Involving Citizens in Commissioning

IPC have taken the idea of co-production and the 'ladder of engagement' (Hart, 1997) and applied it to commissioning. Firstly, you can categorise levels of engagement under four key headings (shown to the right):

- Communication: activities involved in providing information
- Consultation: activities involved in securing ideas, suggestions and feedback
- Negotiation: activities involved in securing agreement to commissioning decisions
- Participation: activities involved in working together to make commissioning decisions

The matrix below applies the concept of this spectrum of engagement to each of the four key stages of the commissioning cycle:

- Understand – assessing needs, resources and priorities to agree the outcomes you want to achieve.
- Plan – mapping out and considering different ways of addressing the needs that you have identified.
- Do – securing services to meet those outcomes, whether through direct provision, procurement or market shaping.
- Review – monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of those services against expected outcomes.

The matrix is a framework to help design appropriate engagement activities, recognising the different aspects of commissioning ie activities and tools should vary at different stages of the commissioning cycle. It can be used at the point of project design and/or to map and review current engagement activities. In selecting and designing the activities to use in a particular circumstance, the following questions should be considered:

- Is the activity appropriate given the particular life experience of those involved?
- Will the activity secure sufficient depth of analysis?
- Is it sufficiently representative?
- Will the activity be cost-effective?
- Will the activity be a positive, useful or worthwhile experience for those involved?
- Is the activity likely to result in an impact on agencies' existing assumptions and behaviours?

Commissioning Stage	Communication - providing information	Consultation - getting feedback	Negotiation - seeking agreement	Participation - working together
Understand	Presentations, reports or summaries of findings from research, needs analysis or national guidance made available in appropriate formats for citizens: graphs, posters websites, videos. Work with theatre groups to illustrate the issues facing people, the impact of current arrangements and future needs.	Questionnaires to citizens and providers asking for comments on needs or services. Workshops or 'sounding boards' with selected groups to explore the extent to which services meet their needs and future requirements. Advocacy support to facilitate feedback from individuals. Reviews of complaints or suggestions schemes. Reviews of national and international research on the views of citizens about their needs.	Citizens on reference groups to agree analyses. In-depth care pathways and reviews of cases with citizens to explore their experience of services and to agree what kind of improvements are needed in the future. Discussions with citizens' forums to explore their views about service needs. Producing a community asset assessment. The assessment asks agencies, citizens and groups: - What do you need? - What can you contribute? people's answers are then collated and the results shared.	Working groups including citizens to design research projects. Advisory groups with people who use services to undertake joint analysis of research. Citizens undertaking projects to gather information through interviews or direct observation etc, to feed in to a final analysis. People and / or communities controlling their resources and undertaking their own analysis of their needs, supported and advised by professionals.

Commissioning Stage	Communication - providing information	Consultation - getting feedback	Negotiation - seeking agreement	Participation - working together
Plan	Commissioning plans and strategies made available in appropriate formats in reports and presentations etc. Opportunities to observe council meetings or partnership board meetings where plans are discussed.	Citizen focus groups to comment on proposals for service development and change. Questionnaires to obtain feedback from citizens on service design proposals. Interactive web-sites to prompt comment on proposals for service development and change. Reviews of the contents of suggestion boxes prior to design and planning exercises. Collaborative approaches involving stakeholders in generating outcomes. Discussions with citizens' forums on the content of service specifications.	Citizens' panels to test and agree service design proposals. Citizens as members of project steering groups to agree proposals and plans. Black and minority ethnic community representatives taking engagement into their communities through local groups rather than waiting for people to come and join in. Focus groups set up to test specifications and service contracts before they are offered to providers.	Service design teams to analyse potential service developments and make recommendations for change, managed jointly with citizens. Citizens as members of partnership boards or decision-making bodies. Citizens and commissioners jointly running consultation exercises with the public or other groups. Scenario analysis workshops where proposed arrangements are tested, and changes agreed with workshop members.

Commissioning Stage	Communication - providing information	Consultation - getting feedback	Negotiation - seeking agreement	Participation - working together
Do	Demonstration sites and visits to existing and potential providers. Open book contracting – service contract information made available to the public.	Citizens' feedback on the effectiveness of services in meeting the aims of individual contracts. Citizens offer input into the desired outcomes to be specified for a service in an outcome-based contract. An advisory panel of people who use services to feed into decision-making about the awarding of contracts.	People who use services reviewing bids and making evaluations as part of tendering exercises. Citizens' councils with a role in analysing and agreeing to service design proposals. Groups with some delegated responsibility for making decisions about the distribution of some resources. Ideas like participatory budgeting are also useful here. So are ideas like pledge-banking.	Citizens working together with commissioners as part of decision-making panels about the awarding of contracts or SLAs. Giving responsibility for budgets to groups of people who use services or communities to purchase services. Direct payments to secure individuals their choice of service. Groups of people sharing resources to secure combined services.
Review	Reviews of commissioned services, gaps and emerging needs made available to citizens in appropriately formatted reports or presentations for information.	Citizen panels to feedback views on the effectiveness of services as part of ongoing monitoring and review of service quality. Regular questionnaires and focus group meetings to review views about the effectiveness of services. Regular monitoring of complaints, compliments	'Mystery shopper' exercises using citizens on behalf of commissioners. Inspections or monitoring by citizens who report directly back to a partnership board regarding findings. People who use services undertaking regular focus group meetings with other	Citizens as regular members of review panels responsible for interpreting evaluations and feedback. People who use services design performance indicators and performance monitoring arrangements. Monitoring and review teams including citizens, meeting regularly to draw

Commissioning Stage	Communication - providing information	Consultation - getting feedback	Negotiation - seeking agreement	Participation - working together
		and suggestions from citizens.	service users. The use of video and social networking to help citizens produce feedback about services.	together information about progress of contracts and strategy.

Note that there is a national code of practice on consultation from which the table below is taken (the 7 consultation criteria). It is for formal consultation, but the criteria are a useful guide or principles for other engagement activities.

When to consult	Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome
Duration	Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible
Clarity of scope & impact	Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals
Accessibility	Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
Burden	Keep the burden of consultation to a minimum to ensure effective ness and consultees' buy-in to the process
Responsiveness	Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation
Capacity	Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation and share what they have learned

References

Centre for Innovation in Health Management (2014). Co-producing health – a briefing. University of Leeds. HM Government (2008) Code of practice on consultation.

Roger Hart (1997) Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens In Community Development and Environmental Care. UNICEF.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2015) Co-production in social care: What it is and how to do it. SCIE Guide 51.