

Co-production in the criminal justice system: Introducing the DEVICES principles

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Abstract

While the concept of co-production is becoming embedded in mental health and social care, the criminal justice system (CJS) has been slower in embracing this approach. In this article, we draw on the findings of a process evaluation of the Include UK Hub – a co-produced service for people with offending histories in Swansea, UK and, in doing so, introduce the DEVICES principles of co-production. The DEVICES is derived from the empirical evaluation data and includes the following principles – Development, Empathy, Voices, Individual, Change, Empowerment, and Spaces. These principles will appeal globally to practitioners and policymakers looking to meaningfully utilise co-production to develop services and support for people in the criminal justice system.

KEYWORDS

community support, co-production, desistance, expert by experience, people with offending histories

1 | INTRODUCTION

The concept of co-production initially emerged in the 1970s from the work of Ostrom (1996). There are multiple definitions of co-production, Brandsen & Honingh (2016) describe it as ‘active input by individual citizens in shaping the service they personally receive’ (p.428). It is a process by

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which 'service users' are responded to not as passive 'clients' but play an integral role in conceiving, designing, developing, and delivering the services they use (see also Pestoff, Osborne & Brandsen, 2006). Co-produced interventions overturn orthodox approaches that separate participants into either 'user' or producer groups, where 'users' are seen as lay producers alongside state producers (Nabatchi, Sancino & Sicilia, 2017). Bovaird (2007) describes the shift to co-produced approaches as a revolutionary way of working to redistribute power to the 'service user'. Crucially, co-production approaches do not view 'service users' as 'defective' and needing something 'doing to them' but as repositories of lived experience (Lambert & Carr, 2018). The development of co-production has led to the rise of the concept of the expert by experience; people who hold valuable knowledge equivalent to that held by experts by qualification (Mayer & McKenzie, 2017). In recent years, there has also been growing traction and recognition from new perspectives of Convict Criminology (Earle, 2016) and initiatives such as the Prison Reform Trust Building Futures programme (Vince & Evison, 2024) on the importance of centring the experiences of people in the criminal justice system (CJS) and involving them in research, service design and delivery, and advocacy for reform.

This article draws on empirical findings from a process evaluation of the Include Hub (The Hub), a community-based, co-produced service for people in the CJS in Swansea, South Wales, UK. The process evaluation focused on centring the voices and experiences of Include's members and staff in co-producing The Hub. The thematic analysis of the data collected during process evaluation uncovered key themes which were translated into co-production principles that coincide with the extant literature. This article presents the 'DEVICES' principles – Development, Empathy, Voices, Individual, Change, Empowerment, and Spaces (the findings section (section 4) explains the DEVICES principles in the context of the data derived from the process evaluation and the extant literature):

- DEVELOPMENT of relationships with people in the CJS to develop their skills and confidence during the co-production process.
- EMPATHY in interactions and for the adversity and trauma people may have experienced.
- VOICES – the centring of people in the CJS perspectives and insights.
- INDIVIDUAL – seeing people as unique individuals with specific needs.
- CHANGE (in both services and participants) through transformative co-production work.
- EMPOWERMENT of people, potentially supporting desistance.
- SPACES which are safe, non-punitive and allow for person-centred approaches (therapeutic settings).

To provide context, Include received significant funding from the Big Lottery Community Fund to co-produce a physical space (The Hub) that provides services and opportunities for people in the CJS or whom Include refers to as their members. Include's project aligns with approaches of Convict Criminology, Learning Together and Inside Out (see Earle, 2016; Pickering & Whitfield, 2023) with the key focus of involving and harnessing the experience of people with lived experience of the CJS to help others in the CJS and inform service design and delivery. The initial development of The Hub was seen as 'an opportunity to create a new model of working that was genuinely co-produced by the people who benefit from the service, with the flexibility to offer service users what they want' (Include UK, 2023). The Hub was conceptualised to meet the following objectives as set by Include and its members:

1. Members have an increased sense of belonging through participation in positive activities chosen by them.
2. Increased skills and opportunities for members through training and volunteering.
3. Improved opportunities for members to access support, particularly those outside of scope or existing services.
4. Members feel more positive about their futures and more confident expressing their needs by accessing advice support and contributing to their development.

From the project's conception, Include wanted to co-produce The Hub and its associated support with its members. As an organisation, they recognised the stigma people face in the CJS and the inherent power imbalance between 'service users' and 'service providers' (Baur et al., 2018; Berry & Weiner, 2020). As such, Include wanted to champion the voices and needs of its members to develop a Hub space designed *by and for them*.

During the initial planning stages for the evaluation, we found that Include did not have concrete outcome data that could be used for an outcome evaluation to examine and measure how they had met their stated objectives. We had designed tools for the organisation to measure people's changes, but due to the busy nature of The Hub and understaffing, they could not use these as intended. As such, a process evaluation was conducted to understand how they had developed and implemented The Hub. The evaluation took place in 2021, and The Hub remains in operation. It continues to be a space run by 'ex-offenders for ex-offenders, their families, and the wider community' (Include UK, 2023). The DEVICES principles and insights from the evaluation offer an important contribution to research in this area. It also provides guidance for practitioners and policymakers interested in innovative ways to co-produce services and improve engagement with people in the CJS through more equitable sharing of knowledge generation, power and responsibility.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Understanding co-production

Co-production is a close relative of, but separate from, co-creation; co-production focuses on the design and implementation of services, whereas co-creation is concentrated on the strategic planning of services (Brandsen & Honingh, 2018). It is also linked to the recently emerging personalisation movement in social care, which aims to put the 'user/patient' at the heart of the service being offered/delivered (Calder & Blunden, 2020; Fox et al., 2018). At its core, co-production is relationship-based, and human contact is one of its core values (Surva, Tönurist & Lember, 2016), necessitating durable professional relationships with people (Weaver, 2011) which are 'voluntary, non-punishing, educative, therapeutic, nurturing and reciprocal' (McCulloch, 2016, p.26). Co-production also challenges the framework of evidence-based policy and practice by questioning what constitutes evidence and whose evidence is valuable (Durose et al., 2017; Weaver, 2022). Co-production places the person at the centre of developing and designing policies, practices, and services as 'experts by experience'. It recognises the importance of lived experience in co-creating knowledge to reshape evidence-based practice and policy frameworks. However, utilising co-production is not without its challenges. As Flinders, Wood & Cunningham (2016) state:

Co-production is a risky method of social enquiry. It is time-consuming, ethically complex, emotionally demanding, inherently unstable, vulnerable to external shocks,

subject to competing demands and it challenges many disciplinary norms. This is what makes it so fresh and innovative. (p.261)

While co-production has emerged within the areas of mental health services and social care, the CJS has been slower to follow suit and research into its application to CJS remains scarce (Fox, Fox & Marsh, 2013; McCulloch, 2016, 2019; Weaver & McCulloch, 2012). Where co-production work in criminal justice environments does exist, there has been a tendency to focus on 'reformed' or 'ex-offenders', with much less attention paid to people currently in the CJS (McCulloch, 2016, 2019).

2.2 | Co-production in the criminal justice system

Co-producing services/interventions and support with people in the CJS can play an important role in rebalancing the power dynamics between 'service users' and 'service providers' (Bovaird, 2007). For example, some see a moral imperative to develop more equitable services that acknowledge and challenge the inherent power imbalances in the 'provider/user' relationship, as part of a commitment to social justice (Weaver & McCulloch, 2012). Through this lens, co-production can feed into anti-oppressive practice, a pillar of the social work theory which continues to influence probation and social work practitioners (Strier, 2007). Co-production can also help develop services/interventions that are viewed as more legitimate by the people who use them, which is key to the construction of effective probation supervision (Rex, 1999).

Challenging traditional power relationships entails viewing people in the CJS as a person rather than an 'offender' whose 'role in that transaction is to comply and conform (or face the consequences of failing to do so)' (McCulloch, 2016, p.431). For Senior et al. (2016) probation supervision should be considered as a type of 'relational co-production' where the co-production of sentence plans and goals is possible, although perhaps not common. It seems, therefore, that there is a growing recognition of the benefits of equalising power in the design and delivery of services towards supporting desistance (Weaver & McCulloch, 2012). Co-production has the potential to help change detrimental and stigmatising views of people in the CJS, as well as reshaping cultures of control and punitivism to more human-centred cultures of support that are more effective in supporting desistance and other positive outcomes (McCulloch, 2016; Morris & Knight, 2018).

McCulloch (2016) reports on the findings of a qualitative study 'that sought to explore the meaning, value and possibility of co-production in the criminal justice context' (p.438), drawing on the lived experience expertise of people involved in the CJS. Six people with convictions were recruited and interviewed; most understood the principle of co-production, even if the terminology was new, but highlighted the tension between working together respectfully and the structures of a statutory sentence. Co-production work was therefore seen as a 'moral, ambitious and challenging project' yet one which was a 'constrained and qualified opportunity' (McCulloch, 2016, p.440). None of the participants identified any element of co-production in their sentence. The majority struggled to find any meaning or purpose behind their sentence other than a punitive one predicated on an imbalance of power (McCulloch, 2016).

However, participants were interested in the co-production concept and felt capable of contributing to such an initiative (McCulloch, 2016). These findings suggest that obstacles to co-production in the CJS stem largely from services rather than the people in the CJS. The idea that co-production could thrive in the traditional prison environment seemed to the researchers and participants to be almost 'fanciful'. Therefore, a better understanding of how co-production

can work has the potential to support project design and arguably provide a process of support towards desistance. As such, the DEVICES principles may offer a potential practical solution to alleviate some of the tensions surrounding collaborative supervision and support between people in the CJS and the people/services who supervise/support them. However, implementing any approach/initiative/programme can be challenging and can be affected by a range of policy, practice and organisational factors (Ugwudike & Morgan, 2019). Further research is required to understand how principles of co-production are translated into practice in the CJS and what this means in terms of their effectiveness in supporting specific outcomes such as recidivism.

Faulkner (2015) sets out four standards for 'service user' involvement in the development of mental health services (the 4Pi approach):

- **PRINCIPLES:** Meaningful and inclusive involvement must be underpinned by shared principles and values.
- **PURPOSE:** Is the purpose clear and shared between all stakeholders?
- **PRESENCE:** Service users of all backgrounds should be involved at every level of organisations and projects.
- **PROCESS:** engagement and communication must be transparent and user-focused, and there must be adequate training for everyone involved.
- **IMPACT:** there must be a method of measuring demonstrable outcomes in terms of improved involvement and mental well-being of service users.

Although examples are sparse, a few key case studies of co-produced services within criminal justice settings in the UK can be found. For example, Morris & Knight (2018) explore the merits and process of co-producing digital technology in a criminal justice setting and recommend using the 4Pi model (Faulkner, 2015). They focus on a particular intervention, the Timewise Channel, which began life as a standard offending behaviour programme (OBP) for use in male prisons. It was developed through co-production into a complementary digital media tool to increase engagement and promote desistance (Morris & Knight, 2018).

Nicholson & McKeown (2021) explore several interventions in the community justice sphere: a co-developed project at a women's Approved Premises, a community-led service within the Lancashire Offender Personality Disorder Pathway where empty properties are refurbished, and self-build projects that provide housing for users of the service. While these projects focused on meeting the practical needs of people, others have focused on projects that aim to modify or change behaviours. One such scheme, Foundation 4 Life (F4L), aimed to engage 'ex-offenders' and former gang leaders in delivering behaviour modification workshops and programmes to young people who were already involved in, or were at risk of becoming involved in, criminal activity. The scheme brought together prisoners on licence, former 'offenders', victims and family members. It used a mixture of educational methods, including personal testimony, debates, role play and coaching on coping strategies (Weaver & McCulloch, 2012).

There are also examples of co-production within the prison estates of England and Wales. Nicholson & McKeown (2021) describe 'socially creative' horticultural enterprise activities co-developed by incarcerated people and staff at HM Prison Wymott. Hartworth, Simpson & Attewell (2021) report on a co-produced, participatory programme for young care leavers ('Paving the Way') in two young offender institutions (YOIs) in the north-east of England. The scheme aimed to tackle problems of social isolation, lack of feeling part of wider society, under-developed social and cognitive skills and capacities, and the difficulty in remaining crime-free in the community without the presence of a 'significant other'. The young people were supported in co-producing a

group work programme to be delivered to other young, care-experienced people in the YOIs. They were also actively engaged in a participatory approach to evaluate the project's worth.

Despite these beacons of co-production, the overall picture within the CJS is not one of burgeoning person-centred projects. However, these examples highlight the importance of recognising that genuine co-production involves centring people's voices and experiences to develop services/interventions. It is not merely consulting with people to feed into preconceived services/interventions. The projects discussed highlight key themes in the co-production literature linked to empowerment, engagement, transformation, participation, and communication, which coincide with the DEVICES principles.

3 | METHODOLOGY

A process evaluation of The Hub was undertaken between May and December 2021. The evaluation focused on the development and implementation of The Hub from the perspective of Include's staff and members. Process evaluations offer a unique opportunity to generate knowledge about effective service/intervention/programme development and implementation (Clarke & Dawson, 1999). The evaluation utilised a participatory action methodology (PAM) and employed focus groups, overt observations and pictorial mapping analysis (PMA) to collect data.

It is well-reported that people in the CJS face a complex web of stigma and exclusion which often result in limited opportunities for choice and decision making (Baur et al., 2018; Berry & Weiner, 2020; Feingold, 2021; Link et al., 1997; Moore, Stuewig & Tangney, 2016). Therefore, a PAM is particularly appropriate for working with vulnerable or marginalised groups facing exclusion and stigma as it redresses some of the power imbalance inherent in the researcher/participant, accepted/marginalised dynamic which is commonly found in research (Godin et al., 2007; Perez & Treadwell, 2009). As noted, Include reported difficulties in collecting data for an outcome evaluation but recorded that The Hub had 1,351 members over four years – this number is likely an underestimation.

For the process evaluation, we utilised focus groups, overt observations, and PMA. We spent 50 hours in The Hub observing its development and implementation, which also included conversations with project staff, volunteers and members. Two focus groups were conducted in December 2021, one with paid staff and volunteers, some of whom were also members (n = 8). Another focus group was conducted with Hub members (n = 7). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from the focus groups and observations.

We also used PMA to capture the participants' views in the focus group. PMA has been used to enhance the experiences of marginalised participants in research studies as it facilitates doing research *with*, rather than *on*, participants (Jones & Jones, 2020). In the words of Lapum et al. (2015, p.1), PMA is a 'technique [that] involves aesthetic attunement to data and visual representation through pictorial design' through an approach that seeks to do 'research things' differently, exploring topics through a holistic, integrated perspective (Leavy, 2020). The findings from the narrative analysis were cross-checked against the themes of the focus groups and observations (triangulation of data).

3.1 | Ethics

The process evaluation was approved by Swansea University's College of Law and Criminology Research and Ethics Committee. All potential participants were informed that they were free to

FIGURE 1 An illustration from the pictorial analysis stating how the members' skills and confidence have improved.



decline the invitation to participate in the study without impacting the service they would receive from Include. Participation was voluntary, and people were free to withdraw at any point. All participants gave informed consent to participate in the study and for the findings to be disseminated. Include also consented to be named in publications to open dialogue and collaborations with others interested in promoting co-produced support services.

4 | FINDINGS

In this section, we discuss the collective findings from the PMA, observations and focus groups that have informed the DEVICES principles of co-production. Quotes from the participants are produced verbatim and the full pictorial analysis can be found in the [Appendix](#).

4.1 | DEVELOPMENT of relationships with people to help develop their skills and confidence during the co-production process

The Hub aspires to the Good Lives Model (see Ward & Brown, 2004) and recognises that interventions should add to the individual's repertoire of personal functioning as opposed to merely managing problems. To achieve this, staff seek to develop members' interpersonal skills by utilising their own relationship-based skills, such as pro-social modelling, displaying attributes such as courtesy, promptness, friendliness, personal/professional boundaries, and challenging inappropriate behaviour (Trotter, 2009). The project also adopts peer mentoring and volunteering to develop members' work-related and interpersonal skills (see Figure 1).

Volunteering and peer mentoring are a key component of The Hub and several of the volunteer members went on to secure employment within or outside The Hub. Other members undertook training courses offered by the project, which helped them develop confidence and skills based on their needs and aspirations. A key component of The Hub is the emphasis on recognising and building on people's strengths. Strengths-based approaches can support co-production, collaborative working and supporting change and positive outcomes.

4.2 | EMPATHY in staff/member interactions

As discussed, people in the CJS are subject to significant stigma, varying according to the type of offending behaviour, with people who have been convicted of sexual offences and homicide being especially likely to experience censure and rejection (Boag & Wilson, 2014; Johnson, Hughes & Ireland, 2007). Empathy is a core principle in working with vulnerable people, including people in the CJS (Mivshek & Schriver, 2022) and is a key tool employed by Include staff. Hub staff often achieve co-operation from members who do not work well with prison or probation staff, through forging relationships by being warm, genuine, humorous, enthusiastic, self-confident, empathic, respectful, flexible, committed to helping people, engaging, directive, solution-focused, structured and strengths-based, all qualities which the literature suggests are effective in working with people in the CJS (Dowden & Andrews, 2004; Raynor, Ugwudike & Vanstone, 2014; Trotter, 2009).

There is growing evidence that perhaps most people in the CJS have personal experience of trauma and/or adverse childhood experiences (ACE) (Bellis et al., 2016). A background such as this can have a detrimental impact on social development, behaviour and mental health in childhood (Kerker et al., 2015) and in later life (Jones et al., 2018; Nurius, Logan-Greene & Green, 2012). Many members shared stories of extreme deprivation and trauma. Include staff, therefore, seek to empathise with their members' past and current difficulties, listening without judgment:

Some services because ... they need to meet a certain criteria, find it really hard to be so person-centred. Here [The Hub], because it is such a wide scope you can be more individualised ... (It's an) approach that is more trauma-informed and we recognise that because of people's experiences they may present or behave or act in a certain way, and that's OK. We're not going to judge them because of that. (Staff member)

4.3 | VOICES: Amplifying people's voices

The Hub explicitly centres its members' voices. An image from the focus group illustrates this (see Figure 2).

There is extensive literature on giving voice to marginalised and 'othered', or even 'invisible' people (Bhopal, 2010; Van Den Muijsenbergh et al., 2016). People in the CJS may be seen as a marginalised group due to the stigma they face and the intersection of the 'offender' status with other forms of marginalisation, such as homelessness, unemployment, drug dependency, membership of a Black or minority ethnic group, mental ill-health and poverty (Fitzpatrick & Stephens, 2014; Glynn, 2016; Powis & Walmsley, 2002).

As Cunningham & Wakeling (2022) note, elevating people's voices within the CJS, for example, via user councils, leads to an enhanced sense of fairness in the system, which may be associated with reduced recidivism. The Hub has developed its own member forum where members actively feed into the development of The Hub. Staff who participated in the focus groups explicitly linked giving members a voice with engendering a sense of hope for change in the future:

That hope comes not because we're telling them what to do, but because we're leaving them some control over what their journey looks like. And that's huge because in most of the services, you're told what you need to do, where you need to go ... As a



FIGURE 2 An extract from the pictorial analysis illustrating that members' voices are at the forefront of The Hub.

start we go what if someone told me how to run my ... life, so give them hope that actually we've given them voice. (Staff member)

4.4 | INDIVIDUAL: Seeing members as unique people with specific needs

The Hub refers to the people they support as 'members' and not as 'offenders', 'clients', or 'service users', which was decided by The Hub's members. Utilising the term 'members' helps to remove the label and stigmatisation associated with offending to build people's positive self-identity and fosters a sense of belonging and community to promote inclusion and social capital. There is active recognition within The Hub of the stigma and discrimination people in the CJS experience, with research suggesting that members often face multi-faceted discrimination arising from a complex web of stigmatised conditions such as Class A drug use (Link et al., 1997), financial poverty (Reutter et al., 2009), mental illness (Byrne, 2000) and homelessness (Reilly, Ho & Williamson, 2022).

Co-production requires seeing those involved in the process as individuals with diverse needs. As a third-sector organisation, Include has the freedom to experiment and explore in a way that would be difficult for statutory services. The Hub was set up to be a space where people in contact with the CJS could be treated as people rather than subjects of an intervention. Inevitably, there is a power imbalance between The Hub staff and members. For example, staff can stipulate who may or may not enter the building, which is crucial for managing the risk of aggression or violence. However, this imbalance is less than in statutory organisations such as the probation service. For example, probation staff are empowered to recommend the level of intervention they consider commensurate with the 'offending behaviour' or 'risk' and take actions such as initiating breach proceedings or recall to custody. In the staff focus group transcript, it was noticeable that the term 'individual' was used to describe members on 19 occasions and this is illustrated in Figure 3. This framing of members as unique people was tied to the level of hope that this can instil:



FIGURE 3 An illustration from the pictorial analysis demonstrates how The Hub views and treats people as individuals and focuses on their strengths.

Here is one success, it might be that one phone call back [male staff member] made because actually they've listened to him, and we will listen to that individual. That gives some hope, that we listen. (Staff member)

The ability of The Hub to recognise, acknowledge and support individual identity was highlighted by the members:

To have someone like The Hub to be able to bond that bridge there [job hunting], and, they, you know, they take over or whatever, it just ..., it just allows us to be on the same level, ... you know, give us a chance to start a job, or you know, give us a week's trial, or whatever. My language has been massively changed My language skills and the way it works here, are improving. (Hub member)

I am from a Gypsy community originally, I had no qualifications, I couldn't read or write, or do nothing. In lockdown, I did my English GCSE and I've just kept going from there. To you know, start more qualifications and more [inaudible] safety and overdose prevention, I've done overdose awareness [inaudible]. I just kept going, I just loved learning. The more I learn, the more I know about people, in the right way. (Hub volunteer and member who secured employment outside of The Hub)

Members viewed The Hub as a place that gave them a sense of belonging. However, taking such a strategic and deliberate approach to project design has been challenging. Developing services that meet the needs of individuals rather than collective, is time-consuming. It draws heavily

on staffing resources and requires staff to think innovatively. Often, projects purport to embrace co-production and participation, but The Hub centres its work on this and provides a unique approach to project development.

4.5 | CHANGE through involvement in the co-production process

Co-production is intended to transform services, organisations and even societies (Turnhout et al., 2020). Studies have shown that culture change is often required for genuine co-production to happen (Andrews et al., 2023). As such, co-production has the potential to reshape criminal justice cultures to be more human-centred. Co-production may also be transformative in less tangible ways, generating culture change and promoting knowledge sharing (Beckett et al., 2018). Participants reported that The Hub had played a key role in transforming their lives:

Yeah, just saying it from the start point of view now, this place has changed my life 'cause I rocked up here 12 months ago, in a mess. (Hub volunteer and member)

The Hub gave the members a safe space to access essential support. Additionally, The Hub enabled its members to use and build on their expertise, experiences, strengths and capabilities to develop their skills and confidence. Many members were volunteers and played an active role in running The Hub. For some, like the member quoted above, this led to paid employment with The Hub and with other criminal justice and social justice organisations.

By viewing and treating people accessing The Hub as members of the project team, Include staff support change in terms of a move away from 'criminal' lifestyles and identities. Importantly, The Hub helped to build hope and confidence in new ways of being/doing, helping members to envisage a positive future self and construct (see Maruna, 2001). Change may be small-scale. For example, the co-production of goals by members and staff may engender a new level of trust, leading to greater engagement – or can be significant and visible. For example, when a person moves from member status to a formal volunteer within The Hub. Personal changes in members' lives and behaviour were raised on 21 occasions during the staff focus group, and supporting change is a key aim for the Include staff. They also saw change as a reciprocal process, highlighting how members' and volunteers' input and lived experiences could change how they thought and worked:

(They) show me different ways and we talk about relationships ... people change, we only support (and) nurture (that) process and that goes for our members as volunteers, because we all have teachable moments and we use all of that. It doesn't matter whenever I'm learning from [member volunteer], I'm learning from [staff members], and for us I think that's really important ... What it means is our environment is continually a learning evolving and growing environment. (Senior staff member)

4.6 | EMPOWERMENT of people

The term 'empowerment' has been used across disciplines, including health/medicine, management and psychology. It is a concept that is often linked to shared, rather than top-down, decision making and is related to concepts of involvement, participation, enablement, engagement, and activation (Fumagalli et al., 2015), with some authors using the terms co-production

and engagement interchangeably (e.g., Cunningham & Wakeling, 2022). Empowerment processes facilitate individuals in gaining control over their own lives and accessing the resources they require to achieve their personal goals (Barringer et al., 2017). It is an interpersonal process arising from shared discourse, and this process is cyclical rather than linear (Carr, 2003), involving setting goals, taking steps to achieve them, and observing and reflecting on the impact of actions (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010).

The Hub staff try to minimise a sense of having ‘power over’ members, seeking to share power in a way that can be difficult in statutory services, where practitioners may be required to monitor ‘compliance’ and undertake enforcement action. Members are empowered to come and go as they please, engaging with the service according to their own wishes and needs, with staff taking their cue about the level and nature of intervention from the members. Staff encourage goal setting but allow members to lead, facilitating the achievement of goals by providing resources or signposting to other organisations that can provide what is required. This approach is closely aligned with the principle of treating people as individuals, recognising that goals can vary widely in complexity and duration:

I know that sometimes to go into the shop for a pint of milk for somebody could be their overall goal of what they want to do to be able to do ... whereas actually going out and getting the job (for) somebody might be that step so I think we don't, like we said before it's all individuals, because we're not going to push people toward (goals) – what's important in their life is actually motivation right now, that, that, that they need to want to accept themselves. (Staff member)

The focus group data and our observations highlight that The Hub gives members the confidence to consider their futures as positive and attainable.

4.7 | SPACES: Safe & non-punitive

The working environment, in terms of its physical location, design and atmosphere within the building, leads to an open space that members feel empowered to use and comfortable attending. Non-punitive spaces for people in the CJS may contribute to desistance and the building of new, non-criminal narratives in the community. Spaces can be physical (Søgaard et al., 2015) or virtual, which allows reflection online (Hinck et al., 2022). Even within the prison estate, where the ‘offender’ status is most keenly felt, there is recognition that therapeutic spaces and approaches can facilitate desistance (Haigh, 2010; Lewis, 2016) and improve relationships between people and staff (Kubiak, 2009).

One of the features of The Hub that sets it apart from other projects delivered by Include is that it has its own bespoke building located just off the centre of a small city centre. At first, the building was rented, and subsequent funding was secured to purchase the building and provide a permanent home. The Hub has become physically embedded within the community. By creating a safe and non-punitive space, The Hub is a space people *choose* to attend and return to. Each day between 40 and 60 people will use The Hub. It is a space where an individual's needs are respected and not attached to statutory/punitive services. On occasions, probation and other service co-locate in The Hub, and those professionals respect the sanctum of the safe space as guests in the member's Hub.

The building was completely renovated in 2022, and the floor plan was significantly redesigned via co-production with the members. Stepping through the front door, painted in Include's cor-

porate yellow, members can immediately access a bright and welcoming cafe-style space with a reception desk, seating, tables, houseplants, a computer and a collection of board games. A blackboard behind the desk gives information about the day's activities (which are decided on by the members). A pinboard is used to obtain opinions and feedback on topics related to change and personal development. What was once an open space on the first floor is now divided into small rooms where members can have confidential conversations with staff from Include and partner agencies, along with a larger room suitable for team meetings and member activities such as arts and crafts. Through co-production, The Hub has emerged as a therapeutic space for its members to access and enjoy.

5 | DISCUSSION

In keeping with the essence of co-production our research has centred the voices and experiences of people in the CJS. From the perspective of our participants, co-production has the potential to create person-led therapeutic services that can help people achieve positive outcomes. Co-production requires and enables people's voices to be heard, considered, and used to inform service delivery (see also Brandsen & Honingh, 2016, 2018). The experience of having one's voice heard is powerful and underpins The Hub's establishment of itself as a 'member-led' space. Co-production can help put the 'service users' at the forefront of decision making and service delivery and can be transformative in rebalancing power between service providers and 'service users' (Fox et al., 2018). Members of The Hub are explicitly recognised as individuals; they are greeted by name when they enter the building, and staff and volunteers remember small details about members, such as how much sugar they like in their tea. Co-production has the potential to alleviate some of the inherent power imbalances in the 'provider/user' relationship to develop and promote collaborative supervision, which can enhance engagement and the likelihood of desistance (Rex, 1999). Additionally, co-production is increasingly seen as a way of maximising efficiency in services (Loeffler & Boviard, 2020; Voorberg, Bekkers & Tummers, 2015), and some argue that it has become imperative in a world of public sector financial constraint (Nabatchi, Sancino & Sicilia, 2017).

Include and The Hub, as specific projects, face challenges in continuing their work with their members. There has been instability in the staff group over the last few years, and, as many third-sector organisations experience, to stay afloat financially, senior staff are engaged in a continual process of seeking funding. As funding cycles end, new projects and financial backers must be sought. Co-production has its challenges. From our observations, it is time-consuming for organisations. It presents challenges when trying to engage a range of members in the co-production process (see also Flinders, Wood & Cunningham, 2016). Managing the expectations of the members can be difficult. A fine line exists between the 'ideal' services members desire and what is financially and practically feasible. Challenges also arose when trying to evidence the 'effectiveness' of co-production to facilitate positive outcomes for its members (see Faulkner, 2015). While people's perspectives of The Hub is positive; more evidence is needed regarding positive outcomes and the impact associated with co-production. This is a broader challenge for developing an evidence base for co-production. Projects tend to be localised and small in scale, with robust outcome evaluations often lacking (Cunningham & Wakeling, 2022).

Additionally, as a third-sector organisation, Include did not have the policy and practice constraints that exist within probation and the prison service. Include's autonomy gave them the conceptual and practical space to co-produce The Hub. Pursuing co-producing ser-

vices/interventions/programmes for statutory agencies will likely present further challenges but may also present opportunities to develop more person-centred services. As such, we present the DEVICES principles as a springboard for those interested in utilising co-production rather than a prescription. Exactly how the principles are put into practice must be tailored to specific projects and may require some creative thinking. For example, how can projects create a safe, non-punitive space? For some organisations, this may require finding alternative premises for the project. This will entail renting a physical space, partnering with another agency willing and able to offer neutral space, or meeting groups of people in a public space such as a library. Co-production can come in many forms, and organisations/projects must decide how best to co-produce knowledge, evidence, practice, and policy *with* the people who access their services. However, it is crucial to remember that co-production is not consultation with 'service users'. Co-production involves centring people's voices and experiences to conceive/design/develop services and support, which involves rebalancing the power dynamic between the 'service provider' and the 'service user' (Bovaird, 2007; Lambert & Carr, 2018).

6 | CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Hub is an innovative example of co-production in practice, and the data derived from our process evaluation have led to the development of the DEVICES principles. However, we recognise the limitations of our findings. The Hub is only one project, and there can never be a 'one size fits all' approach to co-production. As discussed, projects/agencies will need to consider how each principle can be expressed in their practices. We also recognise that not every project will have the freedom to implement the principles as intended and that a project's ability to adhere to the principles will depend on political/managerial will within an organisation and the project's scope and funding duration. That said, to concur with the existing literature, co-production has the potential to transform culture and alleviate some of the tensions that exist when working with people in the CJS to promote more collaborative and person-centred ways to work *with* people to produce positive outcomes (Bovaird, 2007; Lambert & Carr, 2018; Weaver & McCulloch, 2012).

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APPENDIX



FIGURE 4 Full narrative mapping illustration.