

#GENERATION
EQUAL

sleeping
GIANTS



EVALUATION REPORT
Executive Summary
YEAR 1

June 2024

from participation comes empowerment

Executive Summary

Background

The Scottish Government asked Sleeping Giants to set up and then support the Empowering Women Panel for 3 years.

The Panel was set up in March 2023 to support the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG), who advise and challenge the First Minister to help Scotland become an equal society for women and girls.

20 women and non-binary people from marginalised communities were recruited to the Panel and members represent multiple equality characteristics and intersectional identities.

As part of their own internal evaluation, Sleeping Giants collected data throughout Year 1 so that they could:

- measure the success of their work against project outcomes and success criteria; and
- identify learning that could help them improve the experiences of Panel members.

The following tools were used as part of the data collection:



Evaluation Wheel

Completed by Panel members at the start, mid-point and end of Year 1 to record how they felt about participation



Focus Groups

Panel members took part in a focus group in the middle and end of Year 1 to discuss their participation experiences.

Sleeping Giants also shared their views and experiences in a focus group



Partnership and Power Assessment

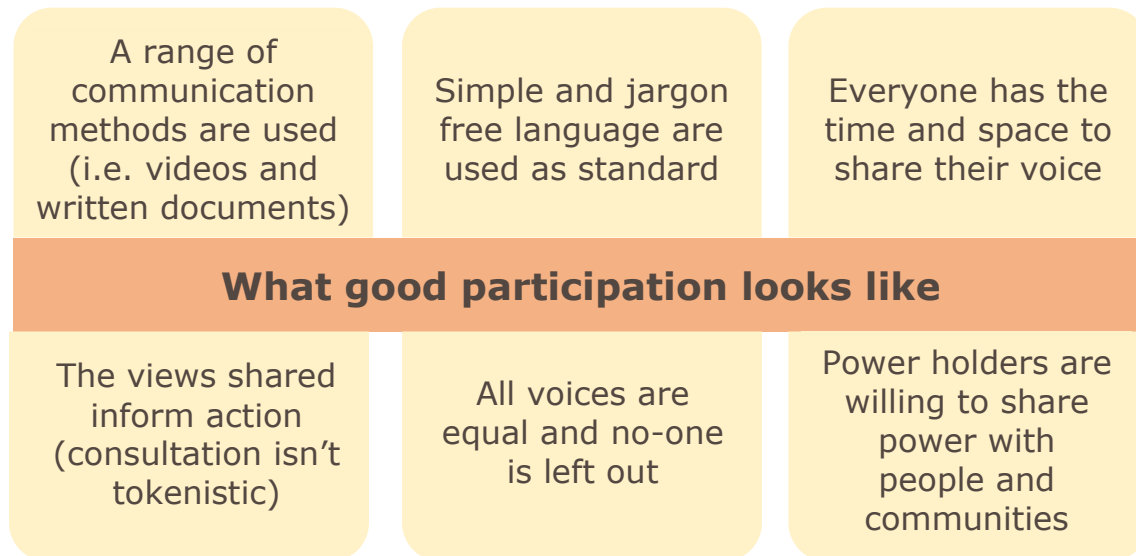
Both Council and Panel members completed this at the end of Year 1.

The tool explored satisfaction with the relationship between the partners

What happened in Year 1

Early in Year 1, Sleeping Giants worked with Panel members to find out and agree what good participation meant to them. A ladder of participation, which set out 5 different levels of from informing to devolving power, was used to develop the approach.

Panel members told us they didn't feel close to even being on the bottom rung of the ladder. A lack of power and voice and difficulties accessing information were identified as barriers. Sleeping Giants worked with the Panel to identify what needs to happen to overcome these barriers and agreed what good participation looks like.



The support available to each member to participate in online and face-to-face meetings and activities included a mentor, monthly virtual drop-ins and capacity building sessions. But how this support was provided depended on individual access needs. For example, some members needed help getting online so they were given a device and training on how to use it and others found visual information easier to understand.

Because it was formed as part of the National Advisory Council's Phase 2 work, supporting the Council to scrutinise and challenge the Scottish Government's response to the cost of living crisis became a key focus of the Panel's work in Year 1. The Panel chose to carry out a peer research project on experiences of the crisis and were interviewed by their mentor and also trained and supported by Sleeping Giants to interview their peers. The findings were summarised in a [report](#) and presented to the National Advisory Council and Scottish Government officers as part of an accountability event. Then, in the culmination of the Year 1 activity, the Panel and NACWG met the First Minister in April 2024 to share their learning and to ask directly how his Government could better respond to the issues raised in the peer research.

Year 1 in Numbers

20 women and non-binary people recruited and supported as Panel members



Mentoring and Support



11 online coffee drop-ins



123 mentoring sessions

Capacity Building



8 online training sessions + training during in-person events



2 induction sessions

Participation



12 online Panel meetings



3 sub-groups were set up



3 face-to-face panel meetings



Basecamp

78 posts or chats started by Panel members



Cost of living crisis peer research



Meetings with the Deputy First Minister and First Minister



Accountability Event

Outputs



28 social media posts (Facebook/Instagram)



Cost of Living Crisis report published

4

Pledges received following the Accountability Event



9 Blogs written or co-written by Panel members



11 Panel members presented at Accountability Event

How Successful was Year 1?

Sleeping Giants agreed with Scottish Government that the success of their work would be measured against 2 key criteria relating to experiences of participation. The data collected in the end of Year 1 evaluation wheel indicates both these criteria have been achieved:

Success Criteria	Achievement
90% of the Panel feel their views are represented and view their participation as a positive experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 93% (13 out of 14) felt that the Panel reflects their personal concerns and goals ✓ 100% (14) enjoyed being part of the Panel
90% of Panel members report that approaches used meet their individual needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 100% (14) felt that they were able to take part in a way that meets their needs

3 project outcomes were also used to help understand achievements in Year 1 and each of these are discussed in turn below.

Outcome 1:	Achievement:
<p>Panel members have improved opportunities for accessible, positive participation where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel informed and better able to understand problems, alternatives, opportunities and solutions in the context of intersectional gender equality • Are consulted, with opportunities for their voices to be represented and heard – gathering evidence directly from the group’s lived experience and through community research methods • Are meaningfully involved in a range of accessible and person-centred ways, where their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and delivered • Collaborate as equals, with each other and all partners in every aspect of the project • Feel that they had more power and decision making devolved directly into their hands, able to hold others to account and investigate relevant issues 	<p>This outcome relates to how Panel members experienced each rung of the ladder of participation. The available evidence suggests that they felt more informed, consulted and involved at the end of Year 1 than they did at the start. This means that improved opportunities for accessible, positive participation have been created at most rungs of the ladder.</p> <p>But experiences at the higher rungs of the ladder (collaborating and devolving) were more mixed. The relationship between the National Advisory Council and Panel was important here, with Panel members wanting to spend more time with the Council so that they could get to know them better. They thought that this would help to strengthen their relationship and make it more equal.</p>

Outcome 2:	Achievement:
<p>Panel members have increased capacity, where they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are more knowledgeable, skilled and confident • Are better able to take effective action and leading roles within the work of the Panel and the work of the NACWG • Have a stronger voice and are better able to influence decision making 	<p>The scores given to the statements asked in the evaluation wheel about feeling more knowledgeable, skilled and confident and being able to take action were higher at the end of Year 1 than they were at its start. There was also a 23% increase in the score given to the statement: I feel like I can share my views and feel like my voice is heard between the start and end of Year 1.</p> <p>But how Panel members felt about their ability to influence important decisions didn't change. It's perhaps too early at this stage of a 3-year project to identify what influence the work of the Panel has had on decision making.</p> <p>This means that Outcome 2 has been partly achieved.</p>

Outcome 3	Achievements
<p>NACWG are better able to provide advice and challenge to the First Minister because of the learning from and partnership with the Panel</p>	<p>National Advisory Council members' experiences (rather than the Panel) have been used to assess achievements here. 8 Council members completed the power and partnership assessment tool and the ratings they gave suggest that most think that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council and Panel are able to develop and share learning across the partnership • By working together, they are both better able to do their job • They are making a difference through the work they do together <p>This indicates that improvements have been made in this outcome. But findings from a separate external evaluation of the Council will provide more understanding of how the Panel has shaped their work.</p>

Experiences of the Empowering Women Panel

Although the finding that outcomes have improved is positive, it doesn't fully reflect what experiences of the Panel were like in year 1. Some of the things members said about the Panel included:

"I can't think of a single thing I would change. The experience so far has been so interesting and has really made me think about the issues and struggles other people face. love the training the meet ups r great love it all 🤗🤗🤗" (mid-point evaluation wheel)

"As always, an enormous thanks to the entire Sleeping Giants team—some of the most genuine, lovely people I've ever met (and have the pleasure of working with). It's an absolute honour to be part of the panel and I am really appreciative of the care SG takes in making sure everyone feels comfortable and happy." (mentoring feedback)

"I've always felt supported, I've always felt that my voice has been heard even when I haven't been about to attend meetings. I've still received all the information, emails, all the notes on everything. Everything that I could ever have wanted has been there and more..." (end of year focus group)

Members enjoyed learning from each other and, by sharing thoughts and ideas, developed a sense of solidarity and mutual respect:

"Equality is the bedrock of all that we do and encouragement of each other is central to all we do." (final evaluation wheel)

"It's been wonderful because I've got to meet such a diversity of different women and learned about so many different opinions and things that I had never been open to before..." (video interview during face-to-face Panel event)

Overall, the Panel was described as empowering: it had given its members the time and space to have their voice heard and members believed that it was valued and could help bring about change.

"It just feels that I'm able to do something, that we can do something together to make a difference, even if it's a tiny bit. So it gives me a lot more hope, it gives me a sense of community, it gives me some level of control in a weird way like I can do something, I'm not as helpless." (video interview during face-to-face Panel event)

Although Panel members had a positive experience and their capacity to participate had increased, there were still times when it was difficult for them to take part in the way that they wanted to because of mental health, physical health, lack of confidence or pressures in their personal life. This finding reminds of us the challenges marginalised women face to participation in these types of spaces.

Experiences of Working with the National Advisory Council for Women and Girls

Panel members described some aspects of the partnership positively but felt that there was scope to strengthen it by developing the relationships that had been formed in Year 1. There was a sense that the relationship was hierarchical, with National Advisory Council members coming along to meetings to share learning and then leaving (a bit like teacher and pupil). Some of the Council members also recognised the potential for tensions.

Despite this, the responses given in the Power and Partnership tool suggest that most members of both the Panel and National Advisory Council felt that they shared common aims. For example, Panel members described how they were on the 'same side' and most members from both partners thought that, by working together, they are better able to do their job.

What helps to Build Positive Participation

The learning from Year 1 suggests that a number of key factors, or enablers, have helped to create positive participation experiences. These include:



Trusting Relationships

Panel members had been given the time and space needed to develop trusting relationships with each other and the Sleeping Giants team.



Accessible

Accessibility measures were then put in place so that members could take part in the way that they wanted to (e.g. Easy Read and visual information, the use of accessible venues).



The right logistics

Some of the more practical aspects of participation were also important, such as providing a quiet space during face-to-face events so that members can remove themselves if they feel overloaded and the inclusion of plenty of short breaks.



Flexibility

Sleeping Giants identified their ability to respond quickly to changes in Panel members needs and ability to participate as important. Their small team size, individualised support packages and regular feedback data were identified as key in helping them do this.

What could be improved

Although overall experiences were positive, the feedback given by Panel members throughout Year 1 identified areas where improvements could be made. Some of these included:

- Improving understanding of intersectional gender inequalities
While understanding had improved for some members, others still found it a difficult concept to grasp.
- Enabling younger Panel members to have a stronger voice
Feedback from these members suggest that they felt less experienced than other members and it could be difficult for them to find a space for their voice. Sleeping Giants plan to recruit a dedicated mentor for young people to increase the support available to them.
- Enabling Panel members with a learning disability to participate
The additional support needs of women with a learning disability were recognised by both members and Sleeping Giants (especially after a support worker from an organisation working with Panel members left their job). Another dedicated mentor will be recruited to provide the support that these members need.
- Setting up a buddy system
In recognition of the barriers some members face, it was suggested that a buddy system could help them to share their voices when they felt less able to do this themselves.
- Creating space for more discussion of the issues that matter to members
The cost of living crisis had been a key focus in Year 1 and members would like the opportunity to discuss other issues in more depth too (e.g. gender based violence, childcare and caring).



- The relationship between the National Advisory Council and Panel members
Panel members wanted to get to know the National Advisory Council better and called for more opportunities to interact with them.
- The accessibility of policy discussions
Year 1 activity culminated in an accountability event where the findings from the cost of living research were presented and used to question the Scottish Government. The response to the questions used jargon and the Panel were an observer (rather than participant) in some parts of the event. This meant that the process didn't always feel accessible and inclusive.

What should happen next

The positive experiences reported by Panel members suggest that much of Sleeping Giants Year 1 activity worked well and the team's commitment to learning from the Panel's feedback meant that changes have already been put in place to adapt areas that weren't. But there is always scope for improvement and strengthening practice; the following recommendations are intended to help achieve this.

- Continue providing person-centred support
The support provided by Sleeping Giants in Year 1 was praised by Panel members and therefore should be sustained as the project moves into its second year. The recruitment of 2 new dedicated mentors for younger members and members with learning disabilities will enhance the support offer. More broadly, the flexible and individualised approach to supporting members will help Sleeping Giants to identify any changes in their ability to participate and enable the appropriate actions to be taken.
- Create more opportunities to meet with the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls
Panel members want to spend more time with the National Advisory Council so they can become more familiar with its members and, in turn, develop a stronger relationship with them. Informal discussions are particularly important to Panel members and Sleeping Giants should consider how best to achieve this within the time and capacity constraints faced by both partners.

- Review the approach to evaluation and monitoring
Year 1 has provided much learning on how much time Panel members are able to give to their participation in the project. The ask of the evaluation and monitoring data collection should be reviewed in this context and streamlined wherever possible to avoid overburdening members. The evaluation wheel has proved a valuable tool and it is recommended that it remains and serves as the primary source of data collection. Opportunities to collect additional data within Panel meetings and events should be explored (e.g. use polls in online meetings to capture feedback rather than post-event surveys).
- Identify if and how the Panel is making a difference to decision making
It was too early to identify what influence the work of the Panel had on the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls and wider decision making at the end of Year 1, but a particular monitoring and evaluation challenge moving forward will be demonstrating to Panel members how their voice is making a difference. Sleeping Giants should therefore review the mechanisms in place for the NACWG and Scottish Government to report how their decisions and broader thinking have been shaped by the Panel's lived experience. While this goes beyond the scope of the project's outcomes, it will help to create more positive experiences of the higher rungs of participation.

To find out more about the Empowering Women Panel

- **Visit:** <https://www.sleeping-giants.org.uk/empowering-women-panel.html>
- **email:** info@sleeping-giants.org.uk
- **call / text:** 07745 188 845 (or via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL app](#))