



# NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE 2026

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**NHS IMPACT**  
Improving Patient Care Together

## Leading with purpose to deliver lasting health improvement

in partnership with



NHS Confederation



NHSProviders

The NHS logo, consisting of the letters 'NHS' in white on a blue rectangular background.

England

# Improving together: Delivering meaningful and lasting co-produced continuous improvement

**National Improvement Conference 2026**  
Leading with purpose to deliver lasting health improvement

Presented by:  
**Cristina Serrao, Lived Experience Ambassador, NHS England**  
**Helen Lee, Experience of Care Lead – Improvement, NHS England**



## Improving together

A focused session exploring how to move beyond engagement toward co-production as a core approach to improvement.

We will share practical insights and top tips on how to embed lived experience, staff voice and community partnership into continuous improvement— not as an add on, but as the foundation for sustainable change.

## What is meant by the term co-production?

"**Co-production** is a way of working that **involves people** who use health and care services, carers and communities **in equal partnership**; and which engages groups of people at the **earliest stages of service design, development & evaluation**. Co-production acknowledges that **people with 'lived experience'** of a particular condition are **often best placed to advise** on what support and services will make a positive difference to their lives. Done well, **co-production helps to ground discussions in reality, & to maintain a person-centred perspective**"

### Values and behaviours

For co-production to become part of the way we work, we will create a culture where the following values and behaviours are the norm:



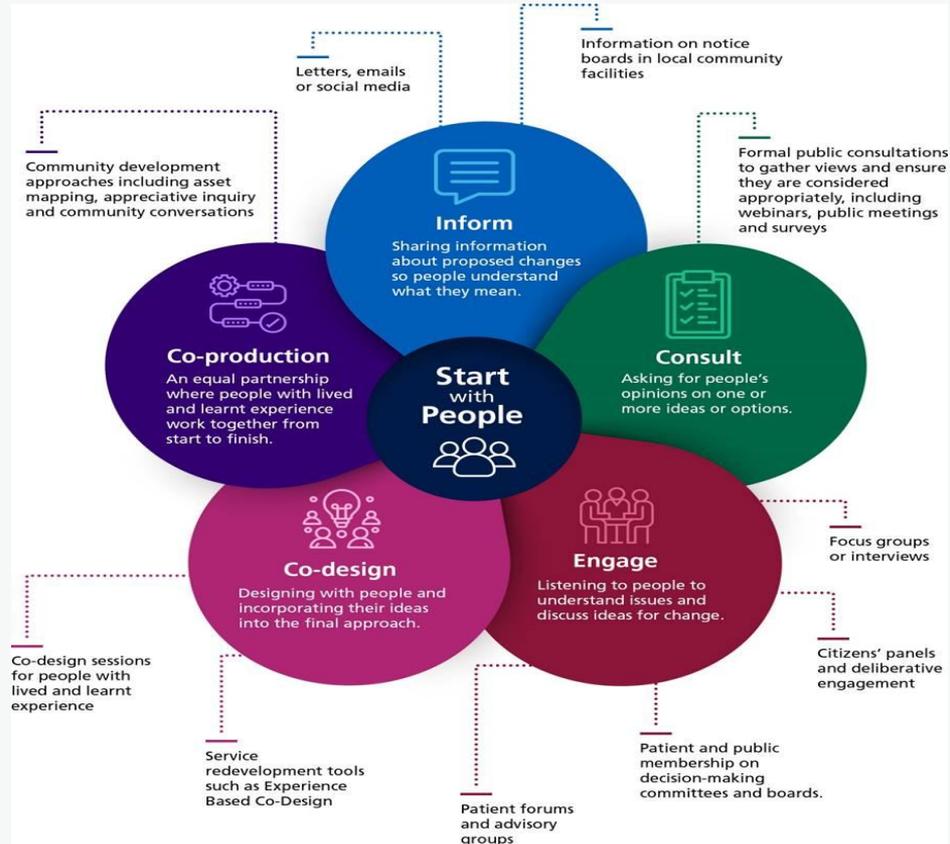
# NHS England Working with People and Communities statutory guidance

## Involvement: where does co-production fit in the NHS

The People and Communities  
team contact email is:

[england.peopleandcommunities@nhs.net](mailto:england.peopleandcommunities@nhs.net)

[Join NHS Futures workspace Start with People](#)



# The cycle of co-production



The cycle of co-production illustrates both the importance of lived experience voices within co-production processes, and how these processes function as part of a healthy cycle of service development and evaluation.

[The cycle of co-production Coalition for Personalised Care](#)



“My experience of health care will always be different because of my learnt experience as a nurse – I have the privilege of understanding the NHS, the language, how to navigate it etc. My experience will never be the same as someone without these insights”

Learnt Experience

Lived Experience

## Recognising the 'third bubble'



## Our shared goal

improving experiences of care by co-producing continuous improvements together, can lead to sustainable change



# National Quality Board Refresh 2022

## Improving experience of care

A shared commitment  
for those working in  
health and care systems

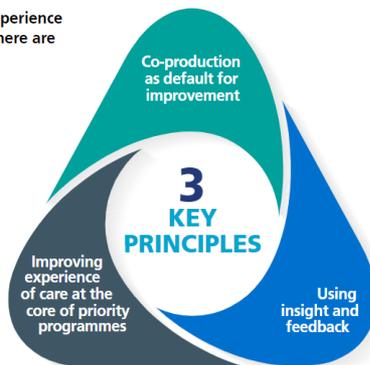


Developed by the National Quality Board

[NHS England » Improving experience of care: A shared commitment for those working in health and care systems](#)

## Delivering the best possible experience of care in systems: **Key principles**

When planning for the delivery of the best possible experience across a health and care system or within a provider, there are 3 key principles that should always be considered:



# Always Events®

NHS England, Picker Institute Europe and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) piloted and tested the Always Events® framework

Created guidelines and a toolkit for implementing Always Events within the NHS in England.

Now 140+ sites – in a range of settings. Now beginning in Primary and social care and across integrated care system footprint

IHI encourages us to think of it as an Always experience not just a one off Always Event

It's a promise to partner with people using services so things that are important happen consistently and always.



## Criteria

Important

Evidence-Based

Measurable

Affordable

Co-production - Improving care together



## Always Events®

### PSYPHER

Psychosis Service for Your People Hull and East Riding

The story of our  
Co-designed Always Events® so far...



Caring, Learning and Growing

## The Survey Results

What we expected vs what we actually read...

**Expected:** Following 1:1/group discussions the common theme was more activities available and trips such as bowling trips/ holidays away.

#### Reality of responses:

- "Smoother discharge- planning through service rather than it being a shock when time runs out"
- "Follow up support from PSYPHER"
- Knowing where to access this support.
- "Personalised discharge summary"
- "Hull and East Riding service being the same time."
- "More CBT availability"
- "Counselling/ CBT availability."

Caring, Learning and Growing

## Top tips

**Embrace** partnership and collaboration - Visibly support and sponsor co-production through culture, behaviour and relationships, including **senior leadership** role modelling and sponsorship. Identify where in the system there is a strong culture of co-production, and **nurture, share and spread** this way of working

Support the **adoption of co-production approaches** such as Always Events®, Experience Based Co-Design

**Encourage** open and honest conversations with all involved

Support organisations and an infrastructure that enables the voice of people and communities to be heard - **Be curious** and eager to **listen to experiences of care, whether “lived” or “learnt”**, about **what matters to people** and what their change ideas are

**Invest in people** who use care and support, including unpaid carers, to ensure they have the **knowledge, skills and confidence** to contribute ‘on a level playing field’ and **reimburse** people for their time



# Top tips

**Consider employing people with lived experience** to enable others to co-produce and create a network of networks, including by providing peer support. Don't rely on a small number of people; build sustainability

Systematic capability building for people with lived experience and staff – **learn together**

**Invest in communities** to assess needs and talk to people on behalf of the system, places and neighbourhoods, e.g. via networks of community champions

**Don't assume** you know what people will say

Be “**comfortable with the uncomfortable**” by not knowing the outcome at the start of the journey

**Keep communicating & going** - co-producing and working differently isn't always easy but it's worth it! It may take time but it's time well spent. It's always better when **we improve together**.

**Celebrate your success & share it with others**



# Doing things together in a different way involves...



AN  
INTENTIONAL  
SHIFT IN  
CULTURE TO  
SYSTEMATICALLY  
ALIGN  
COPRODUCTION WITH  
QUALITY  
IMPROVEMENT



PUTTING WHAT  
MATTERS TO  
PEOPLE AT THE  
HEART OF  
IMPROVEMENT  
WORK



SHARING  
POWER WITH  
PEOPLE WITH  
LIVED  
EXPERIENCE TO  
IMPROVE CARE  
TOGETHER

# Why co-produce improvements with people with lived experience

**It grounds decisions in reality** – lived experience offers insight into what truly makes a difference

**It leads to better, more effective solutions** – improvements reflect what matters to people.

**It builds trust and partnership** – valuing people

**It reduces inequalities** – reveals who is missing or underserved.

**It strengthens culture and sustainability** – voices are heard and acted on.



## What can you do next?

Include **co-production as an approach**, ensuring people with relevant lived experience are partnered with programmes in your organisation and systems.

**Sharing power equitably** with people with lived experience to improve care together. Bringing both **'lived and 'learnt'** experience together to work in partnership.

Understand that we all bring our own experiences and expertise, and **everyone's opinion should be equally valued and listened to.**

Putting **'what matters' to people** at the heart **of every interaction.**



## NHS England co-production resource toolkit

[The resources](#) are being shared to help people who want to co-produce improvements in health and care services. Including:

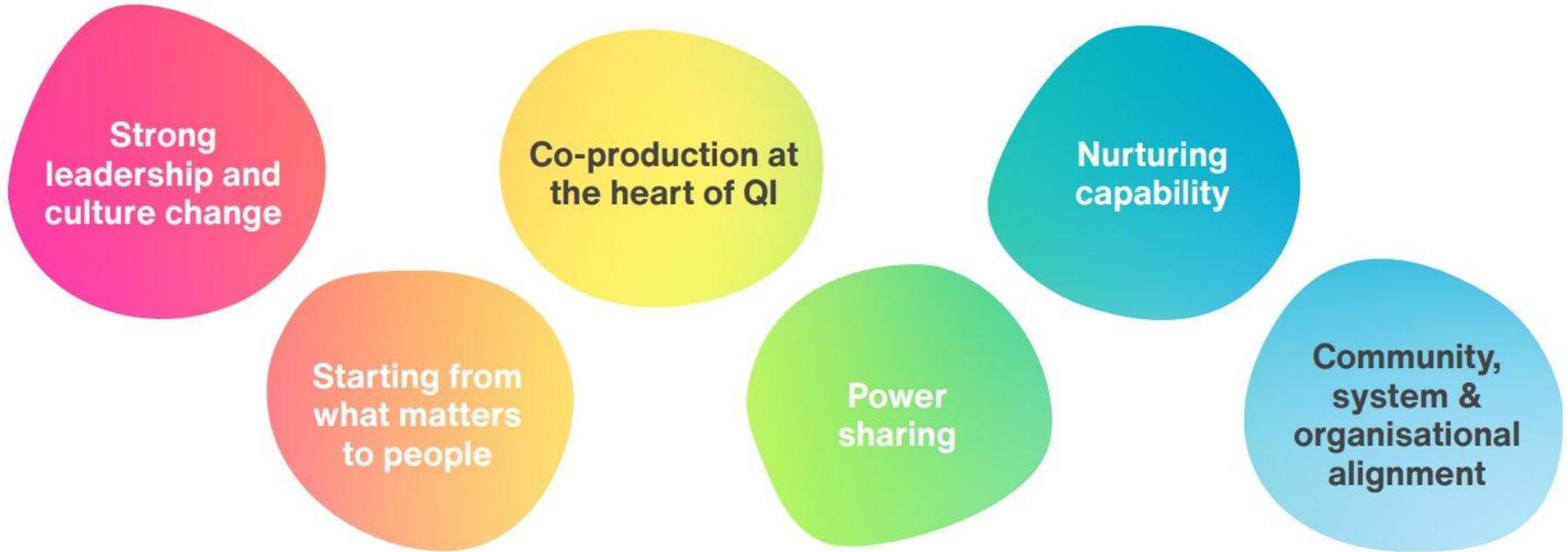
- A co-production introduction
- Supporting literature review
- Resources guide
- QI Venn diagram
- QI Postcards
- A suite of films and animations

Join the Co-production page on the  
**NHS Futures Platform**

Membership via this [link](#) or email us on  
[england.peopleandcommunities@nhs.net](mailto:england.peopleandcommunities@nhs.net)



# Co-production and Quality Improvement



# NHS England Shine A Light on Co-production monthly events

We would be delighted to see you at our future Shine a Light on Co-production events, please use links below to book now!

[Shine a light on co-production March event | NHS England Events](#)

Alternatively, our events are listed online at [NHS England Online Events - Shine a Light](#)



## Q&A

If we don't have time today for Q&A, please email us on [england.peopleandcommunities@nhs.net](mailto:england.peopleandcommunities@nhs.net)

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## Thank You

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 [england.nhs.uk](https://england.nhs.uk)