

Fairville Labs LONDON

Facing inequalities and democratic challenges through Co-production in Cities (Fairville) is a Urban Co-Production Research Project Horizon Europe.

Fairville uses knowledge co-production as strategy to address urban inequalities and democratic issues affecting seven urban areas in Europe, and two other mirror cases in Africa.



Fairville experiments co-production with civil society actors, universities and local authorities to facilitate multi-engagement towards embracing entrenched urban and environmental inequalities with affected residents or community groups. Through coproduction of knowledge and actions-oriented programmes, it contributes to rethinking urban democracy.

Do you want to help? There are many ways to contribute to the project: would you like to participate in the co-production in our project tasks or go on the field in our Fairville Labs?

Contact us!

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CONTEXT

The Fairville Lab (FVLab) **London** operates within the context of Just Space, a London-wide community network that has been active for 15 years, seeking to bring together grassroots organisations and influence planning and planning policy in London. The London Lab's primary focus is on implementing the Community Led Recovery Plan (2022), which includes 44 policy proposals developed through workshops with 60 community organisations from across Just Space.

The FVLab addresses issues of

- **social (in)justice** advocating for the inclusion of community voices in planning and policy-making processes;
- **disparities in economic opportunities** and support for marginalised groups trading and shopping in street markets;
- **health inequalities** in care services and provision within local communities;
- **economic and environmental sustainability** advocating for the access of all communities, especially poorer neighbourhoods, to affordable housing, green space and healthy environments;
- and **increasing representation in co-production and inclusive participation** of seldom-heard communities, including women, people of colour, and working-class communities, in decision-making processes.

ACTORS INVOLVED

The key partners of the London FVLab are all members of the Just Space Network. These include Clapton Commons, a community centre and hub in east London, and the Equal Care Co-operative who aims to create a better and fairer care system. There are a number of other allies in this work. These include: the Spitalfields Housing Association who, as well as their social housing role, supports local street markets and community food hubs; Save Brick Lane campaign who opposes large corporate developments and supporting local street markets and community food hubs; Friends of Queens Market, who campaign to save their market in Newham from redevelopment; the Development Planning Unit of UCL who provides academic support to the Lab and Co Produce It CIC, a new community interest company created by the lead activists working on the FV project. Another partner is Future of London who are also developing co-production principles and providing support together with a PhD researcher.



Figure 1: FVLab London: local tours (Alessio Koliulis, August 2023)

ACTIONS

The main objective of the London FVLab is to implement the policies in the Just Space 'Community Led Recovery Plan for London' through successful demonstration projects based on the principles of co-production in addressing inequality.

The lab's activities are centred around three main themes:

- **improved health and social care**
- **community street markets and food hubs**
- **co-production in the built environment**

The FVLab:

- **Piloted and evaluated a model of co-produced social care** for 5 care recipients in Clapton, Hackney putting the individual at the heart of their own care and improve their support networks.
- **Supports local street markets** to resist closure, poor management and redevelopment through community action and building social networks e.g. with local food hubs, commercial neighbours and market shoppers.
- **Implements co-production principles in planning practice and policy making**, ensuring community involvement from the beginning and conducts and attends workshops and conferences such as the East End Markets Conference and London Health Equity Partnership Community Conference.

EVALUATING THE CO-PRODUCED CARE PILOT

in Clapton, Hackney, London

In early 2022 residents and organisations in Clapton, some of whom were members of Just Space, engaged with the Equal Care Co-operative to re-imagine adult care. The Equal Care Co-operative were looking to pilot the UK's first commons based care approach, aiming to activate grassroots care networks at a hyper-local level. After 12 months of community organising, the Clapton Care Circle of Equal Care emerged with a new service model vision. This framework was developed as part of a 2023-24 project piloting a commons-based home care model in Hackney, funded by the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI). They offered up to £100k to help boroughs collaborate with third and private-sector organisations on innovative social care approaches, while the FVLab supported with knowledge on evaluation methods.

This new model was piloted in neighbourhoods around Clapton Common, Hackney from April 2023 to September 2024. It was led by the Clapton Circle, especially with the support of a place-based community development organisation called Clapton Commons and with staff from Equal Care's HQ in Calderdale, Yorkshire. Specifically, five recipients of care were put at the heart of their own care, supported by their care team, including the individual, social worker, family and friends and community support groups. Funding this grassroots initiative was challenging until LOTI's opportunity allowed us to progress from grassroots organising to co-producing a regulated care service.



Building, testing, and scaling this model involved:

- **Creating a hyper-local network** to build and resource five self-managing care teams.
- **Co-producing an evaluation framework** with a range of stakeholders.
- **Enhancing our tech platform** to empower other UK community groups to establish commons-based care services.
- **Generating a service specification for local authorities** to procure home care services.
- **Co-creating a "playbook"** on developing cooperative care providers-a "how-to" guide for local authorities and community groups.

Given the short-term nature of the pilot, the primary objective of developing our evaluation framework was formative rather than summative. The focus was on iterative learning and refinement rather than a conclusive evaluation of a new service. The pilot was an opportunity to trial the new care model and develop a range of evaluation tools so that other services and groups would benefit from them - including other co-production projects not necessarily those just in a care setting.



Figure 4: Craft gathering at Warm Welcome, offering skills exchange for all ages (Resident, 2024)

The evaluation workshop was attended by team owners, carers, family members, volunteers and members of local community services. We found out that there are challenges and considerations in implementing co-production successfully:

- **Power dynamics:** Balancing power between service users and providers was at times challenging, requiring intentional efforts to ensure equality. In practice, the social services department did not allow social workers adequate flexibility and time to test the approach fully. However, care recipients, family and friends and community groups did engage well. There was inadequate time for further discussions with social services.
- **Resource Intensive:** Co-production can require significant time, effort, and resources to facilitate meaningful participation and collaboration.
- **Cultural Change:** Shifting to a co-production model may require changes in organisational culture and practices. The needed transformation from social services was not received.
- **Skill Development:** Service users and providers may need training and support to engage in co-production processes effectively.

The pilot has been completed now and the process and findings have been captured, both in a Playbook, sharing how to do this type of project in a care setting, and by the London FVLab. Further funding is needed to implement this approach again and to build on the pilot process.

Figure 2: Care in common outdoor engagement (Resident, June 2023)

Figure 3: Co-evaluation workshop (Resident, July 2024)