

Safeguarding & Safe Spaces in Co-Production

Creating Places Where People Thrive, Not Just Survive



Listening to Lived Experience

"Safeguarding on paper didn't make me feel safe"



Understanding Context & Impact

"Peoples experiences are impacted by unequal power, racial realities and cumulative harm"

Thrive, Not Just Survive



Creating Safe Spaces Together

"A safe space isn't guaranteed, but it handles difficulty with care."



Shared Responsibility for Safety

"Safeguarding belongs to everyone here."

From Policies to Practice

"Safeguarding is a culture of care."

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Overview: Purpose and Context

The purpose of this statement is to ensure that:

- Co-Production Collective is committed to protecting all who take part in our activities from harm or abuse.
- Should any incident arise, this statement provides clear guidance on how we will respond, support those who have been harmed, and implement safeguards to prevent further harm.

When done well co-production is usually transformative for organisations and for those taking part. However, if done with insufficient attention to the safe experience of those involved it fails and risks harming the people who give co-production its strength. Our 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' is part of how Co-Production Collective set out to ensure positive and safe experiences. Co-Production Collective do that because being safe is not an add on but is key to every part and the 'success' of co-production.

Context

Co-Production Collective recognise that racism, other forms of discrimination and inequality together with abuse of power exist in society and our organisations. This can contaminate co-production spaces. Therefore, Co-Production Collective acts to create safe spaces that are as safe as possible and where diverse knowledge and experience is recognised and valued.

Our 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' is for all adults taking part in the work of Co-Production Collective. We have avoided using labels for some people, such as vulnerable because broad definitions do not fit or help identify how to organise so that people feel safe. So, Co-Production Collective seeks to work with people as individuals to find what safe will mean for them in co-production spaces.

This 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' is focused on all adults (over 18). There is another Co-Production Collective statement that covers work with children and young people, the 'Co-Production Collective: Children and Young People Protection and Safeguarding Policy'.

It is important to recognise that there are distinct statutory safeguarding frameworks for children and for adults. While these frameworks set out specific legal duties and processes, this safeguarding statement relates specifically to adults and applies to all adults engaged with Co-Production Collective. It reflects the understanding that any adult may experience circumstances that make them vulnerable to abuse, harm, or exploitation at a given time (see Appendix B for an overview of the different types of abuse and harm). Accordingly, safeguarding responsibilities extend to all adults involved in our work, regardless of perceived level of risk, capacity, or support needs. Where an adult is already known to, or receiving support from, statutory social care services, Co-Production Collective will be clear about its role and boundaries with partners and or when contracted to do work. Co-Production Collective does not replace or override statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Instead, it will work in partnership with relevant agencies, where appropriate and with due regard to consent and confidentiality, to promote the individual's safety and wellbeing.

Report using form in Appendix A

If you have a safeguarding concern that you would like to report, please go to paragraph 4.2 and follow the steps outlined

1. Introduction

1.1 Co-Production Collective is committed to creating and maintaining safe and empowering spaces for co-production. This 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' has been developed from Co-Production Collective's Safeguarding Statement 2023 updated and co-produced by members of the Co-Production Collective. It calls on our recent and ongoing work around anti-racism and prevention of discrimination. However, this statement will contribute nothing unless actively applied. So, this statement needs to be accompanied by discussion, training, reflection and practice development. It is important that those organising co-production read, engage and act on the full content of the statement. The section on Preparing and anticipation is a guide to how to do that with all involved.

1.2 Co-Production Collective is part of University College London (UCL) – staff are employees of University College London. University College London have safeguarding policies and procedures which are available on the [UCL Website](#).

1.3 Our Co-Production Collective 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' should be used in conjunction with all Co-Production Collective practice guides but especially:

- [Our Core Values](#)
- [Our Community Commitments \(our ways of working together\)](#)
- [Our Collective Safety Tips](#)

2. Creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive and empowering space for co-production

2.1 The measure of success of this statement is that when asked, people taking part in activities run by Co-Production Collective should be able to respond positively to these statements:

- I feel safe and at ease in this co-production space.
- If I do not feel safe, I know the process and feel safe to report my concerns.
- I am supported to understand and manage any risks or anxieties about taking part.
- I am confident that I can contribute my experience and knowledge.

2.2 Being able to work, express ourselves and be creative is at the core of how co-production works. We see that recounting, hearing and understanding our and others lived experience requires trust about safety and diversity. Therefore, being safe is not an add on but is key to every part of co-production.

2.3 **Diversity, equality, equity and inclusion are essentials for co-production.**

Co-Production Collective are committed to creating a safe and welcoming space where everyone feels respected and valued. We recognise that racism and all the other forms of social injustice are endemic within society and our institutions. This does cause real and lasting harm, so we will not ignore or tolerate any form of racism, discrimination or harassment. Our goal is to actively challenge racism and discrimination through collaborative action.

To support those affected by discrimination and promote equality at every level of what we do, we will:

- Draw people into collaborating on anti-racism.
- Not expect or depend on people from marginalised or targeted groups to be the ones who 'call out' racism or discrimination – responding is a collaborative activity.
- Listen, learn, and take action as individuals and as part of the co-production community, recognising that antiracism is about how we act every day.

Our Co-Production Collective definition of anti-racism is a living definition, updated as we learn and develop, it can be found on [our website](#).

2.4 We recognise intersectionality: people may experience overlapping discrimination due to multiple marginalised identities. We will support all participants to contribute fully and equitably. Awareness of communication, behaviour, and impact is a shared responsibility, and patience and support are part of building a safe space.

2.5 We will all be at different stages of awareness about how our communication and behaviour affect others. Being patient as people seek to correct errors and deficiencies is part of developing the safe space.

The four parts to creating safe, inclusive and empowering spaces for co-production are:

- Preparing and anticipation
- Responding and reporting
- Safeguarding issues that are not related to the co-production activity
- Reflecting and Learning

3. Preparing and anticipation

3.1 Co-production is not safe by default; safety will not happen just because we want it to. It requires anticipation, planning and active effort. Without proper attention to preparation, co-production spaces can end up reflecting the systematic racism and discrimination of society or the organisations we work with. Preparation and anticipation are often referred to as 'risk assessment'. Co-Production Collective's approach is to be collaborative by looking to identify risks and responding to those positively with people; welcoming diversity of experience, background and perspective.

3.2 **A key question to address with all of those taking part, is what is necessary for you to experience safe, inclusive and empowering spaces in co-production?** People taking part in activities run by Co-Production Collective should be able to respond positively to the statements listed in 2.1 repeated here:

- I feel safe and at ease in this co-production space.
- If I do not feel safe, I know the process and feel safe to report my concerns.
- I am supported to understand and manage any risks or anxieties about taking part.
- I am confident that I can contribute my experience and knowledge.

We aim to support people's psychological safety; ensuring they feel able to speak up, ask questions, share ideas, make mistakes and express any concerns without fear of embarrassment or other negative consequences. Psychological safety is the shared belief within a team that it is safe to take interpersonal risks (the potential consequences such as embarrassment, rejection, or appearing incompetent, that arise when making oneself vulnerable by speaking up, sharing ideas, or admitting mistakes).

3.3 Preparation for co-production should start by talking with the people who are taking part, about what safety looks like and how it is experienced by them.

This will include:

- Discussing with participants what safety means to them. This will include their journey to the space as well as what happens in it.
 - Addressing racism, discrimination, power dynamics, and stigma openly.
 - Agreeing collaboratively on ways of working.
 - Making sure the co-production spaces are physically and emotionally accessible.
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3.4 Ensuring that the voices of people from racialised backgrounds are included is integral to this process. Attempts to put aside issues of racism, discrimination, stigma and the associated power dynamics will not produce the equal collaborative space needed for effective co-production. Space and time for discussions about power are needed throughout the co-production process. The result of this preparation work should include you having agreed (as a group) on ways of working together (we prefer this term to 'Ground Rules' which is more hierarchical), being trauma-informed/responsive, making spaces physically and emotionally accessible.

Our Co-Production Collective [Community Commitments](#) are our agreed ways of working together.

3.5 Examples of progress with preparation will include matters such as pronouncing names correctly, using agreed pronouns, acknowledging neurodiversity and being culturally aware. These are part of starting to create trust and the relationships that are the basis of co-production. It may be appropriate for groups to create their own measure of the points raised in the preparation process that can be used to check on trust and inclusivity to see how they are doing. In 2026-2027 Co-Production Collective will be looking into the use or development of Racial Equality Impact Assessment and /or an Equality impact Assessment (you can find out more about our progress in this area on the [Co-Production Collective website](#)).

3.6 Preparation for co-production involves responsibility for personal reflection. We must ask ourselves:

- Are we ready to learn about ourselves?
- Are we ready to feel uncomfortable when there is something that we need to change about how we talk or behave?

We all (and we do mean all) make mistakes in language we use or find that we have attitudes that are not in line with the values Co-Production Collective hold. In co-production people are 'called in' to the group discussion rather than 'called out' (or excluded). There will be care and compassion from others. But even then, this is uncomfortable and changing our selves may continue that discomfort until we have progressed.

3.7 Part of our preparation will be to allow enough time for those taking part to develop sufficient trust so that they can contribute and be creative, as ways to progress are developed. Pacing how the co-production progresses will be a point of discussion within the group as the facilitators check whether people are ready to move on.

3.8 As part of preparing it is important that all members of the group/people involved are aware of Co-Production Collective's [Community Commitments](#). Sadly, on occasion there may be malicious behaviour, such as when a person uses the core values and collaborative approach of co-production to hide predatory behaviour or to be obnoxious under cover of claims of free speech. Racism, sexual harassment and homophobia are not signs of free speech but are part of generating fear and division – the very opposite of the intent of Co-Production Collective. If these patterns of behaviour persist facilitators, in consultation with others in the group and their managers, will exclude that person.

3.9 Co-Production Collective staff involved in working with members of our community and on projects are required to take part in Safeguarding Training and ensure it remains up to date.

4. Responding and reporting safeguarding incidents and concerns

4.1 All of us involved in Co-Production Collective are responsible for noticing and reporting safeguarding incidents and concerns – remember you are not alone – use and remember you are part of Co-Production Collective. If you are responding to a safeguarding incident or concern, be as clear as is possible and focus on the issue from the perspective of the person/people affected. As you respond try to maintain the autonomy of those affected so they do not feel the experience has been taken away from them.

4.2 Report using form in Appendix A

If you have any concern that the intent of the 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' has not been met, please act:

- 1) If there is **immediate risk of harm, incitement to violence or hate**, then contact emergency services by calling 999. If the risk to safety can be removed or reduced without additional risk do so.
 - After emergency services have been contacted, please also contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal by email or phone (n.pascal@ucl.ac.uk, 07741 671 200).
 - Prepare a report using the Report Form in Appendix A.
 - 2) If the incident does not have immediate risk, you should record and report using the Report Form (Appendix A) to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
 - Report to Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal by email or phone (n.pascal@ucl.ac.uk, 07741 671 200). This should be done as soon as is possible. The report should focus on what is known, avoiding including opinions or conclusions formed on the basis of incomplete information.
 - 3) If you are uncertain if the concern is a safeguarding issue do not delay, contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal by email or phone (n.pascal@ucl.ac.uk, 07741 671 200) for advice.
 - 4) Should Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal be unavailable or for some reason be inappropriate, the Alternative Safeguarding Lead is June Hedges who you can contact by email or phone (j.hedges@ucl.ac.uk, 020 7679 0106).
- Whistle-blowing about poor practice, corruption or harassment should also be reported using the Report Form (Appendix A).
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4.3 Recording

- When recording what happened (using the Report Form in Appendix A). Please discuss confidentiality with the person(s) involved to find a way to record and to manage any concerns they have. Recording will ensure the concern will be properly dealt with and that others within Co-Production Collective are able to support.
- It is helpful to include and report something that might be described as a 'near miss'. In addition, the opportunity to recognise good practice or the need for more development can be identified.

5. Safeguarding issues that are not related to the co-production activity.

- 5.1 Co-production projects try to find and engage with people whose voice has not been heard. Their views and experiences are valuable to getting an accurate understanding of the subject. We understand that people who have not been listened to may be experiencing on-going abuse or may have experienced abuse in the past. An important part of co-production is about trust and relationship building to ensure that people can talk and think in as safe a space as possible. This may also provide an opportunity to build confidence for people to share past or ongoing experiences of abuse for the first time.

Please be aware: the 'Safeguarding and Safe Spaces for Co-Production Statement' is to support Co-Production Collective related co-production activity only. If safeguarding issues are not related to Co-Production Collective activity briefly discuss with the person and guide them to organisations that might assist them (see Appendix C).

- 5.2 If the safeguarding issues raised as part of Co-Production Collective activity are not related to co-production briefly discuss with the person and guide them to organisations that might assist them. We want to provide support to all our co-producers (and staff) who have experienced harm that impacts on wellbeing; however, it is important that we are also realistic in terms of the amount of support we, at Co-Production Collective, can provide to effectively support co-producers on a long-term basis. It is therefore important that we are aware of, and direct people to, the support pathways of appropriate organisations (see Appendix C) with resources and expertise available for individuals.

6. Reflecting and learning

- 6.1 All the activity of Co-Production Collective produces new learning about how we work. Being reflective is one of our core values – meaning that we take time to think about what has been said or left unsaid. Openness and candour are part of how we show commitment to values. Having a transparent oversight / governance system for the management of safeguarding issues and concerns arising is also required (see Appendices D and E).

6.2 As part of co-production activities, facilitators and others in the group should regularly call for a pause and create a time for people to reflect on how a discussion has gone. This may be something that can be identified and clarified appropriately there and then, or if a more complex issue is raised, it may be best recorded on a flipchart and allocated more time later. This could be based on measures developed by the group such as those described in paragraph 3.5.

6.3 As part of reflection and learning it is important to log issues to ensure the points for learning and change are not lost or misunderstood in the future. This level of documentation may be resisted as an unwelcome bureaucratic intrusion however it is vital as it will be the way Co-Production Collective can embed safe space working into co-production. Learning documented is fed into the day to day running of Co-Production Collective via monthly learning meetings, project meetings and training sessions in an anonymous way so that staff and co-producers can learn and develop our processes without compromising anyone's privacy or security.

6.4 Co-Production Collective conduct Community Members Surveys every two years where they ask members of the community who have participated in Co-Production Collective activities to reflect on their experience of being part of a co-production process. This is organised in a way that asks people to reflect on the experience, the effect on them as an individual and requests suggestions for improvement. We commit to feeding all safety and safeguarding related learning from this survey into day-to-day practice and our safeguarding governance process.

6.5 Co-Production Collective have a system where all safeguarding incidents and decisions are checked and when necessary, reports made to organisations that oversee and regulate our work. This rigorous approach will also give us the opportunity to recognise good practice as well as the need for more development (see Appendices D and E).

Should you have a safeguarding related concerns about Co-Production Collective related activity please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal (n.pascal@ucl.ac.uk, 07741 671 200).

Should the Designated Safeguarding Lead be unavailable or for some reason be inappropriate, the alternative reporting person is June Hedges, who can be contacted by email or phone (j.hedges@ucl.ac.uk, 020 7679 0106).

Appendix

Please see below for clickable weblinks to our appendix documents which include:

- Ⓐ [Safeguarding Report Form](#)
- Ⓑ [Categories of Abuse and Harm](#)
- Ⓒ [Useful Contacts List](#)
- Ⓓ [Safeguarding Governance Overview](#)
- Ⓔ [Reporting and Governance Oversight Process](#)

With thanks to the Safeguarding Statement Development Group who led this work – Aleem Nisar, Alice Odin, Cecily Henry, Debora Mo, Isaac Samuels, Laura Able, Nat Farley, Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal, Phuong Tu Nguyen, Richard Banks and all the other co-producers and staff members who took part in the co-production of this statement.

Co-Production Collective
March 2026

