

Co-production

Our work with women and girls with lived experience of multiple unmet needs

Women facing multiple unmet needs are at the sharpest edge of inequality. Too often, **they are excluded and failed by the systems and services that should be supporting them**. Agenda Alliance believes that women who have lived experience of multiple unmet needs have a right to be heard. Given their understanding and expertise, they are **best placed to identify failings and tell us how systems can improve**. However, too often they are shut out of discussions about policy analysis and public service design. Our work seeks to correct this by centring the experience and **expertise of women with lived experience**.

This document summarises our approach to co-production and our key learnings to date. It is intended for use by anyone who might find it useful: women and girls seeking co-production opportunities; organisations looking to start or adapt their own approaches to co-production; or organisations (including Agenda Alliance members) who work with women that might be interested in our work. **If you are interested in being involved in any way or finding out more, please get in touch** by emailing our Senior Research and Engagement Officer, nia@agendaalliance.org.

We accept that meaningfully **embedding co-production into our work is an ongoing learning process**. Agenda Alliance are on this journey: we welcome feedback from our alliance members and, most importantly, from women with lived experience.

How are we currently co-producing our work?

Agenda Alliance facilitates an online Women's Advisory Network (WAN) which brings together between six and ten women, with a range of lived experiences and identities, every two months from across England and Wales to inform our work. The WAN have created their Charter for 2024, which details what they wish to achieve and how they wish to operate. We have also issued some Guidelines that set out what women and girls can expect from working with us, and how we expect everyone to work together.

As well as regular engagement with the WAN, Agenda Alliance work closely with a wider network of women and girls with lived experience across our projects, campaigns and media work. When working on research projects, we consult women and girls with lived experience throughout and, where possible, involve them in designing our methodologies. When working to influence policy, we ensure

women are involved routinely, for example, by involving them in consultation responses or inviting them to meetings with officials. When communicating and campaigning, Agenda Alliance platforms the voices of women with lived experience, at times supporting women to share their expertise with media and journalists. Our work is wide-ranging but, underlying it all, is a steadfast commitment to centring women with lived experience in responsible, reciprocal, and intentional ways.

This word-cloud was created during a WAN meeting to reflect how they view co-production and what the network offers them:



How we co-produce:

Our co-production is structured around three central principles. We believe co-production should be:

1. **Responsible:** we work in a trauma-informed way and are responsive to a woman's age, gender, trauma and culture
2. **Reciprocal:** we compensate women for their time and provide women with opportunities
3. **Intentional:** we aim to make our activities accessible and work to disrupt power-dynamics

What do we mean?

Responsible: As a policy and campaigning organisation, Agenda Alliance **does not directly provide support to women and girls**. However, we absolutely recognise the potential impact that speaking with us may hold for some women. As such, we carry out robust risk assessments and give women and girls the opportunity to bring support workers with them to sessions. Our team receives anti-racism and safeguarding training. We do not work with women under the age of 25 who do not have a named support worker. Importantly, we strive to be **age, gender, trauma,**

and culturally- responsive. Our work together focuses on hope and mechanisms for change, rather than only providing spaces where women and girls have to relive their most difficult experiences.

Reciprocal: We understand that when we work with women with lived experience, they are giving us their labour. As a result, they **deserve to be fairly compensated for their time.** In addition, while we benefit from working with women with lived experience, we also want them to benefit from working with us. As such, we provide opportunities to build personal and professional skills and build confidence in the value of their voices.

Intentional: Agenda Alliance is a feminist organisation: we are aware of and seek to disrupt traditional power dynamics. When it comes to co-production, we **endeavour to move away from the hierarchical relationship between “the researcher” and “the research subject.”** We have gathered feedback from women over the years and have developed practice that empowers women to draw their own boundaries and work in ways that they are comfortable. We enable women and girls to connect with peers who have been through similar life events

We’re always working to improve our practice but some of the ways in which we work to be responsible, reciprocal and intentional are listed below. Our policies are reviewed annually by our board and senior management team.

Responsible	
What we do	What we don't do
We provide a consistent point of contact for women and build relationships over time. We understand that it takes time to cultivate trust.	We do not require participants to work with numerous members of staff and repeatedly share their stories and lived experiences.
We ask women ahead of time about what they don't feel comfortable talking about. We respect their wishes. We check in after sessions to ensure women are feeling okay and encourage self-care.	We do not bring up the most difficult experiences of women's lives and risk re-traumatizing them.
We provide comfortable, quiet spaces where women feel safe to engage openly. When working online, we check whether women have access to internet and suitable equipment. We	We do not require women to come to unfamiliar or potentially re-traumatizing environments.

ask them about whether they would prefer to have their camera on/off.	
We follow our internal safeguarding policy and conduct risk assessments for each woman and girl. We assess the risk that working with Agenda Alliance poses to participants.	We do not work with women without applying our safeguarding policy.
We consider how age affects women's ability to give informed consent.	We do not work with women and girls aged under 25, who do not have a named support worker.
We work closely with specialist, "by and for" organisations and make space for the specific needs of Black, Asian, minoritised and migratised women. We acknowledge the compounding impact of systemic racism upon minoritised women experiencing multiple unmet needs.	We do not assume that all Black, Asian, minoritised and migratised women are a homogenous group, who have the same experiences. We embed their individual preferences into how we approach co-production with them.
We ask women for their consent when sharing their experiences and provide options for anonymity or pseudonyms. We securely save their consent forms and review them regularly.	We do not share anything publicly that could identify a woman without her consent.

Reciprocal	
What we do	What we don't do
<p>We remunerate women and girls fairly by providing them with vouchers of their choosing. The amount is benchmarked and rounded up from the London Living Wage. This is reviewed annually. We aim to remunerate women for any additional time spent outside formal meetings; for example, pre/post session preparation or check-ins, and enabling women to practice self-care.</p> <p>We provide additional funds for childcare, travel costs and subsistence.</p>	<p>We do not demand time and women's expertise for free.</p>

We offer remuneration to specialist and “by-and-for” organisations in recognition of the support they give to the women with whom they’re working.	We do not leave specialist organisations stretched by providing additional support to women with lived experience who engage in co-production.
We provide women with opportunities to receive training in media work and public speaking/presentation skills, and opportunities to put these skills into practice.	We do not women and girls in positions where they might feel uncomfortable or underprepared.
We legitimise and validate women and girls’ experiences by crediting them fairly for their ideas and input .	We do not take women’s ideas and present them as our own policy solutions-.

Intentional	
What we do	What we don’t do
We involve women and girls consistently and over time. When working on a project, we will engage with them before, during and after its completion. We let them know the outcomes of projects they have worked on.	We do not ask women questions once, and never speak to them again.
We check quotes with women after meetings to confirm that they are happy with how we have reflected their insights.	We do not gather information and then use it whenever we want.
We disrupt traditional power dynamics by co-creating research processes alongside women with lived experience.	We do not tell women and girls how they have to work with us.
We ask women for consent when saving their data and align our procedures with GDPR protocol. All sensitive is “triple locked” on our secure server.	We do not needlessly and insecurely share women’s data.
We ask women for their insights on language, understanding how they would like us to refer to them. Some women prefer “expert by experience”, others prefer “peer-researcher” or “researcher with lived experience”.	We do not assume that all women have the same preferences with regard to language.

We use a range of different models to engage women and girls including advisory groups, interviews, surveys and media work. We robustly explain what each model involves and how the experience could affect them. Outside of safeguarding concerns, women make their own decisions about the extent and limits of their involvement.

We do not assume that every woman has the same needs.

We explain to women what media and communication work involves, offering them opportunities to learn before they participate. If they do engage with media, we will attend interviews with them (if they wish) and be a trusted intermediary between journalists and women with lived experience.

We do not put women in contact with media and journalists without their informed consent and offering support.

We actively seek feedback and ask women what we can do better. We capture their feedback and respond to their suggestions on best-practice.

We do not assume that we know everything or that we never make mistakes.