project change

FREE PRACTICAL TOOL · NO. 05

05

The lived experience payment checklist

A practical prompt for planning fair payment, expenses and recognition.

If everyone else is being paid to be in the room, "thank you for your time" is not always a payment strategy.

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PLAN IT BEFORE RECRUITMENT

Payment is part of participation design.

The exact approach will depend on the work, the person and your organisation. The point of this checklist is to make payment a design question at the start, rather than a finance problem at the end.

- [ ] **Contribution:** what are we asking people to do? Attend, prepare, review, facilitate, make decisions, create content, travel?
- [ ] **Time:** have we counted preparation and follow-up, not just minutes spent in a meeting?
- [ ] **Expertise:** does recognition reflect the skill, responsibility and experience being asked for?
- [ ] **Expenses:** can travel, food, childcare, support worker costs, data or other participation costs be covered so nobody is out of pocket?
- [ ] **Choice:** what payment methods are available, and have we explained them clearly?
- [ ] **Benefits and tax:** have participants been told that payments can have individual implications and signposted to appropriate independent advice where needed?
- [ ] **Timing:** can expenses be paid or booked in advance and other payments made promptly?
- [ ] **Transparency:** do people know what they will receive, when and why before they agree to take part?

DO A FAIRNESS CHECK

Four questions worth asking out loud

Who is being paid already?

If staff, consultants or professionals are contributing as part of paid work, what does it communicate if lived experience expertise is expected for free?

Who cannot afford to take part?

A process can look open while costs quietly exclude people who cannot absorb travel, childcare, lost work or other expenses.

Are we paying for the ask?

A one-off conversation is different from preparing material, joining a steering group or carrying shared responsibility over months.

Is payment the only thing we fixed?

Payment matters, but it does not compensate for unclear purpose, poor accessibility, extractive storytelling or zero influence.

USEFUL SCOTTISH GUIDANCE

The Scottish Government's 2024 guidance on participant expenses and compensation sets out principles including valuing contributions, inclusivity, nobody being out of pocket, transparency, participant choice and prompt payment. It also covers tax and welfare benefit considerations.

FURTHER READING

Scottish Government, Research - paying participant expenses and compensating for time: guidance, gov.scot.

This ProjectChange checklist is a discussion tool, not tax, benefits, employment or legal advice. Organisations and participants should use current authoritative guidance for individual circumstances.