



Including the voice of lived experience in policy making

March 2025

Updated November 2025

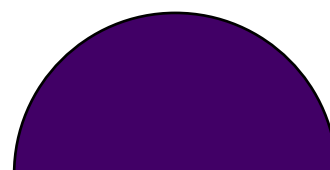


Produced as part of the VCFSE Accord, on
behalf of the GM VCFSE Leadership Group
www.vcfseleadershipgm.org.uk



Contents

Summary	3
Introduction	4
Why is this needed?	5
What this guidance won't do	5
What is lived experience?	6
What is co-production?	6
Considerations and best practice	8
The role of VCFSE organisations	11
Remuneration methods and considerations	13
Types of Remuneration	13
Mechanism for payment	14
Minimum Recommended Remuneration Rates	15
Remuneration: key principles	16
Non-financial recognition	17
Measuring outputs, outcomes and learning	18
How to overcome common barriers	19
Summary of Key principles	20
Implementation checklist	20
Resources	21
GM VCFSE Accord - Policy and Practice Papers - Overview Template	22



Summary

This document is aimed at **public sector policy makers in Greater Manchester** wanting to involve people with lived experience in a meaningful and equitable way.

Below are a set of **clear principles and considerations** that policy makers can adopt when considering including the voice of lived experience in their work to support **inclusive, equitable and effective** policy making.

- 1. Power sharing is essential.** Move beyond consultation to shared decision-making. Include people with lived experience from the start and actively devolve power and control.
- 2. Equal roles.** People with lived experience should not be treated as advisors or consultants.
- 3. Lived and Learned Experience have equal value.** Treat personal insight as equally important to professional or academic expertise.
- 4. Ongoing, not one-off:** Build lasting relationships — meaningful involvement takes consistency and trust.
- 5. From agenda setting to implementation:** People with lived experience should help decide priorities and setting the agenda, not just providing feedback and identifying solutions.
- 6. Inclusive and Accessible by default:** Accessibility and inclusion should be considered from the outset — who isn't in the room, and why?
- 7. Remuneration matters:** All contributions should be recognised.
- 8. Fair and appropriate compensation** must be provided for people's time and insight based on the type of involvement and their own personal circumstances
- 9. Project/policy leads should seek support** from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/Job Centre Plus where they are remunerating someone who's circumstances might be affected by being in receipt of income, regardless of method of payment.

Introduction

This document is an output of the Equalities workstream of the VCFSE Accord, led by Greater Manchester Equality Alliance (GM=EqAl). GM=EqAl were asked to ‘Develop a shared set of principles to ensure the voice of lived experience is heard in policymaking, including remuneration arrangements’. This guidance aims to support Greater Manchester public sector partners to include the voice of lived experience in policy making.

In Greater Manchester, we have ambitions as a city-region, accompanied by significant and evolving devolution of powers, to do things differently and the Greater Manchester Strategy states that GM will ‘involve people in the decisions we make and actions we take’.

As a result, there is a growing consensus across Greater Manchester public services that the voices of those with lived experience are essential in the process of developing policy. This is so that practice reflects reality, and services are designed to meet the needs of the population. Co-production and the elements that are part of it, such as co-design, are commonly used across a range of activities but across Greater Manchester (and beyond) there is not a shared and common of understanding of what these terms mean, and how they can be carried out effectively and more equitably.

The development of this document was led by GM=EqAl. A number of conversations with networks and groups of individuals and organisations across the VCSE Accord partners including wider GM=EqAl membership, GM VCFSE Leadership Group, GM Equality Panel facilitators, GM Equality officers, NHS GM communications and engagement group and GMCA co-production group members have fed into the guidance to ensure it reflects current thinking and challenges across the organisations.

If you have any thoughts on this guidance, please get in touch with lucy.north@vsnw.org.uk. We welcome dialogue, feedback and suggestions.

The **VCFSE Accord** is a three-way collaboration agreement between GMCA and the GM Integrated Care Partnership and the GM VCFSE (Voluntary, Community, Faith & Social Enterprise) Sector represented by the GM VCFSE Leadership Group, based in a relationship of mutual trust, working together, and sharing responsibility. The purpose of the VCSE Accord is to further develop the way in which all partners work together to improve outcomes for GM’s communities and citizens.

GM=EqAl is a coalition of VCFSE organisations and individuals drawn from a wide range of communities of experience and identity across Greater Manchester. Working in alliance with VCFSE, public and private sector individuals and organisations, GM=EqAl serves to connect communities to policy makers, and vice versa, to assist with strategic equality and diversity work.

Why is this needed?

Having engaged and spoken to people from across various parts of the VCFSE and public sector as part of the development of this guidance, it is apparent that the understanding around co-production and the ways in which people with lived experience can be included in policy making, alongside technicalities around remuneration, is varied, and colleagues across the system would welcome more support in this area.

Many VCFSE sector colleagues are frustrated that payments to individuals are seen as a challenging issue for policy makers, both financially but also in terms of processes required. Although many policymakers are aware of the need to recognise, recompense and support people that are providing their time and valuable insight, oftentimes into traumatic experiences from their own lives, there is still a general lack of awareness about the risks when it is carried out badly. This can exacerbate the power imbalances that can exist in co-productive spaces but furthermore can also be hugely damaging to the wellbeing of the individuals involved.

This guidance is an attempt to improve understanding of this and provide practical steps for public sector partners involved in policy making across Greater Manchester

What this guidance won't do

This guidance is aimed at public sector policy makers in Greater Manchester wanting to involve people with lived experience in a meaningful and equitable way, using principles of co-production.

This is not aimed at those carrying out standard public consultation and engagement activities nor is it meant to be an exhaustive toolkit.



What is lived experience?

Lived experience **“belongs to people who have gained knowledge through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events, rather than through assumptions and constructs from other people, research, or media”¹.**

This is contrasted with specialised professional, or academic knowledge which is referred to as **‘learned experience’** in this document.

What is co-production?

There is no need to newly define co-production, but it is still useful to explore the explanations given by networks, and organisations that have led on co-production or facilitate co-production for policy makers.

The Think Local, Act Personal National Co-production Advisory Group says the following:

‘Co-production is not just a word, it is not just a concept, it is a meeting of minds coming together to find shared solutions. In practice, **co-production involves people who use services being consulted, included and working together from the start to the end of any project that affects them.** When co-production works best, people who use services and carers are valued by organisations as equal partners, can share power and have influence over decisions made’.

The New Economics Foundation (NEF), says that co-production is:

‘The relationship where **professionals and citizens share power to design, plan, assess and deliver support together.** It recognises that everyone has a vital contribution to make in order to improve quality of life for people and communities’.

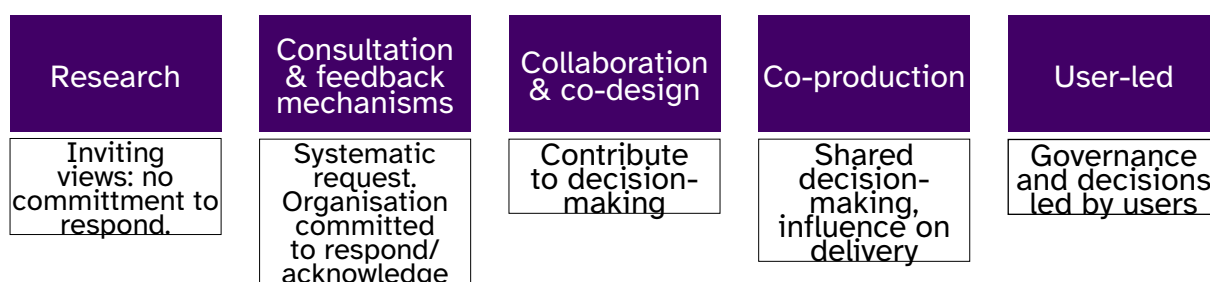
NEF, in [Public Services Inside Out](#), recognises six main important parts of co-production:

- **Recognising people as assets:** People are seen as equal partners in designing and delivering services, rather than as passive beneficiaries or burdens on the system.
- **Building on people’s capabilities:** Everyone recognizes that each person has abilities and people are supported to develop these. People are supported to use what they are able to do to benefit their community themselves and other people.

¹ Chandler D, Munday R (2016) A Dictionary of Media and Communication. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- **Developing two-way reciprocal relationships:** All co-production involves some mutuality, both between individuals, carers and public service professionals and between the individuals who are involved.
- **Encouraging peer support networks:** Peer and personal networks are often not valued enough and not supported. Co-production builds these networks alongside support from professionals.
- **Blurring boundaries between delivering and receiving services:** The usual line between those people who design and deliver services and those who use them is blurred with more people involved in getting things done.
- **Facilitating not delivering to:** Public sector organisations (like the government, local councils and health authorities) enable things to happen, rather than provide services themselves. An example of this is when a council supports people who use services to develop a peer support network.

NPC's report, [‘Implementing and evaluating co-design’](#) provides a **helpful diagram of the spectrum of user involvement approaches**. The following diagram shows where co-production sits relative to similar but different concepts including consultation, co-design, and user-led approaches:



Considerations and best practice

By giving equal responsibility and ownership to people with lived experience in designing and improving services, commissioners and leaders can gain valuable insight into what is important for the service delivery to work. They will also learn the best way to engage and communicate with those using the service so that no-one is excluded and the service is accessible to everyone. The following should always be kept in mind when taking this approach:

- 1. Power sharing is essential.** Move beyond consultation to shared decision-making. Include people with lived experience from the start and actively devolve power and control.
- 2. Equal roles.** People with lived experience should not be treated as advisors or consultants.
- 3. Lived and Learned Experience have equal value.** Treat personal insight as equally important to professional or academic expertise.
- 4. Ongoing, not one-off.** Build lasting relationships — meaningful involvement takes consistency and trust.
- 5. From agenda setting to implementation:** People with lived experience should help decide priorities and setting the agenda, not just providing feedback and identifying solutions.
- 6. Inclusive and Accessible by Default:** Accessibility and inclusion should be considered from the outset — who isn't in the room, and why?



Diagram taken from '[Payment for Involvement Playbook](#)', The Social Change Agency.

Best Practice of involving people with lived experience in health & social care decision-making	Examples
Meaningful levels of involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As early in the process as possible • Inclusion of people with lived experience in all the steps of decision-making (design, implementation, delivery and evaluation) • Listening and implementation • Co-production and collaboration • Feedback and follow-up • Embed inclusive practices and spaces in design and budgets
Ensure clear expectations and communication throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear roles • Having a common goal and clear expectations • Clear communication
Provide training and support for participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help participants prepare for tasks • Accessibility – there are numerous resources around all types of accessibility – understand the needs of participants and use appropriate resources • Online and/or offline engagement and in multiple forms (diversity of options)_ • Tailored emotional and practical support • Links to benefits and/or self assessment advice for people in receipt of remuneration
Have appropriate and well-trained staff and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for staff working in policy and services • Ensure staff can properly support participants • Create trust with appropriate skills • Build relationship with existing networks
Ensure sufficient funding and resources are in place and secure necessary authority to delegate these as the project requires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively planned • Budget for expenses such as training, support, remuneration, out of pocket expenses , venue • Clear timeline • Produce Templates and documents for remuneration • Clarity on what proportion of budget and work will be owned/led by people with lived experience (this could be decided through a co-production process)
Value participants as individuals and reflect their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different experiences and perspectives – diversity of thought • Listen to individuals, collaborate together • Value lived experience at the same level as learned experience • Meet people where they are – • while people with lived experience bring a great deal of knowledge and expertise, they may not have experience of operating in a highly professionalised or technical working environment and may need specific training or support to maximise their effectiveness
Create a trusting and welcoming environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise harm • Safe space • Inclusive language and spaces - see our inclusive language guidance. • Be open and willing to listen • Acknowledge challenges, power imbalances from the start and seek to address them wherever possible

Source: [Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland's Engaging people with lived experience: best practice, challenges, and opportunities](#) (2022).

Consider if your approach is appropriate

It is important to really understand and acknowledge when the conditions are not there for co-production. For example, time constraints, decision already made/ service already designed, or there is no budget for remuneration. In these cases, it is important to find other ways to include voice of lived experience, such as more standard engagement or consultations.

There should be some thought as to what level of involvement and on what basis it is required to include the voice of lived experience in any area of policy making. Although this can be done by directly involving the people with lived experience in the process there are many options such as outsourcing part or all of that to other partners e.g. VCFSE organisations or other partnerships or by ensuring that the voice of lived experience is represented at the highest level of decision-making, priority setting and policy making.

If the process is done badly without putting in place the best practices as suggested in the table above there is a high likelihood that the engagement will be tokenistic and without real impact, therefore leading to little real change for the people the policy is intending to help and at worst, the whole experience could be hugely damaging for the individuals involved.



The role of VCFSE organisations

There is a long history of VCFSE organisations being a mechanism for co-production to happen and enabling the voice of lived experience policy making, including:

- As **facilitators of the process** - providing brokerage between all parties and running of meetings etc
- As **advocates for the people with lived experience** to prevent bad practices and negative consequences of involvement
- Providing **reach into communities** that they work with, either geographical, identity or interest – many organisations work with communities that have had little engagement with policy makers previously
- Providing **support to people involved**
- Providing **payment mechanisms**



VCFSE organisations play a critical role within Greater Manchester both as service providers and as vehicles for community engagement and voice. They are therefore important strategic partners for both the GMCA and the GM Integrated Care Partnership in terms of delivering improvements in health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities – which often involves working more closely with communities.

VCFSE infrastructure including the GM VCFSE Leadership Group, Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs), Alternative Provider Collaborative and other thematic networks e.g. GM Equality Panels, are important in connecting policy makers with the right communities and resources.

[Read more about the role of VCFSE organisations in Greater Manchester.](#)

Lived Experience Representatives for Live Well Manchester - Gaddum

In 2023 Gaddum, a charity offering advocacy, carer support and therapy services to Manchester, were resourced by the Live Well Manchester programme to recruit, convene and support a group of 'lived experience representatives' to feed into the planning of the programme. Recruitment was carried out by producing a fun advert, written in plain English, that was displayed in many community centres across the area asking for people with lived experience that wanted to be part of a group to effect change. Once people were recruited they met at monthly Lived Experience Forum meetings, the theme of which was decided by the members. The Gaddum employee overseeing and supporting this group would then report back on behalf of the group to the Live Well planning group.

The Lived Experience reps were involved in recruiting people for Live Well project and as part of this process everyone, including interviewees, were asked to wear plain clothes and no badges. Members were also part of the 2nd stage interview panel and the induction process including running roleplay sessions to support staff in holding a first meeting with someone and delivering workshops on challenging assumptions. Levels of remuneration were decided by the group of reps themselves and was set at £15 an hour. Where this could possibly affect any benefits the person was claiming, they would sign a tax declaration and invoice for payment, and be supported in doing this by Gaddum Centre staff. Others involved in one-off workshops would receive vouchers and/or be part of a prize draw.

In terms of lessons learnt for the future; managing expectations around whether the scope and time is there for co-production to really happen and wanting public sector colleagues to provide feedback as much as possible. The absence of this was found to be frustrating. More positively, the ability to be involved in more formal processes like the recruitment and induction process felt meaningful to Forum members.

Remuneration methods and considerations

There are various sources of information and current practice for remuneration. We would always advise seeking your own legal help in relation to payments to individuals (whether ongoing or as a one-off) to ensure that it does not affect benefit payments and taxable income, for example.

The [Agency for Social Change Payment for Involvement Playbook](#) provides up-to-date information here. Some of the below information is taken from this useful guide.

Types of Remuneration

Expenses

Expenses refers to any reasonable cost incurred during involvement work that is deemed necessary and related to the tasks performed. Expenses should be covered at a minimum, reimbursing those that are ‘wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred during the course of work’, whether the relationship is as voluntary, involvement or employment. The organisation determines which expenses are covered and it is essential to consider the genuine necessities for participating in an activity. It may be to include a statement such as ‘If you anticipate incurring expenses not outlined in this policy or have other enquiries, please contact [your email].’ Below is a list of suggested expenses to be covered:

- Public transport costs
- Fuel costs
- Parking costs
- Taxi fares
- Childcare
- Cost of a personal assistant or support worker
- Cost of a translator or interpreter
- Meals and subsistence
- Accommodation costs, such as an overnight stay
- Equipment costs

Service user involvement

Activities undertaken to improve a service with a statutory duty to provide care by involving those who use it, or participatory research i.e. research carried out in partnership with individuals with ‘lived experience’. This generally covers **any activity that is designed to improve statutory services, is carried out with or by people with lived experience and is not employment.**

This payment will be treated as earnings, regardless of how it is described in the

policy, but it should not be considered employment. It should not trigger a change of circumstances for participants, and they will not need an employment contract or to register as self-employed.

Where an individual is in receipt of benefits, it is best practice to inform the Jobcentre before the work begins to be sure there are no unintended consequences.

Honorarium

If the involvement work does not qualify as either research or work to improve a statutory service, you may still be able to pay people an honorarium. While traditionally reserved for office holders, honorarium payments are ideal for use in situations which would otherwise be classified as unpaid volunteering. True honorarium payments should be infrequent and over a short period of time. These activities are intermittent and people can withdraw at any time, vary in length and in frequency, and usually last for a few hours (or less) in any one week are individual activities and do not imply future involvement.

They may include:

- Attendance of quarterly or annual meetings
- Contributing to intermittent meetings or telephone conferences
- Helping to prepare for meetings, telephone conferences or events
- Some follow-up activities after meetings or events
- Involvement in decision-making spaces that aim to design or direct the work undertaken by (either full time or part time)
- Activities that require skills or abilities, where all the above conditions still apply

There is no formal contract of employment and payment will only be made for attendance at an eligible activity. The work is done on a voluntary basis with the honorarium paid as recognition for time given.

Permitted work can be carried out in line with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) regulation and will require a permitted work form completed prior to any works commencing.

If your organisation participates in research or facilitates service user involvement, support should be provided for participants to accept payment without disrupting their benefits.

Employment & Self-employment

Where someone is employed or asked to submit invoices on a self-employed basis, this should not be covered in any remuneration process as it forms part of general employment practices with a different set of HR requirements.

Mechanism for payment

Remuneration is normally made in the form of BACS transfer made directly to the individual. If an individual prefers payment in kind in the form of shopping vouchers,

it is good practice to accommodate this without question. However, this does not change the implication for either tax liability or welfare.

A clear breakdown of payments including activity date, payment per activity and expenses reimbursed should be provided by the organisation at the end of each 16 payment cycle for submission to the DWP. This is to enable earnings to be averaged across each payment cycle. It is the responsibility of the benefit claimant to declare all earnings income to the DWP.

While there is no statutory regulation that confirms this must be done for income under the earnings limit, it is advisable to declare all income regardless of value in the interests of transparency and to avoid a full claim audit by the DWP.

Minimum Recommended Remuneration Rates

These rates are suggested as a minimum expectation.

Level of commitment	Expected minimum remuneration level	Mechanism to deliver	Considerations
One off meeting with open invite.	Travel expenses covered.	Petty cash or bank transfer on the day.	Produce template to keep record of payments and store receipts.
Regular attendance in short term, time-limited process e.g. <i>3 monthly meetings as part of co-design group.</i>	High street vouchers/gift card/raffle prizes PLUS travel expenses.	Vouchers given out on the day and travel expenses arranged as above.	Purchase vouchers in advance. For those in receipt of benefits, gift cards should still be declared as income unless they are given as a thank you gift rather than as payment – this must be made explicitly clear to avoid any doubt.
Ongoing long term membership/attendance.	Hourly payment for attendance and prep time. Minimum suggested rate is £12.21 (real living wage at time of writing) but ideally £150/day or £75/half day OR use Bursary mechanism.	Create a standard BACS form to enable standing payment. Benefits declaration form including information about where to seek advice should be provided.	Rate of payment should be clear from outset and whether this includes prep time as well as attendance. Check with DWP that you are following any necessary steps they require for those claiming benefits and in receipt of payment for involvement.

Remuneration case study: The GM=EqAl Bursary

An annual bursary of £750 is available to Working Group members who would otherwise face financial barriers to getting involved in work outside of their organisation. Active Steering Group members may claim an additional £200. The bursary is conditional on participation. Members are expected to attend at least 75% of meetings to claim a bursary. To avoid members having to wait until the end of the year, bursaries become available half way through the year. For example, if members have attended at least 3 meetings between April and September, they are eligible to invoice in good faith that they will meet the conditions of the bursary. Mitigating circumstances are also taken into consideration.

Experiences of Payment for involvement - Unlimited Potential

Unlimited Potential specialises in social and economic innovation. They work with local people to produce solutions to social and economic issues, often through co-production.

They believe that local people should be valued and properly rewarded when they substantially contribute their skills, knowledge and experience to their projects, such as The Elephants Trail, Economies for Healthier Lives and Co-production for Health and Well-being projects.

They pay people above the Real Living Wage, as well as reimbursing travel costs.

Many participants receive welfare benefits. Before the start of each project, staff contact DWP/Jobcentre Plus to inform them of the project and check if this might cause any issues. For each individual, a letter is provided to the DWP and staff accompany them to Jobcentre Plus to inform them of the person's proposed involvement. This emphasises that co-production is not work, but helps to develop their self-confidence, skills, knowledge and experience.

Payment to each person for their time is intermittent for a few hours per month, and the person can stop at any time. If a person needs support with care or mobility needs, it is arranged.

Once Jobcentre Plus has confirmed the person's involvement, Unlimited Potential check what benefits they receive and ensure that they are paid within the rules and regulations.

They have developed a clear system for payment, with the usual aim of paying them within 3 working days of participation, although often they receive payment within 24 hours.

Some situations are more complex, so, Unlimited Potential seek to personalise their approach to payment as needed.

Remuneration: key principles

- 1. Remuneration matters:** All contributions should be recognised.
- 2. Fair and appropriate compensation** must be provided for people's time and insight based on the type of involvement and their own personal circumstances
- 3. Project/policy leads should seek support from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/Job Centre Plus** where they are remunerating someone who's circumstances might be affected by being in receipt of income, regardless of method of payment.

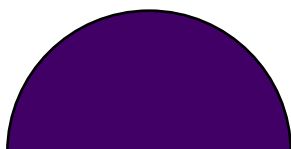
Non-financial recognition

It should be recognised that not all people with lived experience will want to be remunerated for the time they spend contributing. Many of the people that contributed to the content of this document were from VCFSE organisations within GM that were able to offer expenses and financial recognition to people but some people declined gift vouchers or payments for their time.

The reasons given for wanting to participate in projects was driven by a desire to:

- Utilise their lived experience for the benefit of others to change policy and practice for others their peers.
- Gain experience within the sector with a view to further volunteering or paid employment in the future. Within the VCFSE sector many staff do have lived experience and started their careers as volunteers.
- Opportunity to learn new skills. While people with lived experience may be willing to share their knowledge and experience, they will not have had the chance to do so before with an impact for influencing change. The opportunity to facilitate focus groups, interview peers, design questionnaires, participate in formal meetings, and write reports, along with the administrative planning to accompany these functions could be new skills that will be a positive gain for people.

It's important to not rely on people declining remuneration as part of their participation in a co-production project so resource it on the basis that all participants will require remuneration.



Measuring outputs, outcomes and learning

Alongside gathering evidence for funders or senior managers, one of the biggest goals and achievement for people with lived experience that contribute their time, expertise and experiences is clear sense of contributing to positive change. This is one of the reasons why it is important to capture data on outputs, outcomes and impact of co-production work/project. This could:

- Identify the impact of participation on policy and services
- Indicate how contributions are being used
- Incorporate learnings from past work

For those that have been consulted with before it is crucial for them to be able to see what is the change being made people with lived experience, who take part in co-produced projects or are involved in consultations, want to know how their input will be used and of any changes and/or development that will result from their work.



How to overcome Common Barriers

This section presents common barriers to implementing the guidance and practical suggestions for how to overcome them in real-world settings.

‘We don’t have time.’

Build inclusion into existing processes. Use short engagements or asynchronous input. Early inclusion saves time later.

‘We don’t know when to involve people.’

Use a co-production timeline. Engage people at every major stage, starting with setting the agenda.

‘There’s resistance in the team.’

Use peer examples to build confidence. Encourage team reflection. Offer buddy systems or training.

‘We can’t pay people.’

Use the guidance’s recommended options (vouchers, bursaries). Involve local partners for support. Speak to DWP early.

‘There’s no template or clarity.’

Use provided tools and checklists. Share learning across teams and connect through a community of practice.

‘We’re worried it will seem tokenistic’

Use GM=EquAl’s principles and guidance within this document to ensure the inclusion of lived experience is meaningful.

‘I don’t know where to start’.

Spend time building trust with people with lived experience.

‘I don’t know how to make it accessible to everyone’

Seek guidance from VCFSE organisations, or search online - there are lots of resources out there.

Summary of Key principles

To conclude we have summarised the guidance above into a set of clear principles and considerations that GM partner organisations can adopt when considering including the voice of lived experience in their work

- 1. Power sharing is essential.** Move beyond consultation to shared decision-making. Include people with lived experience from the start and actively devolve power and control.
- 2. Equal roles.** People with lived experience should not be treated as advisors or consultants.
- 3. Lived and Learned Experience have equal value.** Treat personal insight as equally important to professional or academic expertise.
- 4. Ongoing, not one-off.** Build lasting relationships — meaningful involvement takes consistency and trust.
- 5. From agenda setting to implementation:** People with lived experience should help decide priorities and setting the agenda, not just providing feedback and identifying solutions.
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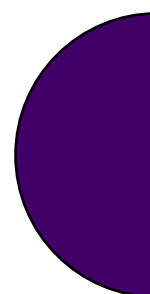
Implementation checklist:

- ☐ I have identified where lived experience can shape my project.
- ☐ I have made time for early engagement.
- ☐ I am using inclusive and accessible language.
- ☐ I understand and can explain remuneration options.
- ☐ I am building relationships with community groups.
- ☐ I have asked for feedback on how we involve people.

Resources

- GM Equality Alliance Inclusive language guidance: www.vcfseleadershipgm.org.uk/resources/gm-equal-inclusive-language-guidance
- A range of resources covering creating accessible PDFs, accessible events, using plain English, and more: www.makethingsaccessible.com/guides/1/
- A Handy Guide to Facilitation (NHS): www.england.nhs.uk/improvement-hub/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2017/11/2010_handy_guide_to_facilitation_final_low-res_-1.pdf
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) Resources for Co-production: www.scie.org.uk/co-production/
- Inclusive participatory approaches: A facilitator's guide - <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e2018b1d-59db-46c0-8a0d-debcb64feef6/content>
- Paying for Involvement and why it matters (The Social Change Agency): thesocialchangeagency.org/blog/paying-for-involvement-why-it-matters/
- The Role of the VCFSE sector in Greater Manchester: www.vcfseleadershipgm.org.uk/resources/the-role-of-the-vcfse-sector-in-greater-manchester
- Entitled To – benefits advice: www.entitledto.co.uk/
- Citizen's Advice Bureau: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
- Turn to Us – helping people with financial security: www.turn2us.org.uk/
- Lived Experience Fair Remuneration campaign: www.basw.co.uk/social-workers-union/lived-experience-fair-remuneration
- Universal Credit information from the UK Government: www.gov.uk/universal-credit

If you're aware of resources we could include here, please do let us know. Contact lucy.north@vsnw.org.uk



GM VCFSE Accord - Policy and Practice Papers - Overview Template

Title of paper	Including the voice of lived experience in policy making
Author (s)	Greater Manchester Equality Alliance (GM=EqAl)
Purpose of paper	This guidance aims to support Greater Manchester public sector partners to include the voice of lived experience in policy making. It brings together a set of principles for including the voice of lived experience, examples of best practice and remuneration guidance.
Scope of paper – what it applies to	The paper is aimed at public sector policy makers in Greater Manchester wanting to involve people with lived experience in a meaningful and equitable way. It is not aimed at those carrying out standard public consultation and engagement activities nor is it meant to be an exhaustive toolkit.
Summary of content	This paper covers how the paper came to be and why it is needed, what the guidance won't do, what we mean by lived experience and co-production, the principles for including those with lived experience in policy making, considerations for policy makers, the role of VCFSE organisations, remuneration methods and considerations (including types, mechanisms and recommended rates), non-financial recognition, measuring outcomes, and additional resources.
Overview of stakeholder engagement in paper development	The development of this document was led by GM=EqAl. A number of conversations with networks and groups of individuals and organisations across the VCSE Accord partners including wider GM=EqAl membership, GM VCFSE Leadership Group, GM Equality Panel facilitators, GM Equality officers, NHS GM communications and engagement group and GMCA co-production group members have fed into the guidance to ensure it reflects current thinking and challenges across the organisations.
Formal approval	GM VCFSE Leadership Group meeting October 2024
Date of publication	31st March 2025 (updated November 2025)
Review date	Development of this paper is ongoing based on feedback and input received from colleagues and partners.