



Sandwell Health
and Care Partnership

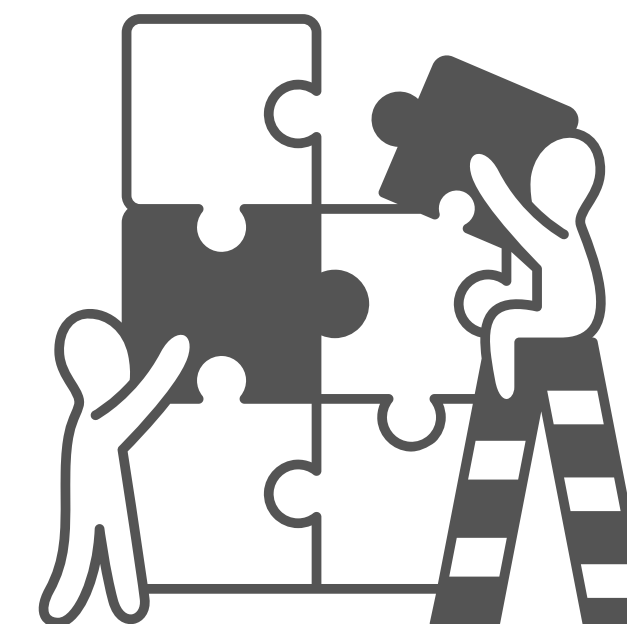


Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

Our Commitment to Co-production

A Sandwell Partnership Charter

September 2024



Review date: June 2026

Foreword

This document has been co-ordinated by Sandwell Council's Adult Social Care commissioning team and created with partners across the health and the community sector. It sits alongside and strengthens The Council Plan, a key document that sets out Sandwell Council's vision, hopes and priorities for the borough looking forward to 2027.

Whilst Sandwell Council and Changing Our Lives facilitated and co-ordinated the content of this Charter, the representation and shaping from stakeholders, professionals and residents enabled this to become a partnership resource. It contains **shared universal guidance** and best practice to enable us to place people at the heart of all we do. Although this document began in Adult Social Care, it is available for any team wanting to strengthen the 'voice' of their stakeholders.

The Charter is aligned with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and supports the three EDI principles:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Charter commitments are found on pages 4/5 followed by background and resources. This is a 'live' document that will evolve over time to capture good practice. We will review the charter annually.

We have engaged and co-produced with a wide range of stakeholders to develop our Partnership Charter:

Sandwell Council teams:

Adult Social Care – Direct Services
Corporate Consultation and Engagement Team
Corporate Customer – Communication and Engagement
Public Health
Sandwell Safeguarding Adults Board
Play Service
SHAPE
The Community Partnership Team
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team

External agencies:

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Black Country ICB (Integrated Care Board)
Brushstrokes
BUDS
Changing Our Lives
Communities in Sync
Healthwatch Sandwell
Ideal For All
Sandwell Advocacy
Sandwell Health and Care Partnership
Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust
Sandwell Consortium
SCVO (Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations)

We held 7 workshops to engage with Sandwell residents to ensure that local people with lived experience of using care and support services could shape the content of this Charter. It was also reviewed by someone with Lived Experience.



Sandwell's Commitment to Co-production Charter

Introduction

The Council and its partners across health and the community sector are committed to working together with the people of Sandwell to improve outcomes for all. There are many definitions of co-production, for us it means:

Making things happen together! Residents, communities, professionals and organisations using their skills, knowledge and experience to work together on an equal basis to; make decisions, create opportunities, develop services, and solve problems that work for everyone.

By adopting this charter, we commit to:

- Strengthening the voice of Sandwell residents; children, young people and adults.
- Being accessible and inclusive.
- Embedding co-production, engagement and participation principles into our way of working.
- Working smarter together; sharing information and opportunities to reduce duplication, time, and resources.



We will:

- **Understand, value, and embrace co-production.** We will actively encourage and promote this way of working across our organisation and teams, sharing and supporting good practice. We will aim for co-production to be 'business as usual' where appropriate, or:
- **Invest in meaningful ways of working with people.** We recognise that co-production and engagement needs to be resourced and is time intensive. We will invest in infrastructure where possible, and allow time to support good practice.
- **Be honest and open.** We will be clear and tell people what we can and cannot do. Full co-production with local people is not always possible, for example, because of legal responsibilities, budgets, or time constraints. When co-production is not realistic we will consider other ways to involve, consult, engage or inform people.
- **Involve the right people.** We recognise that those who use a service, or who are closest to an issue, are often best placed to improve it. We will take the time to get the right people involved, removing barriers, and building relationships.
- **Inclusive and accessible.** We will aim to be creative and flexible in how we work with and communicate with people, so that they can be actively involved in a way that suits them.



Background

Why does Sandwell need a co-production charter? The Council recognises that co-production has many benefits, it is also a legislative requirement in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

- The SEND Code of Practice: 0–25 years (January 2015) states that co-production should take place as far as possible at two levels: for children and young people with SEND, and their parent carers. Housing and Health also have targeted guidance to involve people in their care and support.
- The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 refers to the importance of involving tenants within Housing Services and giving tenants greater powers, and co-production is an effective tool to support and enable this.
- Our UNICEF UK Child Friendly Community Recognition of Commitment shows we are committed to a child rights-based approach, underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which guides our work to improve children's rights, influence, and bring about positive change.

There are many good examples of co-production in Sandwell, however partners agreed that implementing co-production can be confusing. There is lots of information available about co-production, but it isn't always easy to implement.

We want co-production to be the everyday way of working across all council, health, and community services in Sandwell wherever possible.



To do this, we needed a common understanding of what co-production is, and what it is not. We are committed to placing people at the heart of how organisations think and work.

Although there will be times when it is not possible to fully co-produce, aiming for co-productive approaches to be 'business as usual' will ensure that organisations take a "what can we do to engage and involve people?" approach rather than do nothing at all.

Our Partnership Charter for Sandwell contains the co-produced pledges that representatives from Sandwell residents, Adult Social Care (ASC), The Community Partnership Team, Public Health, and partners across Childrens Services, Health, the Community and Voluntary sector have written to enable best practice.



A range of approaches, including consultation, participation, engagement, and citizen involvement, are used when working with people. Below are common terms often associated with working with people, along with their general descriptions:

Consultation – people who use services may be asked to fill in surveys or attend meetings, helping to inform decisions, but do not have power to influence or effect change.

Participation – is the action of taking part in a focus group or discussion.

Engagement – people who use services are given opportunities to express their views and may be able to influence some decisions, but this depends on what the people responsible will allow. Engagement can involve surveys, focus groups, and discussions.

Citizen Involvement – is the active engagement of individuals in providing feedback and participating in activities or services that impact their lives and communities, ensuring they have a voice in the decision-making process.

Co-production – is deemed the best approach, but may not always be possible. It is where individuals are involved from start to finish, working equally with people responsible. It includes joint decision-making on policies and service delivery, from design to implementation.

National Voices suggests co-production is ‘especially important in complex situations where there is no obvious answer or agreed way to approach a situation’. People Hub created a Rainbow Spectrum of Participation based on existing models/Ladders.

People Hub state: “We’ve developed our Spectrum of Participation which shows the various useful ways that people can be invited to input ideas and perspectives to organisations. Crucially it also shows how co-production differs and is distinct from other types of participation”.

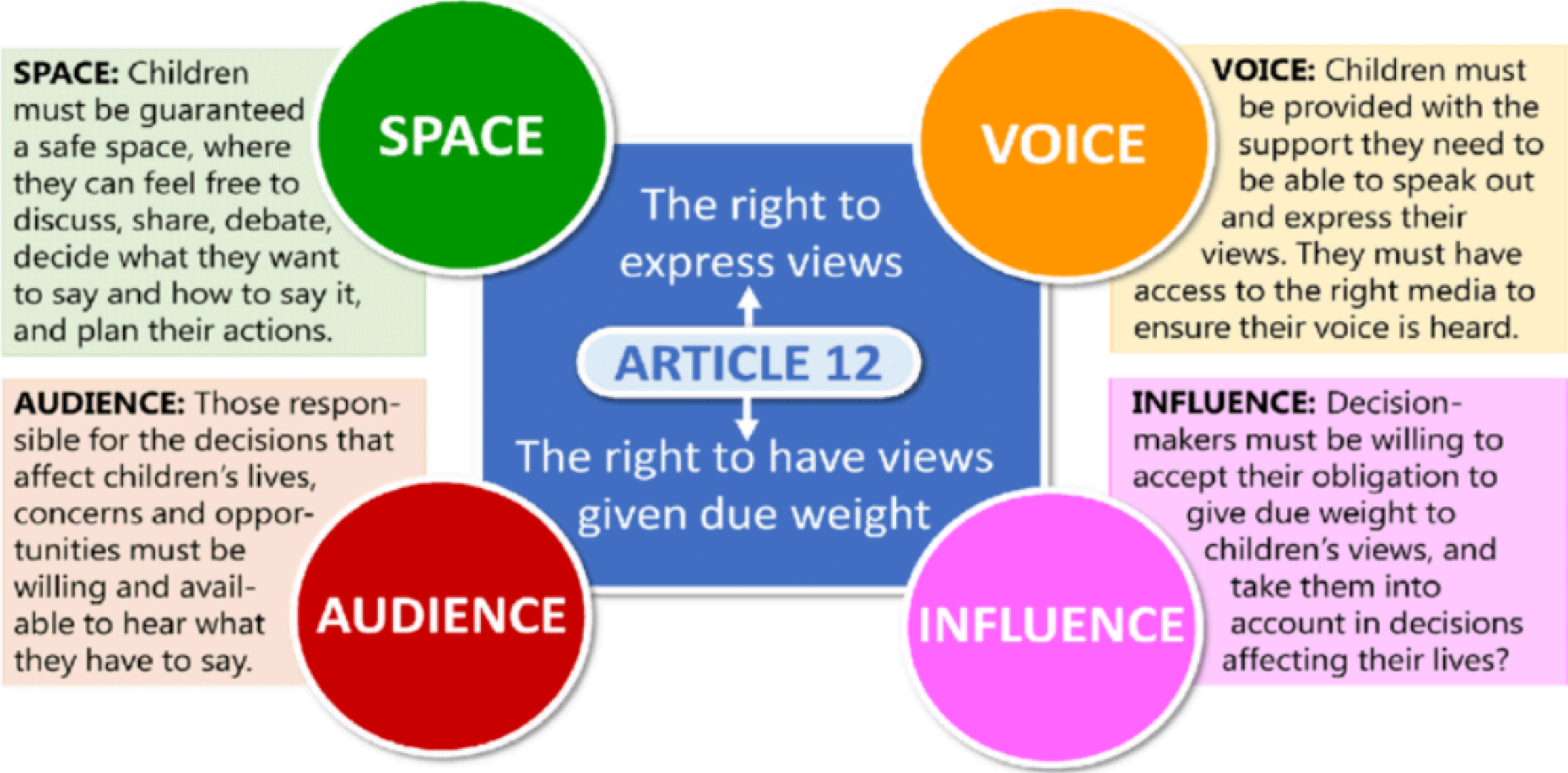
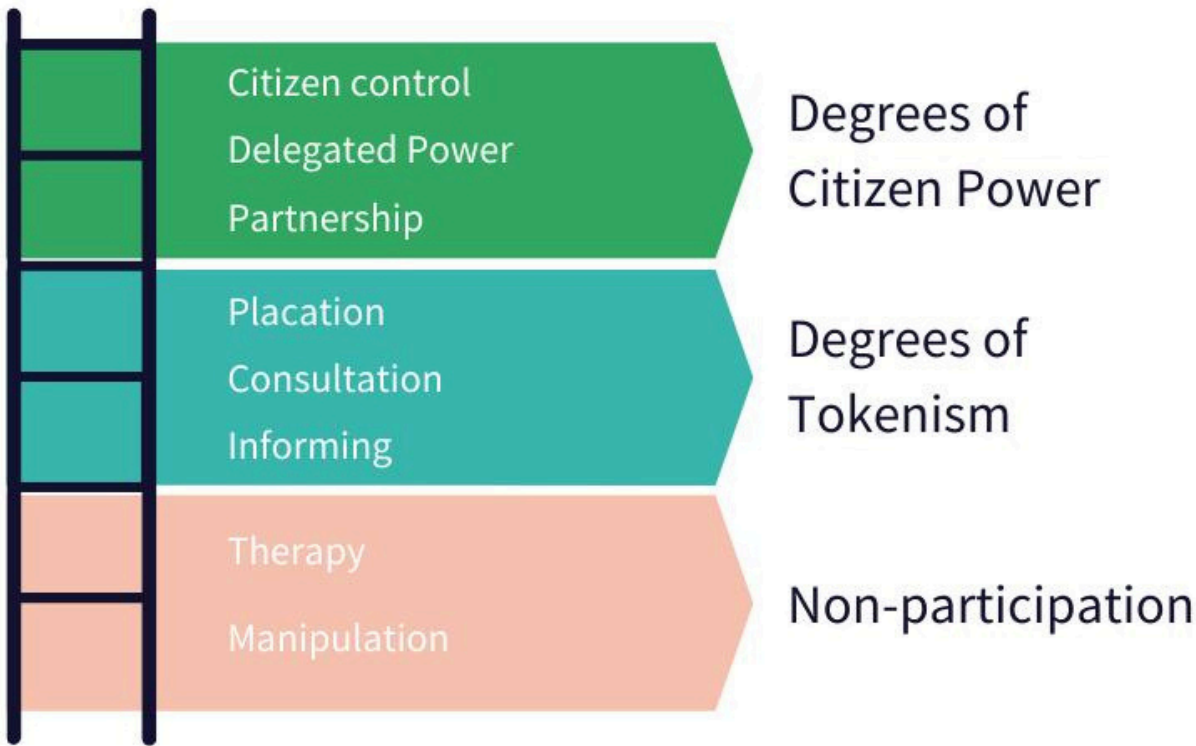
Refer to the illustrations for more details.

These models are just examples, feel free to find others that suit your project or target audience. It is important to decide on the most appropriate method depending on the people and situation.



Participation models

Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation



The Lundy model of participation, Lundy (2007). The four key elements of space, voice, audience, and influence are essential for children's participation in decision-making to be effective, meaningful, and compliant with their rights.

Rainbow Spectrum of Participation



Best practice for co-producing with young people:

- Ensure children, young people and any other people that would not necessarily be able to speak for themselves can give meaningful consent.
- The Childs Rights-Based Approach 7 principles are to be considered when undertaking a child's rights impact assessment pre-any piece of work like an equality impact assessment. The 7 principles are:
 1. Dignity
 2. Participation
 3. Life, Survival, and Development
 4. Non-Discrimination
 5. Transparency and Accountability
 6. Best Interests
 7. Interdependence and Indivisibility

Here are some examples of best practice with Sandwell's children and young people:

[Sandwell Play Sufficiency Assessment](#)

[Sandwell Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy](#)

[Child Friendly Sandwell](#)



Purpose of our Sandwell Partnership Charter

The representatives on the steering group agreed to include the information in this document to ensure people's views are represented. The information is not intended to replace existing strategies or policies, instead it is intended to support professionals to understand more about involving people, and 'true' co-production opportunities in their work.

It is a Sandwell 'view' on where to start and provides further resources, links, and examples for staff who may need them. It is an opportunity to bring our strengths and resources together to work with Sandwell residents. It aims to inspire people to find out more.

So, what is co-production?

Co-production can be used in different ways across a wide range of situations that require change, so it rarely looks the same.

Most things can be co-produced: anything from writing a newsletter to redesigning a community service; creating an individual care and support plan, to changing a care service; from designing a training programme, to developing a new hospital or GP surgery.

Why is co-production important?

The Council recognises that co-production has many benefits, it is also a legislative requirement in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 and The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (January 2015). Sandwell's Community Partnership Team and Health partners also have targeted guidance to involve people in their care and support.

“Co-production gets better results which are meaningful and positive.”

Taking a co-production approach makes it more likely that you will get things right for people first-time round – saving time and money.

It is built on the simple idea that those who are affected by an issue know what works, and are best placed to find solutions: you can't get it right without them and this approach reduces inequalities.

The principle of working with people rather than doing “for” or “to” people means better outcomes for everyone.



The foundation of effective co-production has the following features:

- **People have something to offer:** co-production recognises that local people and communities are experts in their own experience with something valuable to contribute. People are recognised as a resource, rather than passive beneficiaries who need expert help. By sharing power people can work together on an equal basis to achieve positive change.
- **Building on what people are good at:** everybody has strengths and skills. Co-production means recognising what people can do, developing their capabilities and supporting people to use them at an individual and community level.
- **Developing two-way relationships:** co-production recognises the importance of building good relationships, where everybody gets something out of working together in order to achieve the best outcomes.
- **People with similar experiences can support each other well:** personal and peer networks are important sources of support and knowledge. Co-production values and builds these networks.
- **Blurring boundaries between professionals and the people they work with:** the usual line between professionals who design and deliver services, and people using them is blurred, so more people are invited to get involved.
- **Facilitating rather than delivering to:** co-production is about enabling people and communities to make things happen, because this often produces a better result.

Lay the groundwork: Planning for co-production

- Identify what you want to achieve, are you truly co-producing?
- Not every outcome can be co-produced. You can seek other ways of meaningful involvement.
- Make sure people can have a genuine impact on the outcome of a piece of work before you start – plan this time at the beginning.
- Co-production takes time as it involves all interested people from the start.
- Share upcoming opportunities to engage people early and promote these amongst Sandwell.
- Aim for coproduction to be ‘business as usual’ BUT come to the table with a clear idea of any constraints to the project (what is possible and what is not possible) and be honest about this from the start.
- Ask partners if they have similar themes of work, do not duplicate themes with the same people.
- Respect people’s time and try to use existing forums, or partners data where possible. Consider joint exercises if possible.
- Be clear with people about the expectations of being involved: yours and theirs.
- How will you review success? Consider this at the beginning to enable you to measure from the outset.
- Involve people who use the service or who are affected by the issue at all stages – the planning, development, and delivery. Keep checking that this is working.
- Value the experiences of people who are affected by an issue or service (reward and recognition).
- Think about people getting something back for their contribution. This can be a financial reward but can be non-monetary compensation.
- Think about how people can be supported to make the space for co-production.
- It is best practice to consider how your proposed approach may impact people protected under the Equality Act and consider if an Equality Impact Assessment will be required for your project.



During the project: Co-production in action

- All partners have a responsibility to keep things on track and support each other.
- All partners will respect each other and have equal status.
- To achieve meaningful, positive outcomes everybody involved must have the same vision and an equal voice. This means working together to identify and achieve a result that all can agree on.
- The co-production partners will depend on what is being co-produced and their interest in it. Recruit the right people that are close to the issue.
- Co-production needs people with lots of different skills. Think about how this will be done. Think about what support people might need to take part, and how this can be provided.
- Allow for creativity and build working relationships and a culture that encourages the team to find collective solutions.
- Be brave and put trust in people to come up with solutions and ideas.
- Think about the practicalities and overcome any barriers to participation: access needs, communication needs and preferences, reasonable adjustments, best times of the day and week to meet, locations and venues for meeting.
- You may have to go to 'their' space.
- Think about how everyone will communicate throughout the process: professionals and people involved directly in the project, as well as the wider community or other stakeholders. All communication needs to be clear, timely, accessible and inclusive.
- Use partners to disseminate, promote and encourage people to come forward.



Afterward: Reviewing and learning from co-production

- Review how well a project has co-produced: was this true co-production, what worked, what can be learned, what difference did it make, what are the next steps?
- If co-production wasn't possible, but people were still engaged to review or co-design for example, it is important to always go back and tell people how their input was used. What difference did it make?
- Engage with people around future opportunities and use partners to spread the word to keep relationships going.
- Respect people's time and consider joint efforts where possible.





How did we develop this charter?

A co-production steering group was set up by the Adult Social Care (ASC) Commissioning Team. The steering group is made up of representatives from Sandwell Council; including the Community Partnership Team, the NHS and organisations from the Community and Voluntary sector.

Changing our Lives, a rights-based organisation facilitated, and wrote this charter using the information gathered.

By accessing the networks of steering group members, seven workshops were held throughout October and November 2023 to gather people's ideas and views on what is important when organisations work together with people, and what should be in this charter.

The groups included people using health, social care and community services. The feedback from these workshops was shared with the steering group at a workshop held in November 2023 where members used it to shape a draft charter.

This draft was approved at Council Leadership Team and shared for final comments throughout Sandwell networks. It is now available to everyone to use.

Resources

National Guidance

Links to best practice below:

[Co-production at SCIE](#)

[Co-Production at People Hub](#)

[LGA Co-production guidance](#)

[National Voices](#)

[Inside Housing – co-production with residents and tenants](#)

[The Co-production Guide \(Recipe\) WMADASS website](#)

[UN Convention on Rights of a Child](#)

Local Guidance

Changing Our Lives (rights based organisation)

Changing Our Lives – our work on Health Inequalities

Sandwell Play Sufficiency Assessment

Sandwell Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy

Child Friendly Sandwell

Making Council Events and Meetings Accessible

NHSE Co Production model

Our Approach: Black Country ICS

Our Commitment to co-production plan – Sandwell Council

Sandwell Advocacy: Caring Cooks – YouTube

Sandwell Citizen Space

Sandwell Voice

Co-production in Sandwell Adult Social Care

Sandwell Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Patient Voice – video and audio recordings from Sandwell residents:

Accessibility – Blind and visually impaired voices – eye clinic experiences

Accessibility – Blind and visually impaired voices – health and care services

Accessibility – Blind and visually impaired voices – hospital experiences

Accessibility – Deaf young people's voices – challenges with health and care services

Review Summary

This charter has been reviewed to ensure it reflects the current goals, roles, and expectations of stakeholders. It will be revisited annually to maintain relevance.

Version History

Version	Date	Changes Made	Author
1	1 Jan 2025	Launch of charter	SE
1.1	1 June 2025	Internally reviewed with contributions from Childrens Service, Play Service, Housing, and Adult Social Care, with edits to improve clarity, structure, and readability.	MJP
1.2	1 June 2026	Shared with the Consultation and Engagement Group, edits provided by Adult Social Care, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Play Service. Content, links, and resources were updated, and a review page was added.	MJP



