

Experience Based Co-Design

Tools for Partnering with Clients



Design thinking is a solution-focused process that relies on participant insights to generate innovations. It is about designing and developing person-centred services and gives equal weight to all participants (clients, partners, services providers, organisations). Experience-based co-design (EBCD) is the process used to identify issues and work towards solutions in collaboration with clients.

Why do we need Co-Designed Solutions?

- Co-design is a way to bring together clients, carers, families, service providers, partners and organisations to give everyone an equal voice to create better outcomes for all.
- Clients are placed at the centre of an experience-based processes, allowing them to feel valued and validated.
- Co-design generates practical ideas for changes to processes and practices and, as a result, is more likely to produce tangible changes and an impact on client experiences.
- The process allows organisations and services to test their assumptions with users and adapt and re-design using client contributions as a basis.

Approaches to Experience-Based Co-Design

There is no one method that works best for EBCD but the key focus is always on:

- A user centred orientation (experience base)
- A collaborative change process (co-design)

There is a huge amount of flexibility within the process, depending on the scope of work and participants. There are five key stages to work through:

1. Set up for success

This stage encompasses the who, what, when, where, why and how of the process. Essentially, it is an information gathering stage to ensure all the necessary tools, people and services are involved.

This stage defines the aims of the process (develop a new service, improve an existing service, tackle a specific problem or issue) and how they will be achieved. It also includes planning how to support clients and give them the appropriate knowledge and tools needed to make a meaningful contribution.

2. Gather the experience

This stage is about understanding what the current service, process or issue is. It may involve story boards, interviews with clients and staff, surveys, client stories or simple observation.

Understanding that each experience is unique and brings a different perspective to the table is ideal. There may already be some issues or key focus areas that are highlighted.

3. Understand the experience

This is the stage to try and gain a greater understanding of the client experiences. Journey mapping is an excellent tool to use here as it focuses on actions, emotions, barriers and experiences.

Helpful questions and tips for this stage are to ask:

- What would you do to improve the service?
- How did you feel? Remember that the process is based on experiences and emotions.
- Which experiences were good and which were bad?

The goal here is to recognise the key touchpoints and areas for improvement.

4. Improve the experience

This is an ideal time to gather all participants together to workshop. This gives an authentic experience of working together to create solutions. These workshops can be extremely useful, but also require skilled facilitation to ensure the best results and keep the group focused.

Workshops can involve ideas tables, stakeholder needs tables, improvements and benefits tables and roleplays. Drawing on each individual experience gives a range of perspective, potential solutions and innovations. Every perspective and experience is valid and should be considered as a potential innovation or solution.

Once ideas have been selected, they need to be translated into action. Being in a workshop scenario gives the opportunity to see how some of the key ideas could be implemented.



5. Monitor and maintain the experience

EBCD is part of a cycle of continuous improvement. Once changes have been implemented, they need to be monitored and measured to determine they have had the desired effect.

Information gathered in the second stage can be reviewed to identify any improvements based on lessons learned from implementation.

It is also important to communicate and disseminate information regarding the process, changes and outcomes. It is also beneficial to celebrate achievements with all participants to continue to build on the relationships created.

Things to Think About When Co-Designing

- *Equality.* The basis of co-design is that everyone's experiences are equal and have equal value. It is an equitable relationship between stakeholders. It is vital that each participant has the opportunity to share their insights, experiences and perspectives.
- *Diversity.* Co-design supports the participation of all stakeholders. These may include marginalised groups and every effort should be made to include representatives from every stakeholder. Undertaking co-design activities without being inclusive may result in the loss of important insights and perspectives.
- *Accessibility.* Including all stakeholders may require some special effort to overcome barriers that may prevent them from participating. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in co-design activities in a way that is comfortable for them.
- *Reciprocity.* Participation in co-design activities should result in some benefit for stakeholders. These benefits can be anything from improved stakeholder relationships and client experiences to more tangible results such as increased service uptake.

Additional Resources

Here are some additional resources available to help with the experience-based co-design process:

[New Zealand Health Board – Co-Design Toolkit](#)

[Experience Based Co-Design – A Toolkit for Australia](#)

[Co-design: How to increase CALD consumer participation & input](#)