Research project: Exploring the value and valuing of research co-production in Scotland

Participant information sheet

About this research

This research explores how different people and organisations in Scotland come to bestow value on co-producing research.

Before you decide to take part in the research, it is important you understand why it is being undertaken and what it will involve.

Who is doing the research?

The research is funded by the Binks Hub. It is a doctoral research project taken forward by Helen Berry (helen.berry@ed.ac.uk) as the sole researcher, and supervised by Dr Emma Davidson, Co-director of the Binks Hub, and Dr Hayley Bennett. It sits in Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh.

About the Binks Hub

The Binks Hub is a network of academics, researchers, community members, practitioners and policymakers working together with communities to co-produce a programme of research. The Binks Hub aims to promote social justice, relational research methods and human flourishing.

The background to this research

There is a current taste for research co-production in the academic world and beyond, as well as co-production applied to services and policy. This is part of a broader shift, emphasising public involvement in decision-making and collaborative governance.

Despite increased popularity, and bold claims made in support of research co-production, there are concerns regarding its evidence base. How do we know that research co-production delivers?

Research co-production is multi-faceted and shaped by context. It may produce different kinds of value for people and organisations, at different scales, and unfolding over time. Having a complex story to tell can make it difficult to give a clear account of its worth. Yet without a clear story, and as funding becomes more precarious, it can also prove difficult to advocate for the spaces, time, resources and systemic changes needed to do this work well.

This research invites a dialogue about what value and impact really mean to those involved in co-producing research. It compares ideas about its value that are contained in documents and institutionalised (e.g. through mechanisms like reporting requirements, quality assessment and performance measures), with lived and felt experiences of collaboration. It also aims to encourage more equitable and transparent conversations about what values matter, and how these values might be made more visible.

Exploring the value and valuing of research co-production in Scotland runs from 2023 to 2026.

What we mean by research co-production for the purposes of this research

Many traditions of research and public/cultural participation inform how people understand the term research co-production. It can mean different things to different people. The term is often used in a general way to mean research *with and for*, rather than on or to, people whose experiences are the research focus. You may identify strongly with the language of co-production or use it alongside other terms (such as participatory research, community engagement, community empowerment, collaborative research, community-led research, community-university partnerships, patient and public involvement (PPI), co-design).

This research focuses on relational research practices that: 1) bring different groups of people into dialogue, collaboration and shared decision-making; 2) to create knowledge through research; 3) while putting into practice values/principles and addressing power relations.

Who is invited to take part?

This research project is about co-producing *research*, so co-production of services or policy alone lies outside of its scope. It is relevant for people and organisations who are co-

producing research with communities in Scotland. This may include people in several roles such as professional researchers; academics; community researchers; community partners; public contributors; people contributing their lived/expertise by experience; people who use services; research managers; knowledge-brokers; policy/decision-makers; research funders/commissioners; community artists and creatives.

We are focusing on research partnerships which include *communities* (public contributors, community members, people contributing their lived experience) and *third/VCSE sector organisations*. Inter-organisational partnerships, exclusively between researchers and professionals, fall outside the scope of this research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form or give your consent verbally for the researcher to record.

You are free to withdraw at any time until the completion of data analysis at the close of 2025. If at any stage you no longer want to be part of the study, please inform Helen Berry at helen.berry@ed.ac.uk and we will discuss with you how your data will be managed. Please contact the researcher as early as possible if you wish to withdraw.

What does taking part involve?

Fieldwork will be carried out over 2025. Research methods will include a qualitative survey which invites participants to write their responses privately to open-ended prompts, a small number of creative focus groups, and follow-up interviews. The researcher will also record her observations. Focus groups and interviews may take place online or in-person and will be scheduled to suit your needs. In addition to the researcher, focus groups may also be attended by an artist supporting the project.

Participants can self-select to take part in the qualitative survey. If they choose to provide their contact details, some participants will be invited to an interview or focus group.

There are no significant risks anticipated from participation.

Why take part?

This research invites a dialogue across individual projects in the Scottish context. This creates a space for individual reflection that is separated from reporting of any one project.

We are committed to provide a short briefing for participants and participating organisations, highlighting key findings.

Will I be reimbursed for expenses or my time?

If your participation in this project is related to paid employment, we may be able to cover any additional costs you incur during your participation, not covered by your employer. For people in unpaid roles taking part in interviews/focus groups, we can pay for time and expenses. Expenses may include travel, childcare, subsistence and support or communication assistance. We endeavour to avoid any participant incurring up front expenses for their participation in the research.

Payments for time will be made in vouchers. Payments will be discussed before participation and on a case-by-case basis. Discussions will consider how participants feel about payment, and whether payment could have any negative consequences.

This research notes Scottish Government guidance on paying participant expenses and compensating for time: https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-paying-participant-expenses-compensating-time/. Payments for time will not fall below the Real Living Wage (https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage).

How will my data be cared for?

Your data will be processed in line with data protection law and the University of Edinburgh's data protection guidance (https://data-protection.ed.ac.uk/privacy-notice-research).

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential within the research team. In the unlikely event that a risk of serious harm to any participant emerges during the research, the appropriate organisation will be informed/appropriate pathways followed, wherever possible letting the person know and doing this together.

Project data will be uploaded as soon as possible to a secure University of Edinburgh server. Personal identifiers and signed consents will be kept separate from your data. If you consent to be audio-recorded, all recordings will be transcribed and de-identified, and the recordings securely deleted on completion of the project.

How will the research be reported?

The findings of this study may be published in a range of written and creative outputs, as well as the completed PhD thesis (published online). Data including quotations will be de-

identified for reporting, and any preferences for attributing quotations to general descriptors (e.g. 'academic' or 'community researcher') will be discussed with you.

De-identified data may be kept for future, ethically approved research in a secure data repository hosted by the University of Edinburgh, for a period of up to ten years.

Who has approved this project?

This research project has been approved by ethical review.

Contact for further information

Further information about this project and the Binks Hub can be found below:

https://binks-hub.ed.ac.uk/

https://binks-hub.ed.ac.uk/research/exploring-meanings-value-and-impacts-of-co-producing-research/

If you have further questions about this project, please contact the researcher Helen Berry (helen.berry@ed.ac.uk), or project supervisors Dr Emma Davidson (e.c.davidson@ed.ac.uk) and Dr Hayley Bennett (hayley.bennett@ed.ac.uk).

If you have any concerns or wish to make a complaint, you can contact the Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity) in the School of Social and Political Sciences:

Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity)
School of Social and Political Sciences
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh EH8 8LN
ethics-ssps@ed.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this Participant Information Sheet.