# Engaging People With Lived Experience

ACROSS A PROJECT OR PROGRAMME LIFECYCLE

Programme Lifecycle Handbook

# Contents


— Page 4
Introduction

— Page 6
General Principles of Engagement

— Page 10
Considerations for Regional and Country Contexts

— Page 14
How to Use This Handbook

— Page 16
Chapter 1 — Definition & Design Stage

— Page 28
Chapter 2 — Mobilisation Stage

— Page 42
Chapter 3 — Delivery & Implementation Stage

— Page 54
Chapter 4 — Closure Stage

— Page 68
Resources for Engaging People with Lived Experience

— Page 69
Appendices

— Page 72
Glossary

INTRO

# Introduction

This handbook provides practical guidance for organisations delivering programmes on modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT). It supports organisations to work with People with Lived Experience (PLE), including survivors of modern slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, and exploitation, as professional contributors across each stage of the programme lifecycle. The guidance applies to both programmes and projects, recognising that many organisations operate across both.

PLE contribute expertise that strengthens programme design, delivery, and learning. Their insight supports a deeper understanding of barriers to access, service experience, and the assumptions that shape outcomes. Where organisations establish clear roles, compensation, and pathways for this expertise, lived experience perspectives inform decisions, risk awareness, and learning over time.

This handbook outlines practical approaches that organisations can apply across the programme lifecycle. The guidance draws on the United Kingdom's (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Programme Operating Framework and recommendations from the UK Modern Slavery Policy Evidence Centre's report on lived experience engagement.

This handbook also recognises the professional contributions of PLE who participate in working groups convened through the Meaningful Survivor Engagement Project under the Home Office's Modern Slavery Fund, delivered by Survivor Alliance. Insight from these engagements contributes to the guidance presented here. PLE contributors participated in a professional advisory capacity, and their expertise is incorporated through structured consultation and synthesis across programme lifecycle considerations.

Organisations approach this work from different starting points. Some programmes and projects are introducing lived experience engagement for the first time. Others are strengthening established advisory roles or expanding how lived experience insight informs governance and programme learning. The framework presented here supports both contexts by helping organisations review current practice, identify where additional systems may strengthen engagement, and build on approaches already in place.

This handbook follows the programme lifecycle from Definition and Design through Mobilisation, Delivery, and Closure. Three sections precede the lifecycle chapters to support consistent application across contexts: General Principles of Engagement, Considerations for Regional and Country Contexts, and How to Use This Handbook. A resources section and appendices follow the lifecycle chapters and provide practical tools organisations can apply as engagement practices continue to develop.

→ *This document should be read alongside the FCDO Programme Operating Framework and the Modern Slavery Policy Evidence Centre report on Lived Experience Engagement, both of which inform the structure and content of this handbook.*

UK Government

Survivor Alliance

# General Principles of Engagement

Meaningful engagement with PLE develops through consistent organisational practice. Effective engagement is supported by clear principles that guide how roles are defined, how participation is resourced, and how lived experience insight informs programme decisions. The three principles outlined below provide the ethical and operational foundation for the guidance presented in this handbook. Organisations can apply these principles across each stage of the programme lifecycle.

## Non-Tokenistic Engagement

Effective engagement ensures that PLE participate in ways that enable their expertise to inform programme development and decision-making. Engagement approaches introduced late in programme processes, centred on personal testimony, or structured through informal and goodwill contributions can limit how lived experience insight informs programme outcomes.

Programmes that establish clear roles for PLE contributors, provide appropriate compensation, and involve lived experience insight early in programme discussions create stronger conditions for meaningful collaboration. Transparent processes support this work. Effective engagement includes providing contributors with clear information on how their input informs decisions, where it sits within programme governance, and how feedback is communicated once decisions are made.
A practical indicator of effective engagement is the extent to which lived

experience insight informs programme design elements such as scope, design, safeguarding arrangements, and operational assumptions. Where engagement structures support this level of influence, lived experience expertise becomes integrated within programme governance and learning processes.

Organisations should also be attentive to how contributors' behaviour is interpreted within engagement settings. PLE may present as more guarded or hesitant in certain contexts. These responses are predictable and rooted in past experience of harm or institutional failure, and should not be misread as indicators of low capacity. Ethical engagement practice requires awareness of these dynamics and a readiness to adapt communication and participation structures accordingly.

**MARKERS OF NON-TOKENISTIC ENGAGEMENT INCLUDE:**

- PLE involvement before programme design elements or funding decisions are fixed.
- Compensation for all contributions, including preparation and travel time.
- Documented feedback to contributors on how their input was used.
- Visible changes to programme design, safeguards, or assumptions as a result of PLE input.
- Authority and decision-making power, not just advisory or consultative roles.

# Trauma-Informed Practice

Many PLE carry histories of exploitation, harm, and institutional failure. Trauma-informed practice is reflected in how engagement processes are designed, with attention to avoiding conditions that recreate powerlessness or exposure and to supporting the safety, agency, and dignity of contributors.

In practice, this is reflected in how participation is structured and communicated. PLE contributors are provided with clear information about the scope and purpose of their involvement, along with genuine

choice over the level and nature of participation. Time is built in for preparation and debrief, or follow-up. Processes are designed to avoid repeated requests for personal narratives where these do not contribute to programme outcomes. Access is provided to appropriate well-being or supervisory support and maintained throughout engagement.

Organisations also consider how timelines and expectations shape participation. Requests for input are planned to allow time for consideration and response. Urgency is only used where it reflects a clear operational requirement. These approaches support informed participation and help maintain contributor autonomy.

Supervisors and programme leads working directly with PLE contributors receive training in trauma-informed supervision as part of standard safeguarding practice. PLE contributor well-being is understood as a condition of programme quality. Organisations that invest in trauma-informed systems often sustain higher quality and more candid engagement over time.

**TRAUMA-INFORMED ENGAGEMENT MEANS:**

- Providing clear, advance information about participation scope and use of contributions.
- Offering genuine choice over involvement without penalty for stepping back.
- Separating requests for personal narrative from analytical and advisory contributions.
- Ensuring supervisors of PLE contributors are trained in trauma-informed practice.
- Building in debrief, well-being support, and transition planning at all stages.

# Preventing Harm

Effective engagement with PLE depends on thoughtful design and clear organisational structures. Engagement processes function best when PLE contributors are prepared for their roles, expectations are clearly defined, and appropriate support is available throughout participation. Organisational systems such as role clarity, safeguarding procedures, and balanced distribution of advisory responsibilities create conditions where contributors participate with confidence and provide candid insight.

Strong engagement practice is supported by deliberate preparation. Organisations strengthen engagement by completing individual risk assessments before activities begin, establishing clear confidentiality and opt-out arrangements, and confirming that safeguarding and escalation processes are understood and ready to operate. Regular review of workload, scope, and compensation ensures that expectations remain proportionate and that participation is sustainable for contributors. Preparation also includes reviewing accessibility arrangements, such as scheduling flexibility, language support, and participation format options, and ensuring that staff who work alongside PLE contributors have received relevant orientation on trauma-informed approaches and the principles of respectful engagement before collaboration begins.

Attention to cumulative workload is also important. Individual engagement activities may function well on their own, while sustained reliance on the same contributors across multiple activities can gradually increase demands on their time and expertise. Structured check-ins with contributors, held separately from programme reporting discussions, provide an opportunity to review expectations, identify emerging pressures, and make adjustments where needed.

Engagement practices should also be implemented alongside the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) guidance. The GEDSI framework supports organisations to consider additional dimensions of safeguarding, access, and inclusion that apply across all programmes.

→ *Harm prevention requires continuous attention across the programme lifecycle. Regular review of contributor support arrangements, alongside the scope and expectations of their roles, helps ensure that engagement remains proportionate to the resources, safeguards, and organisational structures in place.*

# Considerations for Regional and Country Contexts

The guidance in this handbook applies across diverse regional and country contexts. Engagement with PLE takes shape within local social, legal, and institutional environments, and programmes benefit from adapting engagement approaches to reflect those conditions. Cultural norms, regulatory frameworks, professional ecosystems, and the specific risks that PLE may encounter all influence how engagement is designed and supported. This section highlights several cross-cutting considerations that implementing organisations can review when applying the guidance in this handbook within their own operational context.

## Varying Norms and Levels of Practice

Engagement with PLE occurs at different levels of organisational experience across countries and professional sectors. In some contexts, survivor participation in programme design and governance is supported by established sector standards and professional networks. In others, organisations are introducing these approaches within developing systems where shared practices, infrastructure, and professional pathways continue to evolve. Organisations working in contexts where engagement practice is developing can strengthen their work through investment in organisational capacity, including staff training, role development, and collaboration with local survivor-led

organisations or networks that contribute experience and contextual knowledge. In contexts where engagement practice is more established, organisations benefit from drawing on existing sector learning and professional networks, building on knowledge already present within the local ecosystem.

## Identity, Disclosure, and Safety

Being publicly identified as a survivor of modern slavery, trafficking, or exploitation carries very different levels of risk in different countries. In some contexts, public disclosure is relatively safe and may even be a source of professional and social recognition. In others, it can expose individuals to stigma, family or community rejection, legal risk, or direct physical harm, including from those who perpetrated their exploitation.

Organisations should never assume that a PLE contributor's willingness to engage implies willingness to be publicly identified, or that their comfort with disclosure in one context translates to others. Individual risk assessment should be completed before any public-facing involvement is requested, and contributors should have genuine and penalty-free choice over the extent to which their identity, personal history, or role is disclosed in any programme context.

Many professionals working at the frontline of anti-trafficking and exploitation programmes come from communities affected by these issues and may bring forms of lived experience to their work. Individuals may draw on personal insight without identifying as survivors or choosing to disclose this in a professional setting. Engagement approaches benefit from recognising this diversity of experience and ensuring that organisational practices respect personal boundaries around disclosure.

Programme structures can support this by establishing engagement pathways that value multiple forms of expertise while maintaining clear professional roles. Community-based professionals, programme staff, and formally contracted PLE advisors each contribute distinct perspectives that strengthen programme understanding and decision-making. Thoughtful design of engagement systems helps ensure that these forms of knowledge complement one another and contribute constructively to programme learning and governance.

# Government, NGO, and Regulatory Environments

The regulatory and political environment shapes the conditions under which organisations engage PLE. Legal frameworks governing civil society activity, public advocacy, data use, and association influence how programmes are structured and how contributors participate.

Across different settings, these conditions vary in the degree to which they enable or constrain engagement. In some contexts, government institutions support survivor-led advocacy and programme activity. In others, restrictions related to registration, funding, public communication, or movement affect how organisations operate and how visible or formalised participation can be.

Organisations benefit from assessing these conditions during programme design and defining engagement approaches that align with the operating environment. This includes determining how roles are structured, how contributions are documented, and the extent to which participation takes place in public, advisory, or internal formats.

Where specific risks arise, including those related to immigration status, organisational affiliation, or engagement in policy dialogue, these should be reflected in the programme's risk framework and addressed through appropriate safeguarding and mitigation measures.

# Recruitment, Compensation, and Remuneration

Recruitment and compensation practices are shaped by the operating environment in which programmes are delivered. Legal frameworks, labour regulations, financial systems, and organisational structures influence how PLE are engaged, contracted, and supported as professional contributors.

When identifying contributors, organisations draw on established survivor networks and organisations with experience connecting programmes to qualified individuals. These networks provide access to PLE with relevant expertise and contribute to continuity in how lived experience is engaged across programmes and contexts. Recruitment processes align contributors with defined programme functions, supported by clear role descriptions that specify the expertise required and the areas of work or decision-making processes the role will inform.

This alignment enables PLE to engage in ways that reflect their professional strengths and areas of experience.

Roles are structured to reflect the range of professional contributions made by PLE, extending across advisory, technical, and delivery functions. This includes roles in training, evaluation, programme design, and participation in coordination, management, or governance structures. Contributions may be time-bound or ongoing and may operate within collaborative working arrangements where contributors inform and shape programme activity through sustained input. Structuring roles in relation to programme functions supports clarity of expectation, strengthens the application of expertise, and contributes to continuity across programme stages.

Selection processes are also structured and transparent, with individual risk assessments completed prior to engagement. Organisational systems are prepared to support participation from the outset, including administrative, human resources, safeguarding, and finance functions. This preparation enables contracting, onboarding, and engagement to proceed without delay and supports consistency across different operating contexts.

Compensation is integrated within programme delivery and reflects the professional nature of lived experience expertise. All forms of contribution are recognised, including preparation, participation, and follow-up activities. Remuneration is determined in relation to the level of expertise required, the scope and duration of the role, and the standards applicable within the operating context. In international and country-specific settings, programmes may reference locally relevant compensation benchmarks, including government guidance, sector standards, or comparable professional advisory rates. For example, some government-funded programmes draw on nationally established hourly rates for advisory or specialist input. In the United States, a reference point of $81.25 per hour has been used within federally funded contexts for professional advisory contributions, providing a consistent basis for determining appropriate compensation while allowing adaptation to local conditions.

Organisations establish written compensation practices and policies that define how rates are determined, how they are reviewed, and how payment is administered. Systems are in place to ensure that payments to individual contributors are processed efficiently and reliably. Compensation for PLE is incorporated within project management budgets, supporting consistent and sustained engagement.

# How to Use This Handbook

This handbook supports organisations working with PLE across the full lifecycle of a programme. It is organised around four interconnected stages, Definition and Design, Mobilisation, Delivery, and Closure, each of which presents distinct decisions, challenges, and opportunities for meaningful engagement.

The chapters can be read in sequence as a complete resource or reviewed individually as reference material at any stage of programme development. Readers are encouraged to move between chapters when tracing how decisions made at one stage shape the conditions at the next.

Each chapter follows a consistent structure: purpose of the stage, the rationale for engaging PLE, common challenges, examples of meaningful practice, risks and safeguards, organisational skill levels, proportionality, and key learning. This structure is intentional. It allows the organisation's leadership to locate the specific dimension of engagement most relevant to their current context, without needing to read the entire chapter on every occasion.

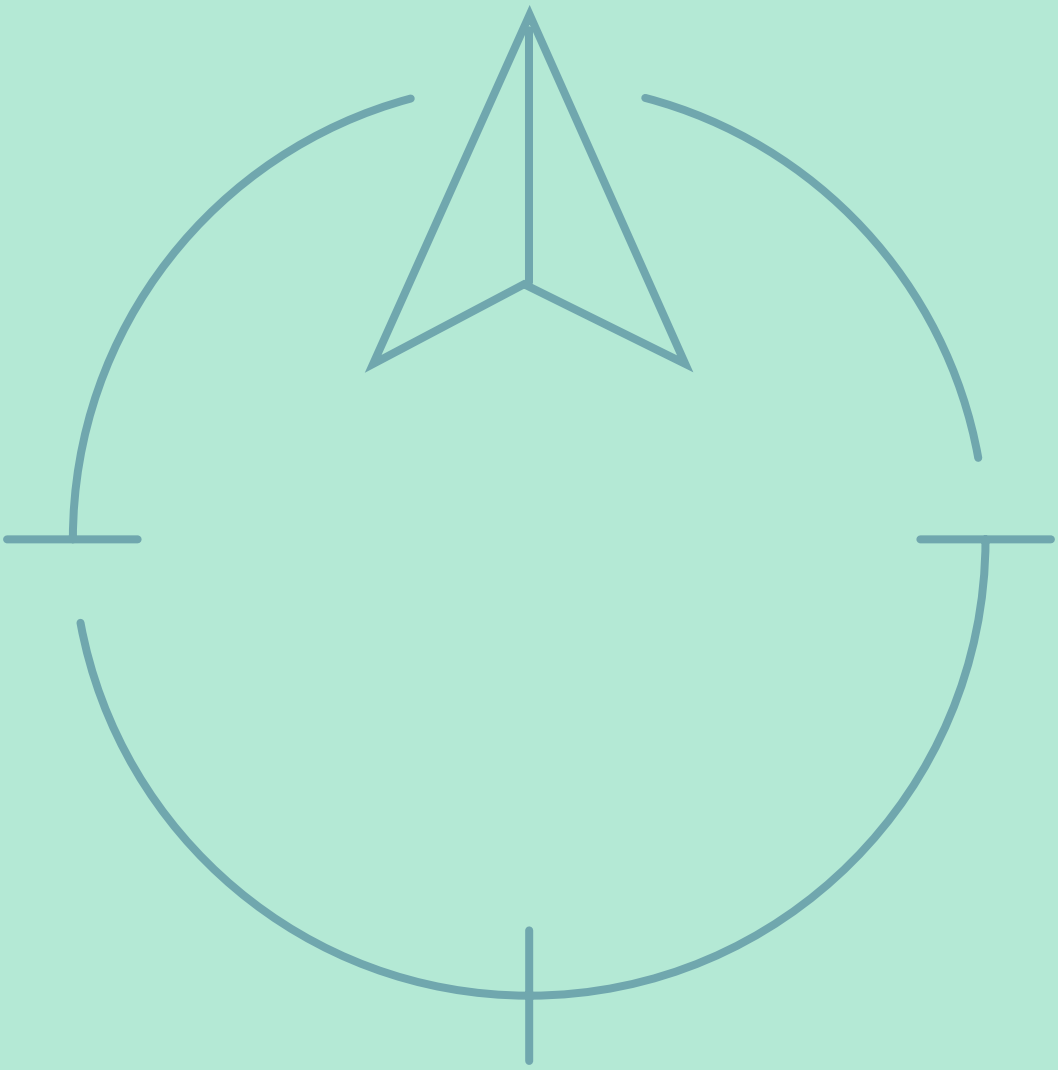
Throughout this handbook, a number of recurring conventions are used. Callout boxes highlight principles, decision cues, and risk indicators that organisational leadership may find useful at a glance. Organisational skill level descriptions are presented as indicative patterns rather than benchmarks. They reflect how engagement operates at different levels of organisational readiness and support reflection. Insight prompts, distinguished by a sidebar, offer brief questions or observations that help organisational leadership pause, check assumptions, and proceed with greater clarity.

This handbook is grounded in the knowledge and professional expertise contributed by PLE of modern slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, and exploitation who work across the sector at all stages of programme lifecycles. Concepts are illustrated through practical application, and the guidance is designed to be usable by programme teams, governance structures, and organisational leadership alike.

### A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Throughout this handbook, People with Lived Experience (PLE) are referred to as professional contributors, subject-matter experts, and advisory participants. This language reflects their role. Lived experience is a form of expertise. It informs analysis, strengthens design, and improves accountability. Organisations that recognise PLE as professional colleagues and prepare internal processes to contract, compensate, and structure their engagement are better positioned to make that expertise count.

# CHAPTER 1



# Definition & Design Stage

CHAPTER 1

# Definition & Design Stage

## Purpose Of This Stage

The definition and design stage establishes what a programme intends to change, for whom, and on what basis. Decisions at this stage shape delivery options, programme feasibility, and the likelihood that an intervention is accessed and used as intended. Once funding is secured and implementation begins, many design decisions become difficult to revise without disruption, delay, or additional cost.

This stage also determines whose knowledge informs early choices. Design decisions reflect which forms of expertise are prioritised, which needs are named, and whose realities are made visible through the design process. Engagement with PLE at this stage supports more realistic programme design by testing assumptions early, grounding objectives in lived realities, and identifying risks that may not be apparent through research, policy analysis, or professional expertise.

Decisions about scope are often understood as constraints. In practice, they serve an enabling function. Clear scope supports commitment to what is achievable, enables appropriate resourcing, and sets expectations for delivery teams and contributors that can be sustained over time. At the design stage, thoughtful scope-setting strengthens credibility and supports meaningful engagement over time.

At this point, objectives function as directional anchors rather than detailed performance measures. Their role is to guide decision-making, align contributors, and provide a shared sense of purpose as the work develops. Objectives may evolve, and early engagement with PLE supports clarity and coherence as programmes move toward development. This clarity helps prevent the work from becoming overstretched and creates a foundation for realistic planning across the full programme lifecycle.

Effective design anticipates future realities. Considerations such as staffing capacity, safeguarding requirements, reporting obligations, and partnership coordination shape how ideas are implemented in practice. Engagement with PLE to identify assumptions early supports stronger and more adaptable programme design.

Taken together, these considerations support recognition of when a programme is ready to move forward. The transition from definition into mobilisation occurs when core concepts, scope, objectives, and roles are sufficiently clear. With these elements in place, organisations proceed through planning and delivery while remaining responsive to learning as it emerges.

→ *Decision cue: If the scope of the programme cannot be summarised by different members of the design team, alignment may still be incomplete, and early PLE engagement is well placed to surface that gap.*

## Why Engagement with PLE is Important at the Definition Stage

Programmes are often designed in response to policy frameworks, sector norms, or funding criteria. These inputs provide structure and accountability, and can also produce designs that are technically coherent yet misaligned with how people experience services, authority, safety, and access in practice.

Early engagement with PLE functions as a reality check. Lived experience provides analytical insight into how systems operate, including where incentives misalign, assumptions fail, or interventions unintentionally exclude the people they aim to support. This clarity supports more realistic planning for delivery.

Clear articulation of how different forms of expertise contribute to the work supports meaningful engagement with PLE. This includes distinguishing between those who shape decisions, those who provide professional insight, and those responsible for delivery. Transparency at this stage helps prevent confusion and supports respectful, ethical collaboration as the programme develops.

At this stage, organisations make decisions about how and when to engage lived experience. Whether engagement begins before or during formal design, this choice shapes what is possible in terms of credibility, relevance, and adaptability as the programme progresses.

**ENGAGING PLE AT THE DEFINITION STAGE CAN STRENGTHEN PROGRAMME DESIGN BY:**

- Ensuring problem definitions reflect lived priorities rather than inferred or institutionally conceived needs.
- Challenging assumptions embedded in Theories of Change, particularly those related to behaviour change, compliance, access, and safety.
- Identifying contextual and operational risks that are absent from secondary data or rapid assessments.
- Improving the relevance of results frameworks by aligning indicators with lived experience rather than proxy measures alone.

# Challenges and Risks at the Definition & Design Stage

## Structural Constraints

Funding constraints remain a common barrier. Design work often occurs before resources are available to compensate PLE. Funding proposals require a defined programme, and ethical design requires paid engagement. Where organisations

lack reserves or flexible funding, engagement is often delayed. Maintaining a small flexible budget line for early engagement, including a modest allocation, makes ethical consultation possible before programme design is finalised.

Procurement and compliance requirements shape what is possible at the design stage. Grant and contracting frameworks narrow options early. Organisations that engage PLE insight before these elements are finalised are better positioned to reflect it in what they commit to. Where this is not possible, noting it as a learning point informs how future design processes are structured.

Organisational readiness is an enabler of effective engagement. Where systems for contracting, safeguarding, trauma-informed supervision, or clear decision-use pathways are still developing, investment in these foundations before engagement begins strengthens safety and the quality of contribution. Treating readiness as a design consideration supports thoughtful programme planning.

Concern about the implications of early engagement is common and worth acknowledging. Organisations sometimes hesitate to involve PLE before design elements are confirmed, uncertain about the scope of revision that may follow. In practice, adjustments generated through early engagement are typically modest and manageable. Changes made at the design stage are less disruptive than those required once delivery has begun.

→ *The ease of engagement at this stage is largely shaped by organisational systems rather than individual project or programme teams. Addressing these through resourcing, policy, and system design reduces the burden on PLE to navigate constraints and helps prevent risks in how contributions are requested and used.*

## Engagement Patterns and Associated Risks

Engagement is most effective when it functions as genuine design input. Late-stage consultation, unpaid contributions, and reliance on personal narratives without decision-making authority are patterns that benefit from early review. Attention to historical, cultural, and political context strengthens both relevance and trust and forms part of meaningful engagement.

### PRACTICES THAT LIMIT THE POTENTIAL OF ENGAGEMENT AT THIS STAGE INCLUDE:

- Engaging PLE only after programme design elements or funding decisions are fixed.
- Seeking endorsement or legitimacy rather than substantive insight.
- Expecting PLE to resolve systemic or structural design issues individually.
- Overlooking historical, cultural, or political dynamics that shape lived experience.
- Relying on unpaid, informal, or last-minute contributions for core design decisions.

*If lived experience input is collected but does not result in changes to scope, assumptions, or safeguards, engagement may be extractive rather than meaningful. The question worth asking regularly is not whether PLE were involved, but whether their involvement changed anything, and if it did not, what that reveals about how engagement is currently structured.*

## Examples of Meaningful Engagement at the Definition Stage

Meaningful engagement is characterised by influence on decisions. The following activities reflect how PLE can contribute substantively at this stage:

### FORMS OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AT THE DEFINITION STAGE INCLUDE:

- Leading or co-developing problem statements, objectives, or intervention logic.
- Reviewing and refining Theories of Change, including assumptions and risk pathways.
- Contributing to concept notes, business cases, or funding applications prior to submission.

- Advising on feasibility, safety, and contextual relevance.
- Identifying lived-experience-led or community-based delivery partners.
- Co-developing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approaches that reflect lived priorities.

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — REVISITING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

A consortium preparing a funding proposal for a modern slavery prevention programme invites two survivor professionals to review the draft Theory of Change before submission. Both contributors identify an assumption the design team has not considered, that people will access support on their own once they become aware of services. This does not reflect how people navigate support in practice, especially where there is limited trust in statutory systems. The assumption is revised, and the programme is built around trusted community intermediaries. At evaluation, access rates compare favourably with similar initiatives. The design team later reflected that the change took minimal time to adjust and meaningfully expands who the programme is able to reach.

→ *Reflective prompt: At what point in your programme design process do PLE contributors encounter the Theory of Change? Are they reviewing assumptions before the logic is finalised, or after it has been used to structure the funding application?*

Effective examples demonstrate that insights from lived experience are incorporated into programme management and decision-making. Organisations maintain transparency in how input informs decisions, ensure appropriate compensation for contributions, and adjust implementation in response to what is learned. These practices are reflected in visible adjustments to programme elements, including scope, safeguarding measures, operational assumptions, and design logic.

### Mitigation Strategies

Effective mitigation at the definition stage centres on early, paid, and influence-bearing engagement. This includes securing flexible funding in advance of formal programme scoping, even at a modest level, and designing decision-making structures so that lived experience input informs programme design elements before they are fixed. Documented feedback loops demonstrate how PLE contributions shape programme design.

Maintaining a modest flexible budget for early engagement supports ethical consultation before formal programme funding is confirmed. Procurement and compliance requirements are recognised as design constraints and are identified early in the process. Where internal readiness gaps exist, these are treated as design considerations and addressed before engagement begins.

Power dynamics and risk aversion related to lived experience involvement are addressed by framing early engagement as a form of risk reduction. Adjustments made at the design stage are typically modest and less disruptive than changes required during delivery. Preparation of safeguarding, contracting, and trauma-informed support structures before engagement begins supports safe and credible participation.

## Examples of Meaningful Engagement at Different Levels of Organisational Readiness — Definition & Design Stage

The following examples illustrate how meaningful engagement with PLE tends to look across organisations at different levels of readiness during the definition and design stage. These are indicative patterns, rather than benchmarks. They reflect how engagement tends to operate when systems and readiness are at different points of development, and are intended to support reflection rather than assessment.

## Early Stage



Organisations at this stage are beginning to explore ways of working with PLE. Engagement may occur through informal conversations, ad hoc consultations, or opportunities that arise during programme planning. Expectations and decision pathways are still being clarified, and participation may sometimes be connected to external requirements rather than a fully developed design approach. This stage reflects early organisational learning and growing recognition of the value of lived experience insight.

## Developing

At this stage, organisations introduce more structured consultation methods and begin regularly compensating PLE for their contributions. Engagement processes are becoming clearer and more intentional. Input may influence particular programme elements such as service design, communication approaches, or safeguarding considerations, while organisations continue building systems that allow lived experience insight to inform wider programme direction.

## Advanced

Organisations at this level establish ongoing advisory mechanisms and demonstrate how lived experience insight contributes to multiple programme decisions. Input from PLE informs direction-setting, assumption-testing, and risk assessment throughout programme design. Engagement is embedded within governance and leadership structures, supported by formal contracting, dedicated staff roles, and trauma-informed supervision. Lived experience insight functions as an integrated component of programme design and organisational decision-making.

*Organisations assessing their level of engagement with PLE as professional contributors can examine how engagement is reflected in organisational systems, authority structures, and decision-making processes. Engagement levels become visible when PLE expertise informs programme practice, planning, and adjustment.*

# Engagement Scale and Proportionality

Engagement is proportionate to programme scope, organisational capacity, and decision-making needs. Expectations align with available resources and support systems, recognising PLE as professional contributors whose experience and expertise warrant appropriate support and compensation.

Smaller programmes often benefit from deeper engagement with a smaller number of PLE, allowing for sustained contribution and clearer feedback loops. Larger or multi-site programmes often require broader participation, supported by defined structures that clarify how insight is gathered, interpreted, and used. Engagement that expands without adequate support can place undue burden on PLE, reduce the quality of insight, and weaken trust over time.

Engagement scale decisions made at the design stage are documented. When engagement expands during delivery without clear communication channels, defined points of contact, or a documented scope, external contributors may lack the organisational context needed to apply their expertise effectively. Deciding and recording the intended scale and structure of engagement before mobilisation supports clarity as staff roles, partnerships, and activities evolve.

### WHEN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE SCALE OF ENGAGEMENT, ORGANISATIONS SHOULD CONSIDER:

- The time, emotional labour, and analytical expertise required of PLE.
- The availability of compensation, supervision, safeguarding, and follow-up support.

- How PLE input will inform decisions, and whether this use is proportionate to the level of engagement requested.
- Whether engagement mechanisms are sustainable beyond the design phase, or risk becoming extractive if not maintained.

# Key Learning

Engaging PLE at the definition stage supports better decision-making about what a programme is and how it is delivered. Early engagement reduces avoidable risk, strengthens credibility, and increases the likelihood that programmes are relevant, trusted, and used as intended.

→ *Design choices made at this stage shape which forms of engagement are possible during mobilisation, particularly in relation to staffing, partnerships, and risk management. What is decided here creates the conditions, or the constraints, for everything that follows.*

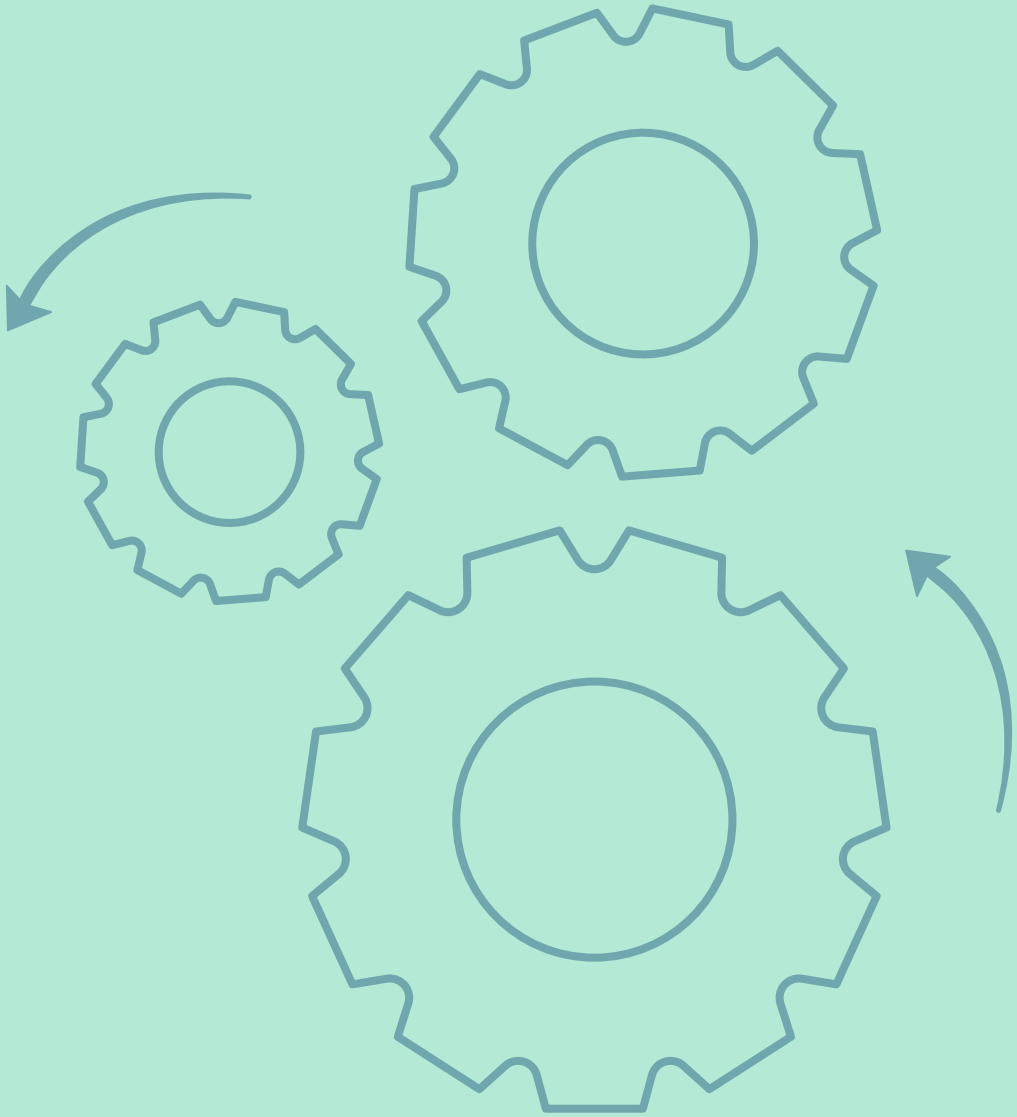
## Moving from Definition into Mobilisation

The transition from definition into mobilisation marks a threshold reached when scope, objectives, roles, and early risk considerations are sufficiently clear to begin operational planning. Programmes that carry unresolved design questions into mobilisation often find these questions become harder to address once staffing, partnerships, and timelines are in motion.

Engagement with PLE during the definition stage provides a stronger foundation for mobilisation. This includes a more developed understanding of the circumstances experienced by recipients of programme services, Theories of Change tested against real-world assumptions, and a clearer sense of the partnerships and safeguarding structures required to support implementation. Mobilisation planning incorporates any remaining gaps in engagement before delivery begins.

Chapter 2 outlines how organisations build on what is established at the design stage and how mobilisation planning incorporates areas that require further development.

# CHAPTER 2



# Mobilisation Stage

CHAPTER 2

# Mobilisation Stage

## Purpose Of This Stage

The mobilisation stage translates programme design into operational reality. It is the point at which plans move from intention into action through staffing, partnerships, systems, safeguards, and early implementation decisions. While often treated as an administrative or logistical phase, mobilisation shapes how the programme is experienced in practice through everyday interactions, roles, and expectations.

The choices made at this stage shape how decisions are made, how trust is established, and how the programme is experienced in terms of accessibility, credibility, and safety. Mobilisation increases visibility and introduces new forms of participation, shaping how work is coordinated and how decisions move through the programme. As roles are filled, resources are activated, and systems are tested, people encounter the programme as a working structure with real demands and constraints.

Well-designed mobilisation enables PLE to contribute in structured and supported ways that align with programme needs. Mobilisation that proceeds without sufficient structure can reproduce extractive practices, place undue burden on individuals, and weaken trust before delivery begins. Mobilisation therefore requires active attention to safety, choice, proportionality, and sustainability.

Mobilisation is also the stage where assumptions embedded during design are tested. Decisions about recruitment, contracting, supervision, partner selection, communication routines, and monitoring frameworks shape how the programme functions in practice. Mobilisation creates the conditions under which delivery operates effectively.

The transition from definition into mobilisation occurs when programme objectives, scope, and roles are sufficiently clear to begin implementation planning. Mobilisation is complete when systems, relationships, and safeguards are in place to support delivery in a way that reflects those intentions and allows learning to continue as the programme unfolds.

→ *Decision cue: If roles, authority, or expectations are described differently by different people, mobilisation may be moving faster than shared understanding. A brief pause at this stage can prevent considerable confusion during delivery.*

## Why Engagement with PLE is Important at the Mobilisation Stage

Engaging PLE during mobilisation ensures that early operational decisions align with how programmes are experienced by those they are intended to serve. Design establishes direction, and mobilisation determines feasibility.

PLE bring insight into how staffing configurations, partnership models, communication practices, and access mechanisms operate in real conditions. This includes identifying practical barriers to participation, surfacing safety and trust-related risks, and highlighting where administrative processes unintentionally exclude, overburden, or silence contributors.

Early engagement during mobilisation also supports legitimacy. When PLE are involved in shaping recruitment approaches, partnership arrangements, safeguarding processes, and learning systems, programmes are more likely to be perceived as credible, responsive, and accountable. At this stage, organisations often balance pace with readiness and relationship-building. This choice shapes conditions for delivery. Investment in thorough mobilisation with PLE, even when it requires additional time, produces more effective conditions for delivery. Decisions made with lived experience input at this stage require less reworking during implementation.

→ *Where contributors are being asked to engage before risks, boundaries, or support structures are clearly defined, pausing to establish those foundations will strengthen the quality and sustainability of participation throughout the programme.*

# What Mobilisation Requires in Practice

Mobilisation is effective when programmes enter delivery with defined structures in place, rather than relying on informal fixes, individual goodwill, or last-minute workarounds. From a learning perspective, this stage requires organisations to make intentions operational in ways that are visible, testable, and adjustable. Key areas of focus include the following.

### CORE OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS DURING MOBILISATION:

- **Roles and accountability:** Responsibilities are assigned to named individuals and decision-making pathways are clear.
- **Resources and infrastructure:** Funding, contracts, tools, and systems are activated and accessible.
- **Operational systems:** Reporting, safeguarding, escalation, and data processes are tested at small scale.
- **Relationships and communication:** Expectations with staff, partners, and contributors are aligned.
- **Readiness assessment:** Risks are acknowledged and leadership makes a deliberate decision to proceed.

Engagement with PLE across these areas helps organisations identify where plans may not translate cleanly into practice and where adjustments are needed before delivery accelerates.

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — GAPS BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND SYSTEM READINESS

An organisation that engages PLE effectively at the design stage moves quickly into mobilisation, contracting two survivor professionals to contribute to staff training and partner induction. When both contributors arrive for their first session, neither has received onboarding, a role description, or clarity on when payment will be made. The HR system does not yet include a safeguarding protocol for non-employee contractors, and finance is unable to release payments because vendor registration is not complete.

One contributor raises the issue. The other does not, later explaining they do not want to appear difficult. After internal discussion, the gaps are resolved within a short period. This scenario highlights how a brief readiness review before engagement begins identifies issues in advance and prevents uncertainty at the point where trust is established.

→ *Reflective prompt: What systems in your organisation would a newly contracted PLE contributor encounter in their first two weeks? Which of those systems have been tested with contributors in mind, and which have been assumed to be sufficient?*

In some contexts, PLE engagement may include voluntary participation. Where this occurs, organisations maintain clarity in how roles are defined, the level of responsibility involved, and the expectations placed on contributors. Roles that involve sustained input, specialised expertise, advisory, or influence over programme decisions are structured as paid contributions.

Where voluntary participation is appropriate, it is time-bound, clearly scoped, and does not substitute for roles that would typically be compensated. This approach supports consistency, transparency, and the recognition of lived experience as professional expertise within programme delivery.

→ *When timelines are driving decisions more than safety, feasibility, or clarity, this is a signal worth attending to. A deliberate pause at this stage to recalibrate tends to produce stronger outcomes than pressing forward and resolving issues once delivery is underway.*

# Challenges and Risks at the Mobilisation Stage

## Structural Constraints

Organisational, programme, and project teams frequently identify time pressure, rigid organisational systems, and funding timelines as barriers to meaningful engagement during mobilisation. These constraints can narrow participation to consultation rather than collaboration, particularly when processes or delivery structures are already fixed.

Imbalances in staffing, contracting, and partnership decisions can make it difficult for lived experience contributors to raise concerns, especially when expectations around roles, compensation, or decision pathways are unclear or still evolving.

A less visible challenge is the assumption that early goodwill compensates for incomplete systems. Informal communication, personal relationships, or individual flexibility may sustain short-term momentum. They can also mask gaps in role clarity, decision-making processes, or support structures that become harder to address once delivery accelerates.

Sustainable engagement at the mobilisation stage requires careful attention to how contribution is distributed across the programme. When a small number of individuals consistently carry insight, validation, or coordination work without support from functioning systems, these conditions become difficult to sustain. Building systems that distribute this work appropriately is part of effective mobilisation practice.

Challenging patterns become visible when contributors are regularly asked to review decisions because processes are not yet in place, advise beyond their agreed role, respond to last-minute requests, or represent diverse experiences without adequate support. Recognising these patterns early and building structures that address them supports both programme quality and contributor well-being.

→ *Clarifying compensation, workload expectations, and professional boundaries early in the engagement process supports stable and effective collaboration. Addressing these concerns during programme preparation allows organisations and contributors to begin delivery with shared expectations and confidence. Prioritising these conversations as part of mobilisation is a practical investment in programme quality and sustainable partnership.*

## Engagement Patterns and Associated Risks

During mobilisation, risk shifts from being largely theoretical to operational. Decisions about timing, roles, communication, and participation begin to affect people in real contexts. Safety considerations therefore include individual well-being as well as relational and organisational risks that emerge when systems are activated before they are fully tested.

Where roles, systems, and expectations remain unclear, contributors may be asked to operate without clear scopes of work, experience delays in compensation, or have limited visibility into how their input will be used. Engagement may rely on individual flexibility rather than defined structures, increasing the likelihood of role drift, fatigue, and inconsistent decision use.

Risks also arise when safeguarding, supervision, or escalation pathways are not fully operational at the point where participation begins to increase. Contributors may encounter challenges without clear routes for support or may be placed in situations where expectations exceed what has been agreed.

Where engagement expands quickly without corresponding systems in place, contributors may be asked to respond to multiple requests across different parts of the programme without coordination. This can reduce the quality of insight, create duplication, and weaken feedback loops.

These risks reflect how mobilisation translates design intentions into operational systems. Addressing them requires attention to how roles are defined, how participation is supported, and how engagement is structured across the programme.

To address these conditions, mobilisation benefits from being treated as a readiness phase rather than a period to move through quickly. Building in time to test systems before they are relied upon, establishing workload expectations and compensation agreements before engagement scales, and naming system gaps explicitly rather than working around them informally support a more stable transition into delivery.

Mobilisation is also an important moment for organisations to recognise and make visible the informal practices that staff already apply when engaging PLE. Many effective approaches to role clarification, communication, and preparation develop informally before they are documented. Making these practices visible through staff conversations, check-ins, and planning discussions allows them to be shared across teams and strengthened over time.

## Examples of Meaningful Engagement During Mobilisation

Meaningful engagement includes involving PLE in recruitment and partner selection, refining monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks, hiring PLE into delivery or leadership roles, and identifying access and participation risks. These activities shape who contributes, how insight is translated into action, and how systems function in practice.

In recruitment and partner selection, lived experience insight helps assess whether roles are realistic and whether partnerships are accessible and trustworthy. In monitoring, evaluation, and learning, PLE help ensure that indicators and feedback mechanisms are meaningful, proportionate, and safe. When PLE are hired into delivery or leadership roles, engagement extends into shared responsibility, and clarity around authority, support, and boundaries becomes essential.

### MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT DURING MOBILISATION MAY INCLUDE:

- Involving PLE in recruitment processes, role design, or interview panels.
- Incorporating lived experience insight into partner selection or collaboration agreements.
- Refining MEL frameworks to reflect lived realities.
- Hiring PLE into delivery, advisory, or leadership roles with appropriate authority and support.
- Identifying access, participation, and safety risks before delivery scales.

→ *It is worth periodically asking whether lived-experience contributors are being invited to shape decisions, or to sense-check decisions that are already fixed. The distinction has important significance. Where engagement has drifted toward the latter, mobilisation is often the right moment to reorient, before patterns become established .across the programme*

## Mitigation Strategies

Effective mitigation during mobilisation centres on building systems before reliance on goodwill. This includes activating safeguarding and escalation pathways before participation increases, conducting individualised risk assessments, and establishing clear opt-in and opt-out mechanisms without penalty. Testing systems at a small scale before systems are relied upon at full scale allows organisations to identify and address gaps while adjustments remain straightforward. In some cases, peer support and access to external support further reduce cumulative demands on contributors.

Mobilisation also requires attention to how lived experience insight is interpreted and applied within programme systems. Contributions may be partial, context-specific, or not immediately aligned with programme scope or timelines. Organisational, programme, and project teams translate this insight into forms that inform decision-making while maintaining its intent and meaning. This includes identifying where contributions clarify risks, challenge assumptions, or highlight conditions not yet visible within programme structures.

Where insight cannot be implemented directly, organisations document it, revisit it at later stages, or incorporate it into longer-term programme development and learning. Making this process visible supports clarity in how contributions are used and strengthens trust in programme decision-making. Responsibility for interpretation and application sits with the organisation, enabling contributors to share input openly while organisational systems determine how it is applied within programme constraints.

### ORGANISATIONS SHOULD PLAN FOR:

- Individualised risk assessment and confidentiality options.
- Clear opt-in and opt-out pathways without penalty.
- Safeguarding and support processes that are tested.
- Access to supervision, peer support, or external support.
- Clear processes for documenting, interpreting, and applying PLE insight, including where input is not immediately actionable.

→ *When people can step back, renegotiate participation, or raise concerns without consequence, mobilisation is supporting safety and choice. This standard is worth making explicit, both for contributors and for the teams working with them.*

Addressing these conditions in practice includes establishing informed consent processes, communicating role scope and boundaries clearly, and ensuring safeguarding pathways are active before engagement scales. Where contributors show signs of overextension, adjustments are made to role scope and participation expectations. Participation structures allow individuals to step back, renegotiate involvement, or raise concerns without consequence.

# Examples of Meaningful Engagement at Different Levels of Organisational Readiness — Mobilisation Stage

The examples below illustrate how meaningful engagement with PLE tends to look across organisations at different levels of readiness during the mobilisation stage. These are indicative patterns, rather than benchmarks. They reflect how engagement tends to operate when systems and readiness are at different points of development, and are intended to support reflection rather than assessment.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Early Stage**  | Organisations at this stage introduce PLE perspectives during mobilisation. Consultation often occurs once core elements such as roles, timelines, or partnerships are already defined, allowing organisations to refine and validate emerging plans. This stage reflects early integration of lived experience insight and provides a foundation for expanding involvement earlier in mobilisation processes. |
| **Developing**  | At this stage, organisations involve PLE in selected mobilisation activities, such as recruitment processes, staff orientation, or learning design. Engagement is becoming more structured and intentional, though it may still be time-bound or focused on specific tasks. Organisations continue strengthening systems that enable lived experience insight to inform a broader range of programme decisions. |
| **Advanced**  | Organisations at this level consistently integrate lived experience insight across staffing, partnerships, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems. Clear roles, expectations, and feedback loops ensure that lived experience perspectives inform how decisions are made throughout mobilisation. Engagement is supported through formal authority, appropriate compensation, and institutional structures that enable leadership development and progression pathways, positioning lived experience expertise as part of the programme's core design and governance. |

Progression across these levels is typically gradual and supported by learning, reflection, and adjustment rather than one-time change.

# Engagement Scale and Proportionality

Engagement during mobilisation aligns with programme scope, organisational capacity, and the significance of the decisions being made. Proportionality is assessed by considering the consequence of a decision, not the effort invested. When a decision has limited impact or can be revised easily, lighter engagement is appropriate. When a decision sets conditions that are difficult to undo, deeper and earlier engagement is warranted.

→ *If engagement feels rushed, overly intensive, or extractive relative to decision impact, proportionality may need recalibration.*

# Key Learning

Mobilisation sets the tone for trust, adaptability, and sustainability throughout delivery. Thoughtful engagement at this stage reduces risk, surfaces assumptions early, and creates conditions for effective delivery.

→ *When there is shared confidence that the programme can adapt without individuals risking burnout, mobilisation is likely complete. If that confidence cannot be clearly articulated across roles, mobilisation may still require attention.*

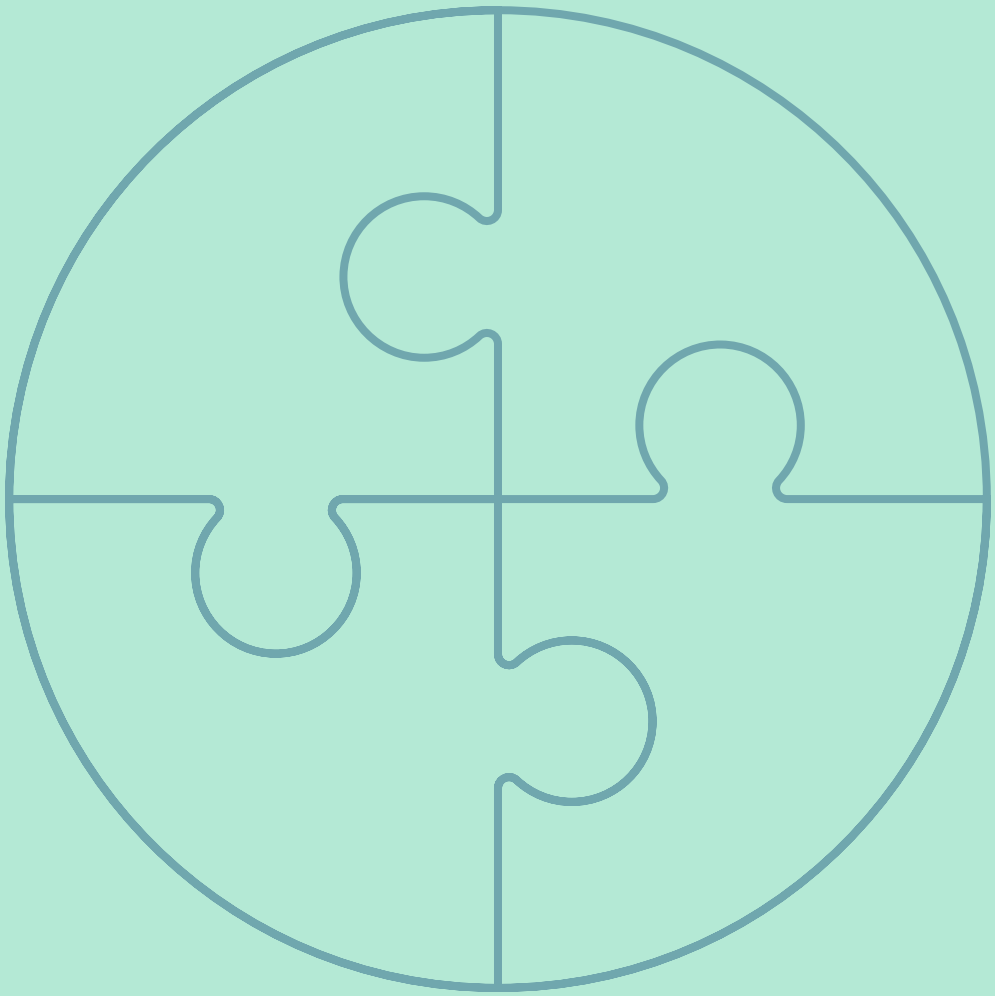
## Moving from Mobilisation into Delivery

Mobilisation is complete when roles are established, systems are tested, safeguards are in place, and there is shared confidence that the programme can begin operating through clear and reliable organisational structures. Delivery begins at that point. The responsibilities and relationships established during mobilisation continue into sustained practice.

The quality of lived experience engagement during delivery depends on the foundations established during mobilisation. Where PLE are involved in recruitment, partner selection, and the design of monitoring and learning

systems, delivery begins with engagement that is structured, supported, and connected to decision-making. Chapter 3 examines how organisations sustain that engagement over time, including how they manage adaptation, maintain diversity of perspective, and strengthen consultative and advisory contributions.

# CHAPTER 3



# Delivery & Implementation Stage

CHAPTER 3

# Delivery & Implementation Stage

## Purpose Of This Stage

Delivery is the phase in which professional engagement becomes sustained practice. Structures established during mobilisation are exercised in real time. Relationships develop into ongoing collaboration. Decisions carry consequence. Learning accumulates.

At this stage, engagement with PLE centres on continuity. The focus is sustaining professional contribution in a way that remains safe, credible, and influential as programme conditions evolve. Delivery introduces a different emphasis than earlier stages, focusing on whether engagement remains active and visible as operational pressure increases and as disagreement, fatigue, or unexpected outcomes emerge.

The quality of engagement during delivery is not measured only through formal consultation. It is visible in the day-to-day functioning of systems, the accessibility of decision-making, and the extent to which lived experience insight informs choices as the programme responds to what it encounters in practice.

# Why Engagement with PLE is Important During Delivery

Delivery generates evidence. As programmes operate, patterns emerge about what is working, what requires adjustment, and why. PLE are well placed to interpret this evidence in context, drawing on their understanding of how services, systems, and communities function in practice. Their analytical contribution during delivery is not supplementary. It provides a form of scrutiny grounded in the realities the programme is attempting to address.

Engagement during delivery also provides a form of ongoing accountability. When PLE contribute to decision-making processes, they bring attention to how programme activities are experienced in practice and whether they continue to reflect intended aims. This includes identifying drift, where delivery begins to move away from original objectives, as well as recognising unintended effects that may emerge as the programme operates.

This form of accountability is embedded within day-to-day practice. It enables timely reflection on whether systems, interactions, and decisions remain aligned with programme purpose. In doing so, it supports programme integrity and reduces the likelihood that risks or unintended impacts persist without recognition or response.

Sustained engagement also strengthens institutional learning. Organisations that maintain active PLE involvement during delivery are better positioned to identify adaptation needs early, respond proportionately, and document learning in ways that are credible and contextually grounded.

# The Nature of Adaptation During Delivery

Adaptation is often understood as correction. In practice, it functions as calibration. Conditions shift. Political contexts evolve. Staffing changes. Community trust fluctuates. Implementation surfaces dynamics that are not fully anticipated at design. These are features of working in complex social environments.

Meaningful engagement during delivery enables structured adaptation rather than reactive adjustment. When PLE hold sustained roles in programme decisions, adaptation draws on accumulated lived expertise and contextual understanding that is not available through programme operations alone. This distinction is important for programme quality and contributor well-being.

PLE working across the sector highlight several forms of adaptation strengthened by lived experience input. These include adjusting outreach strategies when participation patterns reveal hidden barriers, revising safeguarding procedures when risk presents differently than anticipated, reinterpreting behavioural assumptions embedded in Theories of Change, modifying engagement formats to reflect cultural context, and reassessing resource allocation when financial priorities diverge from the needs of service recipients.

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE — ADAPTATION THROUGH LIVED EXPERIENCE INSIGHT

A programme providing employment support to survivors of modern slavery includes PLE advisory sessions throughout delivery. Midway through the second year, advisors notice a pattern. Participants drop out of skills training in weeks three and four, yet monitoring data, which tracks completion rather than participation patterns, does not identify the point at which disengagement occurs.

Drawing on their own experience, advisors recognise a likely cause. Several participants balance rotating shift work and informal income sources alongside programme attendance, and the training schedule allows limited flexibility to manage these competing demands. Participants do not raise the issue directly, uncertain whether requesting adjustments may affect their eligibility to remain in the programme.

In response, the organisation introduces flexible attendance options and adjusts the training timetable to accommodate variable work schedules. Completion rates in the following cohort increase. This adaptation is informed not by monitoring data alone, but by the contextual insight contributed by PLE advisors.

→ *Reflective prompt: In your current delivery structure, how are PLE advisory contributions connected to adaptation decisions? Is there a clear pathway from what contributors observe or raise to where recalibration decisions are actually made?*

→ *Adaptation depends on access to decision-making. When PLE contribute insight but are not connected to adaptation decisions, their expertise remains observational rather than shaping programme adjustments. Organisations benefit when PLE input is visible within the spaces where recalibration decisions are made.*

## Sustaining Diversity and Shared Responsibility

Delivery engagement extends over time. As relationships deepen and decision structures stabilise, programmes often work closely with PLE who are familiar with institutional processes and able to engage consistently in consultative or advisory discussions. Their experience within the programme supports continuity and efficiency.

Over time, concentration of advisory responsibility within a small group can narrow the range of lived perspectives informing delivery. This often develops through practical conditions. Familiarity reduces preparation time, established relationships support pace, and predictability enables coordination. The result is a gradual narrowing of perspectives available to decision-makers, which may not be immediately visible to programme teams.

Sustaining diversity within engagement requires periodic reflection on who contributes to decision discussions and how responsibility is distributed. Expanding participation where feasible, introducing additional lived experience perspectives, and rotating involvement across longer delivery periods strengthens the range of insight available. This approach supports productive relationships while ensuring that the programme draws on a breadth of expertise proportionate to the communities it serves.

Shared responsibility supports sustainability. When advisory engagement is structured so that expectations, compensation, and scope align with actual roles, participation remains proportionate and manageable. Clarity around the

duration of involvement, the intensity of engagement, and the boundaries of responsibility supports advisory roles that remain sustainable across the full life of the programme.

→ *Decision cue: Decision-makers benefit from periodically asking whether lived experience interpretation reflects a range of perspectives relevant to the communities served. Where diversity is actively supported and responsibility is shared, engagement remains resilient and grounded in professional standards.*

# Challenges and Risks at the Delivery & Implementation Stage

## Structural Constraints

Delivery introduces pressures that can erode the quality of engagement over time. Operational demands increase, timelines compress, and the bandwidth available for structured reflection narrows. In these conditions, engagement with PLE can shift from substantive contribution to a more procedural function, with input sought for compliance rather than influence.

Fatigue is a related challenge. When the same individuals carry sustained advisory responsibility over extended delivery periods, cognitive and emotional demands accumulate. Fatigue does not always present as withdrawal. It may appear as reduced candour, reduced capacity to challenge, or a reluctance to raise concerns that feel difficult to address. Organisations that monitor only participation rates may not identify these signals.

Role boundaries can also expand informally during delivery as organisations rely on trusted contributors for a wider range of tasks. This reflects the value contributors provide and signals a need to formalise what has developed in practice. Revisiting scope, compensation, and support as roles expand supports appropriate recognition and sustainable participation.

**How to overcome:** Sustaining substantive engagement during delivery includes maintaining structured opportunities for meaningful PLE contribution over time. Monitoring for fatigue signals, including reduced candour, reluctance to challenge, or withdrawal, supports a more accurate understanding of engagement than participation rates alone. Role drift is addressed through revisiting scope, compensation, and support as advisory responsibilities expand in practice.

## Engagement Risks

Sustaining genuine engagement during delivery requires ongoing attention to recurring patterns. These include input sought for compliance rather than influence, survivor experiences used in communications or training without appropriate compensation, and power dynamics that limit contributors' ability to speak candidly. Programmes build against these patterns through role clarity, transparent consent processes, and open feedback channels. Recognising these patterns as they emerge supports constructive response.

**How to overcome:** Effective engagement includes visible feedback loops. Contributors are informed about how their input is used and what decisions change as a result. Consent and confidentiality arrangements are reviewed periodically to reflect evolving programme activities. Power imbalances are addressed through safe and anonymous mechanisms for contributors to raise concerns, alongside distribution of advisory responsibility rather than concentration within a small group.

For example, some programmes schedule brief quarterly check-in meetings with PLE advisors alongside formal advisory sessions. These meetings focus on reviewing how previous input is applied, discussing emerging concerns, and identifying adjustments in delivery. Contributors receive a short summary afterwards noting actions to be taken, ensuring that feedback remains visible within programme decision-making.

A useful test of whether feedback loops are functioning is whether input leads to visible action. A feedback loop is complete when the information gathered from input informs a decision or adjustment, including modest changes. When input is collected, discussed, or documented without visible change, the loop is incomplete and engagement becomes procedural over time. Transparency about how input is used, or why certain changes are not possible, supports trust and demonstrates that contributors' expertise is valued.

## Mitigation Strategies

Effective delivery engagement is continuous rather than periodic, with PLE contributing across advisory, review, and learning functions. Proportionate recognition and compensation of contributions, active feedback mechanisms, and programme direction that reflects lived experience input are markers of practice that is integrated rather than supplementary. Periodically refreshing the range of perspectives informing delivery, rather than working consistently with the same contributors, keeps programme learning grounded in the breadth of experience relevant to the communities being served.

Where engagement strain emerges, for example when a consultant's role expands beyond its original scope to include additional advisory input across multiple workstreams, ad hoc reviews, or informal consultation requests, without corresponding adjustment to compensation or coordination, this is treated as a programme risk rather than a workload management issue. Logging engagement-related strain within the programme risk register allows it to be addressed through established programme management processes. Mitigation measures include capping consultation hours, assigning a clear internal point of contact, and scheduling structured reviews of scope and decision use. Framing engagement sustainability as a programme risk reflects its direct bearing on delivery quality and accountability.

# Examples of Meaningful Engagement

Meaningful engagement during delivery is characterised by sustained and influential lived experience input as the programme operates. The following activities reflect how PLE contribute substantively at this stage.

### FORMS OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT DURING DELIVERY & IMPLEMENTATION INCLUDE:

- Contributing to ongoing monitoring and learning reviews, including interpretation of emerging data.
- Participating in adaptation decisions when programme conditions change or evidence indicates a need for recalibration.
- Providing structured input into safeguarding review processes.
- Advising on communication, outreach, and access strategies as delivery reveals new barriers.
- Contributing to governance or oversight structures with appropriate authority and support.
- Participating in learning documentation and knowledge-sharing activities.

# Examples of Meaningful Engagement at Different Levels of Organisational Readiness — Delivery & Implementation Stage

The following examples illustrate how meaningful engagement with PLE tends to look across organisations at different levels of readiness during the delivery and implementation stage. These are indicative patterns, rather than benchmarks. They reflect how engagement tends to operate when systems and readiness are at different points of development, and are intended to support reflection rather than assessment.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Early Stage** | Organisations at this stage are establishing regular opportunities to engage PLE, often aligning consultations with reporting cycles or scheduled programme reviews. These interactions provide valuable insights that contribute to documentation and reflection on delivery activities. As systems develop, organisations can build on these foundations by connecting engagement more directly to operational decision-making and programme adjustments. |
| **Developing** | At this stage, organisations maintain structured engagement with PLE across selected delivery activities. Feedback mechanisms are in place, and advisory roles allow contributors to share insights on programme implementation. Organisations continue strengthening how these feedback loops translate into visible programme adaptations and how lived experience perspectives inform decision-making structures. |
| **Advanced** | Organisations at this level integrate lived experience insight consistently into delivery decisions, including programme adaptation, learning reviews, and risk management. PLE contribute across multiple programme functions with clear expectations, appropriate support, and recognised expertise. Engagement is embedded within delivery governance through formal authority, sustained compensation, and leadership pathways, with adaptation processes co-designed and lived experience insight functioning as a core component of programme accountability. |

# Key Learning

Delivery is where programme commitments are tested in practice. The quality of lived experience engagement during this phase determines how knowledge generated through implementation informs programme effectiveness and decision-making.

→ *Organisations that sustain active, supported, and structurally embedded PLE engagement during delivery are better positioned to adapt, learn, and demonstrate accountability in ways that are credible to the communities they serve.*

## Moving from Delivery into Closure

As delivery draws to a close, the programme shifts from generating practice evidence to consolidating it. Learning accumulated across the delivery period, including through lived experience engagement, requires structured reflection to become institutional knowledge that informs future work. Closure is the stage in which this consolidation takes place.

For PLE who contribute across earlier stages, closure provides an opportunity to bring accumulated understanding into evaluation and learning processes. Their perspective on how the programme functions in practice, including what it sets out to achieve, how it adapts, and what it produces, forms a type of programme knowledge that evaluation frameworks alone do not capture. Chapter 4 examines how organisations structure this contribution meaningfully within the time and reporting pressures that closure involves.

# CHAPTER 4

# Closure Stage

CHAPTER 4

# Closure Stage

## Purpose Of This Stage

The closure stage marks the conclusion of a funded programme cycle. Delivery activities draw to a close, programme outcomes are documented, and organisations consolidate learning generated through implementation. This stage translates operational experience into institutional knowledge that informs future programming, organisational practice, and sector learning. Closure is also a point at which organisations determine how learning informs future funding, design, and commissioning decisions.

Across earlier stages of the programme lifecycle, engagement with PLE contributes to programme design, operational planning, and delivery. Closure extends this engagement into a period of structured reflection. Lived experience insight supports examination of how programme intentions translate into practice, how activities are experienced by participants and communities, and what implications emerge for future programme design.

Closure also functions as a point of institutional accountability. Organisations assess the extent to which programme commitments are implemented as intended and examine how programme activities are experienced by stakeholders. Reflection during this stage identifies where operational approaches demonstrate effectiveness, where challenges emerge, and how programme learning informs subsequent initiatives.
In practice, closure includes evaluation processes, completion reporting,

dissemination of programme learning, and preparation for future programme cycles. Integration of lived experience insight into these processes strengthens the depth and credibility of programme reflection. Evaluation findings gain contextual clarity, and learning captures the complexities of implementation alongside what monitoring systems record.

## Why Engagement with PLE is Important at This Stage

Evaluation processes explain how programme activities influence people, services, and systems. Individuals with lived experience contribute contextual understanding that supports more precise interpretation of programme outcomes. Their perspectives connect programme outputs to lived realities and provide insight into how interventions are perceived, accessed, and sustained within communities.

Engagement during closure builds upon relationships established earlier in the programme lifecycle. Individuals who contribute during programme design, mobilisation, or delivery often develop detailed understanding of programme objectives, implementation dynamics, and operational constraints. Continued participation during closure allows organisations to draw upon this accumulated knowledge when analysing programme outcomes.

Evaluation frameworks often rely on quantitative indicators to measure programme performance. Lived experience insight complements these measures by illuminating dimensions of programme impact that are not visible through monitoring systems alone. Observations grounded in lived experience highlight barriers to access, identify unintended programme effects, and clarify how programme activities are experienced in practice.

### Illustrative Example – What The Data Did Not Show

At the close of a three-year county lines disruption programme, a learning review involving three PLE advisors surfaces a gap not reflected in monitoring data. Several participants complete the programme without disclosing ongoing exploitation, as the referral process requires a home address they are unwilling or unable to provide.

The advisors identify this pattern through informal conversations during delivery. No structured route exists for this insight to be recorded or escalated within programme systems.

The finding is incorporated into the final report and informs revisions to the safeguarding framework for the subsequent commissioning round. Organisational reflection identifies that the insight is present throughout the programme, while the systems required to surface and act on it are not in place.

→ *Reflective prompt: When your programme closes, what mechanisms exist for PLE contributors to surface learning that was not captured through standard monitoring channels? How is that learning incorporated into final reporting and used to inform future programme design?*

Closure discussions reveal the wider role that survivor professionals and survivor-led organisations hold within the sector. Many individuals with lived experience contribute to advocacy initiatives, survivor-led organisations, and policy engagement beyond individual programmes. Recognising these roles during closure situates programme outcomes within a broader landscape of survivor leadership and sector development.

→ *Engagement during closure contributes to organisational learning. Reflection informed by diverse perspectives strengthens programme analysis, refines Theories of Change, and generates insights that can guide the design of future programmes.*

# Challenges and Risks at the Closure Stage

## Structural Constraints

Closure provides an opportunity to integrate lived experience perspectives into programme analysis and learning. Understanding the structural conditions that shape this process supports proactive planning and strengthens how insight is integrated.

Reporting timelines are a defining feature of the closure context. Where programmes conclude at the end of funding cycles, evaluation schedules often operate under time pressure. Organisations that integrate PLE engagement into closure planning from the outset maintain space for participation, even when reporting timelines are compressed.

Closure processes highlight the importance of closing the loop. Consultation that invites reflection without visible integration into evaluation findings or reporting indicates a gap in how insight moves through programme systems and informs conclusions. Organisations that demonstrate how lived experience perspectives inform conclusions strengthen programme credibility and reinforce the value of continued participation.

Evaluation conversations at closure intersect with personal histories and service experiences for some contributors. Trauma-informed facilitation, clear communication about participation, and flexible engagement options establish conditions for meaningful and respectful contribution.

The breadth of perspectives informing closure learning also warrants attention. Individuals with lived experience often contribute across multiple initiatives and advisory structures, and a relatively small group of experienced contributors can become the default resource across programmes. Where evaluation findings have implications for communities that are not well represented in the existing contributor base, broader participation at closure strengthens the quality and relevance of programme learning.

**How to overcome:** Effective practice includes planning for closure engagement from the outset of the programme to strengthen reflection and learning at the reporting stage. Identifying contributors with accumulated programme knowledge and inviting their participation in evaluation discussions enables reflection to draw on lived experience insight developed during delivery. This strengthens the quality of programme learning and supports a coherent experience for contributors involved in the closure process.

## Engagement Risks

A significant limitation at closure is consultation that does not visibly inform conclusions. Where lived experience perspectives are gathered but are not reflected in evaluation findings or reporting, contributors may question the value of their involvement. This indicates a gap in how insight is incorporated within organisational processes.

This stage also involves emotional and relational dimensions. Contributors who are engaged across the programme lifecycle may experience an abrupt ending or limited acknowledgement of their contribution. Structured transition planning supports continuity, recognises contribution, and sustains trust.

**How to overcome:** Evaluation processes clearly demonstrate how lived experience contributions shape programme interpretation and conclusions. Communication during closure makes visible where and how PLE perspectives are reflected in final reporting.

Closure conversations are structured with attention to emotional safety. Sufficient time is allocated, follow-up communication is maintained, and the depth of contribution is acknowledged.

## Mitigation Strategies

Planning for PLE involvement from the outset of evaluation design is a strong predictor of substantive closure engagement. Early integration establishes alignment between evaluation questions, data interpretation, and lived

experience insight, allowing perspectives developed during delivery to inform how programme performance is understood.
Co-design of evaluation questions ensures that areas of inquiry reflect programme realities and priorities identified through lived experience. Providing contributors with advance access to data and emerging findings supports informed participation and enables more detailed interpretation of results. Allocating realistic time within reporting schedules for structured exchange allows this insight to be discussed, tested, and integrated into programme conclusions. These practices strengthen the depth and credibility of programme analysis.

Peer-led evaluation approaches contribute to more balanced participation and support the generation of candid, contextually grounded insight. Contributors engage in roles that reflect analytical and professional expertise, which strengthens the quality of interpretation and the relevance of findings.
Where the existing contributor base does not reflect the range of perspectives required, explicit plans to broaden participation strengthen the relevance and applicability of evaluation findings. Consideration of representation at this stage supports a more comprehensive understanding of programme impact across different groups and contexts.

**How to overcome:** Create and share a clear closure plan with contributors that explains timelines, participation opportunities, and how input informs evaluation and reporting. Review compensation and support structures to maintain alignment with the closure phase. Document what contributors have made possible across the programme to support organisational learning and provide recognition of professional contribution.

Where programme learning has relevance for sector practice, involve contributors in how that learning is framed and communicated. This includes participation in drafting outputs, validating key messages, and shaping how findings are presented to different audiences.

In one programme, contributors participated in a dissemination workshop following completion of the final evaluation. Draft findings were shared in advance, and contributors provided input on how key messages were framed for external audiences. Their input strengthened contextual accuracy and ensured that programme learning was communicated in ways that were ethically grounded and did not reinforce stigma. The final report reflected this input, resulting in outputs that were clear, credible, and aligned with lived experience insight.

## Examples of Meaningful Engagement at the Closure Stage

Meaningful engagement during closure is reflected in practices that strengthen programme evaluation and learning.

### FORMS OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AT THE CLOSURE STAGE INCLUDE:

- Reviewing evaluation findings and contributing interpretation of programme results.
- Participating in discussions that examine how programme activities were experienced by communities.
- Contributing to reflective sections of completion reports, including analysis of programme strengths and operational challenges.
- Identifying dimensions of impact that were not captured by predefined indicators.
- Contributing to lessons learned documentation that will inform future programme design.
- Shaping how programme learning is framed and disseminated to the wider sector.

When these contributions are integrated into evaluation processes, they strengthen the credibility and depth of programme analysis. Integration during evaluation ensures that lived experience insight informs interpretation rather than being appended to completed reporting. Closure documentation that reflects a range of perspectives on implementation is more likely to generate learning that is applicable across future programmes.

# Examples of Meaningful Engagement at Different Levels of Organisational Readiness — Closure Stage

The examples below illustrate how meaningful engagement with PLE tends to look across organisations at different levels of readiness during the closure stage. These are indicative patterns, rather than benchmarks. They reflect how engagement tends to operate when systems and readiness are at different points of development, and are intended to support reflection rather than assessment.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Early Stage** | Organisations at this stage are beginning to invite PLE perspectives into programme closure through informal feedback conversations or participation in evaluation activities. These contributions often focus on sharing reflections about programme experience and outcomes. This stage provides an important starting point for incorporating lived experience insight into programme learning and opens opportunities to involve contributors earlier in analysis and reflection processes. |
| **Developing** | At this stage, organisations involve PLE in selected closure activities such as evaluation discussions, learning workshops, or review of programme findings. Contributors may help interpret results, provide contextual insight, and reflect on how programme activities were experienced by participants. Engagement is becoming more structured, allowing lived experience perspectives to inform how findings are understood and communicated. |
| **Advanced** | Organisations at this level integrate lived experience insight throughout closure processes, with PLE contributing to evaluation planning, programme learning discussions, and interpretation of findings. Engagement is embedded within programme governance structures across the full lifecycle, including closure. Contributors participate in evaluation design, learning reviews, and dissemination of programme insights, with their perspectives informing how outcomes are analysed and how lessons are carried forward into future strategies. |

# Engagement Scale and Proportionality

Programme scale shapes how organisations structure engagement during closure. In smaller programmes, closure discussions often involve contributors who participate across the programme lifecycle. Their familiarity with programme objectives and operational decisions supports reflection that connects implementation experience with programme outcomes.

Larger programmes require broader engagement structures. Programmes operating across multiple locations or serving diverse populations benefit from including contributors whose experiences reflect different contexts. This strengthens the evaluation process by capturing a wider range of programme experiences and reduces the risk that closure learning reflects only the perspectives most accessible within existing networks.

Proportional engagement reflects the roles individuals hold across earlier programme stages. Contributors involved in design, mobilisation, or delivery bring insight grounded in detailed understanding of programme implementation. Additional contributors provide perspectives that broaden evaluation discussions and strengthen the diversity of programme learning.

# Key Learning

Closure provides a structured opportunity to translate programme experience into institutional learning. Reflection conducted during this stage informs future programme design, strengthens organisational practice, and contributes to sector knowledge.

Evaluation processes that incorporate lived experience perspectives provide a deeper understanding of how programme activities are experienced in practice. Insight grounded in lived experience illuminates aspects of programme impact that are less visible within monitoring systems or reporting frameworks. Engagement during closure strengthens collaboration between organisations and survivor professionals. Participation in evaluation and learning discussions

supports contribution to the interpretation of programme outcomes and the development of future programme strategies.

Closure discussions also highlight the broader role of survivor leadership within the field. Survivor professionals and survivor-led organisations often continue contributing to policy engagement, advocacy initiatives, and programme development beyond the lifespan of individual programmes. Recognition of these contributions situates programme outcomes within a broader context of sector development.

→ *Programme closure functions as the stage in which operational experience is consolidated into forward-looking insight. Learning generated during this stage informs the next cycle of programme development and strengthens the continuity of lived experience engagement across future initiatives.*

# A Note on the Lifecycle as a Whole

The four stages described in this handbook, Definition and Design, Mobilisation, Delivery, and Closure, operate as a continuous cycle. Decisions made at each stage create the conditions for the next. Scope defined during design shapes recruitment during mobilisation. Staffing and partnerships established during mobilisation shape how delivery functions in practice. The quality of engagement during delivery shapes what is documented and interpreted during closure. Learning generated at closure informs the design of future programmes.

PLE are integral to this cycle. Their analytical expertise, contextual knowledge, and accountability function contribute to programme quality across each stage. Organisations that recognise this and establish the systems, structures, and resources to support it strengthen their ability to design and implement programmes that function effectively in practice.

This handbook is intended as a working resource that organisations can return to, test against experience, and use to refine practice over time. The questions it raises and the patterns it highlights support reflection and ongoing learning. Engagement with lived experience is strengthened through repeated application, supported by structured assessment and adaptation as programmes evolve.

### ACROSS ALL STAGES, THE TEST OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT IS CONSISTENT:

- Were PLE involved before decisions were fixed?
- Were their contributions compensated and supported?
- Did their input result in visible changes to programme design, delivery, or learning?
- Were the structures in place to protect their safety and sustain their participation?

When the answer to these questions is yes, programmes are more likely to demonstrate credibility, adaptability, and trust, and to serve the communities they are designed for.

# Closing Reflections

The preceding sections outline how engagement operates across the programme lifecycle. The following reflections consider how this approach is applied across different contexts and contributes to broader programme and sector practice.

This handbook sets out an approach to engaging PLE as a form of professional contribution within programme design, delivery, and learning. Across programme stages, engagement is reflected in how roles are defined, how decisions are informed, and how insight is applied to programme operations and outcomes. The practices outlined throughout this document establish conditions for engagement that is structured, sustained, and integrated within organisational systems.

Application of this guidance is shaped by context. Programmes operate within different legal, institutional, and cultural environments, and engagement approaches are adapted accordingly. Within these environments, organisations determine how engagement is positioned, how roles are structured, and how contributions are incorporated into programme processes. Clarity in these areas supports consistency over time and enables engagement to function as part of programme implementation.

Over time, consistent application of these approaches contributes to how programmes incorporate lived experience expertise within their structures and decision-making processes. Continuity across programme stages enables this integration to inform implementation, adaptation, and longer-term programme refinement.

The approaches described in this handbook contribute to a broader shift in how lived experience expertise is applied within modern slavery and human trafficking programmes. Where engagement is structured through defined roles, supported by organisational systems, and connected to programme decisions, it becomes part of how programmes operate and evolve. This supports programmes that are responsive, informed by experience, and able to reflect the conditions they are designed to address.

# Resources for Engaging PLE

The following resources provide additional guidance on meaningful engagement frameworks, recruitment practice, and compensation standards. These resources support application of the approaches outlined in this handbook.

## Meaningful Engagement Frameworks

The following framework provides a structured approach to assessing and strengthening lived experience engagement practice:

- Modern Slavery Policy Evidence Centre (PEC). Lived Experience Engagement: Making it More Effective. Available at: modernslaverypec.org
- FCDO Programme Operating Framework. Provides the lifecycle structure on which this handbook is based. Available at: gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-programme-operating-framework
- Twelve core principles to support professional engagement of those who hold lived experience of modern slavery, developed by the Modern Slavery PEC's Lived Experience Engagement Team. Available at: modernslaverypec.org
- C. Ash and S. Otiende. Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience: A Framework and Assessment for Increasing Lived Experience Leadership Across the Spectrum of Engagement. Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and National Survivor Network–CAST, Washington, DC (2023). Available at: nationalsurvivornetwork.org

# Appendices

## Acronyms

The following acronyms are used throughout this handbook:

FCDO — Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

GEDSI — Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion

MEL — Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

MSF — Modern Slavery Fund

MSHT — Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

NGO — Non-Governmental Organisation

NSN — National Survivor Network

OSCE — Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PEC — Policy Evidence Centre

PLE — People with Lived Experience

RFP — Request for Proposals

ToC — Theory of Change

# Additional Considerations

- The following practical points have been raised by PLE practitioners working in the sector and are offered here as supplementary guidance for organisations designing PLE engagement:

- Community dynamics and exclusion: Organisations should consider the impact on community members who are aware of a programme but are not eligible to access it. Where a programme serves a specific group, the boundaries of eligibility should be communicated clearly and sensitively to avoid creating or reinforcing dynamics of competition or exclusion within communities.
- Contractor vs. registered entity: Where a programme intends to contract PLE through a delivery partnership or sub-grant, clarity is needed at the outset about whether the contracting party must be a formally registered entity or whether engagement of an individual contractor is permissible. This should be established and communicated before recruitment begins, to avoid inadvertently excluding qualified individuals or creating ambiguity about the terms of engagement.

- Continuity and transition: Where PLE contributors have been closely involved throughout a programme's lifecycle, careful thought should be given to how the programme's closure or transition affects them. Abrupt endings without acknowledgement or transition planning can be harmful. Closure planning should include explicit consideration of potential follow-up connections, if any, that the programme will maintain with contributors.

- Identifying contributors who do not publicly identify as survivors: In many contexts, a significant proportion of frontline professionals in the anti-trafficking sector have their own lived experience but do not identify publicly as survivors. Organisations should be attentive to this and ensure that engagement approaches do not inadvertently pressure individuals to disclose, or create a hierarchy that privileges those who are willing to be publicly identified over those who are not.

# Networks

African Survivor Coalition [Africa-wide]
ANIRBAN [Bangladesh]
Azadi Kenya [Nairobi, Kenya]
Bhandan Mukti [Kolkata, India]
Bonded Labour Liberation Front [Pakistan]
Challenging Heights [Accra, Ghana]
Elevate Academy [Online]
Empowered Network [USA - referral needed]
Footprint to Freedom [Netherlands]
GEMS Survivor Leadership Institute [New York, USA]
Hamro Samman [Nepal]
IJM's Global Survivor Network (includes survivors of GBV and police violence)
Indian Leadership Forum Against Trafficking [India, country wide coalition]
International Coalition Against Modern Slavery [Global, US-based]
Kasese Platform Advocacy Network (KAPLANET) [Uganda]
Mentari [New York, USA]
MiCreate [USA]
National Survivor Network [USA]
Rising Worldwide, scroll to the bottom [USA]
Shramik Sanjal [Nepal]
Survivor Alliance [Global]
Survivor Connections [Australia]
Survivors Network Cameroon [Cameroon]
Survivor Network NC [North Carolina, USA]
UTTHAN [Kolkata, India]
Voices of Domestic Workers [United Kingdom]
You Are More Than, Inc. [New Jersey, USA]

# Glossary

The following terms are used throughout this handbook. Definitions reflect the way terms are applied in the context of engaging PLE across the programme lifecycle.

## Advisory role

A defined position in which a person with lived experience contributes professional insight to programme decisions without holding line management or operational responsibility. Advisory roles are formally contracted, compensated, and connected to clear decision-use pathways.

## Assumption-testing

The process of critically examining the beliefs or expectations embedded in a programme design, for example assumptions about how people access services, respond to interventions, or navigate systems. Lived experience input is particularly valuable at this stage because it surfaces assumptions that professional or policy analysis may not detect.

## Business case

A formal document prepared during the definition and design stage that sets out the rationale for a programme, including the problem it addresses, the proposed approach, anticipated outcomes, and resource requirements. Business cases are typically submitted to a funder or internal approving body before a programme is confirmed.

## Co-design

An approach to programme or activity development in which PLE participate as active contributors in shaping what is built, rather than reviewing or responding to decisions already made. Co-design shifts engagement from reactive consultation to proactive collaboration and provides contributors with influence over programme direction, tools, or frameworks.

## Concept note

A short document, typically prepared early in the definition and design stage, that outlines a programme idea, its intended purpose, and the population or

context it aims to address. Concept notes are often submitted to funders as a first step before a full application is invited. Involving PLE in reviewing concept notes can surface misalignments between programme intentions and lived realities before design commitments are made.

## Consortium

A group of two or more organisations working together to deliver a programme, typically led by a prime or lead organisation that holds the funding relationship and coordinates the work of implementing partners. Consortium structures can increase complexity for PLE engagement, as contributors may receive requests from multiple partners with different timelines and priorities. Clear coordination and a defined point of contact support effective management of this.

## Contributory expertise

The knowledge, analytical insight, and professional judgement that PLE bring to programme work. This handbook treats lived experience as a form of contributory expertise, not as personal testimony or representative storytelling, and encourages organisations to engage it as they would any other form of professional advisory input.

## Decision-use pathway

The documented process by which input from a contributor moves into programme governance and influences a decision. A clear decision-use pathway specifies who receives the input, how it is considered, and how the contributor is informed of the outcome. Without this, feedback risks becoming extractive, collected but not acted upon.

## Engagement strain

The condition that arises when the demands placed on a PLE contributor, in terms of time, workload, scope, or emotional labour, exceed what has been formally agreed and adequately supported. Engagement strain may develop gradually, particularly in consortium programmes where multiple partners draw on the same contributor. This handbook treats engagement strain as a programme risk to be logged and managed through formal processes.

## Escalation pathway

A documented process through which concerns, safeguarding issues, or welfare risks identified during a programme are raised and addressed by the

appropriate person or team. Escalation pathways are active, understood by all contributors, and tested before engagement begins. They form part of the safeguarding infrastructure that underpins safe PLE involvement.

## Extractive engagement

A pattern of engagement in which an organisation draws on the knowledge, stories, or labour of PLE without providing corresponding benefit, transparency, or follow-through. Extractive engagement may involve unpaid contributions, requests for personal narratives for organisational purposes, or collection of input that does not influence decisions. It undermines trust and is inconsistent with ethical engagement standards.

## Feedback loop

A repeating cycle in which input is gathered, reviewed, used to inform a decision, and then communicated back to the contributor. A feedback loop is complete when input leads to a visible action or adjustment. Loops that collect input without follow-through are broken and risk becoming extractive. Effective feedback loops are active across all stages of the programme lifecycle.

## GEDSI (Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion)

A cross-cutting framework used by FCDO and applied across Modern Slavery Fund programmes. It supports organisations to consider how gender, disability, and social identity shape access to services, participation in programmes, and experience of harm or support. GEDSI principles are directly relevant to PLE engagement and inform safeguarding design, accessibility arrangements, and equitable participation standards.

## Grantee

An organisation that has received funding through the Modern Slavery Fund to design and deliver a programme. Grantees are responsible for applying the guidance in this handbook and for ensuring that engagement with PLE is conducted ethically, safely, and in line with programme objectives and funder requirements.

## Informed consent

Agreement to participate in a programme activity given by a contributor who has received clear, accurate, and sufficient information about what their involvement

will entail, how their contributions will be used, and what their options are if they wish to withdraw or modify their participation. Informed consent is revisited as the scope or nature of engagement changes.

## Intervention logic

The underlying rationale for why a programme is expected to produce its intended outcomes, including what changes are expected and why. Intervention logic is typically expressed through a Theory of Change and forms the basis for programme design decisions. Lived experience input can identify gaps or misalignments before they become embedded in design.

## Lived experience

Direct personal experience of the harms, systems, and circumstances that a programme is designed to address, including modern slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, exploitation, domestic violence, and gender-based violence. Lived experience is treated throughout this handbook as a form of professional expertise that informs analysis, strengthens programme design, and improves accountability. It is distinct from personal testimony and does not require disclosure of personal history.

## MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning)

The systems and processes through which a programme tracks progress, assesses outcomes, and generates learning. MEL frameworks define what is measured, how data is collected, and how findings inform decisions. Involving PLE in MEL design supports indicators that reflect lived priorities and ensures that data collection methods are safe, accessible, and meaningful.

## Mobilisation

The stage in the programme lifecycle between design and delivery, during which plans are translated into operational reality. This includes hiring staff, activating contracts, establishing safeguarding processes, testing systems, and building relationships with partners and contributors. Mobilisation is the stage at which design intentions become operational structures or reveal gaps requiring adjustment.

## Modern Slavery Fund (MSF)

A UK government funding mechanism administered by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office that supports programmes addressing

modern slavery and human trafficking in priority countries. This handbook is written for organisations funded through the MSF and reflects programme design, delivery, and accountability standards.

## Non-tokenistic engagement

Engagement in which PLE hold genuine influence over programme decisions. It is characterised by early involvement, appropriate compensation, transparent feedback, and visible changes to programme design or direction resulting from PLE input.

## People with Lived Experience (PLE)

Individuals who have direct personal experience of the harms, systems, or circumstances that a programme addresses, including modern slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, exploitation, domestic violence, or gender-based violence. Throughout this handbook, PLE are recognised as professional contributors whose expertise strengthens programme design, delivery, and learning. Engagement approaches do not require or presume disclosure.

## Power dynamics

The structural and relational imbalances that shape how authority, voice, and influence are distributed between organisations and the PLE they engage. These dynamics may be visible, such as decision-making authority, or less visible, such as which concerns feel safe to raise. Effective engagement practice identifies and addresses these dynamics.

## Programme lifecycle

The full sequence of stages through which a programme passes from initial concept to completion. This handbook organises the lifecycle into four stages: Definition and Design, Mobilisation, Delivery and Implementation, and Closure. Decisions made at each stage shape what is possible at the next.

## Programme risk register

A management document that records identified risks to a programme, their likelihood and potential impact, and the mitigation measures in place. Engagement-related risks, including engagement strain, role drift, and feedback loop failures, are recorded and managed through standard programme processes.

## Re-traumatisation

The process by which an individual re-experiences distress associated with past trauma, often through recounting traumatic events, exposure to similar environments, or dynamics of powerlessness. Trauma-informed engagement practice is designed to prevent re-traumatisation by prioritising safety, autonomy, and dignity.

## Results framework

A structured document that sets out programme objectives, how progress is measured, and what evidence is used to assess success. Results frameworks typically include indicators, targets, and data sources across outcome levels. Lived experience input strengthens results frameworks by ensuring indicators reflect meaningful change.

## Role drift

The gradual expansion of a contributor's responsibilities beyond what was originally agreed. Role drift can lead to misalignment in compensation, contributor fatigue, and unclear accountability. When identified, organisations renegotiate scope and compensation to reflect actual responsibilities.

## Safeguarding

The policies, systems, and practices that protect individuals from harm, abuse, or exploitation during programme work. In the context of PLE engagement, safeguarding includes physical safety, emotional well-being, data protection, confidentiality, and prevention of re-traumatisation. Safeguarding arrangements are established and tested before engagement begins.

## Scope of work

A written document, typically part of a contract, that specifies deliverables, timeframe, and compensation. A clear scope of work establishes expectations, prevents role drift, and provides a basis for adjustment if circumstances change.

## Sub-grant

A funding arrangement in which a grantee allocates a portion of its funding to a partner organisation to support programme delivery. The primary grantee remains responsible for ensuring that engagement standards, safeguarding requirements, and compensation arrangements are upheld.

## Survivor Alliance

An international network organisation that supports survivor leadership in the anti-trafficking sector. Survivor Alliance delivered the Meaningful Survivor Engagement Project under the Modern Slavery Fund and contributed to the development of this handbook. It is also a resource for organisations seeking to engage qualified PLE contributors.

## Theory of Change (ToC)

A structured explanation of how and why a programme is expected to produce its intended outcomes, expressed as a sequence from activities to outputs to outcomes to impact. A Theory of Change makes assumptions explicit and supports testing and revision. Involving PLE at this stage strengthens alignment with lived realities.

## Tokenism

The inclusion of PLE in ways that create the appearance of participation without corresponding influence. This may include attendance without decision-making authority, limited roles focused on personal narrative, or involvement after key decisions are made. Tokenism limits the value of engagement and undermines trust.

## Trauma-informed practice

An approach to engagement that recognises the impact of past trauma and avoids recreating dynamics of harm or powerlessness. It includes choice, preparation, transparency, and access to support as standard features of engagement, alongside appropriate training for programme staff and supervisors.

## Trauma-informed supervision

A supervisory practice that supports staff and contributors working with or as PLE. It includes regular check-ins, space to raise concerns, attention to vicarious trauma, and clear professional boundaries. Trauma-informed supervision functions as part of safeguarding infrastructure.

## Vendor registration

The administrative process through which a contractor or supplier is entered into a finance or procurement system to enable payment. Delays in vendor registration can affect timely payment to PLE contributors. Completion of this process is part of programme readiness prior to engagement.

# Acknowledgements

The UK Government recognises the professional contributions of People with Lived Experience (PLE) engaged through working groups in the development of this handbook.

PLE contributions were incorporated through consultation and focus group processes undertaken in partnership with Survivor Alliance. The content was synthesised and written by Amie Rainfish, with working group coordination and facilitation led by Cynthia Bailey.

## The following individuals contributed to the development of this handbook:

Abbattista Ilja – *Chapter contribution: Delivery stage*
Adegoke Adewumi – *Chapter contribution: Delivery stage*
Agano Bernadette – *Chapter contribution: Closure stage*
Ayangunna Rachel – *Chapter contribution: Definition and Design, Mobilisation stages*
Ben Shirley Basetsana – *Chapter contribution: Closure stage*
Grootboom Grizelda – *Chapter contribution: Closure stage*
Ilyas Shahid – *Chapter contribution: Definition and Design stage*
Itangishatse Jean Eric – *Chapter contribution: Mobilisation and Delivery stages*
Kusiima Miriam – *Chapter contribution: Mobilisation stage*
Lasonder Jane – *Chapter contribution: Delivery stage*
Ley Alicia – *Contribution: Content review and editing*
Md. Sarkar Amir Hossain – *Chapter contribution: Mobilisation stage*
Ndirangu Abishagy – *Chapter contribution: Definition and Design stage*
Ngonyama Lisakazi – *Chapter contribution: Closure stage*
Ojo Kehinde – *Chapter contribution: Delivery stage*
Wamaitha Caroline – *Chapter contribution: Mobilisation stage*
Worku Firehewot Abiy – *Chapter contribution: Closure stage*
Yohannes Hyab Teklehaimanot – *Chapter contribution: Definition and Design stage*

*Not all contributors' names are listed, preserving the autonomy and privacy of individuals whose engagement in this work takes different forms, including those who participate in professional or advisory capacities without public attribution.*

*This resource document has been funded by UK International Development from the UK government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.*

# Notes