

Ethical Principles for Lived Experience Participation at Justlife

At Justlife, we are committed to embedding lived experience in everything we do. This ethical framework provides an outline of the principles and values guiding our approach to ensure the involvement of individuals with lived experience is meaningful, inclusive, and respectful. It was co-created by Justlife clients, participants, staff and volunteers who have been involved in lived experience work and who have first-hand insights about best practice and equitable inclusion strategies. By adhering to this framework, we aim to create a culture of shared ownership and equitable collaboration while safeguarding the dignity and well-being of all participants. If your work will involve research, please read this alongside the **Research Ethics policy**.

Our Core Principles of Lived Experience Work

Justlife's Lived Experience work rests on eight core principles, co-designed with staff, participants, volunteers and based on what works well and how we aspire to work.

- 1) Equity and Inclusion**
- 2) Person Centred Approach**
- 3) Psychological Safety**
- 4) Accessibility**
- 6) Transparency and Accountability**
- 7) Meaningful engagement**
- 8) Ethical Data Use**

WHAT THESE PRINCIPLES MEAN IN PRACTICE

1) Equity and Inclusion

Ensure that participation is accessible and inclusive, removing barriers related to race, gender, sexual identity, disability, socio-economic status, class, age and other intersecting identities (this list is non exhaustive). Proactively seek diverse perspectives to avoid reinforcing systemic biases. All staff will be trained in DEI principles and inclusive ways of working.

2) Person Centred Approach

A person-centred approach ensures lived experience participation values each individual's unique intersectional identities and experiences, tailoring support to their needs and circumstances. Support should be collaboratively agreed upon with participants, and projects should be planned and budgeted to allow reasonable flexibility in support options and participation routes. Policies should provide enough flexibility for facilitators and project leads to prioritise participant well-being and inclusion while offering clear guidance to maintain boundaries and project limitations.

3) Psychological Safety

Create environments where participants feel safe to participate without pressure to share personal stories, or fear of judgment or harm. Incorporate practices such as trauma-informed approaches, psychological safety, and emotional support.

Projects should plan for how participation begins, continues, and ends. To ensure psychologically safe "good endings," consider how trauma or mental health triggers may heighten emotions during transitions. For projects with a set delivery timescale, establish and communicate end dates from the start, with an ending period designed to support participants' well-being. "Endings" also include significant changes like staff departures, shifts in project phases, or changes in remit that affect participants'

4) Accessibility

Ensure all engagement processes are accessible, including:

- **Sensory Accessibility:** Provide quiet spaces and sensory aids, and minimise overstimulation.
- **Digital Accessibility:** Use user-friendly platforms with assistive technology options where possible. (a review of user friendly and assistive tech on common platforms can be found [here](#))
- **Physical Accessibility:** Select venues that cater to the needs of people with different physical disabilities, including reduced mobility and hearing.
- **Emotional Accessibility:** Use psychologically informed ways of working, led by

trained facilitators; and assess what a level of support is appropriate to offer once you have carried out a project risk assessment and identified what type of work you will be offering the participants.

5) Active Allyship

Our work should focus on providing participants opportunities to grow, and the autonomy to define themselves and their lives. In all our work, we should recognise and value individuals' capabilities, values, skills, careers, training, perspectives, aspirations, and broader life experiences. We should not assume that people with lived experience of homelessness see that as their defining feature or primary motivation for participation.

6) Transparency and Accountability

Clearly communicate the purpose, expectations, and outcomes of all LE involvement activities, and update participants on the impact of their contributions in a format that works for them. Ensure that participants have access to all policies underpinning their involvement, a clear role description, and have staff contact prior to their engagement to ensure they understand their role, and the policies attached to them.

All staff should understand the policies underpinning their work and their responsibilities in the project.

7) Meaningful engagement

Avoid superficial or symbolic gestures of inclusion: involve individuals meaningfully by ensuring their input influences decisions, policies, and practices to an appropriate level and crediting their work and contribution where possible. Be open and clear about the extent and limit of participants influence and power within their role.

Compensate participants fairly for their time, expertise, and contributions in line with the Justlife Lived Experience Payment Policy.

8) Ethical Data Use

Obtain informed consent for the collection and use of personal stories or data using the Justlife consent form. Protect confidentiality and privacy, using information only for agreed purposes. Use pseudonyms or initials, and anonymise data when discussing participant information such as safeguarding concerns, payment or personal information electronically.

Composite Case Studies of the Principles Applied

The following stories illustrate how Justlife's Ethical Principles for lived experience participation can be applied in practice. These demonstrate how the core principles can be embedded in our day-to-day work. Each case highlights the ways in which individuals with lived experience are meaningfully involved in shaping our services and policies, ensuring their voices have impact while safeguarding their well-being.

These are “composite case studies”, meaning they are not based on one person's experience, but are constructed from multiple examples.

Case Study 1: Participation in a Policy Advisory Panel

Angela's journey is a fictional case study illustrating how Justlife's ethical framework for lived experience participation might be applied in practice. It follows a fictional participant through an engagement process that reflects the core principles, leading to meaningful participation and real change.

1. Recruitment and Preparation (Equity and Inclusion, Transparency and Accountability)

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Angela is invited to join a 2 month homelessness disability policy advisory panel through an opportunity fair at a local disability health inclusion conference. Her invitation specifically highlights the importance of hearing from people like her, acknowledging her unique insights.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Before the first meeting, Angela has a 121 session with a facilitator to clearly outline her role, the project's purpose, and the extent of her influence. Accessible briefing materials in print and electronic form explain the policies, expectations, and anticipated outcomes, ensuring Angela fully understands what she is signing up for.

2. First Engagement Session (Psychological Safety, Avoid Tokenism)

- **Psychological Safety:** At the first session, Angela is welcomed into a space where confidentiality and mutual respect are emphasised. The facilitator leads the co-creation of a group agreement, so all the participants can express how they'd like to work safely, and ethically to have the autonomy to agree and express their boundaries of how they'd like to work; and agree participants are not pressured to share personal stories, focusing discussions instead on systemic challenges.

- **Avoid Tokenism:** Angela's voice is treated as an essential part of the conversation, with her feedback directly influencing the panel's direction and design of a group agreement. The session ensures that participants are seen as co-creators.

3. Accessible Participation (Accessibility)

- **Sensory Accessibility:** Angela is provided with the option to join the meeting from a quiet space. Breaks are built into the session to avoid overstimulation.
- **Digital Accessibility:** The hybrid meeting platform is user-friendly, on video technology compatible with assistive technology, and Angela is offered a laptop on loan from Justlife, and given a short tutorial to ensure she feels confident using it.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Although Angela and others join virtually, participants attending in person use a wheelchair-accessible venue with appropriate accommodations.
- **Emotional Accessibility:** The facilitator uses trauma-informed techniques and checks in with Angela after the first session to ensure the pace and tone of discussions feel manageable for her.

4. Payment and Recognition (Fairness and Respect, Transparency and Accountability)

- **Fairness and Respect:** Angela is compensated promptly after each session, in line with Justlife's payment policy. The payment process is explained clearly during her onboarding, and her contributions are acknowledged as being equally valuable to those of other professionals involved in the panel.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Angela is provided with a breakdown of her payments and reassured that any issues will be resolved swiftly by a designated staff member, who she is given the contact details for.

5. Ongoing Support (Psychological Safety, Accessibility)

- **Psychological Safety:** Throughout her involvement, Angela has access to an emotional support contact who checks in with her at a clear and agreed regularity. When Angela feels overwhelmed in one session, she is offered the option to pause and step back without judgment or consequences.
- **Accessibility:** Support is flexible and adaptive to Angela's needs. She offered the option to contribute via written feedback when she cannot attend live discussions.

6. Contribution and Feedback (Avoid Tokenism, Ethical Data Use)

- **Avoid Tokenism:** Angela's feedback shapes tangible outcomes in the policy advisory panel. For example, her suggestions about improving communication in temporary accommodations lead to specific amendments in the policy draft.
- **Ethical Data Use:** When Angela provides input, her data is anonymised as per her request, and informed consent is obtained for any quotes or insights used in reports.

7. Closing the Loop (Transparency and Accountability, Empowerment)

- **Transparency and Accountability:** Angela receives detailed updates about how her contributions influenced the policy. Specific changes are outlined, such as introducing clearer accessibility standards in local temporary accommodations.
- **Empowerment:** Beyond the panel, Angela is invited to participate in co-production training workshops, providing her with opportunities for skill development and future leadership roles.

Conclusion of Angela's Journey

Angela's journey demonstrates how Justlife's ethical framework translates into practice. Each principle—equity, safety, transparency, accessibility, fairness, respect, and ethical data use—is embedded at every stage of her participation, ensuring that her contributions are valued, her well-being is safeguarded, and her impact is tangible.

Case study 2: Participation in a Job Interview Panel

Robin's fictional case study shows how he is invited to participate in a one-off job interview panel for a new outreach role at Justlife. His involvement offers him an opportunity to contribute his lived experience, with a focus on inclusivity and relevance to the community, and is structured in a way that balances his perspective with the wider decision-making process.

1. Recruitment and Preparation (Equity and Inclusion, Transparency and Accountability)

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Robin is recruited through an open call across Justlife's local services to be part of the interview panel. The call specifically seeks individuals who can bring real-world insights to help assess candidates for outreach roles. The call makes it clear that the panel aims to create a diverse, inclusive decision-making process where lived experience plays a central role.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** After Robin expresses interest in joining the panel, he has a 121 session with the facilitator to discuss the panel's purpose, the interview process, and his role. During this session, the facilitator explains how Robin's involvement will be integrated into the decision-making process and ensures he understands the expectations and limits of his role. Robin receives accessible materials, including the role description, interview framework, and guidelines to ensure he feels prepared.

2. Panel Participation (Psychological Safety, Avoid Tokenism)

- **Psychological Safety:** On the day of the interviews, the facilitator emphasises the importance of confidentiality and mutual respect throughout the process. Robin feels safe to share his thoughts, knowing they will be heard without judgment.
- **Avoid Tokenism:** Robin's input is seen as an essential part of the decision-making process, but the facilitator makes it clear that while his lived experience is highly valued, the panel must also consider a range of perspectives to ensure a well-rounded decision. Robin's insights help inform the final assessment of candidates, but the final decision is made collaboratively with all panel members.

3. Effective Support and Integration into the Decision-Making Process (Psychological Safety, Transparency and Accountability)

- **Effective Support:** Before the interview, the facilitator supports Robin in understanding how his lived experience fits into the broader context of the interview process and gives him space to ask questions, so Robin is clear on how his contributions will influence the final decision.

4. Payment and Recognition (Fairness and Respect, Transparency and Accountability)

- **Fairness and Respect:** Robin is fairly compensated for his time and expertise in line with Justlife's policy. His contributions are acknowledged as equally valuable to those of the professional panel members.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Robin is provided with clear information about the payment process, including when and how he will be compensated. A designated staff member is available to address any issues promptly.

5. Feedback and Closing the Loop (Transparency and Accountability, Empowerment)

- **Transparency and Accountability:** After the interview process, Robin is kept up to date about the outcome of the process.
- **Empowerment:** Robin is encouraged to continue engaging with Justlife's initiatives, offering him opportunities for further involvement in similar projects. He is invited to participate in additional workshops to deepen his understanding of co-production and potentially take on future leadership roles.

Conclusion of Robin's Journey

Robin's involvement in the interview panel is a meaningful, short-term engagement that is fully integrated into Justlife's decision-making process. His lived experience is valued as a key input, and his contributions are clearly explained in the context of the broader evaluation. Supported by a facilitator, Robin feels confident in his role and understands how his insights contribute to the final decision. The process aligns with Justlife's ethical framework, ensuring fairness, transparency, and respect while empowering Robin to continue his involvement in future initiatives.

Date of review: 30/08/26 to be carried out by Lived Experience Lead and Internal Lived Experience Advisors