

A Wellspring Settlement Community Inclusion Resource 2021

# **AIMING TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL CO-PRODUCED RESEARCH**

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## **From A Community Perspective**



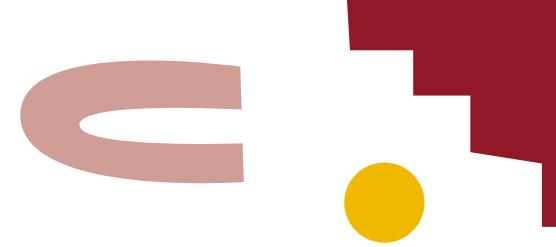
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# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is Co-Production? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.    What does Co-Production offer?	
2.    An Ethical Framework	
3.    Benefits of Co-production	
<b>Challenges and Routes to Success .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1.    Beginnings	
2.    Developing a Research Question	
3.    Power Balance and Ownership	
4.    Managing Conflict	
5.    Meaningful Activity for the Community	
6.    Time	
7.    Money	
8.    Being the Topic of Research	
9.    Accessibility and Inclusion	
10.    Recruitment	
11.    Group work and Retention	
12.    Endings	
13.    Feedback, Monitoring and Evaluation	
14.    Creativity and Outputs	
15.    Writing Up	
16.    The Legacy of the Project	
<b>Good Questions On Considering Future Co-production .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix A:</b> The SPAN Hands On History Project: the full story .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix B:</b> The SPAN Hands on History Project offer poster.....	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix C:</b> The SPAN Hands On History Project information leaflet output....	<b>37</b>



# Introduction

*As a partner in the development of co-production as a methodology, it is in the community's interests to reflect and build upon the practise for greater success and neighbourhood benefit.*

With the luxury of funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for the **SPAN History project (2019–2021)** and support from our academic colleagues at the University of Bristol, we have been able to spend time reflecting on and writing up our learning from this work. Several of the project team's experience with the co-production venture Productive Margins between community organisations, social enterprises and universities in Bristol and South Wales (2013-2018) has also influenced the development of this writing into guidance for future co-produced research. This document is intended to build upon the successes of these projects by suggesting an Ethical Framework (protecting and platforming participants and the community) and mapping out practicalities (or setting the landscape for the work) from a specifically community perspective. While our experience is rooted in co-produced research between community organisations and academia, much of the learning could be applied more broadly, including community development and groupwork processes.

## About the Authors:

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The full story of the SPAN Hands on History Project is included in **Appendix A**.

# What is Co-Production?

**Co** means together or that more than one party is involved.

**Production** means something is produced, e.g. research, activities, artwork.

**Co-produced** (or collaborative) **research** combines community expertise with academic process to learn more about a topic by gathering and analysing data (information) together. When the community and academics collaborate, they bring research skills and theory together with local expertise and the skills and perspectives from lived experience of the topic being researched. What is discovered is also held within the community and can be used to apply for funds or set up services that deal with the issues, as well as contributing to academic understanding and potentially social policy.

The **Research Question** or topic could be about something experienced in the community, such as poverty, shopping or parenting, which is complicated and needs to be understood better. Finding out more can help decide how to deal with the issues. The process of research could include a program of group work with people who have relevant experience, community consultation events, oral history interviews, mapping neighbourhoods or analysing privately-owned documents or public archives.

**Outputs** are how the findings of the research are communicated outside the group. This might include academic papers, conference presentations and policy briefings as well as creative public engagement such as murals, workshops, performances, exhibitions, talks, guided walks, animations etc.

**Outcomes** are the impact of the program on participants, the community and universities. Take the example of a project that interviews young people to explore the reasons for anti-social behaviour in a park, concluding that there is a lack of youth activities. An event presenting these findings could persuade policy-makers to fund new services. The process of working as a group, learning new skills, exploring new ideas and places and having the opportunity to work with the university might increase participants' confidence, connections in the community, employability and ambition to pursue further education.

**As Co-production is a growing practice** seeking to learn and improve all the time, documentation of the process and evaluation of the outcomes are very important.



## 1. What does Co-Production Offer?

Co-production is a way of researching that uses academic processes to gather knowledge held in communities about issues they directly experience. Integrating this with academic knowledge is valued as a more real and useful way to document, understand and respond to complicated social issues. This can lead to better responses to thinking about and tackling these issues within communities as well as in academia.

The methodology is also rooted in a movement to redress the history of power imbalance, distance and divergence of life experience between academic and neighbourhood communities. Barton Hill (now Wellspring) Settlement was established in 1911 as part of a national movement to better connect academia with the social experience of poor communities in Barton Hill, to develop social policy and programs, and as such it is in a unique position for undertaking co-produced research.

Through working together, communities can gain a greater voice, ownership, confidence and new friendships, as well as access to academic funds to develop understanding of their world, describe it to others and respond to key problems. The process also offers an opportunity for individuals to learn research and analysis skills and gain group work experience, which may not have been available on their own educational journey.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. An Ethical Framework

Based in the heart of neighbourhoods, community organisations are very well positioned to support collaboration between academic institutes and their staff and students with the local community. Over years they have built trust with the residents they work alongside and are keenly aware of the issues and assets within the neighbourhood, seeking to develop an organisational culture that is accessible and responsive, supporting local initiatives addressing their needs. For academia, this is an invaluable position that enables consultation and engagement with community members. Providing space that is familiar, local and accessible is also extremely useful as a setting to supports participation.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see '*Imagining Regulation Differently*' (2020).

Connecting community and academia can be hard to navigate and brings many responsibilities with it. Academic research must be sanctioned via a university Ethics Committee, which scrutinises all aspects of a project. While community organisations do not have a similar supervisory body for research, they are founded upon values and visions described within their organisational strategy, mission statement, aims and objectives. This is in effect their Ethical Framework and provides the platform and value structure for all activities and interactions. The community organisation carries accountability to the neighbourhood and participants for how the project is delivered, how personal stories are gathered and views respected, what happens to the information collected and what impact it will have on their lives. The difference between this and the accountability to academic colleagues is that the relationship with the community will continue after the research.

It is the community organisation's responsibility to ensure that the process of research and its outcomes are truly meaningful for participants – that research is '*done with*' rather than '*done to*' communities. '*Research fatigue*' is frustrating for residents who are regularly asked about their lives, housing, finances, relationships and other personal subjects, with the understanding that it is contributing to lobbying for change - but without seeing concrete results for their neighbourhood. Realistically, co-produced research will not produce everything a community needs. However, it can offer fantastic opportunities for personal development as well as generate essential evidence to rally the community, campaign for improvements or as evidence to raise funds for services or activities that benefit local residents. Often, changes in social policy and services are not as dramatic as might have hoped and can also take a very long time.

Community organisations are '*in between*' community and academia so are in a good position to manage expectations, manage issues of power balance and ownership, meet funding requirements, ensure community members' and organisations' time is recognised and compensated, as well as mediate between the different working cultures of the community and academia. The community organisation's role is to ensure that the needs of resident participants are treated as equally to academic needs, and that the inevitable concessions required in collaborative working reflect this. They are also experienced at '*making things work*', particularly with very limited resources, and managing all the usual tensions which go with community and group work. However, certain supports and guidance may be useful to maintain the values of respect, inclusion and supporting self-agency that lie at the heart of community development work.



### 3. Benefits of Co-Produced Research

The potential benefits of co-produced research are broad, sometimes far-reaching and potentially radical:

- The community gets to learn from a university, as well as influence its opinions and working practice, from a position of greater equality.
- Knowledge produced through research has authority when it is informed by '*real experiences*' from the community.
- The generation of useful intelligence and evidence about people and places can benefit universities, policy-makers, local and wider communities, community organisations as well as the people and places that are the subjects of the research. This can be used to change public opinion and lobby for change at governmental levels as well as evidence the need for funding projects.
- The community witnesses and experiences the university listening to them from a position of greater equality.
- Working with the university demonstrates a model for progression via further education, inspiring participants, peers and even future generations.
- The process increases participants' employability, knowledge, connections within the community, commitment to a cause, personal confidence and skills.
- Participants are offered an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge by a valued partner (the university).
- The community has the opportunity to influence the understanding and practise of co-production as it develops.
- Partnership working can open doors to significant funding from research bodies.
- New friendships and collaborations can be developed through the process, even leading to new community groups as well as establishing ongoing, long-term relationships with universities for future research projects.
- Collaboration between academics and community workers enables greater mutual understanding and respect for each other's work. It also offers an opportunity for centring community development values within community engagement practises.

# **Challenges and Routes to Success**

Co-production has plenty of potential for the community but it also needs support and guidelines to keep it on track. The following guidance aims to provide support for our communities and their members to protect themselves whilst engaging in meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships and work with universities.

## **1. Beginnings**

It is worth keeping in mind that many decisions will already have been made about the shape, direction and timing of the project when the funding bid was written – sometimes a year before community researchers or even paid staff come on board. At the beginning of delivering the project, the process can often appear vague or slow, as next steps are being worked out together. This can create confusion and anxiety with people new to co-production and risks drop-out and frustration. It is worth considering the emotional pressure of ‘holding’ the process when recruiting staff to deliver and line-manage the project. Creativity and flexibility are also excellent characteristics. Explaining what to expect and acknowledging the process will help everyone’s confidence.

Due to the time lag between designing the project, writing the funding bid and funding arriving, the original plan details may well need revising once the actual activities begin. Planning takes time, as individuals and institutional cultures bring their own different infrastructure, practises and values. It is an important stage for the project staffing team to build their collaborative relationships.

**An ideal project staffing team would include:**

- Academic and community facilitators
- Community worker who will recruit and support volunteers
- Community line manager/lead
- Academic lead
- Evaluation team
- Steering Group (including community and academic representatives who helped to write the funding bid, with expertise in relevant areas)
- Administrator



## 2. Developing a Research Question

*The research question is fundamental to the process, as it provides the map for planning activities that elicit answers, form data and ultimately outputs.*

When multi-disciplinary groups come together from different backgrounds to co-create, they may have very different ideas about what the question might be. It is essential to give lots of time, input, examples and guidance around how to agree on a question or questions. This can be a challenging process to ensure the whole group feels that their interests are represented. A 5-year well-funded project might include a range of questions that form part of a larger report. If the co-produced work must be completed in a short period of time, one precise question will work better. For data and subsequent outputs to be meaningful, the group must work together to identify the value of the research for themselves and the wider community.

## 3. Power Balance and Ownership

*Co-production does not mean that all decisions and activities will necessarily be taken 50:50 community: academia.*

There are usually many different stakeholders involved and decisions will be made by smaller groups of people at different times in the life of the project. For example, tasks such as consulting the community, writing the bid, recruiting staff, gathering a Steering Group and recruiting community participants all happen before the first formal meeting has taken place. It is very useful to define early on who is going to be making which decisions and making it clear to all stakeholders what to expect.

As a result the balance of power and leadership will fluctuate during the process and this often generates conflict. It is healthy to have an open conversation about the expected changing power dynamics with all concerned at the very beginning of the project – and that it will be OK! The project will start off with aims and a destination but many decisions will be made together to move towards the destination. Maintaining the balance of power and ultimately ownership for all stakeholders through decision-making is hard but central to the co-production process. Ensuring participants maintain ownership over the process needs to be balanced with the other demands on their time (childcare, paid work etc.) and achieving the project aims and activities according to the funding bid and timeline.

Bridging different institutions' cultures is challenging but this is also part of the intention of co-production, so it is worth anticipating and learning how to manage this. Tension demands discussion as agreement is built around how to proceed. Be prepared to be challenged as different working practises and expectations are brought together. Committing to success from the beginning and giving/receiving positive encouragement as well as critical feedback is vital. This is a learning process. Recognition of and trust in your colleagues' skills and experience also helps to build a supportive and expert team.

From the very beginning (pre-recruitment) it is worth assessing the balance of lived experience within your team (gender, race, class, disability etc.) as this will impact your process and research perspective, as well as how accessible or reflective the project may feel to others. Ask your Steering Group or 'critical friends'/evaluation team to give constructive feedback to identify and manage any inappropriate imbalances, omissions or biases.

## 4. Managing Conflict

*Conflict is an inevitable part of any group process. Managed well, it can be creative and bring issues forward to be addressed.*

Conflict can also be stressful and potentially destructive. Tuckman (1965) describes the typical stages of a group becoming fully functional as 'forming, storming, norming, performing' (meeting, conflict, settling, working well). This not only makes what can be a turbulent time seem less daunting, but also a manageable and necessary process through which for establishing an effective and dynamic group.

Groups are made up of individuals with different needs, life experience, expectations and understandings that need to be explored as a group develops. People are also involved as representatives of organisations and their specific cultures. Conflict often arises as these dynamics are being worked out and where common values and visions are located. Exploration of the framework holding the group can also raise questions and struggles. Offering reflective spaces in which people can share different opinions, challenge and be challenged respectfully are increasingly rare but incredibly valuable. Ring-fencing time within a facilitation team is also invaluable to engage with conflicts and plan responses to guide the process positively.

**Tensions can occur between any of the stakeholders, for example:**

- Academic and community-based employees
- Paid and unpaid participants
- The subjects of research (people interviewed or living the studied experience) and project team
- Evaluators and project team
- Steering Group/Management Board and project team
- Different community organisations

The facilitators' role is to hold the process together and focus on its resolution whilst maintaining project momentum. Some people are more comfortable with confronting conflict or may court it as a means of interacting – both responses require support and direction. It is important that facilitators manage issues arising, supporting the resolution process for the whole group to achieve a constructive outcome. For example, they might:

- Share Tuckman's description of '*forming, storming, norming, performing*', as this demystifies the likely sequence of events and enables everyone to recognise and work through it.
- Agree group rules together at the beginning as a contract for expected and acceptable behaviour. These can also be reviewed and added to as the need arises. Display or review them regularly – you will need to reference them if conflict arises to help maintain communication and a respectful process.
- A strong facilitation team who can process conflict well themselves supports conflict resolution in the group and holding it through the difficult patches. Keeping the group to the agreed rules are vital, as is supporting other facilitators, e.g. deflecting personal attacks or backing them up.
- Co-facilitator debriefs are helpful in agreeing strategies for managing challenging behaviour and support progression to the '*performing*' stage.
- Line management or supervision can be vital in supporting Community Workers through conflicts as they arise in the group and might be worked through in one-to-one meetings. An experienced and readily available supervisor can help the worker to debrief, understand behaviours and manage the kinds of conflict that will inevitably emerge. It is worth selecting a line manager who is comfortable, skilled and confident at holding the process of working through conflict, providing them with any necessary additional training and support.
- As well as ensuring that the project is delivered according to its funding commitment the Steering Group can be tasked with ensuring the project and staff are accountable for their management of the group and how conflict is handled.

## 5. Meaningful Activity For The Community

*The needs and interests of the community and volunteers need to remain central to co-production for the benefits of being involved to be meaningful.*

It is useful to establish in the early planning stages of the project what will be valuable to the collective community and what can be offered that is relevant to individuals' personal development.

- Any proposal to the community is worth considering in terms of what that community will get out of involvement and how it balances with the commitment, e.g. much needed money being offered in exchange for very personal information. How will this decision be made and by whom? The ethical framework of the community organisation or group can ensure the interests of residents are centred and that they are treated with compassion and respect throughout.
- Consider what the legacy might be – the real impacts for the researchers and Community at the end of the project (see section 16. The Legacy of The Project). What would resulting community or personal development look like? Stating this as an aim and activity within the funding bid can afford it equal weight as the data collection and written articles. For more information on training for Researchers, see Interlude: Community researchers and community researcher training (Thomas-Hughes, H. 2020).

Working with the university demonstrates a model for progression via further education, inspiring participants, peers and even future generations. Maintaining researchers and other community stakeholders central to the project delivery ensures that their expertise and interests can be identified and incorporated so that they benefit from the process. Involvement from the bid writing stage through other major decision-making to planning data collection and designing outputs ensures their interests are considered throughout. Academics can also offer flexible means for researchers to be supported to co-write academic articles by including transcribed recorded conversations or exchanges of responses to written work. This provides a voice within academia for collective and personal experience – an invaluable addition to academic research but also a process that can provide a unique community platform with wide-reaching impact.

Successful work with academics can also lead to long term-collaboration, enabling initiatives from the community to propose further research and gain help to access funding with help from the university.

## 6. Time

*There is always tension between the idea of how long something will take and what actually happens.*

As a growing practise, there is also a tension in co-production between wanting enough time to explore the process against getting the research done and presented to the public. There is a balance between upholding the detailed time plans required for grant applications whilst adjusting them to reflect the context once granted. As a result, time is highly valuable at the beginning of the project while plans are being firmed up, particularly to set up the project framework – to recruit staff, steering group, participants and the research team, and for all these groups to start working together.

**The establishment of a new community group requires time:**

- for group relationships to be established.
- for all the necessary inductions and consequent paperwork (e.g. ethics committee documents, permission to use photographs and quotes, permission to participate in the evaluation, confidentiality measures including GDPR, volunteer training and policies, safeguarding, out of hours policies etc.) to be completed.
- to allow for other life responsibilities to get in the way (this is not a paid job for researchers).
- to allow for fun! To keep people's interest and continue to be a stimulating, engaging relaxing activity – chatting is part of the process.

Participants will almost definitely drop out over the course of a project. Longer projects are at greater risk of this and may need greater incentives or supports to enable ongoing participation. Drop-out is natural as commitments shift but needs to be planned for so as not to negatively affect the group dynamic or motivation. Recruiting a large group of people at the beginning means drop-out does not threaten the project and also gives the group a buzz and value ('it's popular so worth sticking at'). See sections **10. Recruitment** and **11. Groupwork and Retention** for more on this.

A project schedule with clearly stated phases and outcomes gives transparency but can also feel overwhelming for researchers. Facilitators will need to reassure the group that their job is to ensure that the project that was funded is delivered. Transparency encourages ownership, momentum and a greater likelihood that outputs will be achieved, especially if the process feels '*held*' by facilitators. Outlining the content of upcoming sessions each week also gives participants a sense of what to expect/what will be expected from them, as well as the project's progression.

Planning time for discussion and relationship-building is important, although sometimes hard when there are so many other demands. Not having enough time can upset the power balance of researchers and facilitators, risking:

- people not feeling heard when discussions are curtailed.
- adding pressure to researchers as content or tasks are rushed, risking leaving people behind. Offering support through one-to-one meetings can ensure that people feel consulted and have the opportunity to feed into how sessions can be more inclusive.
- people feeling '*taught*' rather than working together – although this may be very valuable and needed for the delivery of certain parts of the project (e.g. oral history interview skills). Communicating that this is a taught part of the programme can help to manage expectations. It would be useful to understand andragogy and Knowles (1980) Five Assumptions of Adult Learners to ensure all participants are offered the best opportunity to learn.

Offering additional one-to-one time outside the session with the Community Worker helps to ensure that the project is providing meaningful activity for participants and that their needs are met within it. Working through conflicts, picking up issues, finding solutions to promote inclusion as well as offering information for other services is vital to maintain engagement and retention. It also provides a safety valve, preventing individual behaviour or personal problems from side-tracking the group process whilst offering much needed help and support.

It is essential to give adequate time at the end of the project for the '*adjourning*' (or mourning) stage of Tuckman's '*Stages of Group Development*' (1977). A much needed and enjoyed social activity is coming to an end and with it much will change, including friendships that may or may not continue. It is also an opportunity to review with researchers what they need to move forward in terms of services, references, training, introductions – meeting the project's ambitions for meaningful personal development.

A very useful lesson from academic culture is to include time for reflection and writing up the work undertaken throughout the project. The Voluntary Sector tends to work '*at a pace*' with limited resources, often launching straight into the next project. Include time at the end of a project to reflect, learn and share. This is an opportunity to gain more knowledge about how co-production can support the development of the local community and individuals as well as the organisation's skill and experience working with the neighbourhood, university and issues researched.

## 7. Money

*Money is a concrete reflection of the inequalities that surround us.*

It can also be symbolised by the institutions of the university, the community organisation as well as an individual's personal circumstances and life experiences. Money can be a big issue to researchers who are struggling financially. There needs to be sensitivity around the amounts of funding for project activities and how discussions are managed around allocating budgets. As an amount of money allocated to outputs (e.g. a film, mural, event) might be life-changing to an individual, it can also seem abstract or unfair to fund activities that are not life-changing (such buying food or providing shelter to those in need), regardless of why the funding was granted. Useful conversations will be generated deciding what outputs might be for them to be truly '*meaningful*' as well as realistic about the costs involved. £10k is not necessarily as a vast amount of money for a university project but could be life-changing to a low-income participant. Expectations around what budgets are for need to be managed with sensitivity.

There is also a natural tension between the financial positions of those in the room – between those paid and not, as well as differences between academic and community and administrator pay-scales. Paying researchers for their time is a complicated issue, with different projects taking different approaches. It is worth discussing the pros and cons at the point of designing the project/funding application:

- Researchers' time, effort and commitment to a project definitely needs to be acknowledged and not expected to be given without compensation. Financial payment will no doubt be very welcomed by participants if offered.
- Paying researchers is a transaction similar to employment and creates an entirely different relationship laden with expectations, such as how much time they are expected to be present, evaluating the quality of work and tasks being completed. While this can be an excellent opportunity for training and often well within the abilities of many, it will also exclude certain people with personal or domestic barriers. Clarity is needed on who is being engaged to undertake the research and for what reason/benefit, so that all the subsequent decisions around support and management reflect this.
- Individuals may fail to perform stated tasks or drop out through personal or domestic circumstances rather than ability. This can damage self-esteem as well as their relationship with the organisation and the timetable for project delivery. Supporting a volunteer's personal needs and domestic challenges (e.g. health issues or caring responsibilities) might conflict with terms of employment.

- Being paid might bring different motivations and attitude to tasks – it can be less inspiring and engaging to be employed rather than choosing to take part. Payment might also consolidate a power dynamic of employer and employee in a structure that aims to offer different engagement and participation.
- The volunteer offer is still a formal relationship described by organisational policies but it is a supported route. New friendships, new skills, new career or educational prospects should be part of the offer. An organisational Volunteer Policy offers a clear framework to manage expectations, outline what protections surround their work, what supports are available to sustain their role and enjoyment as well as routes to further opportunities for training and employment. This ensures clarity of their position and rights as well as expectations of what each brings to the role. This framework offers safety for both volunteer and organisation should something go wrong.
- Communicate clearly what the project can offer to volunteers beyond payment: materials, food, travel costs, childcare, training, emotional support, job reference, employment preparation and support to access employment and/or further education.
- It is possible that researchers can be paid but it is vital that the potential impact on their eligibility for benefits or how much they will receive is known and discussed, due to limits on volunteering or availability to work, or how much they can work part-time. Vouchers are often offered as a replacement for money but are not always welcome, as they can be inconvenient, time-limited and restricted in terms of what can be bought.

University financial processes are very slow. Community organisations may well have more fluid and responsive systems for petty cash, reimbursing travel expenses, and purchasing small items. Gaining clarity with academic partners on areas of financial responsibility is crucial, including when and how money will be transferred between institutions and who has responsibility for processing reimbursement for different items. Confirm how external payments can be made efficiently (e.g. catering for weekly lunches) and how the community organisation can be reimbursed. This is particularly important if you are aiming to invest in local community providers – they are unlikely to want to go through a purchase order system or to be waiting for payment.

The university has many fantastic resources which it is happy for collaborators to access, including archives, libraries, computers and event or meeting spaces. Gaining associate registration for researchers and staff enables access to these, during the project and for a limited time afterwards. University print services are also very high-quality and low-cost, and can create booklets, posters etc., bind documents, put them in presentation packs and can also pack and post documents cheaply.

## 8. Being the Topic of the Research

*It is important that interviewees feel they have been understood, that their contribution is valued and that their story is presented, with full permission, empathy and respect.*

Research is gathering information around a topic and often means interviewing people about their personal experiences, what they perceive to be happening around them now and in the past. The process can be emotive and requires sensitivity and commitment to prevent the sense that they are losing control of their story or that it has been 'taken away' from them. People can also feel judged by a researcher who is removed from their context or experience. Community researchers, with their proximity to and greater understanding of the issues in their neighbourhood, can offer a different perspective whilst interviewing. They can also generate better knowledge by working with academics who are starting from a theoretical position.

Interviewing can be uncomfortable if intense or difficult memories and emotions are brought up, for both the volunteer and the interviewee, and can make either feel vulnerable. Solid training on how to facilitate respectful interviewing as well as managing emotions raised through the re-telling will set up volunteers for success.

- Encourage interviewers to connect with their interviewees, set a relaxed tone to the meeting and reassure them that their intentions are good and they are genuinely interested in finding out their story.
- Give regular reminders that the history belongs to people, it is their story and requires sensitivity and a non-judgemental approach.
- The project needs to be clearly presented to all interviewees prior to the interview, including information about how their stories will be used and stored.
- Explain and create documentation for ethics in ways that participants and interviewees can understand, rather than long, dry text handouts. Be clear that that ethics provides a protective working framework for everyone and explain why that is important.
- Confidentiality structures need to be understood by researchers and clearly communicated to interviewees so they feel safe. Safeguarding policies need to be shared and understood and adequate supports built in to ensure that researchers and interviewees are safe.
- Interviewers are supported to ensure their safety if working off site and to manage any safeguarding issues.

- Interviewees could choose to restrict access to their testimonies – e.g. the interview is only available for a certain period, or it is anonymous (although it is hard not to be identified by those close to the story). They can also check the transcript of their interview and edit anything confidential or sensitive before it is archived or processed.
- Each interviewer has proper training in how to engage and manage emotional situations as well as stop an interview if necessary.

## 9. Accessibility and Inclusion

*Inclusion means putting additional effort into opening a door and inviting someone in.*

Community organisations have a responsibility to ensure that minority voices are represented and opportunities are accessed by as broad a range of people as possible. Engaging those who do not usually engage – rather than the usual candidates – will require specific approaches, supports and resources to encourage participation. Reaching communities and individuals where there is mistrust requires time, support, commitment and being pro-active. This might require specific planning to set up trust and build upon connections. It is also worth considering whether your researcher group or staff team includes different voices and experiences or is in any way representative of the target group – and if not, what you can do to address this.

Talk to people about the project, the activities, space, food and what barriers might need to be resolved. Flexibility will be needed to find solutions but your efforts will help build trust. A substantial budget is sometimes needed to secure attendance. Involving the group when ordering food that meets different dietary requirements and cultural expectations is an effective way to make people feel seen. Be aware some people might need to take time for religious observances and build this into the program. Direct them to a space and any equipment they might need and make it easy for them to leave and return.

- The basics are choosing a time and physical setting that can be accessed, preferably a familiar place. Provide people to welcome them into a new building and/or activity; provide childcare or money to pay for childcare; offer help with transport and finding the venue; confirm money to reimburse transport/refreshments costs; and make sure they have a valuable experience when they arrive.
- Where possible, talk to each participant prior to the start of an activity to see what specific issues they might have and regularly review with them whether their needs have been met.

- Be conscious that image presented to the community gives messages about the culture of the project and who it is for or delivered by.
- Consider language and literacy issues and make time to discuss participants' learning styles. Honey and Mumford's '*Learning Styles*' (1986) are useful for a group and individuals.
- Adapt modes of communication to whoever you are working with. For some, emails may not work well but Whatsapp or Facebook could be better platforms for short messages and sharing files or photos. A group agreement about how the media is used can help avoid conflicts, inappropriate language or posting and times of use.

## 10. Recruitment

*Without recruits, there is no group. Without a group, there is no project.*

Early discussion and agreement around who and how to recruit are essential to ensure a match with what the project offers and give the best chance that those recruited will remain until the end. Targeted recruitment is only possible when it is clear who the target group is. Clarity means professionals can recruit, posters can be well placed for the target audience and enquiries responded to effectively. Recruits will also get a clearer idea of what the group will be like and whether it is for them. As these decisions will influence the direction of research as well as group relations, this requires discussion and agreement between community and academic staff.

- Be aware that if recruitment is kept open, that this may well exclude others. For example, if targeting women experiencing domestic violence (most likely by men), a women-only group will be focused on a female perspective and will likely feel safer to the participants. A mixed group would include a male perspective but will be a barrier to participation for some and may make the group feel or be less safe.
- Once agreed, plan time to speak to professionals who might refer participants, to present to local groups and to book in one-to-one initial meetings with interested residents for further discussion.

Working with individuals who do not usually access such opportunities, with low confidence or distrust, requires different forms of support. Some people are more confident and will easily access an activity, while others would miss out without support. Targeting individuals who have had Adverse Childhood Experiences requires deliberate and specific interventions to recruit and support them. John Bowlby's attachment theory (1991) has a useful framework for understanding needs and behaviour whilst establishing relationships individually and in a group. People have great capacity for survival and



change and participating in this kind of group work can really help people grow and build resilience, giving them the emotional strength to cope with trauma, adversity and hardship.

- Offering a one-to-one initial chat allows a softer entrance to the project, sets up an ally for each group member and also gives the facilitator a chance to discuss any needs for support.
- Initial meetings before the group is formally created allows for the culture of the group to be established and for expectations and anxieties to be checked.
- Be patient and keep making appointments until it is clear that a person is not unavailable or uninterested. Are there barriers you can work through together to enable them to attend?
- Individual meetings alongside group work enables issues to be worked through in private with support, for referrals and signposting and self-evaluation on progress.
- Be clear from the beginning what other demands or opportunities there will likely be outside the group sessions. Researchers may not be able to attend activities beyond the group sessions if they are working or have caring responsibilities etc. Through group discussion try to set dates and times that are as accessible as possible outside the regular meetings. Ensure that everyone feels included even if they cannot attend: take notes, send messages, photographs or films of what they missed.

Decide if the group will be closed or open for new members as it runs, or whether you will top up numbers at specific times (e.g. after school holidays). A closed group could mean that a limited number of people will be recruited but that their place will be open to them throughout the project unless they choose to leave. This is a way of including people with unpredictable domestic contexts (e.g. health issues or caring responsibilities). Holding their place for them is a statement of commitment, recognising their value in the group and contribution to the project.

Co-production can be difficult to promote. It is not easy to explain because the activities and outputs are decided along the way. Present what **is** known clearly:

- The 'offer' of the project can be described e.g. a good lunch, learning research skills and knowledge, developing new friendships, free crèche, trips, accreditation, references, working with the university and so on.
- The expectations of recruits – weekly attendance, any other times they may need to be available, any homework, interviewing, additional one-to-one discussions.
- That the one-to-one relationship supports their participation.
- That they can 'give it a go' and work out any uncertainties or barriers together.

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See **Appendix B** for the SPAN Hands on History group promotion poster and offer.

## 11. Group work and Retention

*Creating a predictable and welcoming framework for meeting each week will increase confidence, promote trust and provide for participants' needs, supporting their ongoing engagement.*

Participants may be anxious, unsure, hungry or stressed. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs it is of benefit to offer food and drink on arrival (physiological); create a predictable working framework and give clarity on what is going to happen and what arrangements have been made (security e.g. creche times); welcome and include everyone (belonging); recognise skills and ask for opinions (esteem); and promote creativity and problem-solving abilities (self-actualisation).

- Giving a decent notebook, folder and pens to each researcher on joining the project to show that they are valued, supported to be organised and encouraged to participate.
- Starting the day with a delicious breakfast is a great welcome. It relieves social anxiety and offers a relaxed, sociable entrance to each session.
- A delicious lunch at the end of the session is a way of saying thank you for people's effort as well as providing an opportunity for relaxing and socialising after the work. Buy plenty and ensure people take away additional food for their families – ensure there are containers and bags in which to carry it home.
- Opening and closing each session with a check-in offers each person the chance to share how they are doing, download their day so far and ask for anything they need.
- Support researchers socially: introduce them to people and create connections. They will build friendships with each other once they are more comfortable.
- Allow for time-outs and agree which worker will offer individual support out of the room if needed.
- If participants are not responding in the group or unable to contribute, follow up with a phone call or one-to-one conversation to see what support is needed.

External personal or domestic issues will lead to absences, dis-engagement and distraction in sessions.

- Request that people inform you if they cannot attend to promote accountability. Also let the group know if someone is absent so the process is clear (although no details need to be shared).

- Keep the door of the group open for individuals who arrive late or miss sessions. This is not necessarily their choice or fault, so do not make them feel bad. Actively make it clear that they are welcome, valued in the group and missed.
- Absences can be followed up with a phone call or text bringing them up to speed so they do not feel behind.
- A researcher may not be feeling well or confident this week, but this does not mean they do not want to attend next week or for the rest of the project.
- Welcome them back into the group when they do attend, although try to do so without disrupting the group's activities. You may also want to invite them to come for lunch only, as this is the more social element of the session and meets their physical needs.
- If absence is a repeated pattern, you may require one-to-one discussion to offer more support, see what issues have arisen or to set clearer protocols on how fluctuating attendance can be managed.

Demands to complete paperwork (contact details, consent forms, safeguarding, volunteer policies etc.) in the early stages risk being dull and off-putting.

- Lead appropriate 'getting to know you' exercises and interactions to help start connections – people are motivated by potential friendships and fun.
- Include interesting content about the future research subject to inspire people and get conversation started straight away.
- Confidence-building tasks early help bond the group.
- Assess what both institutions really need and negotiate how to schedule these in a way which does not overwhelm the program or prioritise either institutions' needs over the other.
- Consider offering an introductory course or taster before people commit to a longer program and are required to complete all paperwork.

Academic, technical or fast-flowing language is off-putting for those with limited English language skills, limited educational experience or low self-esteem.

- Slow sessions down, asking everyone in group whether they understand. Make time to review and check everyone is on the same page.
- Diagrams and pictures can help with learning and memory.
- Jargon needs to be explained – a '*jargon buster*' list on the wall can be added to as and when needed.
- Short written resources and emails can support knowledge – too much will be overwhelming or left unread.
- Facilitators need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak e.g. go around the room and ask everyone to contribute or use post-it notes.

- Smaller group or paired work supports more focused communication and confidence and provides an opportunity for a peer to fill gaps in understanding.
- Ask one-to-one whether individuals are following what is going on and whether or how they want to be checked in with without embarrassing them.
- Play to individuals' strengths – if they are good at reading rather than listening, give them these tasks or create pairs who can support each other.

Bias towards white people and culture can characterise majority white institutions (both academia and community organisations) and may not adequately recognise the needs or experience of researchers of colour or indeed anyone who minority communities. Committing to an anti-racist approach means committing to establishing a setting where issues can be discussed, different opinions are welcomed and sought, voices are heard and specific needs can be met. It is worth discussing these values early on as well as what supports and checks exist within the project structure.

- Diverse voices should be recruited to represent the breadth of the community, particularly those who are often under-represented. Ideally people of colour are engaged as both staff and in the group to support ethnic minority perspectives being included in all aspects of the project.
- Unconscious bias also relates to anyone outside the privileged male, white, heterosexual, able-bodied population and needs regular attention and an open forum for discussion to support inclusion.
- Facilitators promote and model sensitivity to all perspectives. They direct discussion within the group to be inclusive even if this means working through prejudices. They provide support for individuals when key issues are raised that relate directly to them whilst also maintaining confidentiality e.g. not disclosing an individual's sexuality but raising issues to influence discussion within the group.
- Minority perspectives are incorporated into the session planning beyond the identity of the facilitators and regularly reflected on in post-group debriefing to support a culture of recognition and inclusion.
- The Steering Group and Evaluation framework support practises of equality and fairness throughout the project's activities.

Participants will almost certainly drop out, particularly over longer projects.

- Recruit enough people to see the project through its full lifespan.
- Decide if it is a closed group or open to new members (although this can affect group dynamics).

- If numbers are low or there is an interruption to the project, the group could consider recruiting new people e.g. by asking participants to each bring a friend or putting a call out into the community.
- Thank people for their contributions – you never know if they will re-engage. Their involvement well may have been a positive experience, but life responsibilities have taken over.

## 12. Endings

*Endings need to be planned from the beginning.*

Saying goodbye can be hard for individuals, depending on their circumstances and history. Individuals with poor attachment or with Adverse Childhood Experiences can find endings extremely distressing. Tuckman's theory (1977) also includes 'mourning' as a process of unwinding a group and letting go safely. Sometimes this does not go smoothly and requires support, so it is important to consolidate what has been learnt and experienced by sharing documentation of the process with researchers and community. Things that can be taken back to people's homes, such as cards, photos and certificates, can be very welcome and celebratory if presented at a group event. They can also generate emotional, sometimes unexpected responses that require understanding and support, such as people leaving before the end, criticising what they have built and enjoyed as well as being unable to let go or being very sad. Many will also be very proud of their achievements and have completed a project and will want to have their work recognised and celebrated.

Participants also want to progress within and beyond the group and their development should be a specific project output set up from recruitment through the project activities, one-to-one sessions and final support to move on.

- Help each researcher to define how they want their life to develop and set goals to work towards using the project as a springboard e.g. employment, training, another group, volunteering, access to parenting support etc.
- Celebrate what has been achieved – verbally in one-to-one conversations, self-assessments and through regular reviews of the work in group.
- Write up their achievements throughout the project as personal references for future job applications and feedback. Detail specific skills, growth, contributions and individual successes – make tangible what they have learnt and achieved and promote their confidence.
- Make a clear ending to the group work but include clearly defined time afterwards for supporting individuals to progress with their goals.
- It is important for the ending process that the group is thanked together for their effort and achievements but also for individuals to be recognised for their contributions.

## 13. Feedback, Monitoring and Evaluation

*Regular feedback (reflections at the end of the session) allows for the program to be tweaked as it is being delivered; monitoring ensures a project is meeting its scheduled goals (how project plans are being met); and evaluation measures impact (what were the outputs, how was the process, what was learnt).*

Gaining regular constructive feedback is vital for a project's development and fine tuning in response to unforeseen events. Given constructively, listened to and used well it can successfully divert activities that are failing or underline for everyone what the achievements have been so far. Consideration is needed to ensure people feel safe enough to give critical feedback well and know that it will be received appropriately. An appropriate response to something that needs to be improved will give confidence that opinions and ideas will be listened to on the basis that everyone wants things to work well. In its best form, criticism can be viewed as a gift, as it points out weaknesses or mistakes with the intention of improving the experience for all. Often, however, criticism can be given negatively, taken personally or fed into insecurities or frustrations within the researcher group or project team.

Developing sensitive ways of giving and receiving feedback is a part of growing group culture:

- Normalise feedback and critique as a way of working. Modelling this between facilitators is very effective, including positive observations and a culture of generosity.
- Regular invitation to give negative feedback normalises and validates it (e.g. 'tell us one negative and one positive aspect of today's activity').
- For some, positive feedback can also be hard to believe and accept. There may be a need for processing in one-to-one sessions.
- Group rules provide a framework for how this feedback can be given i.e. not personal, presented as a person's individual view and offered intending to improve the project.
- Gaining feedback should support participation if everyone's voice is valued.
- Writing anonymously on post-its supports issues being raised without being connected to an individual or threatening relationships.

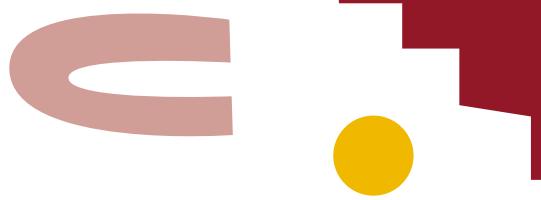
## **Useful data to gather for monitoring includes:**

- Post-session feedback from participants to facilitators.
- Pre-, during and post-project self-assessments by researchers e.g. focusing on any developments in their confidence, connections in the group, personal influence (on their life/environment), skills, ability to effectively communicate, personal development and so on.
- Facilitator debriefs, reflecting on process and content of sessions and general project development.
- Special unforeseen issues raised within the project e.g. issues around childcare.
- Documenting how the Steering Group meetings ensure plans are delivered and interrogate issues arising.
- General public and colleagues' response to project outputs, including webinars, events or public artworks.

Evaluation, often undertaken by a separate academic team, is vital for all involved to capture what has happened through the delivery of the project as well as demonstrating to funders how their money has been used. It is a key part of research and can be narrative (stories) or quantitative (numbers). All Stake Holders should be included in the process and it should capture the progression and impact of the work. Gathering and processing information takes time and can be seen in competition with delivering the rest of the project activity. It would be worth considering how much you can fit into your project and set realistic limits.

- It is important to balance the needs of the group with the demands of evaluation. Recompensing people with high street vouchers for time spent outside the group to participate in interviews is often very welcome – and needs to be budgeted for.
- Any worker (academic or community based) giving critical feedback will want to avoid damaging their relationship with their current or future employer. This might compromise the honesty of their feedback.
- Confidentiality of conversation and anonymity in reports can protect individuals but this may not be possible in interviews. Consult individuals to ensure they are comfortable with how their information is presented.
- Views change through a project and it is wise to include the development of opinion. Individuals should also have the right to change their minds or withdraw their interviews.

Each project needs to decide when to stop evaluation as some impacts will be long-term and may not be captured at the end of a project. To evaluate the real-life impact on community and participants, consider applying for funding to undertake interviews 6-12 months after the project's conclusion. Change takes time.



## 14. Creativity and Outputs

*Art is increasingly recognised for its potential to engage, communicate and inspire a wide range of responses.*

Both commissioning an artist to lead on a piece of work and involving the researchers in the creative endeavour as well as commissioning can open up new possibilities for all involved, with often surprising results. Playing to the researchers' strengths is key and allows them to explore their relationships and confidence in new ways. It is also a very different experience than undertaking research and may allow researchers to bring different skills, interests and experience to the table. The dynamic in the group will change as people engage their imagination and practical skills. Collaboration becomes even more important as the activity becomes more creative and facilitation shifts further away from a more 'taught' experience.

Art offers the opportunity to present complex and potentially conflicting information in a way that can be experienced on emotional, intellectual and sensory levels – and enjoyed! It can become a marker in time, as a celebration or event; can exist in different places simultaneously including being owned in private homes; or mark and characterise a public place.

Deciding as a group who they would like the outputs to reach (whether general public, specific demographics or local decision-makers etc.) and what impact they would like to have are crucial steps towards deciding what medium will best suit the purpose – and needs time and documentation. Clarity of aims with any output will help when coming to evaluate whether it has achieved what was hoped. Designing a commission, shortlisting and interviewing artists all develop transferrable skills but can also build a group's sense of power and identity, which will hopefully also be reflected in the resulting artwork. Decisions around involvement in the development of the creative output, be it short film, mural, animation, event, or a set of posters, all need to be based around what is realistic for the researcher whilst also getting the work completed. With some forms (e.g. a short film), there may be possibilities for developing skills such as script-writing, editing, camera work and so on, and while most media offer a route for being involved (designing or editing motifs, choosing colours for a mural, generating stop-frame animation), the depth of this involvement is defined by the project timeline and budget, as well as availability of the researchers. It is also worth managing expectations to avoid disappointment. It is also advisable to have a creative professional (within the project team or commissioned externally) to hold the production of the output together, make suggestions to be agreed with the group, direct and integrate contributions, resolve technical problems and ensure



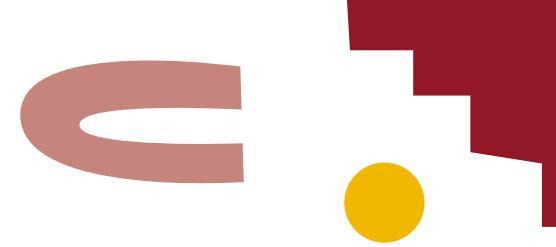
the work meets the brief and is completed on time. It is vital that this professional is organised, skilled in their art and has the interpersonal skills to manage the decision-making process, include people and listen to what the group wants. Careful commissioning, interviewing and contracting enables clarity of expectations on both sides.

## 15. Writing Up

*Academic papers will continue to be read and circulated for a long time after the project and offer a great opportunity for researchers to contribute their thoughts and experience.*

Co-written articles are both learning opportunities and exciting ways of documenting different voices. However, the restrictions of domestic lives need to be considered and worked around to facilitate contributions. Discussion with academic colleagues can lead to the development of a supportive plan for facilitating researcher contributions. This can be difficult as the momentum of the group drops away and people return to other commitments. It can also appear a dry or unattractive process, rather like writing an essay. Flexibility, encouragement and imagination may be needed to define ways that they can contribute – and potentially coffee and cake! There are less daunting ways in which co-writing can take place, including recording conversations on a topic between two or even more individuals, writing multiple perspectives on a subject, the researcher writing a response to a paper and so on. The academic needs to recognise that even though the researchers may be interested, they may still need support to contribute. The community worker will have a useful role supporting researchers to resolve barriers and support their participation, continuing the collaboration with their academic peers.

An important lesson for community organisations working alongside academics is the value of allocating time to reflect on what has been learnt, write it up and share it with colleagues and community to build upon experience and methodology.



## 16. The Legacy of the Project

*The project comes to an end but the impact of the project is carried onwards by individuals and communities in a variety of ways.*

At the end of a project, it is important for individuals, communities and community organisations to make the most of the knowledge, experience and relationships generated through projects – for future co-productions, ongoing neighbourhood campaigns and opportunities for personal development. The group will need time for all activities to be wrapped up, to prepare for ‘what next’ as well as mourn the ending of the project.

Offering post-group time via one-to-one conversations can identify opportunities based on strengths and learning over the project. These can be built on to work towards the individual’s ambitions. Planning a budget to support bridging these ambitions is also helpful – to pay for a training scheme or further education, life coaching sessions or ongoing mentoring, for example.

It is hoped that community research and the evidence it generates will directly influence policy and decision-making. While this is not always possible, the outputs do offer a means of succinctly and often emotively communicating the findings to people who have influence. Community organisations also have an excellent track record of using this information to write funding bids that lead to resources being brought into communities. Individuals also find that they have learned much about themselves as well as the topic and research as a process. Their experience can bring about a range of positive outcomes including increased confidence, refined research skills, motivation and empowerment to challenge the status quo, better connections and platform for applying for work and training. Personal progression should run through the entire project as an aim in itself, rather than an afterthought.

# **Good Questions To Ask When Considering Future Co-Produced Research**

- Where has the need for this research come from?
- What is the community's interest in this?
- What do we expect to achieve through this research?
- How might it benefit the community and individuals involved?
- Which individuals in the community would grow through this process?
- How will we reach those who do not normally participate?
- What budget is required to support inclusion?
- How will we ensure that the community's demographics are represented?
- Is there any risk that the process or topic of research could be disruptive or have a negative impact on participants or the community?
- Are participants going to be paid for their time?
- Can we employ a Community Worker to support individuals outside group work?
- Do we feel confident at managing conflict and delivering group work? What support is there to help us?
- Who will decide the outputs?
- How do we ensure the widest reach and biggest impact when we present our findings?
- Who could be invited to join the Steering Group?
- How will we gain feedback, monitor progress and evaluate the work?
- Will we be able to influence the understanding of how co-production worked and its contribution to the development of the practise?
- How can we support individuals in the writing-up process?
- How will participants progress after the conclusion of the project?
- What will the legacy of the project activities and the research be for the community?
- What time is available after the project for the community organisation to reflect and share with others?
- Is funding available to measure the impact in 6/12 months from the end of the project?

# Conclusion

Hopefully this document is useful guide for the development of co-produced research as a dynamic and growing practise that offers enormous benefit to individuals and communities as well as academia. The landscape of co-production is so broad that it is not possible to describe but the above might provide some useful compass directions. Co-production offers an exciting way to learn through collaboration, shaping understanding and best practise within the development of a growing discipline. The SPAN History Project was completed during the Covid-19 lockdown, requiring all involved to be creative and adapt in response to the needs of individuals and wider communities, demonstrating the value of establishing clear values and ethics within a project as you never know what might happen in the process.

## Co-written by

**Jude Hutchen**, Community Worker for the SPAN Hands On History project,  
and **Annie Oliver**, Community Inclusion Manager, Wellspring Settlement, June 2021.

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## **Appendix A:**

### **The SPAN Hands On History Project (2019–2021): the full story**

We have to go right back to the beginning! Single Parent Action Network (SPAN) was a network of multi-ethnic grass-roots groups in the four UK nations and was involved in anti-poverty work and transnational participatory research exchanges across the EU. SPAN's activities included education, research, local service provision, community organising and political lobbying. SPAN was led by women who were 50% ethnic minorities and working-class activists. Annie Oliver, who co-wrote this document, was involved in SPAN from 1990 (not long after it started) until it closed in 2016.

The SPAN History Project came about when SPAN closed and two ex-members of staff saved all the SPAN documentation (reports, photographs, displays, research etc.) from being put into a skip. Their vision was to preserve an archive of the work. A conversation started with Dr. Josie McLellan from the University of Bristol's Historical Studies Department, who had been involved in previous SPAN projects. As the remaining SPAN services were merged with Wellspring Settlement, they were also approached to be partners on the project. The university agreed it was a history worth documenting and that the project offered an excellent opportunity for co-produced research. Subsequently an application for funds was submitted to the Arts and Humanities Research Council – which was successful.

In the spirit of SPAN and Wellspring Settlement's commitment to grassroots participatory working, matched with Dr. McLellan's interests and experience, the project team agreed that it should be local community members who would be trained and supported to be researchers. The project team brought together expertise from the heritage, voluntary and university sectors in an innovative participatory methodology with a skilled and experienced evaluation team. A Steering Group was also gathered to bring additional skills and reflection to the project's development. Jude Hutchen, who co-wrote this guidance, was employed as the Community Worker to co-facilitate alongside Dr. McLellan and an experienced Co-produced Researcher Jenny Barke.

The central focus of the project was a History Group meeting weekly at Wellspring Settlement (formerly Barton Hill Settlement) for a year. The group included both academic researchers and community members, activists and services users from both Wellspring Settlement and SPAN. The community researchers comprised twelve mothers from predominately innercity Bristol who experienced a range of barriers to progression in their lives. They worked with two University of Bristol academics and a Community Worker to research the culture and achievements of the local Single Parent Action Network, taking oral histories and analysing the archive. The group



also planned and featured in a short film created by Calling the Shots, reflecting on a group reminiscence by former SPAN employees. They also designed a ‘virtual exhibition’ in the form of a set of commemorative mugs using images from the archive and quotes from interviews, to be distributed to everyone involved. The group presented their research question and the project to a great response from academics at the Modern British Studies Conference in Birmingham (2019).

Due to the onset of Covid restrictions in March 2020, group meetings were shifted online. While this offered a welcome space for reflection on decisions which everyone faced around working, schooling and shielding, it also highlighted some of the vulnerabilities experienced by those in high-rise flats with children, single parents juggling working from home, mental health, the need to access medical support for themselves and their children as well as higher risks to those with health conditions or from ethnic minorities. While the installation of the mural was postponed, work continued and a webinar was organised in July 2020 where members of the group presented the short film and issues raised through the research were discussed via a Q&A. Managing to work via Zoom, the group edited a leaflet presenting the project, which was then circulated prior to the webinar (**Appendix C**). The event was attended by ex-SPAN members as well as local decision-makers, academics and community groups and received excellent feedback.

Following the group, members received one-to-one support for 6 months from the Community Worker to work on their own personal skills, interests and ambitions, including accessing support services, joining other community groups, applying for jobs as well as starting further education and training programs. They were also involved in co-writing articles about the group’s facilitation, the impact of presenting at the Academic Modern History conference as well as the role of the archive on the project. Academic articles were written about recruitment and retention, the methodology of facilitation and outputs and the role of the archive in the project. The archive was also catalogued ready for installation into the Feminist Archive South, University of Bristol, when Covid restrictions allowed. A full and thorough evaluation of the project was also completed and is available at:

<https://www.thespanproject.org.uk/files/2019/06/SPAN-Full-Evaluation-Report-June-2021.pdf>

For more information and links to the outputs, see -  
[www.thespanproject.org.uk](http://www.thespanproject.org.uk)

For a link to the short film, see <https://vimeo.com/435016661>

## Appendix B:

### The SPAN Hands On History Project offer poster

In the 1990's a group of Bristol women came together to support one another and make life better for single parents. They created the Single Parent Action Network.

We want to tell their story  
... and we need your help.



If you might be interested in exploring SPAN's history, working as a group to create and share their story and can attend Tuesdays 09:30 - 12:30 from 30th April (lunch and childcare is provided) come to find out more:

**INFO SESSION**  
**Tues 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1 - 4pm**

Meet with Jenny and Jude for more info about the project, have a tour of the building and get a hot drink and cake.

Or contact Jude Hutchen on 0117 955 6971  
Community Inclusion Office or via email [judeh@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk](mailto:judeh@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk)

Barton Hill Settlement, 43, Ducie Road, Barton Hill, Bristol, BS5 0AX Tel/ fax: 0117 955 6971  
Email: [admin@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk](mailto:admin@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk) Website: [www.bartonhillsettlement.org.uk](http://www.bartonhillsettlement.org.uk)  
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## **Appendix B:**

# **The SPAN Hands On History Project offer poster**

**Over a year long program we hope to offer you:**

**A Weekly group at BHS during term time on Tuesdays 09:30 – 12:30:**

- Working together to develop skills and training in research,  
collecting oral histories and archiving**
- Opportunities to visit local places of interest to the project  
(eg. MShed, Feminist Archive South)**
- Participation in a creative process to present the history to the public**
- Opportunities to present the group and history at conferences and to the local community**
- Experience of working with the University of Bristol and access to the University libraries.**

**Practical support to participate:**

- Childcare in the BHS Family Centre for weekly sessions**
- Tea, coffee and lunch on Tuesdays**
- Access to the Community Inclusion work space and computer at BHS**
- One to one support for personal and career development**

**A record of what your achievements:**

- Accreditation of the programme (if desired)**
- Certification of participation**

**A reference on completion of the course, and the ability to use BHS as a referee for future job/training applications.**

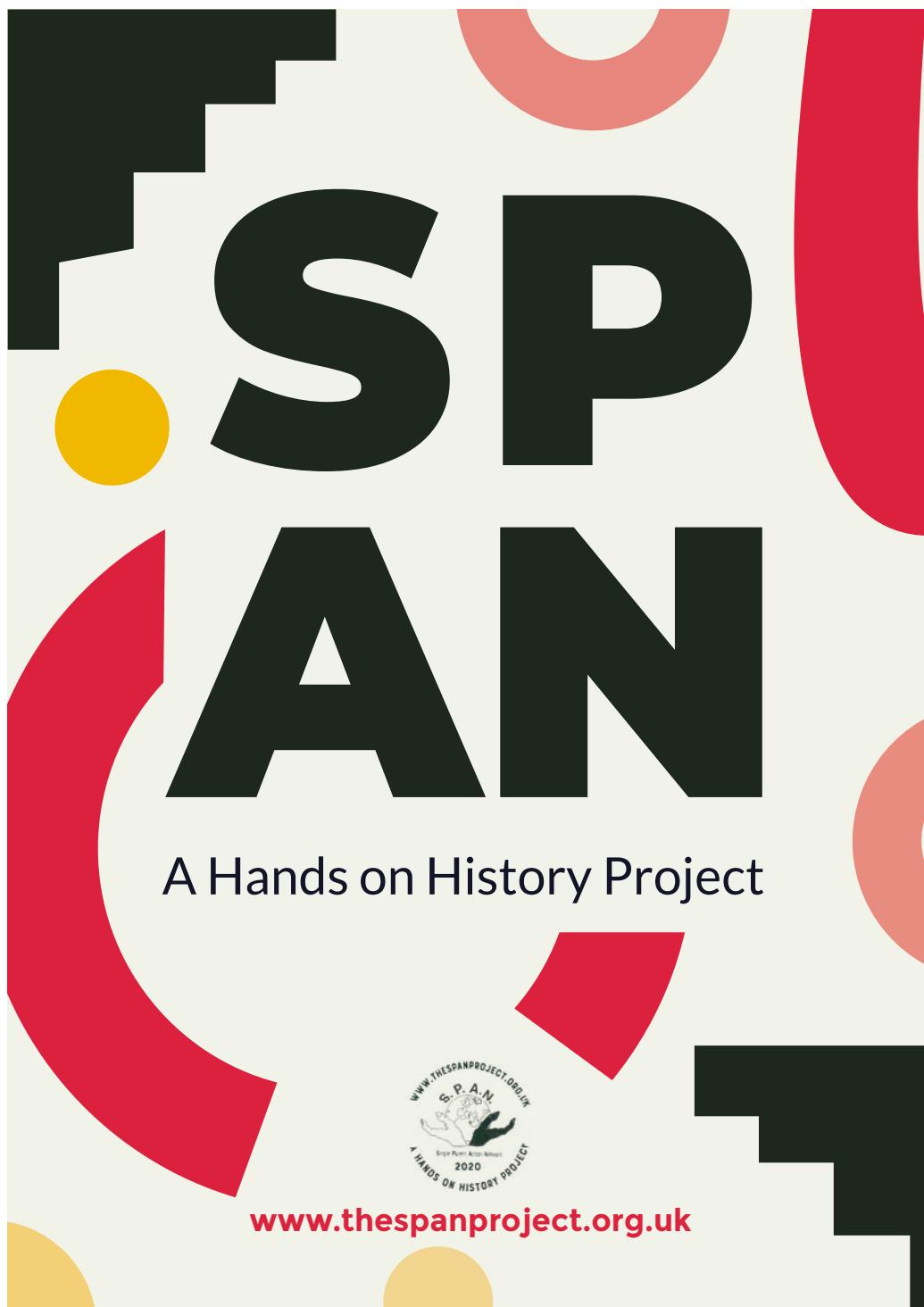
**Contact Jude Hutchen on 0117 955 6971 Community Inclusion Office or via email [judeh@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk](mailto:judeh@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk) to find out more**

Barton Hill Settlement, 43, Ducie Road, Barton Hill, Bristol, BS5 0AX Tel/ fax: 0117 955 6971  
Email: [admin@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk](mailto:admin@bartonhillsettlement.org.uk) Website: [www.bartonhillsettlement.org.uk](http://www.bartonhillsettlement.org.uk)  
A company limited by guarantee, registered in England, number 5031499, registered charity, number 1103139

The logo for SPAN UK features a stylized globe with hands emerging from it, with the letters "SPAN UK" written above the globe.

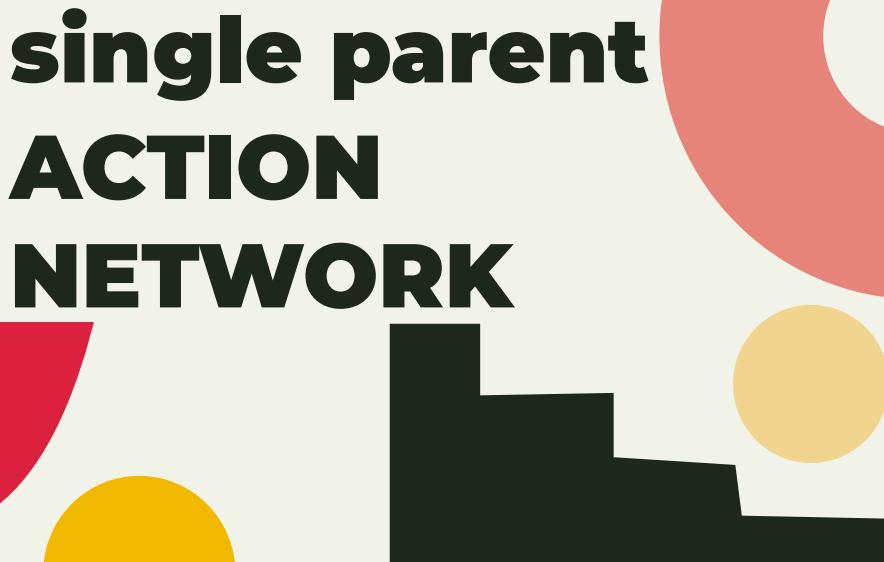
## **Appendix C:**

The SPAN Hands On History Project  
information leaflet output



## **Appendix C:**

### **The SPAN Hands On History Project information leaflet output**



Single Parent Action Network (SPAN) was a UK-wide organisation (1990 - 2016) set up by a group of Bristol women who wanted to make life better for single parents.

It built on the work of Bristol One Parent Project (BOPP), which brought together mostly female single parents to support each other in the 1980s. Like BOPP, SPAN's work always drew on the experiences of single parents and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds living in poverty.

SPAN's work ranged from supporting grassroots groups across the country, and establishing a Bristol Study Centre, to political lobbying at a national and international level. Its activism debunked right-wing political and media myths in the 90s that stigmatised single parents as welfare scroungers and bad parents.

## Appendix C:

### The SPAN Hands On History Project information leaflet output

# about our PROJECT

SPAN: A Hands-On History Project is a participatory research project that involves members of the public in **co-producing historical research**. It is a **collaboration** between Wellspring Settlement (formerly Barton Hill Settlement), **the Feminist Archive South**, and **the University of Bristol**, and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

We believe it is important to bring new voices into the discussion of the past. This seems very important when writing the history of an organisation like SPAN and its many working-class and black activists, which put the experience of single parents at the heart of its work.

From April 2019 to March 2020, a History Group has met weekly at Wellspring Settlement. Since April 2020, due to the Coronavirus, the group has been meeting online. **Our researchers are mothers, single parents, volunteers, campaigners, activists, business owners, graduates, artists and more.** We have been learning about research, looking at the SPAN archive, interviewing people who were there, and planning how to tell the story of SPAN.

Feminist Archive South <http://feministarchivesouth.org.uk/>  
Wellspring Settlement <https://www.bartonhillsettlement.org.uk/>  
University of Bristol <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/public-engagement/>  
Arts and Humanities Research Council <https://ahrc.ukri.org/>

## Appendix C:

### The SPAN Hands On History Project information leaflet output

# our research QUESTION

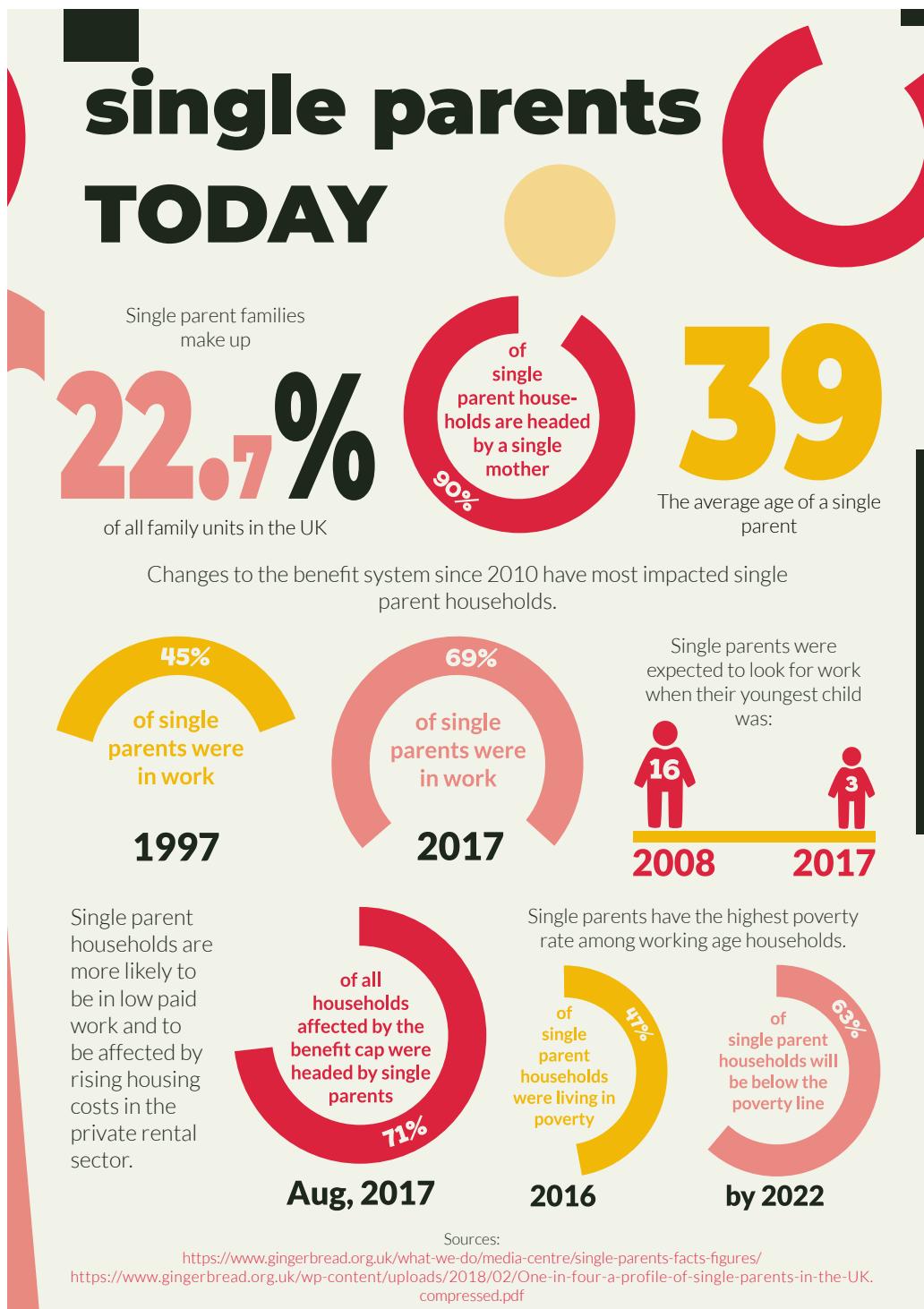
We want to find out the impact of SPAN and explore its story by looking at how it supported single parents, its culture, and the political and social context.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

- We have commissioned the artist **Carrie Reichardt** to design a piece of **public art** featuring archive documents
- We have designed a range of **limited-edition mugs**, drawing on the SPAN archive
- We have made a **short film** with **Calling The Shots**, reflecting on the history of SPAN
- Lorna Henry has been helping us evaluate and learn from the project. Her **Evaluation Report** will be available on our website in early 2021
- The **SPAN archive** has been catalogued and will be accessible to researchers in the Feminist Archive South, in the University of Bristol's Special Collections
- We have interviewed **30 former SPAN workers, volunteers and service users**, and their stories are available in the SPAN archive
- We have spoken about our research at the **Modern British Studies Conference** in July 2019
- We are also working on a number of **academic publications**, which will appear soon and will be available via our website

## Appendix C:

### The SPAN Hands On History Project information leaflet output



# Appendix C:

## The SPAN Hands On History Project information leaflet output

# the project TEAM

**THE HISTORY GROUP:** Jenny Barke, Senior Research Associate  
Yvonne Deeney, Researcher  
Sharon Evans, Researcher  
Rifat (Roofi) Hamid, Researcher  
Muna Hussein, Researcher  
Jude Hutchen, Community Worker  
Amber James, Researcher  
Josie McLellan, Project Lead  
Yanhong/Margaret Nie, Researcher  
Amal Omer, Researcher  
Bianca Ramshaw, Researcher  
Jendaye Selassie, Researcher  
Jess Wheeler, Researcher  
Becky Whitmore, Researcher

**EVALUATION TEAM:** Tim Cole, Co-Investigator  
Lorna Henry, Project Evaluator

**ARCHIVE TEAM:** Vivian Latinwo-Oladije, Archival Fellow  
Ellie Pridgeon, Consultant Archivist

**STEERING GROUP:** Nicole Andrieu, Project Administrator  
Sue Cohen, Community Consultant  
Catherine Lecointe, Chair of Management Board  
Annie Oliver, Community Inclusion Manager

Thank you to everybody who has been interviewed and supported the research.

**FAS** feminist archive south   **Wellspring Settlement**   **University of BRISTOL**   **UK** Arts and Humanities Research Council

[www.thespanproject.org.uk](http://www.thespanproject.org.uk)