

# Our Co-producer Payment Policy

28 July 2025, Version 3.0

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## Introduction

This payment policy has been co-created by the Co-Production Collective community and is for anyone who co-produces with Co-Production Collective. It sets out who we can offer payment to, in what circumstances; rates and methods of payment; and information about expenses. It also signposts to further resources and support.

This policy applies to people aged 16 and over. If you are under 16, we will explore the most appropriate option for payment with you.

Please note that this policy applies to those who co-produce with us, i.e., those who get involved in our sessions to co-produce ourselves or with sessions for other organisations.

## Why do we offer payment for co-producing with us?

For us, co-production is an approach to working together in equal partnership for equal benefit. In practice, this means living our [core values](#) – we try to be [inclusive](#), [transparent](#), [embracing of change](#), [kind](#) and [reflective](#) in everything we do.

This means removing barriers to participation, addressing power imbalances, and valuing a diversity of knowledge and experience. Payment is one way we can work towards this, through:

- Supporting access – payment removes financial barriers which may prevent people from co-producing with us.
- Supporting diversity – payment means a broader range of people may be able to co-produce with us.

- Recognising everyone's time and expertise – payment demonstrates that everyone's contribution is valuable, and nobody is expected to contribute for free (although some people may choose to do this) when others are being paid.

In an ideal world we would want to pay everyone for co-producing with us. While that's not possible in the real world, we hope this co-created policy lives up to our values and approach.

### How was this payment policy developed?

We have been discussing payment in co-production since our days as the UCL Centre for Co-Production in Health Research, way back in 2017! The first version of this payment policy was co-created with the Co-Production Collective community over many months and released in October 2022. We used a variety of methods to co-create it together and also built on the work of others in this area.

Since then, we have continued to engage with our co-producers to refine and improve the policy. The second version, released in September 2024 was updated to reflect pilot changes to payment rates made after further discussions with the community that also attempt to take into account the increased cost of living (since this policy was originally published in 2022.) It also included changes to the options for how to get paid. This third version sees the new payment rates from the second version become standard (i.e. we are no longer piloting them) and some further changes to options of how to get paid.

We want to say a **huge thank you** to everyone who has contributed to the co-creation process or our original policy as well as discussions after. Whether you commented on a draft, attended a session, or shared your learning, this policy wouldn't exist without each and every one of you.

## How does this payment policy continue to develop?

This payment policy will always be a work in progress. We know it's not perfect but with each version, including this second one, we aim to make meaningful improvements based on feedback and evolving needs. We see this current version as another step forward in our ongoing efforts to better support our community as Co-Production Collective continues to develop.

We will continue to collect regular feedback and reflections on how this policy is used, what is helpful and what could be improved. We commit to reviewing it every six months, producing a new version if necessary.

We hope you will join us on this journey as we continue to refine and improve our payment policy to better serve our community!

## 1. Our approach to payment in a nutshell

### What for?

We offer payment for activities which require significant time and commitment, make use of your experience and expertise, and where you work as part of a team on a project or an activity.



### Who for?

We offer payment to anyone who is co-producing with us from a personal perspective, in your own time, and not as part of a job you are already being paid to do. Accepting payment, if you're eligible, is entirely optional.



### How might it affect me?

Payment for co-production may affect your personal tax and benefits situation. We can signpost you to sources of support, **but we recommend you check with a tax and benefits advisor**. We will be flexible with our approach to payment to try and meet your needs, and work with you to find alternatives.



### How much and how am I paid?

We offer different rates depending on the type of activity\*:



- **£30 per hour** for activity facilitated by Co-Production Collective staff that focuses on co-producing ourselves as Co-Production Collective (for example, the co-creation of things like Our Safeguarding Statement, our core values or giving feedback on our communication materials). This rate is lower than for externally funded projects to ensure we can utilise the limited budget we have for as much co-production work as possible with our community.
- **£40 per hour** for all other activities with external partners or as part of research projects.

*(Please note: this change to rates is a negotiation we take very seriously as part of our strategy to change culture towards more equitable involvement in research projects. However, often research projects are subject to the parameters set by the research funder which we may not be able to change straight away; as we take on new research grants we will do our best to incorporate the new rates).*

We also offer the following rates for other co-creation activities. These rates are set to ensure that we can utilise the limited budget we have for as much co-production work as possible with our community. The rates are:

- **£75** for writing a blog for our website or contributing to another publication (please ask us for our Guidance document about writing a blog for us for further information by emailing [coproduction@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:coproduction@ucl.ac.uk)).
- **£20** for responding to our bi-annual Community Survey (as this is designed to take less than half an hour)

Most payments are processed through Expense Forms however, we can also accommodate other payment options. If you are involved in our sessions regularly, you can choose to become a 'temporary employee' and fill in timesheets. For more information on payment methods, see page 15, section 5.

### **What about expenses?**

We can cover expenses for any additional support you may need to fully participate.



### **What if I'm not sure?**

Please ask if you have any questions, are unsure about anything, or would like more information. We're happy to help!



## 2. Which Co-Production Collective activities are paid?

We offer payment to eligible co-producers for activities which:

- Require significant time and commitment
- Make use of people's experience and expertise
- Involve everyone working together as one team

Activities that are more social and informal, or involve the Co-Production Collective team giving information rather than everyone collaborating, do not meet these conditions and are therefore not eligible for payment.

### Examples of paid activities

Examples of Co-Production Collective activities which eligible co-producers can be paid for include:

- Co-production/co-creation sessions and activities (such as co-creating via a document)
- Writing or contributing to a blog or other publication
- Co-facilitating a workshop with us or supporting us to deliver training
- Planning sessions or activities with us
- Participating in a recruitment panel

When we share an opportunity, we will clearly indicate when payment is available. This will be via email, our session registration pages, or on our website.



## Examples of unpaid activities

Examples of Co-Production Collective activities which do not come with the offer of payment include:

- Attending informal conversation sessions, such as our Co-Pro Cuppas.
- Conversations with the Co-Production Collective team that are not part of a specific project (e.g. an introductory meeting).
- Attending activities organised by other organisations, where Co-Production Collective is present.
- Attending training sessions or talks put on by Co-Production Collective to benefit community members e.g. LinkedIn training sessions etc.

### 3. Am I eligible for payment?

#### Eligibility criteria

If you are **co-producing with us as part of your job**, meaning you are already being paid or are able to join us specifically as part of a paid role, then **you are not eligible** for payment.

If you are **co-producing with us from a personal perspective**, in your own time, then **you are eligible** for payment.

If you are eligible for payment, then it is always your choice whether or not to accept it.

#### How might being paid affect me?

Payment for co-production is considered 'earnings'. Depending on your individual circumstances, payment for co-production may affect your state benefits (including pension) or liability for tax and National Insurance.

Our Payment and Benefits Information Sheet – [available as a PDF](#) and [as a Word document](#) – provides more information and highlights key considerations for people receiving specific benefits. It also signposts you to other sources of support.

We are happy to discuss this with you, but we are not benefits experts. Therefore, we can't advise on specific situations and recommend that you consult a benefits advisor if you are unsure. It is your responsibility to understand how any payment from us may affect your or your household's state benefits (including pension) and your liability for tax and National Insurance.

We will be as flexible with our payment arrangements as we can to try and meet your needs. For example, you can change how you choose to be paid, such as requesting to receive a lower amount to avoid crossing your earnings threshold. We can also provide you with an official letter explaining your co-production role to show benefits advisors or other officials.

We recognise that your personal financial circumstances are just that – personal, private and none of our business. We will always try to find the balance between making sure you have the information and support you need, but don't feel pressured, uncomfortable, or asked to share any information you may not wish to.

### What if I can't accept payment?

We recognise there may be many reasons why someone is unable to or would prefer not to receive payment, even if they are eligible. Please tell us if this is the case and we can explore alternative options to support your participation and recognise your contribution in a way that works for you.

We offer expenses separately to payment so we can still reimburse these for you, if needed. See page 20, Section 6, for more information about expenses.

### What if I don't want to accept payment?

It is entirely your choice whether to accept payment, if you are eligible. You may choose to be paid for one activity but not for another, or not at all. You can request that the money you would have been paid go to a charity, if you like, or simply not identify yourself as someone who is eligible for payment. In this case, any money that would have been paid to you will remain in Co-Production Collective's budget to support our wider activities.

## What if I'm not eligible?

We hope you still feel that being part of Co-Production Collective is valuable. Our co-producers enjoy connecting with others, opportunities for personal and professional development, and the chance to make a difference.

We aim to offer more benefits in the future, such as peer support, training opportunities, and records of achievement. If you have any thoughts on this, please [let us know](#).

## Explaining our approach

Co-Production Collective benefits from a diverse community of co-producers with different circumstances, backgrounds and experiences. In an ideal world, we would be able to offer payment to everyone who co-produces with us. However, this is not possible due to our funding limits, so we have tried to be as inclusive as possible with our approach to eligibility.

We understand that not everyone who is eligible will choose to accept payment, but the offer is always available for those who wish to. We recognise that everyone's circumstances are different and may change over time, so will work with individuals on a confidential case-by-case basis.

We will try to have a conversation with you before your first activity with us. If there is anything you're not sure about or you would like to discuss further, [please get in touch](#).

Our **Eligibility Examples Information Sheet** – available [as a PDF](#) and [as a Word document](#) – gives examples of how eligibility may vary for different co-producers.

## 4. How much will I be paid?

Our payment rates\* are currently set as follows:

- **£30 per hour** for activity facilitated by Co-Production Collective staff that focuses on co-developing ourselves as Co-Production Collective (for example, the co-creation of things like Our Safeguarding Statement, our core values or giving feedback on our communication materials). This rate is lower than for externally funded projects to ensure we can utilise the limited budget we have for as much co-production work as possible with our community.
- **£40 per hour** for all other activities with external partners or as part of research projects.

*(Please note: this change to rates is a negotiation we take very seriously as part of our strategy to change culture towards more equitable involvement in research projects. However, often research projects are subject to the parameters set by the research funder which we may not be able to change straight away; as we take on new research grants we will do our best to incorporate the new rates).*

We also offer the following rates for other co-creation activities. These rates are set to ensure that we can utilise the limited budget we have for as much co-production work as possible with our community. The rates are:

- **£75** for writing a blog for our website or contributing to another publication (please ask us for our Guidance document about writing a blog for us for further information by emailing [coproduction@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:coproduction@ucl.ac.uk)).
- **£20** for responding to our bi-annual Community Survey (as this is designed to take less than half an hour)

We will make the payment amount for each activity clear in advance, but you are always welcome to contact us if you have any questions.

**What does this payment cover?**

Payment covers the duration of the paid activity you have taken part in, and any additional time needed for preparation and/or follow-up.

These rates do not cover expenses, which are paid separately. See page 20, Section 6 for more information about expenses.

## 5. How will I be paid?

We offer different options for payment to accommodate diverse needs. Our main method is through Expense Forms shared via email, and for those who work with us regularly, we offer Unitemps as a valid option. Additionally, vouchers as a thank you for your time are provided as an alternative method, if that suits you.

Here's a brief overview of each option, but please contact us if you have questions—we're here to help!

### Expense Forms

Payment using Expense Forms is the most straightforward option. It's generally used by those who co-produce with us on an occasional basis and the payment goes directly into your bank account. These forms shared via email ensure your payments are processed promptly.

Here's how it works:

- **Simple setup:** You don't need to set anything up. We'll complete a form with the agreed payment amount and send it to you.
- **Easy process:** Just fill in your personal and bank details, sign the form, and send it back to us. We'll handle the rest, including approval and processing by UCL's finance team. It can take a few weeks for the payment to reach your bank account.
- **Tax and National Insurance:** Payments are made without deductions, so you'll need to declare your earnings to HMRC if applicable.
- **Expenses:** They can be processed either with your payment or separately, depending on your preference.

Please contact us to find out more about Expenses Forms.

*"I find this way of being paid convenient for me because of my circumstances, it also doesn't make me feel pressured to deal with lots of paperwork, it's a quick and easy process. Sometimes I have expenses and since these are out of pocket, I would find combining my payments quite difficult so claiming them separately means I'm declaring the correct amount of tax and not losing out. Co-producing with Co-Production Collective doesn't leave me worrying about payment, instead it is a simple and straightforward process" – Co-producer.*

## Unitemps

Unitemps is a popular choice for those who frequently collaborate with us. It's managed by UCL, and it treats you as a 'temporary employee'—this is different from having a regular contract with the Co-Production Collective or UCL, but it does require a 'right to work' check and the completion of a Payroll form with your bank and tax details. Here's what you need to know:

- **Online timesheets:** You can log your hours online and receive payments on a monthly basis.
- **Tax and National Insurance:** Deductions are made automatically, so you might not receive exactly £100, for example, depending on your tax status. Holiday pay is included, and we've adjusted it to make sure the total rate is the same of other payment methods.

**Separate expenses:** Expenses are processed separately from Unitemps payments.

*"I am paid through Unitemps and have always found it to be a very easy, reliable process" – Mandy Rudczenko, Co-producer.*



*"I have been involved in the Collective's work since it launched which has been a great experience. Payment for my involvement has been through Unitemps since I started. The payment procedure is easy to use and there is an easy guide on how to use the site for payment. You can refer to this when you need to fill in your timesheet. I recommend this way of payment and I have had no problems. Good luck with your involvement"* – Katherine Barrett, Co-producer

*"Having been involved with the Collective for several years now I have always found Unitemps easy to use. The timesheets are clearly set out and easy to fill in. The checks when first using Unitemps are all explained and support is available if needed"* – Alison Allam, Co-producer

## **Vouchers**

We also offer the option of receiving vouchers, as a thank you for your time, which can be redeemed via all Love2Shop partner organisations. This provides an alternative if you prefer to utilise the money for retail purchases.

## Comparing payment methods

The differences between these options are briefly set out below. It isn't always straightforward to know which works best for you, so we are happy to support you to work this out.

	<b>Unitemps</b>	<b>Expense Forms</b>	<b>Vouchers</b> (as a thank you for your time)
<b>What you need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bank account</li> <li>• A right to work check</li> <li>• Payroll form</li> <li>• Registering online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An email address</li> </ul>
<b>How to claim</b>	Via an online timesheet you complete.	Via a form we will send to you to complete and return	Via a conversation with the Co-Production Collective staff member involved in the project you have been involved in.
<b>Method of payment</b>	Payment is paid directly into your bank account.	Payment is paid directly into your bank account.	Vouchers emailed to you as a thank you.
<b>Timeline</b>	Payment received on the same date each month, in arrears (after the	Payment received once processed by UCL – this could be anything	Vouchers received once processed by UCL – this could be anything from

	timesheet has been completed).	from approximately 1-3 weeks.	approximately 1-3 weeks.
<b>Tax implications</b>	Tax and National Insurance deducted at source (if eligible), which means that you may not receive the full amount of payment directly.	It is your responsibility to declare your earnings to HMRC and Department of Work and Pensions where relevant.	It is your responsibility to declare your earnings to HMRC and Department of Work and Pensions where relevant – vouchers are considered payment.
<b>Expenses</b>	Paid separately to Unitemps, via the Expenses and Payment form.	Paid via the same form, so can be combined or processed separately.	Not Applicable

If receiving payment in these ways is not possible for you (e.g. if you don't have a bank account), please [let us know](#) so that we can find suitable alternatives to support and recognise your contribution. If your involvement with Co-Production Collective or your circumstances change, we can revisit payment options whenever you need.

## 6. Expenses

At Co-Production Collective, we strive to make our activities as inclusive and accessible as possible. To enable your full participation, we offer to cover expenses related to any additional support you may need. Here's how it works:

### Eligibility for expenses

- We offer expenses to those who are eligible for payment **and** are participating in a paid activity.
- If you are not eligible for payment but feel that covering expenses would make a significant difference to your ability to participate, please reach out to us and we can explore options with you.

**Note:** Please tell us as soon as possible if you would like to claim expenses, particularly those related to care or online access, so we can arrange this for you before an activity.

### What expenses can be covered?

- **Care and support costs:** We can reimburse additional care or support costs required for you to co-produce with us. Examples include (but are not limited to):
  - Childcare expenses.
  - Costs for a personal assistant to support your participation in an online meeting.
  - Covering the care of someone for whom you are a primary caregiver.
  - Interpreter services.

- **Data and online access:** If your participation requires internet access, we can assist with these costs up to the amount of £5 per two hours of online activity.
- **Travel:** If we run face-to-face activities, we can cover the cost of your transport. This could include car parking fees, mileage, taxi fees, train or bus tickets. We ask that you let us know as soon as possible if you would like us to cover your transport expenses. This means we can book and pay for transport for you, so you are not out of pocket.
- **Accommodation and subsistence:** We do not generally deliver activities which require you to stay overnight or purchase meals, and we make sure to provide plenty of drinks and snacks during our in-person sessions, so you won't go hungry! However, in exceptional circumstances where an overnight stay or meals are required, we would cover these costs for you in line with UCL's Expense Policy.

## How to claim expenses

- **Before the activity:** To ensure everything is in place, please inform us as soon as possible if you need to claim expenses, especially for care or online access costs. This will allow us to make arrangements in advance.
- **During and after the activity:** If unexpected expenses arise, contact us so we can work together on the best solution.
- **After the activity:** You can submit your expenses for reimbursement when claiming the payment for your co-production work.
  - If you're using Expense Forms, or vouchers, your expenses can be processed either together with or separately from your payment, based on your preference.

- If you're paid through Unitemps, expenses are processed separately. We will provide you with a specific expense form to complete and submit after the activity.

***Please note:*** We can only cover additional costs directly related to your involvement in co-production activities. Our goal is to remove any financial barriers that might prevent your full participation.

We understand that every co-producer's needs are unique. If you're not sure about whether a particular expense can be covered or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to ask!

## 7. Contact us

If you would like to explore the payment process with us, ask questions or share some feedback, you can reach us via:

Email: [coproduction@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:coproduction@ucl.ac.uk)

Phone: 07741 671 200 (Niccola)

## 8. Further advice and support

Below is a list of organisations and resources where you may be able to find further advice and support relating to your specific financial circumstances.

### **HM Revenue and Customs**

The [HMRC website](#) provides information about [welfare benefits](#), [income tax allowances](#) and further forms of financial support.

### **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

You can find your local CAB on the [Citizens Advice Bureau website](#) which also gives lots of information to help you make financial decisions.

### **NIHR guidance**

[NIHR's guidance for members of the public](#) includes a section with information on welfare benefits regulations

### **Disability Rights UK**

[Disability Rights UK](#) website includes information and advice on benefits. You can contact 0330 995 0400 to access paper copies of their factsheets and publications.

### **Turn2Us**

[Turn2Us](#) is a charity providing financial information and support, including a [benefits calculator](#), a ['find an advisor' tool](#), and free helpline: 0808 802 2000.

### **Local sources of support**

Your local authority may provide benefits advice services or signpost to those available in your local area. Housing associations and community organisations may also offer similar services.