



Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations
Cymdeithas Mudiadau Gwirfoddol Powys



SHARED POWER: AN INTRODUCTION TRAINING MATERIALS

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Introduction

Co-production is defined by New Economics Foundation as 'delivering public services in an equal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours'

Co-production can help to challenge the idea that people with lived experience – for example , those who have used services – cannot participate on an equal level with people in professional roles. It can be a very effective way for people with lived experience to be able to influence change.

PAVO's Health and Wellbeing Team have produced a short film, with the service user and carer representatives from the Regional Partnership Board, the Area Planning Board, and the Mental Health Planning and Development Partnership. The film is aimed at professionals that sit on these boards to help them plan effective co-production opportunities in Powys. This booklet serves as a companion to that film, with some discussion points and further reading.

'The only source of knowledge is experience'
Albert Einstein



The Powercube

Why we used the powercube

In this film we use the powercube framework to look at how organisations in Powys can make co-production as easy and effective as possible for anyone involved in it. In previous induction workshops we had discussed the nature of power with prospective representatives and needed a simple way to understand and explain the nature of power. We discovered that the powercube was a good way to look at this. This film will help us, and other organisations, understand how to improve the experience of co-production for everyone partaking in the process.

What is the powercube?

The powercube is a framework for analysing power. It is useful in letting us explore various aspects of power and how they interact with each other.

It was first used by John Gaventa, Director of Research at the Institute of Development Studies at a meeting of the The Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability in 2002.

It has built on some of the theories and analysis of power that Stephen Lukes highlighted in his book 'Power: A Radical View.' Lukes introduced the concept of the '3 Faces of Power' which are **Visible, Invisible and Hidden**.

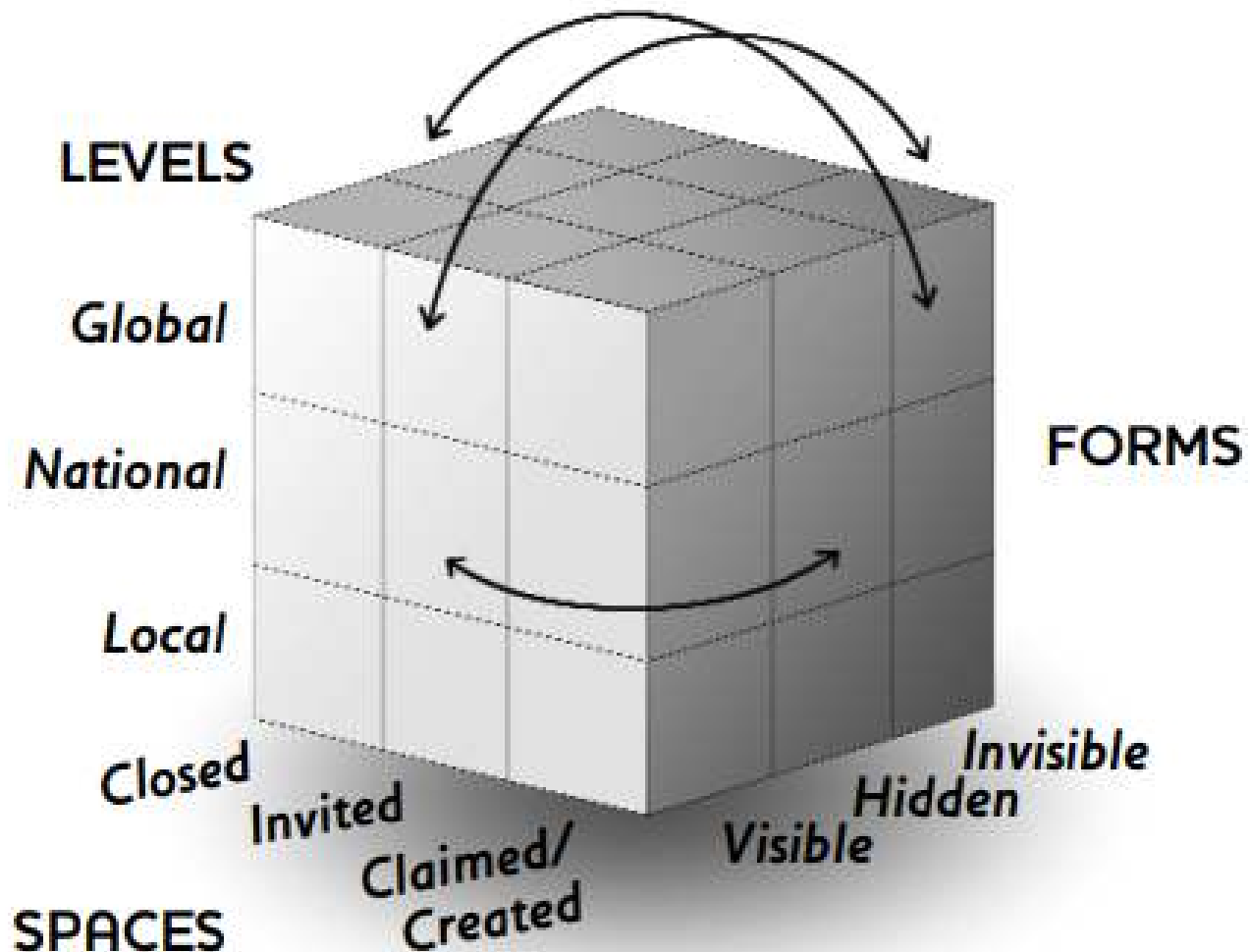
Gaventa proposed that these dimensions, or forms of power 'must also be understood in relation to how spaces for engagement are created and the places (from local to global) in which they occur'

The powercube is a visual aid to see how these 3 aspects of power, each containing 3 components, can interact with each other. The framework can be used to assess the possibilities of transformative action in various settings.

How is the powercube used?

It is important to understand each dimension with its multiple facets one at a time, and then talk about the interrelationships. Consider each one independently and then think about how they work together and affect each other. Look at the diagram on the next page, and then use it in conjunction with some of the questions we have asked in the next section to reflect on your co-production practice.

Practical Use of the Powercube



How can we make our co-production more effective using the powercube?

If planning an event, look at the people you want to hear from, and then think about the faces of the powercube. You can use the powercube to help plan the event to ensure the most effective co-production and avoid pitfalls. Here are some ideas and questions you can use.

Forms of Power

Visible, Invisible and Hidden Power

What are your processes like for decision making? You may feel they are transparent and open but they could be incomprehensible for non-professionals who want to get involved.

Are there any invisible 'actors' changing the agenda? Are all the options being presented to citizens involved in consultation?

Is there anything you can do to alter long term perceptions that might prohibit people from engaging with co-production?

Could you publicise successes in coproduction to help change long-held attitudes?

Can you remove stigma so people are more open about coproduction?

E.g. Attitudes to substance misuse and recovery.

Spaces of Power

Closed, Invited and Claimed

Where are you holding meetings?

If they are in a professional space such as council officers or a hospital is that going to create an inequality or reignite trauma for certain service users?

If you using an 'invited' space how can you make it more hospitable to attendees?

Can you organise transport to make sure no-one is excluded due to distance or travel issues?

Where are the 'claimed' spaces locally? Think about your target group; For example, if it's young people where do they congregate? Are meetings held during the day when they are not available? You can do the same for any group of under-represented people - farmers, travellers, older people, self-employed tradesmen.

Levels of Power

Local, Regional and National

Where are you trying to make change?

Can you work together with other agencies or health board/council areas to give a wider and louder voice to service users?

Are decisions that seem to be made locally affected by national policy?

Do global attitudes have an effect on local policy - for example medicalisation of mental ill health?

Combining the Three Faces of the Powercube

After you have considered the individual faces think about how they interrelate with each other?

Can global or national policy affect the spaces that are available to people to 'claim' as their own?

Do the spaces used for coproduction affect the long held perceptions that can contribute to hidden power?

How can you use all the faces of power to combat stigma?

Can positive coproduction increase recovery outcomes for the people involved in it?

Find your own questions to use with the powercube that relate to your practice and reflect on all your coproduction opportunities to ensure the best outcomes for everyone involved.

A Case Study



Within a partnership board every person, and every role or organisation represented, has a part to play in improving services. Understanding this will lead to more effective co-production. In some instances the voice provided by service users can have a more powerful effect on change than anyone that works within the 'system'.



Feedback from the Brecon Care and Treatment Plan event

Background

In 2018 the Mental Health Service User and Carer reps were hearing that the new 'Care and Treatment' plans were not being well received by the people using them. These collaborative documents set out what a person's treatment would be during their time using mental health services and their goals for recovery. People felt the forms were patronising and led to them having to re-tell their trauma stories each time they saw a different medical professional, which can cause further stress.

Solution

After reporting the raised issues through the Mental Health Planning and Development Partnership Board it became clear that the care co-ordinators who worked with patients to complete the 'Care and Treatment Plans' were also frustrated with the forms. The Health Board suggested holding two 'engagement' events that would bring together service users, carers, and care coordinators to discuss how they could be improved.

A neutral, non-clinical venue was hired for each event (in the north and south of Powys) and transport was organised and provided for attendees.

Outcomes

The way the meeting was facilitated made it clear that everyone in the room was there as an equal and was there as an expert because of their experience.

Some light 'ice-breaker' activities helped to break down barriers between attendees and the real progress was made when people felt listened to on both sides, and when people realised that everyone was there with a common goal of improving the service. Staff members drew on their experiences, and some shared quite personal stories . Doing this helped the service users and carers in the room see that this was an environment in which they could speak freely about their experiences.

When it was time to report on the results of the sessions another interesting aspect of the power balance emerged. The Mental Health and Service User Reps are also members of a national forum composed of all the reps from other health board areas in Wales. This forum has a direct link to the Welsh Government through reports they prepare at each meeting. Because of this link we decided that reporting the results of the two meetings would have more gravity coming from the reps themselves. The subject was added to the agenda at the next Wales Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum, changes were suggested to, and implemented by Welsh Government in the way the forms were worded.

Because of this work that stemmed from a local level in Powys, positive change was made to a national policy.

Conclusion

Within a partnership board every person, and every role or organisation represented, has a part to play in improving services. Understanding this will lead to more effective co-production. In some instances the voice provided by service users can have a more powerful effect on change than one from somebody who works within the 'system'. It can be easier for someone in power to ignore a request from another department within their organisation. They might think 'We work together, they understand the pressures we are under, so they will understand the delay, or the reason for our decisions.'

However if that feedback has come from people using the service, who are saying 'this needs changing, and it isn't fit for purpose' and that voice is protected and required by legislation then it becomes much harder to ignore.

I have used this case study an example because I think it attempted to address a lot of the issues that can exclude people from giving their voice to effect change. For the 'forms of power', the importance of the voice of service users and carers was stressed from the beginning in all the publicity and throughout the day by the actions of the facilitators.

The 'spaces of power' were considered through the booking of neutral meeting spaces that were used regularly by the community (A rugby club and a community hall). Even if these specific spaces weren't known to all the attendees, they are similar to community buildings that everybody uses, and this helped with the concept of equality of opinion in the room. The 'levels of power' were considered when reporting to the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum. Staff realised that this was perhaps the best approach to making change in Powys.

Further Reading

www.powercube.net

A website full of resources and background on the powercube including further exercises, ideas for workshops and case studies.

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