

Context of Share, Connect, Grow

Share, Connect, Grow was designed to support refugees and people seeking asylum in Liverpool through information sessions, social activities and tours. The project was fully co-produced with volunteers who have lived experience of the UK immigration system. While all volunteers shared lived experience of forced migration, they brought diverse cultural backgrounds, religions and personal journeys—this diversity was a key strength of the project. The team consisted of two part-time coordinators, ten volunteers and one manager, with external co-production assessment provided by PM Universal CIC. The project ran from November 2023 to April 2026.



Caption: A co-production team meeting to evaluate and plan the project.

Advantages of Co-Production for Share, Connect, Grow

- Better quality of service which led to increased engagement.
- A flexible approach that was able to adapt to changes.
- A sense of purpose and a sense of belonging among a strong team.
- The project remained relevant and shifted with the community's needs.
- In a hostile environment that often removes agency from people with forced migration experiences, co-production offered a powerful way to restore voice, influence and dignity.

Co-production Volunteer's Reflection:

"It gave me confidence to remember my identity, feel I am a person who can do anything rather than thinking I am a refugee with restrictions. I now understand being a refugee is just an experience not an identity and I'm more than this. Refugee Action reminded me that I am a human being."

How To Co-Produce

*Recommendations from the team that co-produced
Share, Connect, Grow in Liverpool from 2023–2026*

Start with ways of working and the team culture

- Agree on ways of working. We used meetings, briefings, debriefs and 1-1s.
- We benefitted from training in consensus decision making to structure our meetings.
- Encourage ideas to be challenged—challenges add value!

The outcome: a team that holds each other accountable for the co-production.

Build the team Relationships are at the heart of co-production. Spend time on this.

- Actively build in relationship-forming. We used ice-breakers and socials.
- Maintain motivation through ongoing support and encouragement.
- You need enough people to share the responsibility but not too many.

The outcome: a strong team to face challenges positively with flexibility.

Clear purpose and success criteria

- Agree the project purpose and the basics: Who is it for? What is it? When will it happen? Where? How?
- Remind everyone of the purpose regularly and ensure people joining the project are clear on this too.
- Create a shared understanding of success and celebrate all wins!

The outcome: everyone on the same page.

Conditions for collaboration

- Compensate attendance.
- Prioritise meeting in-person and time for ice-breakers and breaks.
- Make enough time for meetings, in regularity and meeting time.
- Ensure the right people are in the room (we agreed a minimum of 4).

The outcome: all perspectives heard.

Share power, roles, responsibility and successes

- Identify and assign tasks based on people's expertise and interests.
- Everyone shares responsibility for the projects successes.
- Leadership in co-production means enabling others, rather than traditional project-management.

The outcome: shared ownership.

Communicate openly and consistently

- Decide together on agreed ways of communicating.
- Keep everyone informed throughout the process so there are no surprises.
 - Encourage open dialogue and continuous feedback.

The outcome: A culture of evaluation and iterative improvement.

Reflect together: are we genuinely co-producing yet?

When co-producing, how you do things is more important than what you do. We held sessions to reflect together on our co-production, using the ladder of co-production to support us.

The outcome: a strong understanding of co-production among the team.