

Co-production: remuneration

How do we recompense people for their time and contribution?

Valuing co-production participants

At its heart, co-production is a process of sharing power. To co-produce effectively, the contribution of all participants should be treated equally, and all participants need to feel equally valued.

Co-production activities may be organised and attended by people as part of their paid employment. Because of this, people with lived experience can feel like their contribution is less valuable than those being paid. This can result in believing that their contributions will have less power in the decision-making process.

Many organisations recognise this and seek to offer some kind of payment to people with lived experience to recompense them for their participation, but sometimes encounter issues with implementing payment.

This discussion will:

- Explore the reasons why people take part in co-production activities.
- Identify and suggest solutions to some of the obstacles to offering payment.
- Highlight alternative ways to recognise and reward participants.

What motivates people to take part in co-production activities?

Making a difference:

- Altruism.
- Wanting to make a service more effective for others (due to lived experience).
- Wanting to 'give back' to the NHS.
- Passion for change.
- Making a meaningful contribution to society.

Personal fulfilment:

- Having a voice and being heard.
- Having opinions valued.
- Having a sense of purpose.
- Rebuilding confidence (after experiencing illness).
- Intellectual stimulation.
- Connection to others.
- Feeling that they haven't been listened to elsewhere.

Community focused:

- Wanting to represent a seldom-heard group.
- Wanting to make changes in a particular region or community.

Professional development:

- Developing communication skills.
- Involvement in a professional organisation.
- Learning about how systems and organisations work.

Long-term achievements:

- Repeated participation leading to iterative change.
- Being part of ultimately successful outcomes.

Financial incentives

- Actively seeking paid opportunities to participate.

What are the issues related to making payments to participants?

Budget

- Not-for-profit organisations often don't have funding available to pay participants.
- As co-production takes time, additional staff hours may need to be budgeted.

Ethics

- Is it appropriate to offer payment for people to re-live their trauma?
- One-off payments often don't acknowledge time spent on preparation or follow-up.

Systems

- Participants who are in receipt of government benefits may encounter issues with their regular payments if they receive payment for co-production activities.
- Organisations can have complex systems in place for claiming.

Expenses

- All expenses relating to co-production activities should be reimbursed.
- Managing travel expenses in advance, so that people aren't out of pocket, can be difficult to manage.
- Additional PA support hours should be covered if needed.

Creative solutions to payment issues

Practical:

- Be transparent and clear about budgetary constraints and the ability to pay participants, including detailing any expectations around meeting attendance or preparation.
- Offer guidance (such as template letters) to those for whom benefits payments may be an issue.

- Simplify systems and processes for claiming expenses and involvement payments.
- Evaluate the way co-production activities are managed and consider arranging these directly rather than through an agency.
- Consider offering different levels of payment for corresponding tiers of participation such as:
 1. Basic payment: attendance at one meeting to talk about their experience.
 2. Mid-level payment: longer co-production activities including preparation time and follow-up.
 3. High-level payment: chairing or co-chairing a meeting.

Cultural:

- Factor in the time needed for co-production from the outset.
- Systems-wide change is needed so that people value co-production as a tool.
- Acknowledge that co-production is an essential part of the job for people who are involved in delivering services, and offer mandatory training so that everyone has an understanding of what co-production is, why it's valuable and how it works.
- Changing mindset to acknowledge that co-production **doesn't actually cost more** time and money because co-produced services are better, cheaper and right the first time.

Alternatives to financial payments

Given the long list of non-financial reasons that motivate people to take part in co-production activities, organisations could consider offering alternative rewards.

Ideally, any rewards should be also co-produced, so that participants are offered the chance to influence the way they are rewarded.

Payment-in-kind:

- Shopping vouchers – noting that these might also impact benefit payments.
- Experience vouchers (for health and wellbeing activities).
- Paying for additional Personal Assistant hours if needed.

Thanks:

- Writing handwritten thank you cards, personalised to recognise people's contributions.
- Certificate of participation (email or print out to post).
- Simple email, personalised with participant's name.

Feedback and acknowledgement:

- Credit people if they wish on any documents/videos produced.
- Celebrating achievements or outcomes.
- Provide long-term feedback on the ultimate outcome of a project.
- Issue certificates specifying the skills participants have used or developed during co-production activities.

Resources

[Payment guidance for members of the public considering involvement in research](#) - National Institute for Health and Care Research

[Working with our Patient and Public Voice Partners – Reimbursing expenses and paying involvement payments](#) - NHSE

[Service user consultation payments: how they affect benefits](#) - Disability Rights UK

[Co-produced Payment Policy](#) - Co-Production Collective

[Access to information](#) - Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight

[Macmillan Cancer Co-production Group](#) - Every One

[Resources](#) - Get Yourself Active

[Co-production: Principles into practice](#) - CFE Research and The Systems Change Action Network