



**Co-production
from the
heart**

What co-production means to the
Ageing Better partners

Getting to the heart of Ageing Better's co-production evolving practice

At its core, co-production is about people coming together to find a shared solution, "a meeting of hearts and minds" so to speak. However, the multifaceted nature of co-production can make it seem more complicated than it needs to be. Co-production jargon doesn't help with this as it can make the very people that we want to engage shy away from becoming involved.

The more I chat with the people who are practicing co-production with Ageing Better, the more I've realised that the same questions & frustrations keep popping up, even from the people who have been living, breathing and doing co-production within the Ageing Better Programme for the last 6 years.

I'm often met with the question, "so what does co-production really mean?". Well, there are a plethora of definitions, models, illustrations and principles to explain this, but the jargon often confuses and frustrates people. I decided to turn this question around and ask, "what does co-production actually mean to you?". This is what we are really interested in when pulling learning together for the national co-production project. My role is to get to the heart of co-production and step right into the experience of how our Ageing Better partners have worked together to meet the needs of older people within their communities - this is actually what we mean by co-production, the rest is really just about how we actually get there!

1. The jargon: Recognising people as assets

(a strengths-based approach)

What we mean: Older people have so much to show and tell us, they are the experts, so let's make that happen





1

Ageing Better partners tap into older people's skills and experiences, this is how our projects, services & activities develop, flourish and grow

Inclusion

Providing the opportunity for older people to have a voice.

Ensuring that what is available can be the best it can be by listening to what's really needed.

Making sure that we reach out and include the right people to make the right decisions.

Connection

Collaborating with others to include a range of expertise.

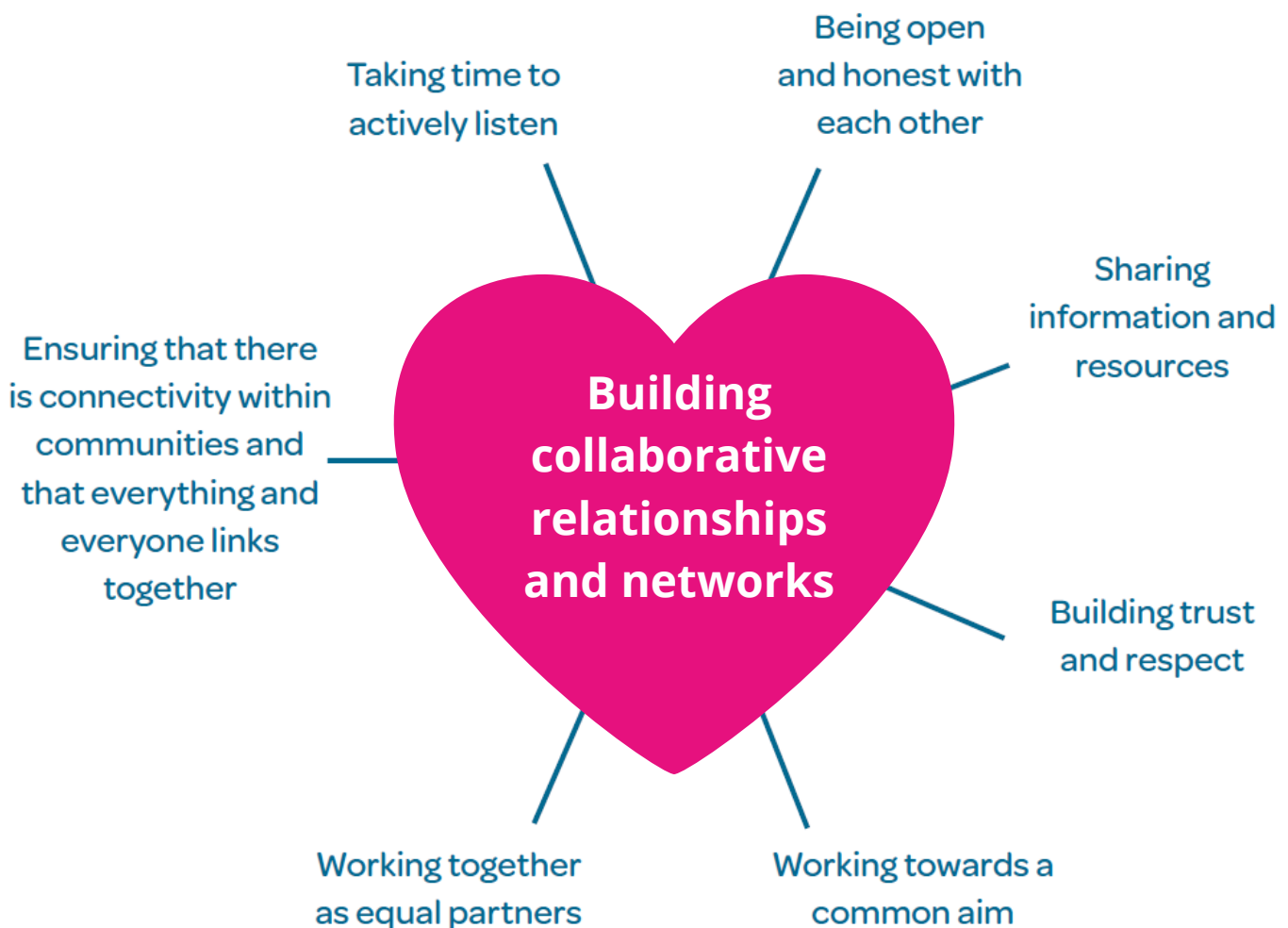
Being thoughtful, kind and compassionate around what people need.

Action

Acting on people's assets, skills & strengths and not just recognising them.

2. The jargon: Developing two-way reciprocal relationships (being collaborative)

What we mean: Let's all work together as one community towards a joint aim, we can achieve so much more this way





2

**We build joined up relationships
because we want to take the time
to get to know who is in our
communities and how we might
work together to provide
what's wanted
and needed**

Inclusion

Getting people together in a room to share ideas.

Not attempting to work alone, working with other partners to complement each other.

Find ways to link in with one another to carve out a way forward that includes citizens, organisations, services and local authorities.

Connection

Take the time to get to know each other well, building a sense of togetherness, stepping outside of hierarchical structures.

Give your opinions based on how you feel rather than just what you think, which means that views come from the heart and not always from the head.

Action

Building a network of what is available across an area, city or region and sharing our expertise, knowledge and learning through mini hubs.

3. The jargon: Encouraging a peer led approach

What we mean: Enabling our people and communities to take the lead





3

We ensure that older people lead the way within our programme because we want them to be able to influence what's available to them in the future and the way in which that happens

Inclusion

We try to be as far reaching as we can to ensure that we represent all older people within our communities.

Our aim is to include people from diverse backgrounds to lead the way on differing types of needs.

Connection

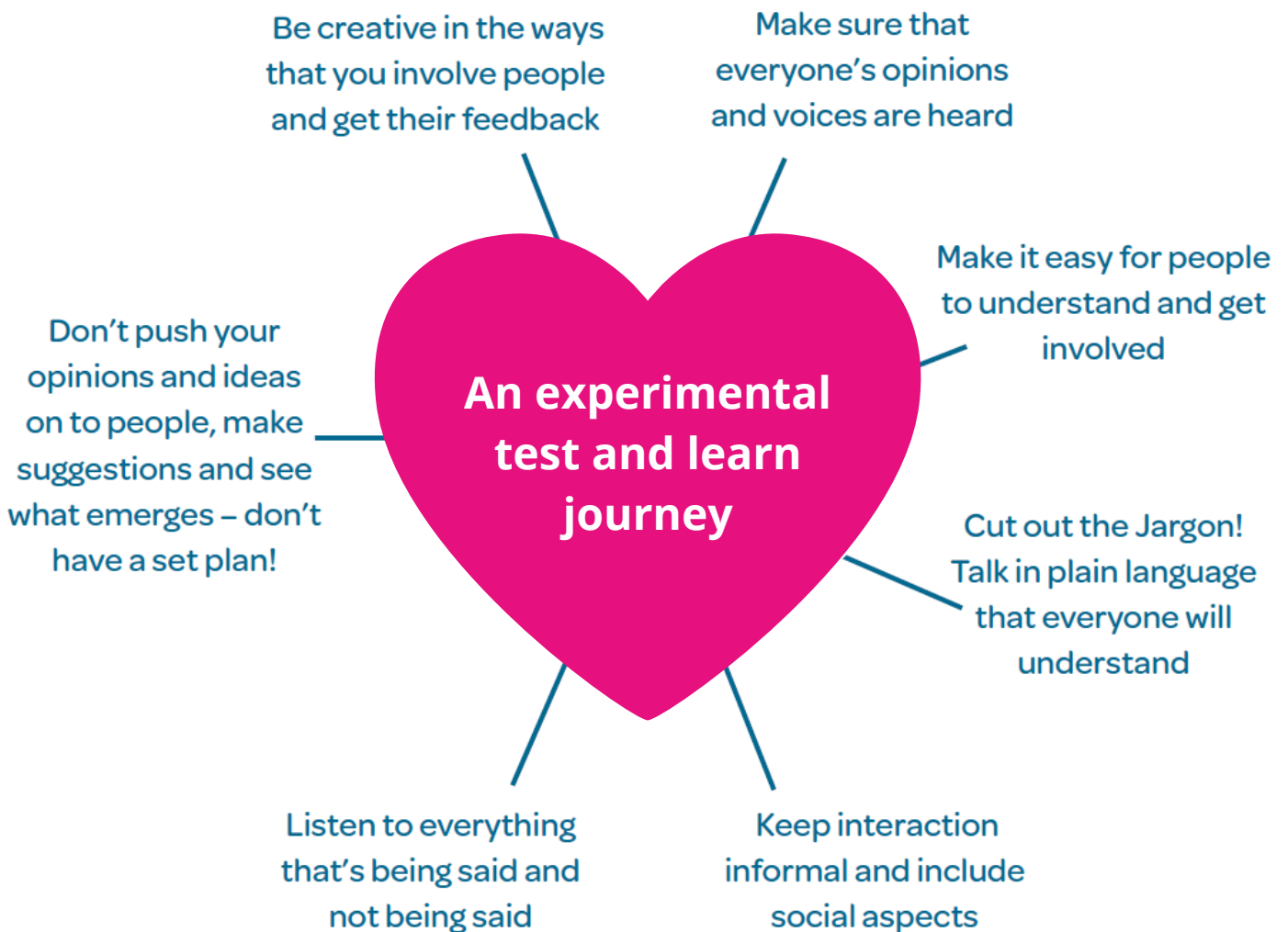
We connect with people out in our communities by going where the energy is and bringing services to people's doors.

Action

Offering the support mechanisms and infrastructure that an organisation has in place to enable our volunteers to take the lead and support each other through the processes of co-production.

4. The jargon: Facilitating rather than Delivering

What we mean: Stop telling people what needs to happen, take people on a journey to find that out instead!



4

We endorse the test and learn approach of co-production on the Ageing Better programme because we are interested in seeing what emerges rather than having a set plan

Inclusion

Not allowing collaborations to be dominated by professionals or senior figures - everyone should be equal when working in this way.

Connection

Ensure that everyone has time to think, time to reflect, a chance to tell their story and are given the opportunity to do this in inclusive and accessible ways.

Use facilitative and integrative methods to draw out ideas & suggestions, and fair collaborative ways of working out what the priorities are.

Action

Be prepared to be flexible and adaptable and try things out with the spirit of a test and learn approach. Not expecting to end up at the destination you had originally mapped out. A journey has many twist and turns along the way!

This report was created in partnership with delivery partners and older people representatives across the Ageing Better network.

With particular thanks to Age Better in Sheffield, Ageing Better in Birmingham, Ageless Thanet, Ageing Better in Middlesbrough and Brightlife Cheshire for their contributions.

Written by Vicky O'Donoghue (Co-production project lead) on behalf of the partners.

