

# Social work in England:

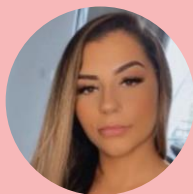
## Our co-production approach to producing the State of the Nation report, published in 2023

14 November 2023



**Katie Newbould**

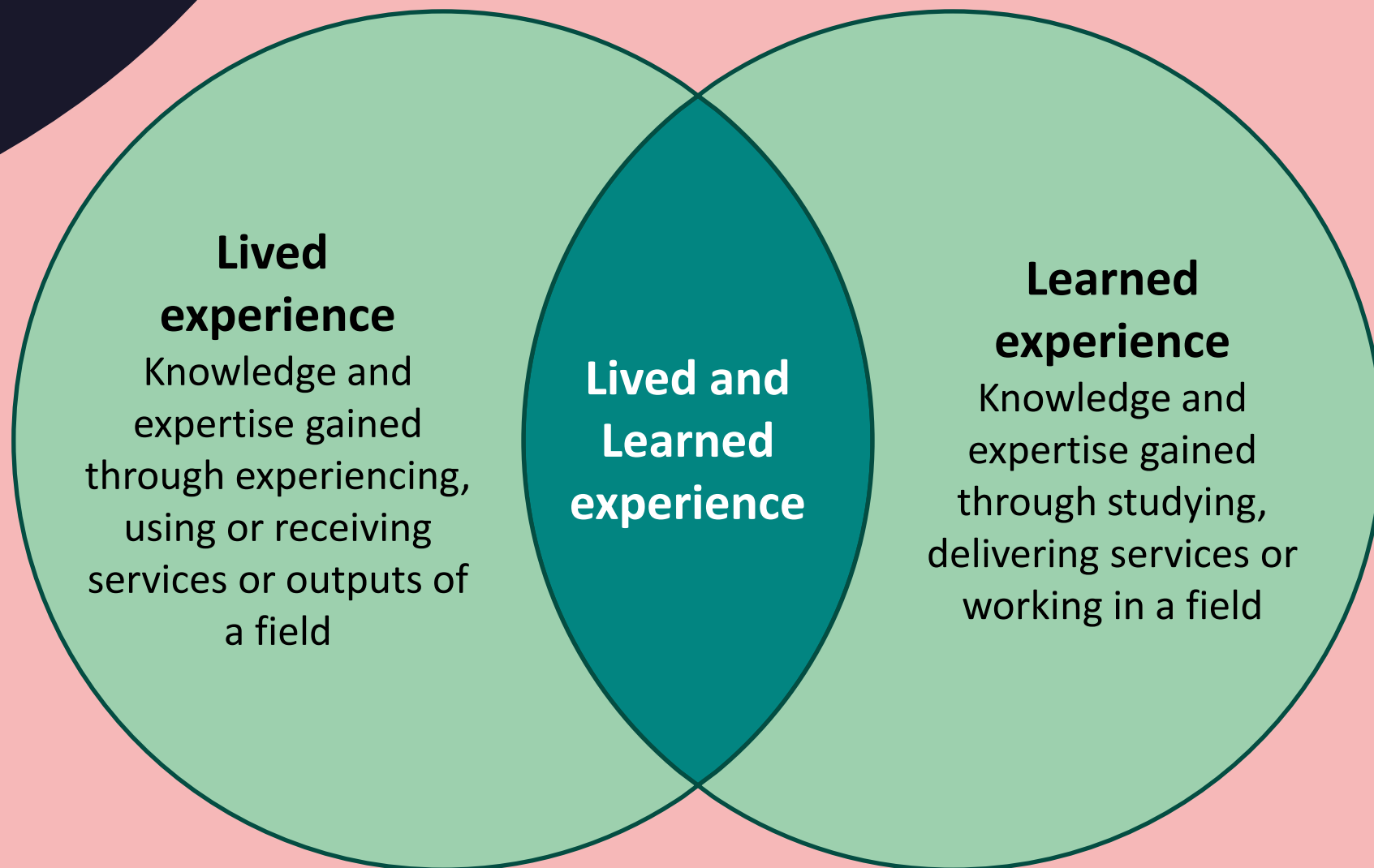
Head of policy, Social Work England



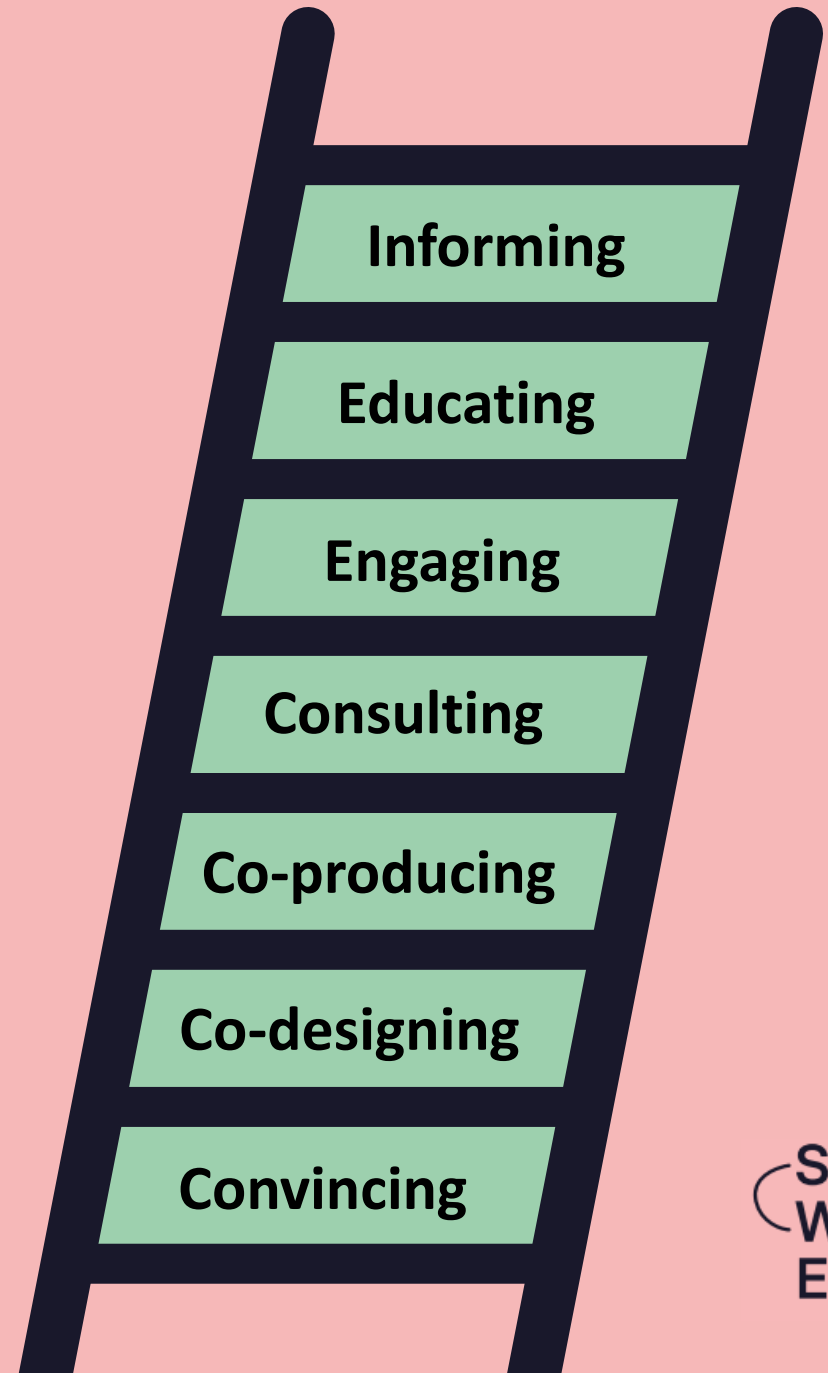
**Ashleigh Searle**

National Advisory Forum, Children's  
Commissioner, Person with Lived experience of  
Children's Social Care

# Our approach to co-production



# Our approach to co-production



# Our co-production journey

## Co-production

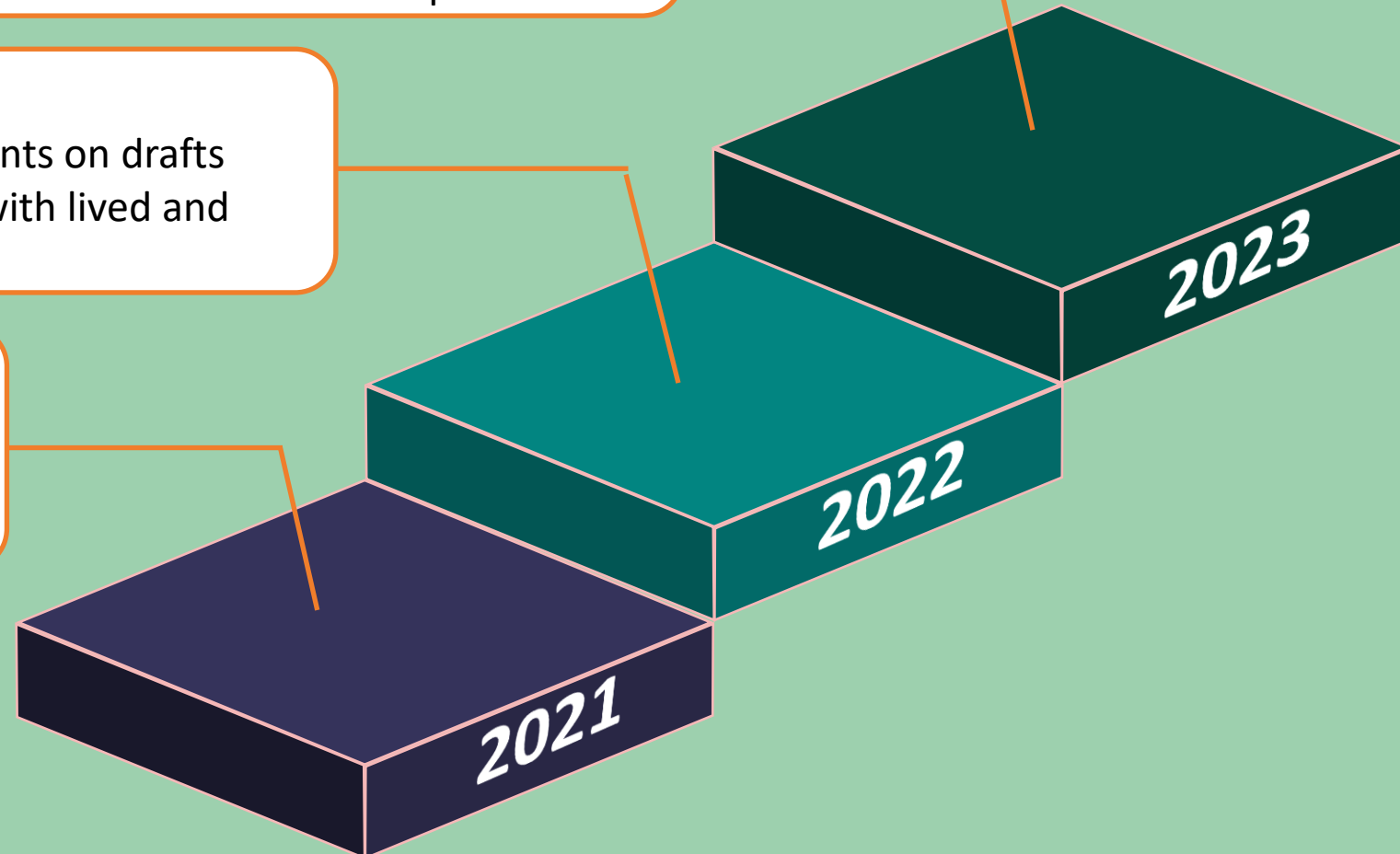
- Pre drafting, internal and external engagement, and steering group participation
- NAF drafted sections, including a thank you to the profession
- 28 contributions to the report from people with lived and learned experience

## Co-design

- NAF provided advice on drafting and comments on drafts
- 13 contributions to the report from people with lived and learned experience

## Engage

- NAF provided comments on drafts
- 6 contributions to the report from people with lived and learned experience



# Examples in the report

“The last 3 years of my life have been the hardest but the most rewarding.” **Student**

“A good social worker is an ally and an advocate for the vulnerable.” **Person with lived experience**

“[A strong professional identity] recognises the importance of social workers in society.” “It gives others confidence in what we do.” **Social worker**



## Case study

Turning 'us and them' into 'we':

### Social worker:

“I am a consultant social worker and trainer for a charity which supports people who have experienced sexual abuse, display harmful sexual behaviour and are at risk of being exploited. The charity planned to deliver a virtual webinar to support professionals discussing the barriers boys may face when speaking of, and seeking help for their experiences of sexual abuse.”

“Authenticity has always been a core value within my work, so approaching the co-founders of a lived experience organisation to collaborate on the webinar was imperative to be able to ensure legitimacy.”

### 2 people with lived experience:

“We are the co-founders of a lived experience organisation providing training and consultation. Our main focus is to create an interactive learning environment that will inspire confidence in practice and look at recovery from trauma through lived experience.”

“Before agreeing to collaborate we needed to consider if the charity was worth standing alongside and the project itself would not exploit our vulnerabilities and experiences.”

Thank you to the profession

As a forum comprising both lived and learned experience of social workers, when reflecting on social work the following was shared by a social worker in the forum:

“Social work can be a tough job. At times the way social work and social workers are portrayed can make that tough job even tougher. However, tens of thousands of us make a positive, significant and lasting difference to the lives of people every single day in social work practice. It is fair to say that this often goes unreported, but we know from our experience as practitioners that it does not go unnoticed. The people we meet often go unreported, but we know from our experience as practitioners that it does not go unnoticed. They thank us for helping them, and they thank us for our support. They thank us for helping them, and they thank us for our support. They thank us for helping them, and they thank us for our support.”

Thank you to the profession

Although social work in its very nature can be polarising for the people that receive it, we can all reflect on positive effects, instances or experiences of social work the following:

## Thank you to the profession

We want social work to be the best profession it can be. We believe in the power of collaboration and co-production to help achieve this goal. Co-production is about giving people who are affected by our work the opportunity to participate in and influence our work. When co-production is done well, people should feel heard and that we have listened to their experiences.

Our [National Advisory Forum](#) is a group of people with lived and learned experience of social work. They act as a critical friend to support us in our role as the regulator of social workers in England.

### A thank you from the National Advisory Forum

The co-production journey of the forum did not begin when it was formed in 2020; it started with a group of individuals from different areas, backgrounds, ethnicities, faiths, genders and ages – all with a personal experience of social work. These personal experiences encompass the breadth of social work, from:

- people living with physical disabilities
- mothers caring for children with additional needs
- individuals that have experienced mental health challenges
- people that have experienced the foster care system or have been adopted, and
- those experiencing social work through and with others in their lives.

We have all heard feedback around the professional identity of social work and the heaviness of many of the narratives, particularly in the context of an extraordinarily challenging few years. We felt it was important to acknowledge the good practice that takes place and share our words of encouragement for the years ahead.

...on my door at various times as an adult when my own mind was overwhelmed by my mind being 4 children, with the added challenge of living with disabilities. The time, gave me strength, as a person and as a parent.”

...most positive impacts of social work supported living into my own flat. My care plan was in place and I was able to move as smooth as possible. They were there after I'd moved! I now feel I am more in control over my life.”

...social worker who read my story and on the fact that no life story was written. With great encouragement he was photographed them. I found out that I had been on my date. He also told me I was this social worker's challenge that ensured I had the chance to meet my brother at the relationship with him and his

# Looking to the future

Other areas of co-production:

- National Advisory Forum
- Policy committee
- Decision Review Group
- Consultations and research

Our approach to co-production is always growing and evolving!

“My experience of being a member of the forum has been a very positive experience both in terms of the impact I’ve been able to have [and] on my own development, skills and knowledge” **Member of the NAF**

“I’ve found that throughout my involvement my contributions have been consistently valued and well received” **Member of the NAF**



**Follow our journey as we grow  
and evolve:**

 [socialworkengland.org.uk](https://socialworkengland.org.uk)

 [Social Work England](https://www.linkedin.com/company/social-work-england)

 [@SocialWorkEng](https://twitter.com/SocialWorkEng)

