. Again, there is an issue about how unique this is to co-production, but asset-based reciprocal systems of this kind seem to be more successful at attracting the involvement of hard-to-reach groups.

Social capital

> I think everyone knows me now. If I ever come to anyone, for example X,
> and want to get a letter, then yes, she'll do it like that. It helps you socially
> as well. I try to make as many friends as I can. It's the same for the racist
> bit as well. I'm helping them as well if they help me – I'll help them ... I've
> got loads of people I can turn to now.
> (17-year-old participant, Wales)

There is no doubt that these projects were seen as increasing the social networks available to participants. There was also some evidence of a 'domino effect' of increased social activity – participants getting involved in more projects and other

groups through getting involved in the first place. Bingo or litter picks might lead to the youth forum, for example. Sometimes this happens automatically; sometimes it is engineered:

> We have one volunteer who I knew was interested in sports and had been involved with setting up football teams with asylum seekers and so on and so forth, so, when a client was referred who was a similar age and had similar interests in sports and stuff, I thought 'Ah, perfect match'. And they have been a good match and they are trying to set up a football team in an Amnesty International tournament to raise money.
> (Gorbals refugee peer advocacy staff member)

This sense of community seems to have been broader than simply knowing more people. 'There's a sense of community pride starting to come back', said a time bank staff member in Wales:

> People are saying that our efforts are actually reaping rewards. A lot of people subliminally do wonderful things without even realising that they are doing wonderful things so the time banks encapsulate a lot of different achievements – things that people in the community can do. It also encourages community interaction. People realise that there is a lot they can offer each other and people realise that they have some power as well because they are so used to being dictated to. They can actually realise that they can actually take responsibility.

As well as 'linking' social capital of this kind, we found numerous examples of 'bridging' social capital. Many participants acknowledged that their experiences had made them more tolerant of others across boundaries of race, age and religion, by introducing them to people they would not ordinarily meet. A number of interviewees, especially in Glasgow, mentioned changed attitudes towards asylum seekers they had come into contact with. Yet there was also some evidence that the projects based on close-knit communities were more sustainable than those that were not, so there is clearly a balance required that allows them to stay outward-looking but generates the basic energy to do so.

In fact, the emphasis in the different sites was rather different. In Wales, where a time bank approach has been widely adopted – and where staff are looking at broader community regeneration and ways to release social energy and increase participation in volunteering – there was evidence of what might be called social capital emerging as a result. Feedback from Glasgow suggests projects have a significant impact on aspects of community life towards which individual projects

focused their attention – integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the local community, encouraging lone parents to support each other, for example. In London, the impact on community as a whole was less obvious, because participants were more involved in one-to-one exchanges of time.

The context is different as well. While the London sites were very multiracial, the sites in Wales for example were tightly knit – where children were excited about a trip to Tonypandy, the nearest big town, and where there were few examples of linking across public–professional divides or geographical ones.

Although the projects may not be setting out to build social capital directly – even if such a thing was possible – what they had in common was that, as Putnam and Feldstein (2003) put it: 'the protagonists here understand and emphasise the centrality of relationships and interpersonal connections'.

Summary

All the projects had fostered strong links both with other community groups and with some professional agencies working in the area. Participants also considered themselves to be better informed about their community and about the opportunities available to them. Many reported that they were becoming active in more than one community group, while several gave examples of a new-found confidence to take more control of their own lives, and where necessary even to challenge those in authority.

As well as 'linking' social capital of this kind, we found examples of 'bridging' social capital. Many participants acknowledged that their experiences had made them more tolerant of others across boundaries of race, age and religion, by introducing them to people they would not ordinarily meet.

> **Roots, Glasgow, interview with management committee member**
>
> Roots started when a student placement from the Congo at Gorbals Community Forum thought it would be a good idea to set up a multicultural group that would be led by refugees and asylum seekers – Gorbals is a refugee dispersal area. The management committee is made up of asylum seekers and refugees.
>
> The main aim is to promote integration and to encourage asylum seekers and refugees to use other existing services in the community. Ten women are learning
>
> *Continued overleaf*

to make soft furnishings at the local Cardonald College. They are involved with Gorbals Recycles at the moment, looking at premises and starting up a community shop that would sell recycled clothes and household goods. They also accessed funding to go to Newcastle to look at a multicultural project in a building where they are using all eco-friendly methods with a view to adopting more eco-friendly methods in the proposed shop. They are also doing a lot of signposting to encourage other services to make their services accessible.

Those involved are using their own life experience and identifying needs, making decisions for themselves … they had experience of what was lacking in the community rather than myself saying: 'that would be good for an asylum seeker'.

They have run a number of training programmes such as residential management committee skills and local structures in relation to how our government works (for people coming to this country) and IT training. Also swimming classes, because a lot of African women can't swim. Three women who took a sewing course at local college are now 'stepping on to doing' a course at college.

We don't have our own premises and there are *no paid staff* – the local playbarn lets us use their premises as a meeting space. At first there was some sessional staff in the playbarn that didn't speak to the women, but now they chat. I think they didn't know how to approach them. I think people think that, because they are refugees and asylum seekers, that they're not well educated and they're now proving to other groups that they are well-educated and intelligent people that are capable of being self-managed.

To become a member of the local leisure centre you need two forms of ID – a utility bill with your name and address. But, if you have asylum status, the house you are staying in is rented by the Home Office so it's not in your name and neither are the bills, so people aren't able to access the leisure centre or the library. Roots contacted the leisure centre and explained to the manager, who was unaware that asylum seekers didn't have the proper identification that was needed, so he arranged for them all to be registered.

5 Co-production and institutions

> If *[running the drop-in]* was left to the staff, it would be too time-consuming. At the end of the day, the parents are willing to do it and everybody mucks in. It makes them feel as though it's their project. Even though I manage it, they feel as if they are actually in control of the drop-in.
> (Patch staff member in Glasgow)

The progress attributed to individuals and their surrounding neighbourhoods is evidence that agencies can achieve their objectives more easily by engaging with co-production systems. But it is also clear that large institutions find it extremely hard to engage systems of this kind. There was evidence from the interviews that better relationships were developed over time with front-line agency staff, and that this helped to build trust and break down power differentials. But this seems to have been more successful with smaller agencies and the voluntary sector than with large government institutions. Agencies like the NHS were still seen as remote and uninterested, even though some departments might be very supportive of the kinds of approach that were being tested.

The issue at the heart of this research is the extent to which public services can be improved or broadened by accessing the skills of people outside paid work. This seems to require changes in the public services as well as in the individuals they engage.

Attitudes of clients

> One of the things a lot of the tutors say is that they *[student peer tutors]* have got a lot better understanding of what it is like to be a teacher, having tutored, and how difficult that might be, so in a sense you might say that it is beneficial to the school and the classroom teachers.
> (Peer tutoring project staff, Glasgow)

Staff in the Wales projects said that the relationship between project users and professional staff had loosened and improved considerably, and pinpointed increased trust as the reason. In both Wales and Glasgow, the police interviewed said that relations had improved between them and the community, though this seems to be as much about having a focus for meeting local people as any joint effort. 'It is very difficult. People often sidle up to us but often, if they do, it will be for their own ends', said one police interview in Wales:

> I think of it more in terms of rehumanising us. Last year, people in the force were appalled that I went to an event and had these sponges thrown at me, but what I was trying to do was to show people that I was human. Most of the time people come across you in your professional capacity for all the wrong reasons. Now we can go to places and talk to people – go to partnership board meetings and show people that we are still going after all these months – also showing that what I say, I will do. And now people are more prepared to engage with us.

But there are other examples of more reciprocal relationships between the neighbourhood and organisations, brokered via the projects. Project staff also talked about the local train station that participants had adopted and the new community garden, both of which have escaped vandalism, possibly as a result. The community house has also not been vandalised, though a local council environmental scheme – not linked to the project – was wrecked. These projects are not unique in their ability to improve relations between the neighbourhood and other linked agencies, in this case the police and building contractors, but the evidence is that they can do so.

Attitudes to clients

> A greater understanding amongst staff, more willingness to work with carers and users. Raising awareness amongst staff about patients' and carers' contributions.
> (Slam staff interview, outlining their experience of the benefits of the projects)

Co-production has to be defined very broadly in this report, because of the variety of different projects involved. But reciprocity is part of the definition and the fact that there is an element of reciprocity means that service users involved are, even to a small extent, in a different relationship with professionals. One regeneration professional in Wales, interviewed for this research, said that working through the time bank meant that they could offer something in exchange for people's involvement and that helped their consultation process.

The other way that staff attitudes change in the agencies is because they see users working alongside them:

> Our service users are not seen as members of a community, but seen as distant. Only when they do something through time banking are they valued, but even then not initially.
> (Slam staff member)

Slam involves service user 'link-workers' in every ward and service in Lewisham's older people's care. The speciality services also have link-workers, as well as the more traditional method of representing service users on interview panels, on the joint consultation forum and on Lewisham's advisory groups. The contributions of those outside paid work are recognised and formalised through these co-production projects. 'In Lewisham, we have raised the profile of service user involvement, and staff awareness of its necessity', said another Slam staff member.

Yet there is no doubt that there are still hurdles to overcome in the attitudes of some professional staff towards the more equal involvement of users. One way in which their resistance has been broken down, albeit in small ways, is the realisation that patients working as outreach staff have a credibility that professionals sometimes lack:

> The fact that it is volunteers delivering the training means something to people and hopefully that means that they could trust that the information they are getting is not biased and it's accurate, whereas, if it is a paid member of staff, they could think: 'Oh, she's just paid to say that'.
> (Refugee peer advocacy staff member, Glasgow)

On the other hand, there clearly remains a gap in understanding between big agencies and users, even when they are involved in these projects. Public service structures and targets seem to make it hard to entirely break down the barriers. Busy professionals tend to see disadvantaged communities as 'liabilities', according to one Wales interview. Indeed, the whole thrust of public service commissioning systems assumes this:

> We tried to get the local councillors to take more of an interest in the project. We cleared three days in our diaries and invited them to come on one of those days and visit the project to learn more about what we do and would like to do. The response was completely negative. Not one of them even acknowledged the invitation.
> (Wales time bank staff member)

However committed individual officials are to co-production inside the institutions, it takes a long time to explain to colleagues what reciprocity means in practice. 'What's gone wrong with working in this co-production way is in the implementation of it and the inability of people to let go', said one Wales staff member:

> For many of the staff I work with, this is an unfamiliar concept. For those who are familiar with the ideas, I have to say there is a mixed bag – some think it a brilliant idea and feel encouraged by being able to ask for

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something in return, others are more suspicious, especially if they don't wish to have anything in return, are not sure what is on offer or do not want to be involved with people they are unfamiliar with.
(Slam staff member)

Joined-up agency work

There wasn't a lot of refugees and asylum seekers using other projects and now, because of signposting, there is – so it means these projects are able to tick boxes with their funders to say that they are providing services to refugees and asylum seekers.
(Roots staff member, Glasgow)

One way in which the smaller agencies involved seem to have benefited is that the projects have provided a catalyst for supporting each other. This seems to have gone beyond the predictable business of providing volunteers to other local charities, but has challenged agencies to find ways in which they can pay back – either to individuals or to the research as a whole. The refugee peer advocacy project in Glasgow, for example, persuaded Save the Children, the Medical Foundation and the Legal Services Agency to give training free to their volunteers.

An interview with staff at the Gorbals Time Bank suggested that this had encouraged local organisations to be less protective of the assets and volunteers that they had, and to share assets like minibuses. There were other examples too:

Reed Partnership now provides the benefit advice service on Monday and the Castlemilk Violence against Women project supports the women's group on Wednesday. There are a whole range of projects that support Patch – social workers, health visitors, the *[Gorbals]* Initiative, the healthy living network. We have a couple of mums who did childminding, and one is an ex-nursery teacher who gets the children to sing and play games, so we can resource them rather than me doing it. We've got parents who can cook; people who do dishes. So it's like a lot of networking – people working together.
(Patch staff member, Glasgow)

Equally, the interviews imply that these basic problems – distrust between voluntary projects that see themselves in competition with each other for resources and distrust between rival departments inside agencies – are a major block to the

development of co-production. 'Co-operation between agencies is not happening as well as it should', said a time bank staff member in Wales:

> We have a multi-agency meeting, which is regularly attended by police and a community nurse. The idea is we talk openly about problems, but it is not attended by housing or social services who have a big input … They are overstretched, yes, and have other meetings, yes, but not attending meetings means they are missing out.

Sometimes the basic problem is ignorance about each other's work. One police interview in Wales put it like this:

> We either go down the luvvy-duvvy approach of methods to keep people included, or we take the punitive approach. My idea is simpler – if we spoke to time banks about what programmes we have got going and what they have got going, if youth came on board with a project and we were with them, we could build something. Currently the problem is that we don't know what each other is doing.

Service broadening

> Within the Occupational Therapy services, for example, volunteers bring an extra dimension to the activities that are provided. They often bring specific skills related to the activity that other participants can relate to and use.
> (Slam staff member)

Dame Elizabeth Hoodless from Community Service Volunteers (CSV) has talked about volunteering 'lengthening and strengthening' public services, and uses as an example CSV's volunteer street warden scheme in Birmingham (CSV, 2004). This is clearly co-production in the sense understood by this report and it highlights one of the potential benefits to public service agencies. Users – in this case, local people – can provide services that big agencies never can. The projects we studied were carrying out services that conventional public services delivery and support:

■ could not afford to do (one-to-one support through refugee peer advocacy)

■ was not designed to do (matching up people with people to help each other)

- would not consider part of their statutory obligations (bingo and salsa in the time banks in Wales).

They were able to do so partly because they are volunteers and partly because they are non-professionals. For the same reasons, they were also able to:

- pay closer attention to the uncategorisable needs of individuals than agencies could ever provide

- offer very simple services – often no more than a friendly face – that agencies are not equipped to provide

- ignore the geographical boundaries that can put vulnerable people out of the reach of agencies because they happen to live just outside their target postcodes.

Often it meant no more than volunteers having the time to commit longer than a trained professional, like the volunteer at the Gorbals refugee peer advocacy project who sat for five hours with a client in hospital. The Seal project, also in Glasgow, reported that they successfully employed participants at the local health centre to greet and direct people, as well as helping the oral health action team, spreading awareness of healthy eating and dental advice work with nursery children. There was some suggestion that this could save agencies some money covering areas that would otherwise have to be covered by professional staff. There was other evidence of people outside paid work filling gaps in public service provision:

> Home helps used to do a lot of this. Now they don't, so it's not our fault if there is a gap there that we are trying to fill. You can't then come along and say, 'oh you shouldn't be doing that because you are not doing it right'. You find, not only in health, but in a lot of walks of life, people have stopped doing what they used to do. Then volunteers or time bank people are stepping in and they are meeting resistance – but they are doing it. (Gorbals Time Bank staff member)

But most of the contribution was in activity that professional staff would not do anyway – like providing fresh vegetables (Seal volunteers even learned sign language so they could serve vegetables to deaf people). Other examples of broadening public services included:

- guiding refugees to GP or social work appointments, or taking people referred by health visitors to specialist clinics or mother and toddler groups (Gorbals refugee peer advocacy)

- translating information on head lice into ten languages for local GPs (Roots, Glasgow)

- taking referrals of patients from the traumatic stress service to the local time bank so they can help other people and have more contact with others (Time banks, London)

- helping with health screening (retired nurses) on the health promotion double-decker bus (Slam, London)

- encouraging people in hospital to earn time credits so they will be less isolated when they are discharged (Time banks, London).

The difficulty about this was that, because these services were not part of the organisation's normal operation, the projects tended to stay on the margins of their work – this is still parallel production again rather than strictly co-production.

Professional practice

> We had a referral from the psychology department. The person was a
> tailor. He joined a time bank and is training others to sew, to save money
> by doing alterations or teaching them to make their own clothes. One of
> his 'students' is now going into full-time education. So, in this instance,
> his contributions have trained and inspired another person whilst giving
> him structure to his time and enabled him to meet people after leaving
> hospital.
> (Time bank staff member, London)

The fact that, through its link with Slam, this time bank could be referred someone by professional staff implies that these projects do shift professional practice, encouraging professionals to recognise some patients with problems as assets in other ways – and to act on that. Slam staff members interviewed who were involved in these partnerships said that working with time banks provided another possible treatment option for patients, and the evidence is that other professionals have been testing this approach.

At its most radical, the claims for co-production are that it means reorganising the way professionals work – as connectors, facilitators and agents of change. There was some evidence that this process had begun in small ways, but little that it was being adopted wholesale. There was some evidence of opposition from

professionals too: 'People in community development may say that at the moment they are trying to do themselves out of a job and that's rubbish', said a Valleys Kids professional in Wales. 'They should see their role as one of unleashing potential.'

Many of the interviews with staff cited lack of time among professionals as a key block to progress. There are also challenges for those inside agencies who back co-production to find ways of getting colleagues to use these approaches:

> The vocational link-workers in my team are the main flag-wavers for time banks on the wards and for the service users. Service users have got time credits for decorating the Ladywell unit in Lewisham and this has also raised the profile of co-production. It's on the radar – every one of my team members know what they are, so time banks are seen as referral opportunities for volunteering in Lewisham.
> (Slam staff member)

That shows determination, but there is clearly some way to go for the big agencies – even those that have embraced the idea at some level – before co-production could be said to have been genuinely tried. One interview makes the point that institutions need to capacity build themselves:

> We can't pay lip service to getting this buy-in to the process, and it needs to be corporate buy-in … And even where there is buy-in, it is sometimes the staff within who don't have it. Sometimes there is a bit of a county ethos – people find it hard to have professionals questioned. The change will take time. While people say that it is the capacity of the community that needs to be built, it is also the capacity of the partners in the process that needs to be built.
> (Local authority staff member, Wales)

Without that widespread buy-in from staff – who may not feel very valued or involved themselves – change relies on a 'huge amount of energy to keep the momentum going', according to one staff member and on 'a particular kind of personality' to make it work. These tend to be, almost by definition, rather scarce in big institutions.

Other problems include:

- the speed of response that big institutions are able to manage

- targets and narrow commissioning rules that will often frustrate more holistic approaches like co-production

■ lack of internal communication inside the big agencies

■ a risk-averse culture in public services and the related military-style bureaucracies that try to eliminate risk by the management of details

■ related insurance problems for activities that are, by their very nature, human-scale, empathetic and unmeasurable

The frustrating story of one London time bank underlines the problem:

> We wanted to have a launch celebration and everyone decided they would bring cakes they had made. But we were told we weren't allowed to eat anything on the premises that had been made by people who didn't have a food hygiene certificate. So the staff had to go and buy the food.

Funding and sustainability

> I think that one of the advantages we have is that basically we do it the way we want to do it and it works.
> (Peer tutoring staff member, Glasgow)

Financial instability was one of the most common recurring themes across all sites. Staff tended to be uncertain about their future and the future of the projects themselves. It is hard to imagine how chronic funding uncertainty will not lead to disillusionment, disengagement and rapid staff turnover. There was evidence that the co-ordinators of these projects can feel very isolated, even when they are embedded in the public services.

It is clear that mainstream funding, rather than short-term grants, is required. The logic is that, if co-production assists public services in their work, they need to fund it directly. But there was nervousness about the idea of being funded entirely by public service institutions:

> My experience has been that the local authority wants to use the money attached to community development programmes and, when they access it, wrap the programme and their workers up in bureaucracy, give them additional work over and above the initial remit, making the workers overstretched, ending the programme without the promised results and then blaming the community. Next time there's money available, they

redirect it elsewhere, as the original community they just completed three years of community development work in has 'had enough'.
(Community development professional, Wales)

Other interviewees said they feared that even local authority funding would change the nature of the projects. Any solution to this conundrum will have to combine mainstream funding with independence and we return to this in the next chapter.

Summary

Progress attributed to individuals and their surrounding neighbourhoods is evidence that agencies can achieve their objectives more easily by engaging with co-production systems. But it is also clear that large institutions find it extremely hard to engage systems of this kind. There was evidence from the interviews that better relationships were developed over time with front-line agency staff, and that this helped to build trust and break down power differentials. But this seems to have been more successful with smaller agencies and the voluntary sector than with large government institutions.

The issue at the heart of this research is the extent to which public services can be improved or broadened by accessing the skills of people outside paid work, and this seems to require changes in the public services as well as in the individuals they engage.

Some of the projects were providing services that big agencies never can. The difficulty about this was that, because these services were not part of the organisation's normal operation, the projects tended to stay on the margins of their work. On the other hand, the fact that, through their link with Slam, a time bank could be referred someone by professional staff implies that co-production projects do shift professional practice, encouraging professionals to recognise some patients with problems as assets in other ways – and to act on that.

At their most radical, the claims for co-production means reorganising the way professionals work – as connectors, facilitators and agents of change. There was some evidence that this process had begun in small ways, but little that it was being adopted wholesale.

There was also a common recurring theme of financial instability across all sites. Staff tended to be uncertain about their future and the future of the projects themselves, which must result in disillusionment, disengagement and rapid staff turnover.

Jade's story, Rushey Green Time Bank, London

(Jade is 54 and lives on her own in a flat in South-East London where she has lived for more than ten years. She is on Incapacity Benefit and lives on less than £10,000 a year. She has severe ME and has also developed osteoporosis.)

I can't go to places where there are more than a few people present because I can't bear too much noise. I could go to the park in a cab on my own but it is difficult to arrange for a cab to come and collect me. Also it's not nearly as relaxing or fun on my own. As all of my family and most of my friends live far away, I do not see them on a regular basis. I used to spend much of my limited energy on which person I was going to see each week to make sure that I didn't spend more than seven days on my own. I might pay someone to do cleaning in order to have contact with a person.

I am now able to go to the park or visit my time banker *[partner]*'s house or go to the shops so it has widened my opportunities for leisure. She drives me places that I couldn't get to without paying for a taxi or minicab. The time bank has helped me to meet someone of a different age and background that I otherwise would probably not have met. This is very interesting for me. She has improved my emotional well-being by decreasing my isolation and helped me with a couple of computer problems – I'm not well enough to go to a class …

In exchange for the help I get, I earn time credits for helping another person. I often listen to her problems and help her with spelling and literacy issues. This is empowering for me because I no longer feel like a 'passive receiver'.

6 Prospects for co-production

> People in the Valleys and other places have been so used to
> professionals up there and being put down, I think it's about people
> believing that they have something important that they can offer
> themselves and about them valuing what they have to give and
> understanding that they don't have to receive all the time. It's also about
> the expectation that professionals can fix it – it's about helping them to
> believe they can effect change.
> (Wales time bank staff)

This chapter attempts to draw some broad conclusions – for co-production itself, as
well as for communities, institutions and government – which have implications about
the future prospects for making the co-production sector more mainstream. It is
informed by the series of interviews with senior policy makers carried out for the
project.

Policy interviews

It is hard to draw conclusions from such a diverse range of policy interviews, but the
following themes emerged and are reflected in this conclusions chapter.

1 *Co-production is desirable:* the majority of interviewees identified co-production
   as desirable across a broad range of policy areas, including education, health
   and tackling crime.

2 *Co-production is happening:* they also recognised the principles of co-production
   as familiar and were to some extent active in putting aspects into practice – in the
   citizenship agenda at the Department for Education and Skills, in Patient and
   Public Involvement at the Department of Health and in specific involvement of
   clients in delivering services, as at Macmillan Cancer Care (see below). It also
   seems to be happening in a natural way, when it is given space to, for example
   involving parents in primary schools.

3 *There are significant barriers:* although there is this generic co-production going
   on, there are barriers to introducing it more systematically where it is not currently
   happening. Most major co-production experiments seem to be isolated and at the
   margins of big public service bureaucracies – especially as their target regimes

value throughput rather than reducing dependency. And, since the voluntary sector is increasingly involved in delivering these same targets, there may in fact be fewer potential partners to organise co-production.

4   *There are also major opportunities:* the recent Green Paper on social care (Department of Health, 2005) is one example where the Government is searching for ways of reducing the dependence on professionals and which looks at time banks as a potential way forward.

5   *Systems of measurement and accountability are key:* the priority is to carve out some space in the big public services where co-production becomes more possible, and that means more flexible targets and more local autonomy, neither of which is currently on the Government's list of priorities.

There was also some discussion about the mechanisms for co-production and some reservations about co-production in action. These included:

■   the cost of managing these systems locally

■   the tendency for co-production organisers to become subsumed into the prevailing public service or voluntary sector culture, and fearful of the risks of their volunteers delivering services themselves

■   some of the language around co-production, which can – under some interpretations – imply that clients will eventually be forced to 'pay back' in some way for professional services they receive.

The co-production sector

> Co-production is the result of human existence because we all do a favour for someone as it is human nature – if you help someone, they help you back. It's compassion. But trust has broken down in society as a whole.
> (Wales time bank)

Co-production is multidimensional. The characteristics of co-production set out in Chapter 2 may not always be achieved together. There is no absolute definition, though Edgar Cahn's ideas suggest that it is related to organisations achieving better results by joint action together with the ultimate consumer of the service (Cahn,

2001). Co-production seems to be most explicit when it involves partnerships, both between professionals and clients and between public services and neighbourhoods. Critically, the purpose is some shared mutual support for social objectives.

This research has two major conclusions about the spread of co-production. First, that we have been studying two overlapping categories on the same continuum – what we might call 'generic' co-production and 'institutional' co-production of the kind advocated by Cahn, which, partly because of management systems in the organisations that might benefit, but also because of professional training, is at the moment quite hard to achieve. Co-production is clearly happening around the world and there are examples of generic co-production – neighbourhoods providing each other with mutual support – almost everywhere. There is an emerging co-production sector, though it may not be aware of itself as such. Most of what this research was studying was generic versions of co-production and only the very tip of an enormous iceberg. Yet, if co-production is still hard to define precisely, it is recognisable when you see it and it remains an effective critique of the failure of big institutions to engage their beneficiaries in a way that recognises them as assets.

The second conclusion is that generic co-production – the widespread effort to involve local people in mutual support and the delivery of services – is both widespread and probably a natural part of human life. People remain the main protagonists in their own lives and are the primary producers, not professionals. In this sense, co-production is simply a reminder of the way things actually are through the smokescreen of professional dependency and political debate. Certainly, there are thousands of projects already happening that embody many of the principles of co-production, even if they are not all engaged in quite the same way.

Discussion of the latest NHS improvement plan, *Creating a Patient-led NHS* (Crisp, 2005), suggests that some of these ideas are filtering through to the mainstream. Even so, the consumer-based model of public service delivery does not seem compatible with meaningful co-production, because it uses a narrow understanding of human psychology, does not create well-being and impoverishes the relationship between public and service providers.

The ubiquitous 'consultation' exercises that government bodies prefer and the appointment of community representatives onto boards are not, by these definitions, co-production. They are passive exercises that do not use patients or tenants as the assets they are, except as experts in their own neighbourhoods, and that is the basic idea behind the concept. They are also the object of some suspicion among the people they are supposed to benefit. There is evidently a need for more

understanding about how to build mutually beneficial relationships between people and public services, because this interface may need more effort if any further services are going to be effective.

It would be inaccurate to say that there was a widespread consensus among the projects about the definition of their efforts. The overwhelming sense was also of the diversity of co-production that goes on, often in tiny ways and below the official radar – and has always done so. It is primarily the overprofessionalisation of public services, and their regulation by narrow government target, that seems to frustrate the basic and thrifty impulse for people to reciprocate and play to each other's strengths. This is, as Cahn (2001) has said, a basic prerequisite for the effectiveness of any public institution and any economic activity worthy of the name.

But if it was hard to define co-production in an exclusive way, because its boundaries are necessarily fuzzy, it was possible to recognise it and to see repeated patterns where it enjoys some measure of success. This is, in a way, the most important outcome of this research – a clearer sense of what public institutions will look like if they are going to use their clients as assets. It means that institutions will, for example, do the following.

■ Provide opportunities for personal growth and development to people who have previously been treated as collective burdens on an overstretched system, rather than as potential assets.

■ Invest in strategies that develop the emotional intelligence of people and capacity of local communities.

■ Use peer support networks instead of professionals as the best means of transferring knowledge and capabilities.

■ Reduce or blur the distinction between clients and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way services are developed and delivered. Services seem to be most effective here when people get to act in both roles – as providers as well as recipients.

■ Allow public service agencies to become catalysts and facilitators rather than central providers themselves.

■ Devolve real responsibility, leadership and authority to 'users', and encourage self-organisation rather than direction from above.

- Offer participants a range of incentives – mostly sourced from spare capacity elsewhere in the system – which help to embed the key elements of reciprocity and mutuality.

These should also serve, not so much as a definition of co-production, but as a picture of what organisations will look like when they use co-production successfully.

A great deal of co-production is happening without connection to the large institutions it is helping

Most co-production might more accurately be described as 'parallel production'. The truth is that an innovative voluntary sector has been attempting to improve health, housing and education, and to reduce crime, but generally entirely outside the auspices and systems of the nationally funded services that are supposed to achieve this. The Expert Patient initiative is one exception to this and is thriving inside the NHS. Large institutions find it extremely hard to integrate with initiatives that challenge their existing systems. When they do so, even with major government support – like the healthy living centres – they are often allowed to wither on the vine. It may be that mainstreaming co-production requires public services to put their energies into how they engage with their ultimate consumers as co-producers, rather than just as clients. Some of the projects here have managed to do this to some extent, though none has found it easy.

Public service systems can be corrosive to co-production

Although the clear thrust of the co-production idea is aimed at public services, there also seems to be a danger that the whole concept could be subsumed into a more utilitarian public service agenda, aimed at reducing expenditure and the efficient pursuit of targets. This would undermine the human-scale nature of co-production and the ability to define as assets almost any human capability. There is a need therefore to recognise that working in neighbourhoods is valuable in its own right. It must remain an end in itself as well as a means to other ends and our interviews with outside practitioners stressed that repeatedly. There will always be individual benefits to involvement that resist being incorporated into service-level agreements and projects must retain some independence – financial if possible – to allow them to encourage vulnerable people to give in ways that are not primarily perceived as useful to the public service.

Co-production must continue to challenge concepts of what is 'useful' work

It must feed these interpretations of what people find useful and meaningful into the mainstream. This tension exists also in the question of redefining work. The efforts of those taking part in the projects were 'crucial to what the community needed', according to a staff member at Valleys Kids in Wales, arguing that sometimes the work of volunteers is not valued by public services simply because it is not paid. But that critique must continue even when the governmental organisation has accepted it, otherwise co-production work risks being formalised just as paid work now is. Now that formal volunteering is becoming more like the workplace – trained and subject often to government targets – there is a danger that people outside paid work will be excluded here, too, for the same reasons they are excluded from paid work.

Co-production must reach out beyond the poor

Many of the policy interviewees expressed concern that co-production systems should not just target poor people. There are two reasons for this. First, there is a danger that they then become some kind of ghetto for the socially excluded, which will undermine the status of the activity – when there are many people who are not primarily poor who are outside paid work who would also benefit. There is already a danger that participation of all kinds is somehow expected of poor people alone. Second, there is a danger that, by targeting poor people, co-production means that broadening of public services is carried out only by the most vulnerable. The strong implication is that, to make an impact, co-production needs to involve everyone putting in a few hours to underpin public services. This is probably a method by which a sense of meaning could be spread very much more widely.

Co-production requires human face-to-face connection

Some opinions were expressed in interviews with senior officials that the structure of time banks, with professional staff at the centre, was too expensive to become ubiquitous. Time banks were not the only way of organising these projects, but there was evidence that the relationship between project co-ordinators and individual participants was critical in the progress they made. Co-production is probably not, therefore, reducible just to counting systems or smartcards that could be administered across cities or regions – though those could be brought into the equation – because that vital human connection with professionals would be missing, and it seems likely that this is where the change takes place. Those professionals may not be working in the way that public service professionals

normally do – they may be challenging participants to use their time and ability to care – but their presence is probably vital. Even so, there is a debate about how this can be achieved in the short term, how far software can help volunteers take on part of the role of brokers – or how much existing outreach professionals can adapt their job descriptions to running this kind of reciprocal co-production.

Co-production and communities

> We are still in the early stages of participation. It's partly because of historical reasons. We are working in one of the most deprived areas. Pre-Assembly, things were done *to* the Valleys. Most were a waste of time.
> (Community development staff, Wales)

If it did nothing else, this research confirmed the vital importance of social networks as a prerequisite for support for people outside paid work. It confirms also recent thinking that it is not just links with powerful institutions that matter, but 'rather the nature and extent of the relationships between them' (Hampshire and Healey, 2000). Social networks extend choice and the range of opportunities. They enable people to work together to achieve common goals and to draw on resources contained within the group of participants. The research also confirms the health and well-being benefits of these networks. They may also prevent ill health, but certainly provide support if people do get ill. This research also suggests that the Social Exclusion Unit (2005) is right to call for 'a new type of preventive social policy geared towards providing support to individuals at key turning points in their lives'.

Official solutions for social exclusion are increasingly subsumed into the objective of maximising paid employment. The main problem with these is that they often take little account of the unpaid or at least reciprocal 'work' that is done by people who are not in paid employment, whether it is childcare, or wider neighbourhood development, or social capital building.

If the Government's full employment policy was to succeed, for example, there would be social and economic costs if nearly everyone was at work. It would mean, for example, that with few people at home except for frail and older people, there would be a gap left among those who socialise children, look after older people, prevent crime and provide the human face of our neighbourhoods and communities. The research points towards some other conclusions.

There are enormous, vital assets among people outside paid work

The co-production insight is that there are considerable resources among people, however disadvantaged – resources, moreover, that are human ones rather than trained ones. These unique assets that individuals possess need to be the starting point in co-production. But they are, generally speaking, not neatly categorisable. Some of the effort made by people who might have very serious depression is not susceptible, for example, to market-value comparisons, any more than the participants in these projects were mouldable into mini biddable civil servants.

Blurring organisational boundaries is an important prerequisite to engaging neighbourhoods

The experience of the police interviewed in Wales was that this kind of dismantling of traditional professional boundaries was vital to persuading local people that they had a critical role to play in preventing crime. Unbridgeable professional barriers seem to have been the main hurdle to overcome for building any kind of new relationship between public services and their clients. These boundaries include those between different public services, as well as between the public and voluntary sector.

Co-production requires physical space

Physical space where community and paid staff can meet on a regular basis in a relaxed and non-confrontational environment seems to be important to co-production happening. It also needs opportunities for regular contact outside office hours. Time banks tend to provide this opportunity, although there were issues with the Dinas time bank opening at weekends.

Encouraging people to do something is more effective than just consulting them

The way to create social networks is not so much the consultation exercises that local government struggles with – the issue of how you get beyond those who go to meetings – but to engage people to *do* something. Government policy currently favours community participation in decision making as a means of improving public service delivery. But attempts to make this a reality regularly founder because too few people are willing or able to take part. Our research suggests that co-production networks are helping to build capacity in communities in a more meaningful way –

increasing awareness and understanding of community issues, bridging social divides and encouraging a willingness to challenge authority.

Reciprocity is a vital ingredient to broadening the social base of projects

The findings do not suggest that credit systems are the only way to create a sense of mutuality and reciprocity, and there are clearly circumstances where this is not the best way. But some sense of reciprocity is vital for the self-esteem of those taking part, the sustainability of the project and its reach into the more socially excluded groups. Exactly how this reciprocity should work – whether it is in exchange for trips, treats, training, credits or simply a feeling of achievement – will probably vary from project to project, and this needs further research.

Co-production projects need to balance insiders and outsiders

There was some evidence that projects where the bulk of participants came from the same close-knit local community were more sustainable in the long term. So, to make them effective at reaching out to other communities also, asylum seekers for example, it makes sense where possible to have a core of members who have reason to know each other. The practice of some time banks to base themselves in places where people gather, like the local school or surgery, also makes sense. But, equally, the projects must also reach out. There was a suggestion, for example, that some were not reaching out enough to young people. Co-production seems also to work best when there is a wide range of different people – so that problems can be more easily matched with skills – and these two requirements probably need to be balanced in any successful co-production.

Co-production needs to hold onto the ideal of social justice

Cahn's (2001) four principles, including social justice, are a critical feature of the concept and must remain at its heart if it is not to become hijacked by the technocratic systems that are preferred by managers of large public service institutions. The right to contribute could, in the wrong hands, become an obligation, and this would endanger the ideals behind the co-production approach.

Co-production and institutions

> Many staff struggle still with the idea that service users are people who
> can contribute in a significant way. Many still have a traditional view that
> the service 'does to' people, not 'co-produces with' them and their carers.
> Many staff think a recovery model is unrealistic and see the disability of
> clients rather than their abilities.
> (Slam staff member)

It is clear from the experience of the projects we studied that co-production can help
public service institutions to achieve the objectives they have set themselves, by
opening up new resources in the form of the time and effort of their clients. As a
result of the research, Gorbals Initiative plans to develop referral systems and a
caseload of clients who it believes could benefit from taking part in community
activity, as a stepping stone to employability. Slam continues to experiment with co-
production in mental health.

Other intractable policy goals, around mental ill health for example, may be more
achievable in this way. 'How do you put Humpty Dumpty together again?', asked one
mental health professional, explaining that he knows how to get a patient to talk
about a mental problem and how to prescribe the right drugs, but is powerless to
provide what he knows is the best medicine – friends, social networks and work.

But the research findings also suggest something of a paradox. On the one hand,
co-production projects can help break institutional barriers down; on the other hand,
they require some barriers to be blurred already to have any chance of success. This
seems to be an important problem because there is no doubt that, in the prevailing
climate and under existing administrative systems, breaking down enough
institutional barriers is difficult.

Co-production seems to work, where it does work, largely through the efforts and
inspiration of a few managers who can see the benefit, and often despite the best
efforts of the system as a whole. This implies that the role of professional staff needs
to change. If co-production is to be more mainstream, their basic task must shift from
being fixers who focus entirely on problems to catalysts who focus on abilities.

This paradox has implications for the problem of sustainable funding, which was so
important for the projects studied. One obvious solution, given that co-production can
help public services be more effective, is that they would fund the necessary
infrastructure directly. This will be inevitable to some extent if the sector is to
succeed. But there is a danger that co-production initiatives would then be entirely

subsumed into government systems and that might threaten their power to define people as 'assets' as they would like.

There was also some evidence that too much grant funding and too many paid staff can undermine the co-production dynamic – the paid staff take over. They need to justify their jobs and, since co-production thinking is inevitably new to some of them, there is a tendency to slip back into dependency culture. In more than one case, we found that the 'grant' had a tendency to dilute community leadership and energy. A recent report from the USA talked about 'habits of detachment' in deprived communities, and particularly the fact that people get used to things being done for them by experts (Bailey, 2005). We noted that the presence of paid workers frequently appeared to reinforce these ways of thinking – there seemed to be a subtle transfer of power away from local people, even where the intentions of the staff and project sponsors were precisely the opposite.

This is not to argue against the presence of professional staff in co-production projects, but it is an argument for a more powerful co-production ethic. Other related conclusions are the following.

Developing staff capacity is as important as developing the capacity of people outside paid work

The NHS University recently developed a draft core curriculum for patient and public involvement (PPI), which identified the capacity of staff as a big issue for developing the full potential of PPI programmes. Although the principles of co-production are embraced by a few individuals inside the big institutions that have pioneered some of these ideas, they are clearly not shared or understood by the majority. Some feel threatened by the shifts in working practice that they imply – from concentrating on the problems of clients to seeking out their capabilities. The perceived threat is also shared by some voluntary organisations, either because of their overwhelming sense of the vulnerability of their clients or because they are afraid that rewarding the efforts of volunteers will steal them away elsewhere. This is a problem of training, but it also requires a shift in management systems – an empowerment of front-line staff, who may not be regarded as co-producers either, to use their own skills, intuition and imagination.

Institutions need to be able to let go

The capacity of communities to take on responsibility seems to be related to the capacity of institutions to 'let go'. There is a dilemma about how to catalyse social

energy without overformalising it, as well as the need for a new approach to risk that does not stifle much of what ordinary people do for themselves. This requires more space to experiment for staff, providing them with a sense of possibility, rather than reinforcing the sense that they are working in a vast, impersonal structure in which they have little power to change anything. The NHS in particular seems to be trapped within a pincer of risk minimisation – where most innovations seem to risk either money or patient safety – and so there are no incentives for middle management to innovate or take risk-seeking decisions. For co-production to spread, managers will need some incentives to work with clients to 'give them back their lives' – rather than feeling they have gained a customer for the duration. Some of our interviewees said that the very term 'co-production' is misleading, because it assumes some kind of consensus about what kind of shared endeavour has been embarked on, when actually this has never been discussed and certainly has never been agreed. This underlines the basic problem.

The role of professional staff needs to change

For co-production to become mainstream, the basic task of professional staff will need to shift from being simply fixers who focus on problems to catalysers who also focus on abilities. This same shift is urged in the latest Green Paper on social care (Department of Health, 2005). This is not a simple matter to achieve, but there is no doubt that overprofessionalisation has been deeply disempowering to clients, who can be reduced to passive supplicants, losing their traditional status as co-producers of health or education. The research also reflects the central importance of front-line staff in delivery and empowerment. To these ends, staff need more interpersonal, facilitative skills – rather than just having a rigid delivery focus. This shift may be hard to achieve in practice, but there was evidence that staff were inspired when they saw co-production working and – in the end – it is this effectiveness that will make the necessary changes possible. Co-production needs to be seen to be effective, not just in studies like this one, but in the day-to-day experience of professionals.

Some element of reciprocity is important in the relationship between professionals and clients

Often the problem seems to be a failure on the part of public service delivery agencies to construct a user-friendly offer or relationship that is equitable, reciprocal, responsive and rewarding. Some agencies will come to a meeting and 'show a film and say that therefore there was participation', said one interviewee from Wales. On the other hand, co-production does seem to have potential for renewing the ethic of

public service, and this would benefit staff and clients alike. Institutions in the past have approached community engagement with little thought about what participants would get in exchange. In the case of community representatives, one way has been to pay them, though this can have negative effects as well, making them dependent on small amounts of money, making it impossible for those on benefits, and driving a wedge between them and their own neighbourhoods by turning them into professional representatives. The projects interviewed here had given much more thought to what participants could get in return, and where the offer was clearest – in Wales with driving lessons, trips, educational support materials, equipment for community groups, etc. – this seems to have had the biggest success in drawing in a wide range of participants from all social groups.

Staff morale is as important as client morale

Interviews with one police officer suggested that their engagement with the community was regarded as a weakness by colleagues. The introduction of police–school liaison officers also meant that they were no longer able to engage directly. One of the peculiarities of modern public services is that front-line staff often share more characteristics with clients than is entirely comfortable for them. In those circumstances, professional status may appear to be all that separates front-line staff from being supplicants themselves because, in practice, the participation that they are asked to extend to clients is often not extended to them.

We need new ways of capturing public benefit

Part of that management shift is about the way they measure and evaluate their own progress, because institutions will need to find ways to incentivise the asset-based model. The current regime of narrow target setting and technocratic commissioning systems does not encourage innovation and is deeply wasteful of the assets represented by clients. It actively frustrates co-production. Time banks, on the other hand, are an effective method of valuing people's informal efforts, as long as they – or projects like them – can be tolerated by the current target-driven controls. Whether alternative measuring regimes emerge from new accounting techniques like social return on investment, or from a more enlightened target regime that gives front-line staff the freedom to innovate – or both – something is required so that big institutions can see the task as it really is, rather than what their metrics tell them. But a simple shift that incorporates a bowdlerised version of co-production into the standard performance measurement regime of big institutions will compromise the whole process. It is also hard to capture the value of the asset-based approach unless you have a system for capturing value across the whole system – for covering

families as a whole or across whole public service budgets. Once again, boundaries need dissolving.

Opportunities for activity are more important than specific tasks undertaken and all sides need to be clearer about how they can reach shared outcomes together

There was evidence that those involved in the institutions and those on the ground – including the participants – had rather different ideas of what they were intending to achieve. That ambiguity led to some tension, even though the institution was very supportive. It may be that there needs to be some kind of outline agreement that sets out areas where both sides can win, so that both are clear about the nature of the deal. There can clearly be misunderstandings about whether it is the tasks undertaken or the opportunities to help that are the most important aspects of a co-production project. Our research strongly implies it is the latter. It is also clear that intense work is necessary in early stages by project staff to make these projects happen at all. The co-production experiments of the Manningham Housing Association – which makes very clear what the shared purpose, responsibilities, benefits and incentives are for all sides – are an example of how these compacts might be specified (Burns, 2004). As things stand, mainly but not exclusively because of funding uncertainty, the terms of engagement need to be more equal. It may be that co-production can learn from the community compact idea developed by the Scarman Trust, where authority and resources are devolved as part of the agreement (Pike, 2003). This would also allow both organisations and community groups to plan financially for a long-term future and tackle sustainability.

Time banks provide an alternative, and more supportive, way of measuring and evaluating the efforts of clients, which can provide more valuable outputs

Time banks are not the only method of doing this, but they do offer ways of valuing co-produced labour and they provide in their systems an inventory of the work that goes on below the radar of paid employment. Member linkages offer another way of measuring social networks.

Co-production and government

> The system is incentivised towards a pathological, deficit, fixing-it model.
> (Former hospital trust chair)

The key issue for government here is the narrowness of the current model of public service delivery, incentivised by throughput rather than long-term recovery, managed by targets that often bear little relation to real people and blind to the assets that their clients represent. While services are managed in this way, the scope for embracing co-production as a mainstream idea – rather than as parallel production – is limited. Yet there is evidence of public services, and especially key enthusiasts inside public services, who would like to do more – to find new ways of engaging clients as partners in the delivery of services in every area.

There is also the problem that government departments have difficulty planning and co-ordinating broader services, though clearly progress has been made. Jamie Oliver's school meals, for example – so crucial to long-term health – are defined as 'education'. Workplace smoking is the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry. Co-producing health with patients, with families and neighbours does not fit easily into the existing systems and targets.

This may be why interventions seem to work best when they do not challenge existing public service administrative systems and assumptions directly. A more sophisticated approach may be to recognise this and find other ways of bringing the parallel approaches closer without actually trying to force them together.

One area that clearly needs reform is the benefits system. One of the people outside paid work trained up in this programme as a researcher was penalised by the Benefits Agency for their involvement. This was despite the fact that it was making them considerably more employable and despite the fact that they were encouraged to get themselves trained via a formal government scheme. It was the informality and the unpredictability of their initiative that seemed to frighten officials.

Seminars held as part of this research on the issue of maximum paid employment and whether it was actually desirable – given that many of those outside paid work were actually involved in useful activity – suggested that the ultimate solution might be to extend payments to those who were organising voluntary activity in their neighbourhoods. Something along those lines would be useful, but it is unlikely to take in all those who are involved in co-production in a useful way – or that it *should* do so, if the corollary is that the State then defines again what useful work is.

Welfare officials need to be positive about encouraging engagement with social networks

Those who are involved in co-production are doing useful work, though they may not be capable or fit for paid work. It is axiomatic that they deserve the basic necessities

of life. The issue is, then, how to defend the independence of the co-production infrastructure that measures and rewards the efforts people make. In the long run, co-production would work best under a simple Citizen's Income regime, though this seems to have dropped out of public debate. Even if no payments to people in return for the effort they make are forthcoming, the potential of time banks and other co-production networks could be maximised by allowing participants to earn awards in kind. It should not be too great a leap for government to recognise that this work is both necessary and not affordable or replicable at market prices. Similarly, in many cases, such activity is more sustainable and more useful than low-paid work. As a bare minimum, there needs to be a shift – not so much in regulation but in attitude – towards volunteering and active citizenship by benefits officials. In theory the regulations support it, but in practice claimants still prefer not to risk admitting it, and feel a sense of powerlessness and vulnerability in the face of obscure distinctions between 'volunteering' and 'unpaid work'. There is a clear need, not just for encouragement, but also for enthusiasm – and to include in that enthusiasm the efforts claimants make to involve themselves outside official government training schemes. The present deep suspicion of self-help is precisely the opposite of the attitude that is required.

Co-production is best organised through local institutions and membership organisations

There is a danger that simply extending benefits payments to those involved in co-production might undermine the vital informality and innovation of the voluntary sector, and extend the narrow definitions of work only to government-approved activity. It is important, therefore, that encouragement – and reciprocal recognition – is funnelled as far as possible through local institutions, which may be funded or affiliated to public services.

Sustainable funding for co-production is an absolute necessity

Financial instability was the most common recurring theme across all sites – making it clear that staff were uncertain of their future and the future of the projects themselves. Although no one mentioned this specifically, this must have an impact on the attitudes of both community members and front-line staff. Chronic funding uncertainty is likely to lead to disillusionment and disengagement – as well as rapid staff turnover. All the projects had insecure futures and the prospects of funding seemed unrelated to whether or not they were successful in their objectives. The consensus among projects seemed to be that present funding arrangements seek

out innovation and evaluation at the expense of successful efforts on the ground, and that leads to deep cynicism among those who have lent their unpaid efforts to the project – knowing that it will shortly be replaced by something else, often staffed by the same people. Statutory support by public services – which many of these projects were benefiting from – was very patchy. More of the responsibility for funding these projects needs to shift to them. On the other hand, simply subsuming co-production under the auspices of public services may not solve the problem either, for the reasons outlined. There is, then, a problem of ownership, which may fatally undermine the ability to engage people, and to make a difference when they do. Solutions, if there are any, will probably lie in some combination of funding – direct from public services and local government, but backed by other sources to guarantee independence.

Co-production must include an empowerment ethic

Many of those we interviewed stressed that people need fundamental environmental and economic opportunities to be in place – basic prerequisites for health and personal safety – which co-production can never provide by itself, however successful it is. Co-production can help overcome structural inequalities, by changing people's attitudes towards themselves – and by giving them the confidence to demand better and to use political processes – but those political processes must be available. Co-production that does not include the egalitarian ethic that Cahn (2001) describes is simply a technocratic attempt to subvert people's aspirations.

Government at all levels needs to be able to welcome some element of risk

Co-production attempts to shift professionals from fixers to catalysts. That means they need to be able to operate in a climate where they can trust clients to take responsibility, make mistakes and learn from these. That is extremely difficult in the current climate where users have to be 'protected' from risk. There is evidence that the Government has understood that:

- people need some risk in their lives if they are to change, and this needs to be managed

- the voluntary sector cannot survive in the current tyranny of insurance companies and no-win no-fee compensation lawyers.

Either way, some kind of framework is required that gives professionals more freedom to empower their clients.

Summary

Most of the opinion formers we interviewed as part of this project were positive about co-production. They also recognised the principles of co-production as familiar and were to some extent active in putting aspects into practice. But they also identified significant barriers. Most major co-production experiments seem to be isolated and at the margins of big public service bureaucracies – especially as their target regimes value throughput rather than reducing dependency.

There were also some reservations, including the cost of managing these systems locally, and the tendency for co-production organisers to become subsumed into the prevailing public service or voluntary sector culture and fearful of the risks of their volunteers delivering services themselves.

This research has two major conclusions about the spread of co-production. First, that we have been studying two overlapping categories on the same continuum: what we might call 'generic' co-production; and 'institutional' co-production of the kind advocated by Cahn (2001), which – partly because of management systems in the organisations that might benefit, but also because of professional training – is at the moment quite hard to achieve.

The second conclusion is that generic co-production – the widespread effort to involve local people in mutual support and the delivery of services – is both widespread and probably a natural part of human life. In this sense co-production is simply a reminder of the way things actually are through the smokescreen of professional dependency and political debate. Certainly, there are thousands of projects already happening that embody many of the principles of co-production, even if they are not all engaged in quite the same way.

But, if it was hard to define co-production in an exclusive way because its boundaries are necessarily fuzzy, it was possible to recognise it and to see repeated patterns where it enjoys some measure of success. This is, in a way, the most important outcome of this research – a clearer sense of what public institutions will look like if they are going to use their clients as assets.

On the downside, it is clear that public service systems can be corrosive to co-production, and that – if it is to develop a more mainstream role – it must continue to challenge concepts of what is 'useful' work and reach out beyond the poor. It also requires human face-to-face connection.

There is also potential conflict with any political agenda of 'full employment' – one that fails to value other activities by people outside paid work – which takes little

account of the unpaid or at least reciprocal 'work' that is done by people who are not in paid employment, whether it is childcare or wider neighbourhood development or social capital building. If the Government's full employment policy was to succeed, for example, there would be social and economic costs if nearly everyone was at work.

The research findings also suggest something of a paradox. On the one hand, co-production projects can help break down institutional barriers; on the other hand, they require some barriers to be blurred already to have any chance of success. Co-production seems to work, where it does work, largely through the efforts and inspiration of a few managers who can see the benefit, and often despite the best efforts of the system as a whole. This implies that the role of professional staff needs to change. If co-production is to be more mainstream, their basic task must shift from being fixers who focus entirely on problems to catalysts who focus on abilities.

The key issue for government here is the narrowness of the current model of public service delivery, incentivised by throughput rather than long-term recovery, managed by targets that often bear little relation to real people and blind to the assets that their clients represent. While services are managed in this way, the scope for embracing co-production as a mainstream idea – rather than as parallel production – is limited. Yet there is evidence of public services, and especially key enthusiasts inside public services, who would like to do more – to find new ways of engaging clients as partners in the delivery of services in every area.

7 Next steps

> The mutual model offers the opportunity to renew the public service ethic
> and deliver a culture shock to public services, whose values have ossified
> over time.
> (Interview with policy maker)

If co-production can 'lengthen and strengthen' public services, as one of our
interviewees put it, and if it can help recreate the social networks that make a clear
contribution to recovery, well-being, education and employability, then it makes
sense to face up to some of the hurdles we have identified to spreading these
techniques better in mainstream services.

Although some mainstream services were involved in the projects we studied, and
certainly have been in other co-productive projects, the implication of our findings is
that this happens despite – not because of – the prevailing welfare and internal
administrative systems of government and public services. The following might be
areas for debate to reverse this.

Proposals for funders

It is important that funders realise that co-production is not susceptible to a narrow
target regime and that the challenge to redefine clients as assets means that the
definition of asset – and the list of tasks that participants may end up doing – must
not be prescribed. That requires some freedom and flexibility, and we suggest that
they:

■ *experiment with 'community service agreements',* which set out clearly what is
expected of service users, community agencies and service providers, and
specify both broad objectives and some of the tasks that are expected to achieve
it (Pike, 2003)

■ *encourage large charities to provide back-office functions for small ones*, so that
the small-scale voluntary infrastructure for co-production can be freed up to
operate more effectively – and to raise the money they need independently

■ *reduce targets required to simple, robust but light-touch measures* that allow
flexibility for projects to focus better on the assets of participants.

Proposals for welfare

There is no doubt that the welfare system, as it currently works, is frustrating the development of co-production, and that – in practice – the message that welfare officials are supposed to be encouraging voluntarism and self-help has not reached front-line staff. We therefore suggest that policy makers should:

■ *focus on volunteering and participation as a vital role that is important for its own sake*, rather than just a step towards paid work, and encourage informal, self-help activity

■ *develop an acceptable way of allowing people on benefits to be recompensed for their effort in the community*, so that those outside paid work are given incentives to become active contributors to the community – but funnelled as far as possible through local institutions that may be affiliated to or funded by public services, but are independent of central government

■ *reform Incapacity Benefit regulations so that they stop discriminating against rehabilitation*

■ *develop ways for people outside paid work who are doing useful activity in their neighbourhoods to have sufficient income to maintain some quality of life* – in the long term, this may form some kind of Citizen's Income available to all.

Proposals for institutions

These findings suggest that interventions that strengthen people's resilience and ability to cope with day-to-day challenges will have significant impact on reducing the need for remedial interventions. But they also suggest that large public institutions have a range of difficulties using co-production in practice. We suggest that they:

■ *include the values and skills of co-production in the training of professionals and front-line staff*, and recruit people who show an aptitude in these areas

■ *adopt broad indicators of well-being*, rather than narrow measurements of throughput

■ *experiment with new methods of costing the effects of co-production into mainstream budgets*, so that co-production is more acceptable under a best value regime

■ *incentivise the asset-based approach to clients*, to encourage professionals to find new ways of using the assets their clients represent to create permanent change.

Proposals for government

Government needs to set the framework that will allow co-production to become mainstream, both in the way it evaluates public services and the way it organises its budgets. We propose that it:

■ *sets a duty to collaborate between services, their clients and the public* – that would mean requiring all bodies responsible for setting standards and auditing or inspecting performance in the public sector to put in place mechanisms to make sure public service organisations engage with their users, and the wider public, in formulating and pursuing common objectives and targets

■ *builds on its 'Together We Can' campaign to promote collaboration between citizens and public services*, and introduces a cross-sector award scheme to recognise effective co-production – as Investors in People now does for staff training – and to inject reciprocity into the relationship between professionals and clients

■ *experiments with cost-benefit accounting systems, which allow policy makers to see more clearly which interventions save money* – in the short term, this will mean giving consideration to the findings and proposals from the research on the evaluation of the costs and benefits of community engagement, commissioned by the Civil Renewal Unit in the Home Office

■ *trusts citizens to do more and take more responsibility* by tackling directly the culture of risk aversion

■ *sets up a Co-production Fund for public service institutions*, which will match their investment in innovative asset-based experiments

■ *enables everyone to give their time to shaping and delivering public outcomes without any financial penalties*, especially if they are outside paid work, have mental health difficulties or are excluded in a range of other ways, and make sure that public services provide more opportunities for joint work with citizens.

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Appendix 1: Participants interviewed

Total number of participants interviewed across all three sites: 65.

Table A1.1 Gender

Gender	% of total responses (61 responses/4 no response)
Male	24
Female	76

Table A1.2 Age

Age	% of total responses
15–20	13
21–34	23
35–44	27
45–54	8
55–64	12
65–74	13
75 and up	3

Table A1.3 Nationality

Nationality	% of total responses (57 responses/8 no response)
North American	2
British	37
British/Welsh	5
Congolese	1
English	1
Georgian	1
Greek	1
Indian	1
Irish	2
Nigerian	2
Scottish	14
Welsh	31
West Indian	2

Table A1.4 Accommodation

Accommodation	% of total responses (64 responses/1 no response)
Own house/flat	28
Rented house/flat	17
Council house/flat	28
Other	6

Table A1.5 Length of time in current home

How long have you lived in your current home?	% of total responses (65 responses)
Less than one year	6
1–3 years	26
4–10 years	29
Over 10 years	39

Table A1.6 Health

Health	Response
Do you consider yourself disabled? (3 responses/63 no response)	3 participants ticked yes
Do you have any chronic medical conditions like diabetes, arthritis or asthma? (55 responses/10 no response)	42% reported chronic conditions including arthritis, asthma, diabetes, ME, angina, epilepsy, back pain and prostate problems
Do you have personal experience of mental health problems and/or mental distress? (42 responses/23 no response)	38% reported mental health problems primarily depression and stress
Can you describe how your health conditions have affected your life? (e.g. not able to work, find going out difficult, etc.)	Range of responses included: depression unable to work can't mix with people difficulty in listening, concentrating I get down, housebound low motivation, find going out difficult not socialising mobility problems not able to use public transport generally poor health

Note: 11% reported both *chronic health problems and mental health problems.*

Table A1.7 Employment status

Employment status	% of total responses (56 responses/9 no response)
Full-time paid work	7
Part-time paid work	21
Self-employed	5
Student	12
Retired	21
Other	9 unemployed; 7 homekeepers; 6 other

Table A1.8 Benefits

Benefits	% of total responses (33 responses/32 no response)
Job Seeker's Allowance	6
Income Support	39
Incapacity Benefit	33
Other	15 pension/6 other

Table A1.9 Household income

Household income (£ per year)	% of total responses (41 responses/ 24 no response)
0–10,000	56
11,000–14,000	17
15,000–20,000	20
21,000–24,000	5
Over 25,000	2

Appendix 2: Other interviewees

Staff interviews

Staff were interviewed from the following organisations.

Glasgow

Patch
Gorbals refugee peer advocacy
Gorbals peer tutoring project
Roots
Seal
Gorbals Time Bank

London

Rushey Green Time Bank
Cares of Life project
Southwark Time Bank network
Maudsley Hospital
South London and Maudsley NHS Trust

Wales

Dinas Time Bank
Blaengarw Time Centre
Miskin Time Bank
Rhymney Time Centre
Valleys Kids
Dinas local police
Caerphilly Council
Creation Development Trust

Policy interviews

Government

Harry Cayton, Director of Patient and Public Involvement, Department of Health
David Halpern, Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office
Ed Mayo, Executive Director, National Consumer Council
Jan Newton, Advisor on Citizenship, Department for Education and Skills
Henry Tam, Civic Renewal Unit, Home Office

People commissioning services

Jackie Ballard, Youth Justice Board
Andrew Couzens, Corporate Director of Social Care and Health, Leicester City
Council
Prof. Tom Craig, Institute of Psychiatry
Dr John Middleton, Director of Public Health, Sandwell
Peter Molyneux, Non-executive Chair, Southwark PCT
Zoe Reed, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust

Community voluntary sector

Jane Bradburn, Head of User Involvement, Macmillan Cancer Care
Alison Cobb, MIND
Bill Garland, Community Service Volunteers
Alison Gilchrist, Community Development Foundation
Dame Elizabeth Hoodless, Community Service Volunteers
Matthew Pike, Scarman Trust
David Tyler, Community Matters

Think tanks and academics

Angela Ellis, Institute for Volunteering Research
Steve Howlett, Institute for Volunteering Research
Diane Plamping, London School of Economics and former chair of Tower Hamlets
PCT

Appendix 3: Project descriptions

Project	Outline of project	Aims
Glasgow		
Patch	Conventional volunteering approach – paid staff and volunteers from local community. Emphasis on peer support	Self-help group for lone parents
Refugee peer advocacy project	Conventional volunteering approach – paid staff and volunteers are refugees and asylum seekers and local people. Emphasis on peer support	Helps to welcome and settle refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow
Peer tutoring project	Peer mentoring approach – modelled on a Chicago-based schools mentoring programme	To improve educational attainment and social skills of 'troubled' students
Seal	Healthy living network run by local volunteers	Focused on, but not restricted to, the promotion of healthy eating in the Gorbals
Gorbals Time Bank	Community-based time bank	To strengthen and support local people/organisations to help each other and increase levels of social capital
Roots	Refugee community organisation	Involved in a range of local activities including social enterprise to support and promote integration of newcomers to Glasgow
London		
Cares of Life	Community-based project with time credit approach	Aims to encourage uptake of mental health services by local Afro-Caribbean community
Rushey Green Time Bank	One of London's first community time banks, set up in GP's surgery in Catford, SE London	Time credit model – aims to reduce isolation and strengthen social networks in local community
Wales		
Dinas Time Centre	Community time bank located in small block of local flats in isolated part of Welsh Valleys	Time currency model aims to: • encourage exchange on free-flowing basis, enabling inter-action and community • engagement (social energy) without necessarily involving agencies • get new people through the door and see the intrinsic value of volunteering

Continued

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Project descriptions - *continued*

Project	Outline of project	Aims
Wales – *continued*		• recognise what current volunteers are doing • help people value themselves and their potential, giving them new life skills, reducing isolation
Blaengarw Time Centre	Community time bank located in former Workmen's Hall in centre of town	Time centre model aims to: • encourage exchange on free-flowing basis, enabling interaction and community engagement (social energy) without necessarily involving agencies • get new people through the door and see the intrinsic value of volunteering • recognise what current volunteers are doing • help people value themselves and their potential, giving them new life skills, reducing isolation.
Rhymney Time Centre	Community time bank	Awards for participation model aims to: • get people through the door and see the intrinsic value of volunteering • recognise what current volunteers are doing re-release social energy into community development structures • help people value themselves and their potential, giving them new life skills, reducing isolation

Appendix 4: Co-production comparisons

	Conventional delivery approach (e.g. institutional public services)	Generic co-production approach (e.g. conventional voluntary sector)	Institutional co-production approach
People as assets	Community members as patients, students, refugees, victims, perpetrators, the problems to be solved	Community members as volunteers usually primary medium of service delivery	Community members seen both by others and themselves as complementary participants equally responsible for positive/negative outcomes
	Strategy and policy documents and quality standards restrict community members to status of consumers, clients, end or service users	Community members often describe themselves as 'just a volunteer'	Community members' direct experience seen as integral part of 'solution'
	Significant status and power/distance differentials	Volunteers often protected and directed by paid professional staff	Networks of friends and families considered positive co-contributors to success
	Community members may provide user representation on boards, in consultation processes but have little or no real influence over decision making	Community members have some influence over design and creation of services, often sit on management and partnership boards	Community members meaningfully involved in all stages of service planning, design, creation, delivery and evaluation
	Friends and family networks seen as marginal or, at worst, negative influences	Often co-delivery of services done by volunteers and direct experience valued	
Work	Community contributions often restricted by regulations and institutional risk management	Clear distinctions between roles and responsibilities of paid professionals and community members	Community members' contributions to strengthening the core economy seen as necessary for achievement of successful outcomes – by both professionals and community members
	Status and pay accorded by professional skills, qualifications and expertise – specialist knowledge delivered/transferred to lay recipient	Some regulations and risk management approaches restrict fully inclusive participation by all community members	Community contributions form integral part of organisational strategy – they are systematically recorded and used to define organisational mission and meet objectives
	Paid with some marginal unpaid contributions in specific areas	Community members' contributions recorded only for funding purposes rather than to meet organisational aims	
	Unpaid contributions do not figure in targets or evaluation of service effectiveness	Unpaid work valued highly but nature of work tends to be limited by type of organisation and strategic aims and objectives	

Co-production comparisons - *continued*

	Conventional delivery approach (e.g. institutional public services)	Generic co-production approach (e.g. conventional voluntary sector)	Institutional co-production approach
Work - *continued*	What constitutes work is pre-determined and regulated		Nature of work is defined by needs and complementary skills and capacity of both community members and professionals
Reciprocal activity	'Contract' between professionals and community members is implicit with community members required to comply	Specific reciprocity – tends to take form of one-way transactions between volunteer and beneficiary (individual or organisation) for which volunteer may receive acknowledgement in the form of training, work experience, paid expenses, etc.	Giving and receiving encouraged equally – emphasis on reducing cultural resistance to asking for help (and associated 'weakness')
	Professionals seen as 'authoritative voice' by both paid staff and community		
	Generally one-way transactions from professional/expert to lay person/community member	Stated motivation for community members' participation often 'to give something back'	Reciprocal transactions take place in both specific (one-to-one) and generalised (one-to-many; many-to-one; many-to-many) ways.
	Assumption (implicit) that this is what professionals are paid to do and therefore wouldn't be expected or need to ask for help – nor should community members be expected/required to provide it	Expectation of getting something in return for contributions often viewed as contradiction to ethos of volunteering	Asking for help/contributions is seen as positive and expected
		Reciprocal benefits increasingly used as 'carrot' to incentivise volunteer involvement	Reciprocal actions take place across conventional boundaries – both horizontally and vertically, e.g. across status divides, interculturally and cross-generationally, between organisations
Social capital and social networks	Generation of social networks and strengthening of both individual and community social capital seen as outside the remit of service delivery	Generation of social networks and strengthening of both individual and community social capital often unintentional by-product of participation, e.g. self-help groups	Generation of social networks and strengthening of both individual and community social capital is specific and explicit organisational aim

Co-production comparisons - *continued*

Social capital and social networks – *continued*	Conventional delivery approach (e.g. institutional public services)	Generic co-production approach (e.g. conventional voluntary sector)	Institutional co-production approach
	Professional networks of high status the norm – foster polarisation of in-groups/out-groups	Social capital building may be implicit marginal aim	Both instrumental and transformational networks are actively promoted and supported
	Bonding social capital common – bridging and linking forms are rare	Bonding social capital common, some low-level bridging and linking	Support and delivery of activities that bring people together and generate positive emotions are an integral part of organisational ethos
			Bridging, bonding and linking social capital building activities are underpinned by organisational policies and practice

Appendix 5: Other examples of co-production

The basic ideas behind co-production are not unfamiliar in policy circles. Indeed, the phrase has appeared in think-tank circles in recent years in the UK (for example Leadbetter, 2004). But most of these mentions have neglected to explain the depth of the concept, using it in a purely rhetorical sense that leaves it without a practical driver. This appendix sets out some worldwide examples of co-production in action.

Mitchell High School, Stoke-on-Trent, UK (Sanderson, 2004)

Mitchell High School is one of the models for the UK Government's 'extended schools' programme. Its success is based on the efforts of an innovative headteacher and her team, and their ability to turn to the community for help in regenerating a failing school. The school explicitly reaches out to the neighbourhood, mainly to parents, to use their skills – not just on the governing body or helping out in the classroom but also to achieve major projects, including improving behaviour. Mitchell uses the school as a springboard in order to rebuild the local community through co-production. It may be the fact that this is a school is less important – other local institutions could have been used in much the same way – than the underlying purpose behind the project. In fact, the project has been only indirectly about raising educational standards. It has been primarily about building emotional capacity in the community, which the headteacher saw as a vital prerequisite before academic standards could be raised. The danger is that government policy makers interpret the success of Mitchell very narrowly and then roll out a national programme of extended schools without understanding that its success has not been primarily about making more services available to a passive neighbourhood. The central idea has been that the community is an equal partner.

Member-organised Resource Exchange (MORE), St Louis, USA (Grace Hill Settlement, 1998; Time Dollar Institute, 1999; Burns *et al.*, 2002; www.gracehill.org)

MORE is a highly ambitious, city-wide infrastructure designed to build social well-being and community capacity, including a neighbourhood college, a network of time banks, a whole range of health-related support systems and 'safe houses', and a network of touchscreens and community centres – as well as the US equivalent of

Sure Start. Like Mitchell High School, this did not have to be based on the local medical infrastructure – that was purely the way Grace Hill Settlement chose to take – but the focus is on building the community and its capacity to regenerate itself. MORE shows what happens when you take co-production – like the ideas tested out successfully in Mitchell High School – to scale. And, just as neighbourhood capacity, almost emotional capacity, for the school was regarded as a prerequisite for education, MORE regards it also as a prerequisite for health. But again, like the team behind Mitchell High School, MORE is not about delivering enhanced services by professionals. It is about engaging with people or helping them engage with each other. It is also a glimpse of what Mitchell and the other extended schools could be like if they carried on growing in ambition. The challenge for Grace Hill and MORE is whether they can go beyond health-related community development, and whether co-production can do more than build friendlier more mutually supportive neighbourhoods. Can it, for example, take on major and technically challenging problems? That question is where the next case study – of Partners in Health – is relevant.

Partners in Health, Boston, USA (Kidder, 2003; www.pih.org)

The work of Partners in Health in Latin America was forced into co-production by the death of one of their workers of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), and the powerful advice by the World Health Organisation and others that MDR-TB could not be treated in developing countries. Their determination to find an alternative – which in this case meant developing a community support mechanism that could deliver the powerful drugs reliably – meant that Harvard doctors were soon working alongside ordinary people in the neighbourhoods where they were active, and with great success. Once again, this was not the involvement favoured by current policy making – mainly inviting user representatives to join the decision-making structures. This was involvement of neighbours alongside professionals in actually delivering the service. It was this element of trust – not just in patients but in their neighbours – that was most apparent in the famous Peckham Experiment, described below, which demonstrates that co-production is not in fact new to the UK.

Pioneer Health Centre, London, UK (Pioneer Health Centre, 1971; Curtis, 2002)

The Pioneer Health Centre in Peckham lasted two decades, from 1930 to 1950, and provided important lessons – now generally forgotten – about the importance of co-

production. The Centre was the ground-breaking initiative of local doctors seeking to develop a system of medical self-care by looking at broader determinants of health, in particular social capital, friendships, confidence and social assets. When they joined the Centre, patients were invited to a family health check once a year, during which doctors gave no advice. It was their job simply to keep patients informed about the options available – including the social club, literacy classes, the swimming pool or other options designed to give them self-confidence and self-knowledge. It was built on the realisation that simple one-way service delivery was not effective and made little difference to morbidity. Like other examples of co-production, they regarded health as a social asset rather than a narrow absence of morbidity, and used cookery classes, language lessons, and swimming pools to achieve their ends. Importantly, they also allowed patients to organise themselves. There is a historic irony about the Pioneer Health Centre, in that it was set up by medical scientists with little interest in community development. They saw it as a method of exploring the origins of disease. Despite this, they came up with a dramatically social model of health, which demonstrated that patients needed to develop their confidence, capabilities and potential if they were to tackle their own health issues. The lesson of the Pioneer Health Centre is that the determinants of health care regarded as most important by the current generation of policy makers – the level of spending or access to services – are not actually effective in themselves, because people do not tend to use the services properly. Yet, at the beginnings of the NHS, which coincided roughly with the demise of the Centre, it was these that were emphasised.

Rushey Green Time Bank, Catford, London, UK (Garcia, 2002; Seyfang and Smith, 2002; Harris and Craig, 2004)

The Rushey Green Time Bank is an example of how the ideas behind the Peckham Experiment have been revived, with time banks driving a new version of co-production – in this case again in a health context. The time bank is based in a general practice health centre in East Lewisham, South London, not far from the site of the original Peckham Experiment, and in many ways is an attempt to reinject reciprocity and mutuality back into the NHS.

The Peckham Experiment was revived in the highly acclaimed Bromley-by-Bow project, which in turn has led to a whole wave of healthy living centres, funded at least partly by the New Opportunities Fund. But, despite the success of the original healthy living idea, these have been very hard to sustain over the long term. What Rushey Green provides is an example of how to sustain involvement by measuring and rewarding the efforts the patients put in.

The lesson is that co-production has to be more than the goodwill and imagination of a few professionals, as it was in Peckham. The challenge is to find a model that can be replicated, which needs both the enthusiasm of staff who can be effective face-to-face with patients, and a legal and fundable system that can be rolled out, and embedded in the legal structure of the organisation. Rushey Green is now in its fourth year of operation, so it remains to be seen whether that model can be sustained either, but the idea of involving staff and patients on an equal basis has provided an important example of co-production on the ground.

Basta Arbetskooperativ (Basta), Stockholm, Sweden (Basta Co-operative and www.basta.se)

Basta is a unique partnership between drug rehabilitators and former drug users to develop community services as equal partners, and in a co-operative social enterprise structure. It is an example of how co-production can be embedded as part of the legal structure of an institution, rather than relying on the interests of a handful of professionals who may move on to other positions. Basta gives recovering drug users the option to become a partner in the not-for-profit company. The result is a tough model, which gives away nothing, but where support is entirely reciprocal and where a great deal is expected of the service users. In other examples of co-production, the issue is how to continue injecting co-production into the methodology of an existing institution. There is always a tendency for professionals to lose faith in their clients and their neighbours, and for the project to revert to being simply a conventional volunteering scheme – there is also a tendency for professionals to over-protect their clients. That is not a danger in the Basta project. Quite the reverse, in many ways it is too tough for existing practice and yet it does get results.

Curitiba Recycling Project, Curitiba, Brazil (Lietaer, 2001; Boyle and Holdsworth, 2004)

This is a ground-breaking attempt by a Brazilian city to pull together underused capacity in the public transport system to solve problems of waste and recycling in slum dwellings, and improve the overall environmental performance of the city. It emerged out of the innovative work of Mayor Jaime Lerner, whose key problem was that the streets in the *favelas* were too narrow to allow his waste trucks down. As a result, there was a serious problem of informal rubbish heaps, which festered disease and illness and which were affecting the health of the populace. Lerner's successful solution has been to measure and reward the efforts made by ordinary

people to tackle this problem with a credit system that allowed them to use public transport. A similar but considerably more complicated project, the NU-Spaarpas (Boyle and Holdsworth, 2004), has been launched by Rotterdam and Amsterdam.

Washington Youth Court, Washington DC, USA (Time Dollar Institute, 2003; Smith and Burns, 2004)

This case study is another example of how co-production has been used by city authorities to deliver major systemic change, in this case tackling the near collapse of the youth court system in the District of Columbia – an area where half the majority black population under the age of 35 is now in prison, on parole or on probation.

The purpose of the Youth Court – which now deals with over a third of all the teenagers arrested in Washington for the first time for non-violent offences – is to recruit young people to reinforce the anti-crime message. The ultimate purpose is to deliver a youth justice system that helps to prevent criminal behaviour in the short term, but also one that succeeds in changing some of the conditions that produce it in the first place. It arose directly out of the problem of the system's response to those arrested for the first time – mainly benign neglect. Unsurprisingly, prosecutors are more concerned with hardened criminals and repeat offenders than first-time offenders. The Youth Court now tries many of these, under licence from the DC justice system, with supervised juries of teenagers. Those that come before them are normally sentenced, among other things, to training and taking part in the juries themselves.

The lesson of this successful project may be that the juries are not enough. The Youth Court led directly to the formation of a Youth Grand Jury to look at the problem of drugs in Washington. It took evidence and made a string of recommendations – many of which have been accepted and enacted by the Mayor.

Manningham Housing Association, Byron Street Development, Bradford, UK (Lemos and Crane, 1999; conversation with Nazneen Zafa, Housing Officer, Manningham Housing Association, May 2004)

Manningham is another example of an attempt by a housing provider to transform the nature of the relationship between it and its tenants, and to rebuild community. In contrast to most tenancy agreements, that just tell tenants what they must not do,

Manningham has transformed its agreement into a legal undertaking to be a good neighbour and take responsibility. It provides incentives for positive neighbourly behaviour and mutual support, but leaves tenants to use this as they see fit. Manningham's understanding of the importance of social capital, and its realisation that its tenants are assets that can be used, has led to an unusual mutual aid system where tenants must sign up to offer help and receive help. Although this is enshrined in a legal document, the system then entirely trusts the tenants to do as much or as little as they want. This contrasts to the example of public housing in Baltimore – based on a little-used federal regulation in the USA – which insists that all tenant households also owe six hours a month in time (Cahn, 2001). Similar stipulations are now being introduced to other tenancies. But this is the exception in policy making at present. When government programmes fail to engage people successfully, they are often subjected to mechanisms that make it clear – despite the rhetoric – that they are not trusted. Yet the Manningham example seems to be proving itself. Its level of complaints and its tenant turnover are both considerably lower than other similar properties. This also has implications about costs.

Hureai Kippu, Japan (Lietaer, 2001, 2003)

The Hureai Kippu system in Japan combines many of these examples together. It is enshrined in a legal form, it tackles a serious and intractable problem – the shortage of resources to support a rapidly ageing population – and it has trust and spontaneity at its heart.

It means literally 'ticket for a caring relationship' and recognises the efforts that people put in – mainly mutual support – for older people by paying them a ticket worth the price of a home-cooked meal. These tickets are widely accepted in exchange for similar support all over the country – one of a range of related complementary currency schemes, including time banks, that have emerged in Japan since the Kobe earthquake in 1995 led to an upsurge of voluntary support.