

# Co-Production Collective Allies Group

## Meeting notes: 23 June 2021

### Members

**Present:** Niccola Hutchinson-Pascal, Lizzie Cain (notes), Graham Hart (chair), Mandy Rudczenko, Cristina Serrao, Rob Horne, Sarah Welsher, Laura Crane

**Apologies:** Laura Cream, Ian Needleman, Simon Denegri

### Updates

#### Our Direction 2020-2022

Nicc and Lizzie updated on progress against each of the goals under the four ambitions in '[Our Direction 2020-2022](#)'. We will share this with our community as part of the one-year milestone (October 2021).

The Allies Group responded positively and encouraged us to 'shout more' about our work, achievements and how we can support others to work this way in order to influence culture change. Suggestions included:

- Taking a 'thought leadership' role through publishing (e.g. in [Research for All journal](#) or a book through [UCL Press](#)) and training offers (e.g. to early career researchers)
- Re-connecting with [Wellcome Trust](#) on their work around [research culture](#).

#### Funding Update

Nicc updated on our funding situation, specifically the additional funding recently secured from UCL's Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF)

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to cover staff costs: £100k secured to be spent by September 2022 – this puts us in a stronger position in the short-term.

We also have an additional circa £40K remaining (as of 11 June) to be spent by March 2023, which does not include income secured elsewhere. Securing consultancy and grant funding continues, but we need to be mindful of ensuring we have the capacity to deliver on these as well as our core activity.

## Evaluation

Lizzie asked the Allies Group to share their thoughts on ‘what matters most’ when it comes to evaluating Co-Production Collective? We plan to explore this with our community in the coming months.

Responses included:

- Clarifying what we (the Co-Production Collective community) want and need from evaluation, for example:
    - Meeting funder needs and interests.
    - Case studies showing how we’re creating culture change (e.g. Rob now thinks about patient public involvement (PPI)/co-production differently
    - Providing resources to support others to co-produce
    - Asking researchers/co-producers ‘how is working in this way different, and what has changed as a result?’
    - Learning about process vs outcomes
  - Being creative with our approach and not over-evaluating
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- Recognising that we will be focusing on understanding and improving our work when evaluating ourselves, rather than objectively and independently assessing our impact from an external point of view.
- Graham noted that the question ‘does co-production make research better?’ is often not possible to answer and might also be the wrong question – participation has value in its own right, research should include the voices of others and can bring benefits to individuals in and of itself.

## Our governance, development and making decisions

### Advisory group

Lizzie presented an idea to bring together a group of people with specific knowledge and experience to act as advisors for Co-Production Collective’s development (specifically evaluation, financial sustainability and communications).

Responses included:

- We need to think about the needs we’re trying to meet before coming up with an idea for a group or structure
  - Advisory groups with 1–2-year terms are more likely to encourage people to commit and allow us to build relationships which can continue
  - Any members would need to understand and commit to our values and way of working
  - We would want lived experience representation on any group (and to recognise that people in other roles also have lived experience, and those with lived experience have other skills too).
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## **How we make decisions about who we work with**

Lizzie reported back on our March co-creation session – [‘How do we decide who we work with?’](#).

Responses reinforced the themes from the session, including:

- Every potential partnership is complex – there are rarely ‘good’ and ‘bad’ opportunities
- We need to move this work forward by developing a clear and published framework for making these decisions, including who is involved, when and in what ways.
- Could consider an ethics group or panel, to help with this thinking.

## **Our governance structure**

We discussed broader questions around our governance and decision-making structures, including some research we’re doing into [‘sociocracy’](#). Themes included:

- Risks of developing multiple layers or separate groups who don’t work together – do we need one overall group/board with representation from all other groups and our community to oversee everything?
  - How do we distribute power and accountability within co-produced structures?
  - Suggestion of hybrid structure – traditional aspects (e.g. a board to hold us to account) but co-produced (who is on it, how it works).
  - Lots of interest in sociocracy and other alternative forms of decision-making, and encouragement to explore this with our community.
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## The role of the Allies Group members

We asked the Allies Group how they saw their role at the moment, and how it could develop in future.

Responses included:

- Graham – see the Allies Group as an open space for the team to get support, and input for ideas. In future, could reinvent traditional structures, as boards have their uses but could be done differently.
- Mandy – interested in exploring alternatives but needs to know what they might be first! Also, keen to build stronger links between our community and the Allies Group.
- Laura Crane – Allies Group members currently hear updates and provide support but could possibly act more as a ‘critical friend’ on specific aspects of our work.
- Rob – personally finds being on the Allies Group interesting and educational, would be keen to know how he can be of more value. Also, important to consider the ‘guarantor’ role a board can play in securing funder confidence. Important that we get those who are most able to help us deliver our work involved in these structures.

## Actions

Agreed approach	Person taking this on	Deadline
1. Team to do more thinking around Advisory Group idea, specifically what our needs are in terms of advice and therefore what solutions may be beneficial.	Nicc/Lizzie	By next meeting
2. Allies meeting notes to be shared with Allies first, then published for community	All	July/Aug 2021

3. Allies to be asked if they would like to contribute to a blog about their role	Lizzie to organise	July 2021
4. Team should use the Allies for questions in between meetings	Nicc/Lizzie	Ongoing
5. Team to continue exploring governance options, especially sociocracy	Nicc/Lizzie	Update at next meeting
6. Team should explore production of case studies to showcase/support our work	Lizzie	By next meeting
7. Team to begin developing framework for decision making and risk, building on the 'How do we decide who we work with' co-creation session	Nicc/Lizzie	July/Aug 2021

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