

# Co-Production Guidelines



**Looking to develop Home Education Policies  
with Local Authorities and Home Educators  
as Equal Partners**



# Table of Contents

Who is Educational Freedom?.....	3
The Purpose of this Document.....	4
What is Co-Production?.....	5
Frequently Asked Questions.....	9



## Who is Educational Freedom?

We are a non-profit organisation with the primary purpose of ensuring all Home Educators have access to free information and support.

Educational Freedom was founded in 2013 by Cheryl Moy and Liz Jenkins as a response to many Home Educators asking for the same information and advice. At the time, the information was either buried behind membership fees, or scattered across many different groups, blogs, email and social networks, so Educational Freedom was a way to bring this information altogether in one location, accessible to all and free for every user.

We have a team of volunteers that not only keep the information up-to-date with the current governmental guidance, but also offer free support to Home Educators across the United Kingdom, via email, Facebook and by phone. Our entire team are made up of current or previous Home Educators who are willing to make a difference for the benefit of others.

Educational Freedom has experience dealing with Home Educators on a 1:1 basis and helping them with their Local Authority and other services, as well as representing a group of Home Educators, when asked.



## The Purpose of this Document

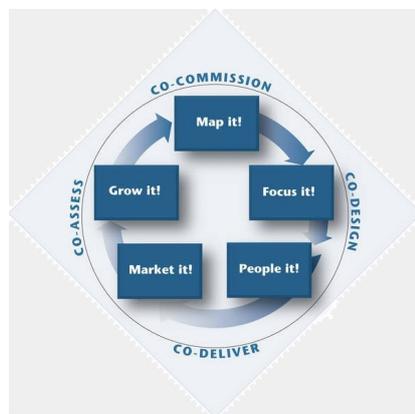
This document has been put together by Educational Freedom to help explain what co-partnership is, and how it can work between Home Educators and Local Authorities when developing a Local Authority's Elective Home Education policy.

This policy will not only be based in law and the government's Elective Home Education Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities and for Parents; but also will be driven by local Home Educators who are living and experience Home Education in collaboration with their Local Authority.

At the time of writing, we are unaware of any examples of co-production between Home Educators and their Local Authorities, and as such, we have looked to other sources and used their key learnings.

## What is Co-Production?

Co-production is the ‘in’ word at the moment, but it is more than just a buzzword. It is a pledge by various parties to work together as equals and an acknowledgement that many different stakeholders have skills and experience that can be used as go through the development cycle. Iriss<sup>1</sup> developed a Co-Production cycle based on Governance International’s Co-Production Star<sup>2</sup> which demonstrates that Co-Production is not a one-off method, but a continual process.



Rather than simple consultation, co-production means that the end-users are actually involved in the concept, design, methodology and are key decision makers.

The Care Act 2014<sup>3</sup> defines co-production as “*Co-production is when you as an individual influence the support and services you receive, or when groups of people get together to influence the way that services are designed, commissioned and delivered*”.

The National Co-production Advisory Group<sup>4</sup> defines co-production as “*Co-production is not just a word, it is not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find shared solutions. In practice, co-production involves people who use services being consulted, included and working together from the start to the end of any project that affects them. When co-production works best, people who use services and carers are valued by organisations as equal partners, can share power and have influence over decisions made*”.

1 <https://blogs.iriss.org.uk/keepingitpersonal/approach/>

2 <https://www.govint.org/our-services/co-production/>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

4 [https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/Co-production/National\\_Co-production\\_Advisory\\_Group/](https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/Co-production/National_Co-production_Advisory_Group/)



The New Economics Foundation<sup>5</sup> defines co-production as *“The relationship where professionals and citizens share power to design, plan, assess and deliver support together. It recognises that everyone has a vital contribution to make in order to improve quality of life for people and communities”*.

Inspire<sup>6</sup> defines co-production as *“Co-Production is where people with relevant lived, worked and trained experience work together as equals to plan, design and develop the delivery of mental health and wellbeing services.”*

To ensure that everyone is starting on the same page, Educational Freedom have come up with this definition of co-production:

**“Co-production is the coming together of Home Educators, HE Organisations and Local Authorities or the Government, as assets with equally valid lived, worked and trained experience. Both citizens and professionals work together from the initial concept, through design, implementation and assessment, as key decision makers, developing local policies and facilitating all styles of Home Education in the UK.”**

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5 <https://neweconomics.org/>

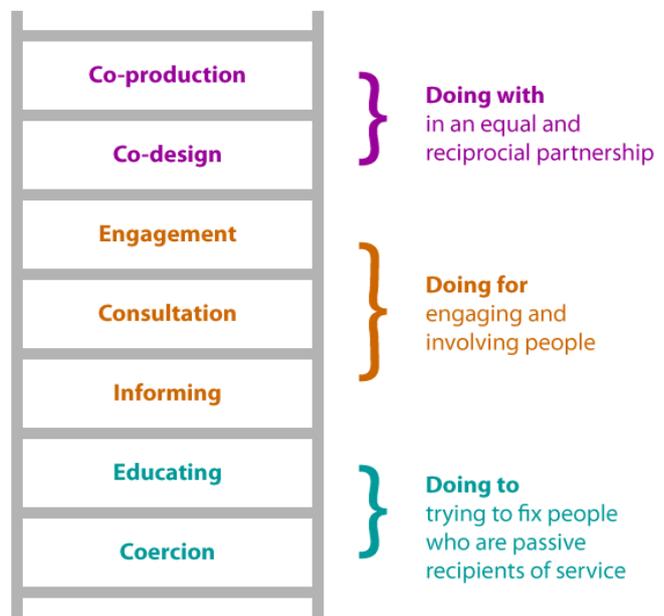
6 <https://thcvs.org.uk/sites/default/files/Co-production%20guidelines%20FINAL%20with%20Copyright.pdf>

Dr Catherine Needham and Sarah Carr<sup>7</sup> say there are three levels of co-production, which we have paraphrased to relate to Home Education policy:

1. Basic co-production: It fails to acknowledge that home educators can have input beyond basic compliance with existing guidelines or policies.
2. Intermediate co-production: It recognises that home educators should have some input into developing policy, but is often in the form of ‘reviews’ after decisions have already been made by the Local Authority or government.
3. Transformational co-production: This is when the balance of power changes so that everybody is equal. Home Educators have the ability to help develop policy from the point of conception and know that they can directly influence decisions throughout the process.

Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) has developed this Co-production Ladder<sup>8</sup> which again shows the difference between the attitudes to engagement between professionals and end-users.

Previously, the development of EHE policies by Local Authorities has always been developed internally and Home Educators were expected comply, even if the policy went far beyond the law or governmental guidance.



<sup>7</sup> <https://lx.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Co-production.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/co-production-in-commissioning-tool/co-production/In-more-detail/what-makes-co-production-different/>



By co-producing local policy will help ensure that Local Authorities are happy that they can do their duty to ensure there are no children missing education and supporting Home Educators with any practical difficulties, whilst allowing Home Educators the freedom to educate their children as they see fit, according to the age, ability and aptitude of the child.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who can be involved?

Home Educators and Local Authorities with HE organisations, such as Educational Freedom.

### What does it cost?

Co-production does not have to be financially expensive. It is more important that everyone involved are equal partners and are committed to work together.

### How much time does it take?

Co-production does take a time commitment, as developing trust and building relationships between all the parties does take time. Additionally, because co-production is cyclical with opportunities to analyse and review, it is not a do-once-and-forget methodology, but evolves over a long time.

### What is the benefit of co-production for LAs?

Co-production has benefits for people delivering services. Primarily, it is a good way of making sure you are supporting Home Educators and their children, making a meaningful difference in their lives. It will improve the relationship you have with the local home educating community, demonstrate your commitment to Home Education as a valid and legal education option in the UK, and will build better social networks to ensure the support you offer is of higher quality and more useful and practical.



## **What is the benefit of co-production for Home Educators?**

Co-production is a way of ensuring that everybody has a say in decisions and policies that affect Home Educators, especially if they often feel overlooked or undervalued. It is about making sure that power and control is fairer, and can increase the community's confidence that the LA is adhering to the law and governmental guidance. It will enable the support offered to Home Educators to be more useful and relevant to the education of their children.

## **What is the difference between Consultation and Co-Production?**

In Consultation, all the decisions have already been made, documents have been produced and you are simply informing end-users about what is to come. Although there may be some level of engagement and interaction, it is often tokenism rather than genuine, and can leave end-users feeling undervalued.

In Co-production, all parties have equal value and are equally involved in the decision process. End-users are involved right from conception of the idea and play an active role in the design and actualisation of the methodology.

## **Is it possible to Co-produce an EHE Policy Document?**

Whilst it would be great if Local Authorities' EHE Policies could be brought about through co-production, all LAs already have a document that they use. That does not, however, mean that updating the policy is limited to consultation; rather, taking the time to co-produce a policy from a blank slate, even if you use the current one for ideas, is the best way to ensure the engagement of Home Educators and improve the support you offer.



## **In what other areas can Co-Production be useful?**

Co-production can be used to develop training for LAs and Elective Home Education Officers (EHEOs) as Home Educators are uniquely placed to understand the law and the impact that badly trained EHEOs can have on their child's development.

A further area suitable for co-production is that of support offer by the LA. Rather than limiting it to a phone call, there are many areas of support that can be given. Basic examples could be library cards, reduced priced rooms for hire, and helping access for examinations. By using co-production, LAs can save their resources by focussing on what would be more useful for Home Educators, who in turn, would be willing to have more engagement with their LA.

As Local Authorities and Home Educators get better at working together, there are likely to be other areas where co-production can be used to ensure full engagement by all parties.