



**NORTHERN LIGHTS**

Small Steps Big Changes

Coproduction Evaluation and Legacy  
Planning

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June 2023

## Introduction

2023- 2025 marks SSBC's 'Phase Six – Full Delivery and Legacy'. Planning for this has commenced with a partnership discussion and subsequent drafting of an 'SSBC Legacy Proposal'. This will list legacy ambitions for its programme outcomes, assets and the four dimensions of its system change model.

SSBC took the opportunity to test two elements of this emergent Legacy Plan, Coproduction (covered in this report) and Father Inclusivity (addressed in an accompanying report).

## Objectives of the work

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The objectives of this work were to:

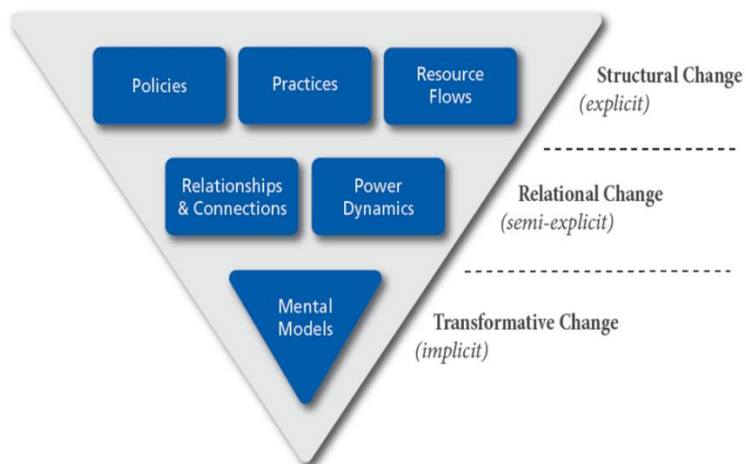
1. Road test the system change impact of the emerging SSBC Legacy Proposal using the Water of Systems Change Model
2. Pilot an approach to deep dive individual aspects of systems change legacy, in particular the Father Inclusivity and Coproduction strands of SSBC's work
3. Provide recommendations for further development and delivery of the SSBC Legacy Plan in light of this systems evaluation

## About the model

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The Water of Systems Change model was developed by the non-profit philanthropy organisation, FSG. It starts from the premise that complex problems do not lend themselves to simple solutions, and so system change is about "*shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place*" (Social Innovation Generation in FSG, June 2018). For change to be successful and sustained FSG argue that change must take place across three explicit (or tangible) and three implicit (intangible) aspects of a system. These include our 'mental models' – our long held beliefs about a problem or population, ways of working and what is and isn't possible – often overlooked in action plans.

***The six conditions of system change that hold a problem in place***



SSBC appointed Helen Platts of Northern Lights Learning & Solutions and Claire Baxter of Richmond Baxter Ltd . Helen and Claire used the framework to structure questions for 121 interviews with stakeholders and design an insight workshop with SSBC staff. This innovative approach was applied to gather and analyse activities to date, gaps in legacy planning and next steps. The results are presented below.

### Reflections on what we heard

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- **Building support for coproduction**

It is a sign for optimism that there are different examples of coproduction taking place throughout the system, beyond SSBC-led activity.

As coproduction is *“in vogue”*, SSBC has been able to capitalise on this, generating interest and adding huge value by being able to *“show the way”* to others.

***“Taking this approach leads to more innovation and creativity”***

***“We couldn’t have done it without SSBC leading the way”***

The challenge now is moving to support other services to find their own way and address the nervousness that the (comparatively well-resourced) SSBC approach is the only option.

***“In the system everybody looks at SSBC and says this is the best way... We’d love to do it like that but we can’t”***

***“... for a local authority letting go of power is a challenge, there is a corporate decision making process”***

There is still some way to go to sell the benefits of coproduction to support a change in mindsets.

And there is no co-ordination point or person who has an overview of current system-wide activity.

- **Implementing coproduction approaches**

As coproduction has become more talked about, there is a danger of it being turned into a process – it is a way of doing things, not a thing in its own right.

There is some confusion around what coproduction is - most focus on it at design stage, and not something that can take place throughout commissioning cycles.

A further consideration that arose was to keep encouraging new, fresh, diverse voices and perspectives from parents?

***“Once you have got that additional perspective and knowledge... how are you still like everybody else?”***

And if we desire a variety of voices, how does SSBC and its partners manage this when wanting to coproduce for a universal service?

## Coproduction - achievements and enablers

Policy (& Governance)	Practice	Resource
Coproduction required in the system e.g. Child Friendly City, H&WB Strategy, ICB Working with People & Communities	Coproduction is seen in more places e.g. Family Mentors, PCs & PAs, possibly Parent Care Panel & NHS Citizens Panels	More people tasked with / expert in coproduction e.g. ICB Team, SSBC & Parent Champions Family Hubs
Multiple examples of coproduced policies e.g. Maternity Voices Partnerships, obesity, neglect	Examples of proactiveness / asking earlier e.g. oral health specification, Family Hub bid - and of some services being less defensive	Skills of SSBC / PCs / PAs recognised, being " <i>invited in</i> " and have the confidence " <i>to be the irritant</i> "
Coproduction is more routinely being considered in strategy and transformation e.g. in ICB, Public Health, Nottingham City Council	Some good evidence that it works e.g. Family Mentor Service take up and feedback, SOSA evaluation	Funding to 2025 for SSBC, ICB Team and Family Hubs

Relationships & Connections	Power
Evidence of Parent Champions building strong relationships within the system	Parent Champions have gained the knowledge to challenge existing power bases
Multiple examples of trust being built overtime between parents, the workforce, across organisations etc	Being listened and spoken to as an individual demystifies power
Some consider senior support / buy in has " <i>smoothed the way</i> "	

Mental Models
"People are doing it, want to do it & see the benefits"

## Coproduction - remaining to be done and barriers

Policy (& Governance)	Practice	Resource (people, £, knowledge)
No overview of what is happening	Uncertainty as to how to manage alongside mandated services and limited budgets	Potential to widen expertise e.g. Community Champions, Maternity Assistants
Policies need to be embedded, to stop them disappearing	<i>"How can it work for universal services?"</i>	A need to invest in the understanding & skills of those involved and more professionals
Some questioned the level of buy in and that <i>"it needs to go further up the chain"</i>	Some way to go to be able to <i>"sell the benefits"</i>	Funding – <i>"are there only a few organisations with the resource to do it?"</i>
	How balance talk and action - <i>"let's do it right"</i> v. <i>"our time is precious"</i>	Funding – different approaches to paying people for involvement?

Relationships & Connections	Power
Trust can easily be lost – it needs maintaining	Question as to whether some professionals fear challenging PCs because of their power
<i>"SSBC has scratched the surface of intergenerational distrust of services but there is still a long way to go"</i>	Some reluctant to <i>"discount"</i> their professional expertise
Perception that SSBC Board is under-used / under attended	How to keep encouraging new, fresh, diverse voices and perspectives from parents & communities?

Mental Models
Current coproduction <i>"is not sufficiently on parents' terms"</i>
<i>"Some professionals still don't get it"</i> and want to feel safe by putting processes around it
A concern there is a myth that <i>"there is only one way of doing it"</i>
<i>"Coproduction is costly"</i> in time & money
Can coproduction be squared with democratic accountability?
<i>"Post SSBC it will be hard to keep the pipeline of PCs going"</i>
<i>"Part of our success is down to coproduction being in vogue at the moment"</i>

## Recommendations

- **The SSBC team has committed to the following actions**

Capture the SSBC journey

Create a “*Coproduction the SSBC Way*” toolkit and insight showing:

- this is what we have learned
- this is how we used coproducing at all stages of service development, delivery and oversight (e.g. data, communications, contracting etc)

Develop an SSBC coproduction strategy for the final two years of the programme setting out:

- what does good look like?
- what is SSBC’s place in the system?
- what now and next for the current Parent Champions and Parent Ambassadors?

***“We need to naturally create more parent champions and ambassadors... be very deliberate about it...”***

Parent Champions and Parent Ambassadors to have access training and coaching, to assist them to:

- identify individual areas of interest
- align these to opportunities (e.g. education or employment for those that choose this)
- reform the ambitions for coproduction for the next two years with in independent person

***“When a parent comes along it forces people to think outside of the box”***

Maintain and further develop connections with the wider system

Joanna Okrasa to be the project lead moving forward

- **We would add that**

In the development of a toolkit

- Care is taken to avoid “*we are telling you how to do this*” and focuses on ensuring coproduction is a true conversation where parents and professionals share and use all the experience and knowledge

- The toolkit and its development lead to thinking time / helps partners explore how coproduction can work without SSBC and its resources

***“We [services trying to develop coproduction policies] need to get our own house in order with our organisation”***

- It helps partners to explore how coproduction can sit alongside other sources of decision making information e.g. insight, consultation

The SSBC coproduction strategy

- Capitalises on those areas locally where there is impetus and energy to coproduce, and parents can “push at an open door” (e.g. Family Hubs, Infant Mental Health)

***“There is a lot to do around influencing others in coproduction but the policy stuff takes forever”***

- Supports parent champions who are increasing in knowledge and confidence to “*stay representative*” of their community

***“We need to invest in people who can take on leadership roles in communities”***



## Reflections on the model

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Feedback was mixed. For some, once the factors had been explained, it helped organise their thoughts. Some felt they “*already thought in this way*”. Amongst those some valued the opportunity to talk through their strategies to build networks, and to shift beliefs and power.

***“I’m doing what I need to do, and it is moving into that mental model. That’s the area I need to focus on - it’s been really, really useful.”***

Some said it made them see the value of such activities aimed at tackling intangibles, which they had not previously considered as contributing to system change. This meant that the model generated a large volume of activity, which took more time to analyse than expected and gave workshop participants a lot to take in.

The model helped test for lasting change because it identified the nature of remaining challenges. Critically, the model illustrated how these differed between the two strands. This helped SSBC decide how best to use their remaining time:

- Wide partner support for coproduction learnt itself to a focus on tangible actions, hence it is considered that sharing learning and building this into a toolkit will help already supportive partners embed practice.
- Entrenched societal ‘mental models’ regarding the role of fathers learnt itself to a different strategy. Here, SSBC believe upping campaign work on the back of test and learn activities is needed to challenge perceptions and shift power.

In summary, there is merit in using this approach again, but with more upfront information for participants, and allowing more time for analysing and reflecting on the volume of achievements and challenges uncovered.

## Acknowledgements

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We would like to extend our thanks to all of those who generously gave their time to contribute to these discussions:

Alison Poxon (SSBC), Amanda Wright (ICB), Amy Callaway (ICB), Amy McDonald (SSBC), Cllr Cheryl Bernard (Nottingham City Council), David Johns (Nottingham City Council), Donna Sherratt (SSBC), Farzana Akhter (Parent Champion), Jane Flewitt (SSBC), Jin Williams (Parent Champion), Joanna Okrasa (SSBC), Julia Bramble (Nottingham City Council), Karla Capstick (SSBC), Karon Foulkes (NHS), Katie Hall (Nottingham CVS), Kyesha Davies (NTU), Liz Orton (University of Nottingham / Leicestershire County Council), Prema Nirgude (ICB), Sheona Dalton (SSBC), Usma Bhatti (Nottingham City Council), Zaynab Akhtar (Parent Champion)