

Tool: Using social media to deliver co-assessment

Performance management and auditing are key to ensuring the effective management of local authorities.

The role stakeholders can play in co-production has received significant coverage for a number of years. But the insights that they can offer in reviewing the effectiveness of services (or 'co-assessment') has received less attention until now.

Co-assessment involves bringing stakeholders into the process of reviewing local authorities. This can range from providing personal insights about their experiences of dealing with services, through to helping devise the methods themselves for evaluating and assessing services.

While conventional co-assessment is a resource-intensive activity, a report published by INLOGOV (the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham), highlights the potential role social media can play in opening up the process.

To some extent this is already happening. From Freedom of Information to the Local Audit and Accountability Act, the ever-increasing publication and transparency requirements being placed upon local authorities has enabled growing numbers of citizen journalists to investigate the expenditure and performance of their local authority, with the 'Peoples Audit' twitter account highlighting a number of occasions where residents have uncovered issues.

It is easy for councils under pressure to view such activity as something they need to defend against. But by adopting a culture of openness and welcoming the insights residents can bring, authorities can turn a perceived nuisance into a valued asset, helping to deliver continuous improvement.

Below are the top three principles by which councils can foster a social media-driven co-assessment culture:

- 1. Encourage feedback, even when it is challenging.** Co-assessment is about gathering feedback from stakeholders, regardless of whether it's positive or negative. Instead of being defensive, councils should encourage comments. They should welcome and acknowledge feedback, regardless of how challenging it is, and be ready to ask further questions.

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Which hat are you wearing?

Context

Section 1:
The Basics

Section 2.1:
Trust and democracy

Section 2.2:
Trust in the community

Section 2.3:
Trust in the system

- 2. The more data, the better.** Fear of criticism encourages councils to publish only the minimum amount of data they are legally required to. But co-assessment cannot take place without stakeholders having enough information to deliver feedback. Councils should play an enabling role in their own public scrutiny, publishing accounts and performance data by default, and actively working to help residents make sense of it.
- 3. Don't just publish data, publicise data.** Publishing data is not enough if you want to gather the best of stakeholder insight. Most residents won't know what data is available; others may struggle to navigate council websites. The goal should be encouraging people to access the data and play a role in the process, working to let residents know what is available and how they can get involved.

For more information see INLOGOV's report [We're all in this together: harnessing user and community co-production of public outcomes](#).

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Which hat are you wearing?

Context

Section 1:
The Basics

Section 2.1:
Trust and democracy

Section 2.2:
Trust in the community

Section 2.3:
Trust in the system