



Kailo Framework Resources

Co-design and its benefits



Co-design and its benefits: This document aims to support you in considering the Co-design approach used within Kailo.

What is co-design?

Kailo's overall aim is to work with and support local communities, young people and public service partnerships to better understand and address the social determinants of young people's mental health. To achieve this, Kailo employs a co-design approach—bringing together diverse experiences, knowledge, and expertise to design, develop, and refine solutions that improve young people's mental health and well-being.

Co-design is described by McKercher (2020) as “an approach to designing with, not for, people”, with those with lived experience, communities and professionals coming together to work collaboratively to achieve a common aim or goal i.e. “to improve something they all care about” through “elevating the voices and contributions of people with lived experience”. Within this approach McKercher (2020) highlights four main principles to be followed; the sharing power, prioritisation of relationships, the utilisation of participatory approaches and the building of capacity.

In recent years, co-design has become popular in the design and innovation of place-based solutions for local and national challenges or systemic problems (Benz et al., 2024; Gillett-Swan et al., 2024). By bringing together different skills, perspectives and ideas, there is opportunity to create meaningful and sustainable place-based change within local communities that benefit the children and young people who live there (Abrams et al., 2019).

Benefits of co-design

Benefits of the approach can be seen both for the organisation, service, system or individual involved, as well as in the outcomes for the local community, and children and young people (Man et al., 2019; Vella-Brodrick et al., 2023; Steen et al., 2011; Slattery et al., 2020; Thabrew et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2024):

Benefits of co-design involvement to an organisation, service, system or individual

- Development of **new skills, knowledge and areas of expertise** in both the methodology of the co-design approach, as well as the challenges and needs being experienced by children and young people within the local community
- Development of **new and stronger social connections, relationships and networks** with other people, organisations or services that have similar aims or interests, or are working in similar areas.
- Enhancement and **development of facilitation, organisation and leadership skills** by being involved or taking a leading role in the design and decision-making process surrounding change and innovation within the local community
- **Involvement in influencing change within local communities** through bringing individual experience, expertise and perspectives which offer valuable contributions and influence within the design process.

Benefits of using a co-design approach in the innovation of place-based solutions for local challenges

- **More likely to develop something that works and therefore increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the design process:** By working collaboratively with co-designers, there is an improvement in mutual learning and understanding from all involved in the process, with a greater understanding of what is needed by those who participate in an activity, service or organisation, meaning that there is a reduced risk of the product/service/innovation failing or not meeting needs.

- **Generation of more innovative and creative ideas or designs that meet the needs of the local community:** Co-designing with people who don't work in a particular organisation or system, but who have lived experience of a particular challenge, can lead to more 'out of the box' thinking that is based on need, rather than implicit assumptions held by professionals (as there is less knowledge of historic constraints, ideas or practices). Those bringing lived experience will often better understand what change is actually required, based on the true needs of young people and their community, rather than the assumed needs that professionals and organisations can sometimes bring to design.
- **Enhancement of communication, connection and collaboration between young people, community members, professionals and organisations:** Co-design brings lots of different people together from across the system to work on a common challenge that the community is facing i.e. children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. The approach supports and encourages a collaborative approach, allowing for the development of more sustainable and effective change to take place within the community.
- **Increased buy in, support and enthusiasm for innovation and change from the wider community:** By working with lots of different people with lots of different experiences, expertise, knowledge and networks across the community, there is a much greater chance of the innovative idea for change being sustained and filtered through to, and having a greater impact on, the wider community.

Useful Resources and Further Reading

For more information or guidance on adopting a co-design approach within your project, please contact the Kailo team to learn more about the Kailo Systemic Co-design tool at: kailo@ucl.ac.uk

You may also consider other helpful resources:

Blomkamp, E. (2024). Shades of co-design - Emma Blomkamp - Medium. [online] Medium. Available at: <https://emmablomkamp.medium.com/shades-of-co-design-edac826de66e> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2025].

Man, M., Abrams, T. and Mcleod, R. (2019). Evaluating co-design I Contents Implementing and Evaluating co-design a step-by-step Toolkit Part of NPC's Work on User Involvement. [online] NPC. Available at: <https://www.thinknpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Co-design-guidance-July-2019.pdf> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2025].

McKercher, K.A. (2020). What Is co-design? [online] Beyond Sticky Notes. Available at: <https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2025].

Sunlight Foundation (2024). Guide to co-design — Roadmap to Informed Communities. [online] communities.sunlightfoundation.com. Available at: <https://communities.sunlightfoundation.com/action/codesign/> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2025].

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<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Co-Design-Community-Spaces-Guidance-2.pdf> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2025].

Benz, C., Scott-Jeffs, W., McKercher, K.A., Welsh, M., Norman, R., Hendrie, D., Locantro, M. and Robinson, S. (2024). Community-based participatory-research through co-design: Supporting Collaboration from All Sides of Disability. *Research Involvement and Engagement*, [online] 10(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s40900-024-00573-3>.

Gillett-Swan, J., Kerr, J., Winter, A. and Callard, N. (2024). Co-designing place-based co-located Health and Wellbeing Infrastructure and Services with High School students, educators, and Health Service Providers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, [online] 166, p.107971. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107971>.

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Slattery, P., Saeri, A.K. and Bragge, P. (2020). Research co-design in health: a Rapid Overview of Reviews. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, [online] 18(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-020-0528-9>.

Steen, M., Manschot, M., & De Koning, N. 2011 Aug 14. Benefits of Co-design in Service Design Projects. *International Journal of Design* [Online] 5:2. Available: <https://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/890>

Thabrew, H., Fleming, T., Hetrick, S. and Merry, S. (2018). Co-design of eHealth Interventions with Children and Young People. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, [online] 9. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2018.00481>.

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