

## Transcript

### Developing a shared design purpose

#### Voiceover:

#### Why is a shared purpose needed in co-design?

The power of co-design lies in the diverse perspectives, skills, knowledge and experiences each participant brings to the table.

However, although participants may have agreed to work together in a design task, defining a shared purpose is far from straightforward.

Researchers and practitioners who have studied and reflected on design over the last 50 years, disagree on many things, but they do agree on one thing: design is more about defining a problem than solving it.

Design and design problems have been labelled 'ill-defined', 'ill-structured', 'open' or even 'wicked'. Design problems are open to interpretation, so the way you frame a problem will guide your solution. This is both the enormous appeal and challenge of any design task, but in co-design, the need to coordinate diverse perceptions of the problem becomes more obvious.

#### A structured way to facilitate the creation of a shared purpose

We often use a simple table to help different participants create a shared purpose statement. The process is divided into the following steps:

**Step 1:** First, participants reflect and record their individual priorities and concerns and the values they believe should drive their design decisions. It's good to use post-it notes for this exercise, as they will be moved around in the process.

Each participant is then asked to present their individual thoughts to the group.

A facilitator can help the process by interrogating statements, asking 'why' questions or other clarifications. For example, if a participant says, 'my priority is to create a 'safe' space', it's important for the team to understand what safe means for that particular person, and how it relates to materials used, the organisation of space, lighting, visibility etc.

**Step 2:** Once the first step is completed and all participants have had their turn, they then start clustering similar or complementary priorities, concerns and values under the column marked 'shared'.

Together, or with the help of a facilitator, they can decide to use additional post-it notes or other ways to distinguish or label common themes. It's important that any labels or terms used are understood and agreed by all participants.

Certain conflicts may become apparent in the process. For example, one person's idea for a 'safe' space may conflict with another person's idea for a 'social' space.

Participants may discuss ways to consolidate both views under a common theme or idea, but it's useful to record any unresolved conflicts in the 'conflicting' column. The team can then return to these issues further down the co-design process.

**Step 3:** As a last step, participants can then use the information on the table to co-author one or more shared purpose statements. A purpose statement is a sentence which summarises what the group wants to do and why, using the shared ideas they have now collated.

For example, a group developing a project to renovate and adapt their historic faith building, wrote in their statement:

*'Be an exemplar of cohabitation between a worshipping congregation and wider community – to be sustainable and special.'*

### **Why is the method useful?**

There are many other ways to create a shared purpose statement to guide the co-design process.

This particular method is useful for a number of reasons.

- It helps unearth, understand and give space to diverse priorities, concerns and values that guide design decision-making
- It helps participants explore commonalities, differences and areas of conflict that may inhibit the process further down the line
- A shared purpose statement helps focus the co-design process and can feed into a more detailed design brief. It's also something the group can refer back to throughout their journey and sense-check their emerging design.