

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

BMJ Open publishes all reviews undertaken for accepted manuscripts. Reviewers are asked to complete a checklist review form (<http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/resources/checklist.pdf>) and are provided with free text boxes to elaborate on their assessment. These free text comments are reproduced below.

### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	Are you really doing “co-design”? Critical reflections when working with vulnerable populations
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Moll, Sandra; Wyndham-West, Michelle; Mulvale, Gillian; Park, Sean; Buettgean, Alexis; Phoenix, Michelle; Fleisig, Robert; Bruce, Emma

### VERSION 1 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Harm van Marwijk Brighton and Sussex Medical School, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	13-Jul-2020

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>Interesting and timely reflection on co-design as a research philosophy and method.</p> <p>As it is intended as a communication paper, it is a bit short on methods and the format thus seems a bit open-ended, mostly opinion-based. How end-users have been involved in writing this (I would assume that they did that, considering the topic), is not clear. I have learned about co-design more through the work of Gadamer, hermeneutics and sharing or merging of perspectives. The 'really' in the title is intuitive but I am not sure it makes sense that much: who gets to decide that? I liked the questions in table 1 but would that become an actual checklist?</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	S Williams Swansea University, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	03-Sep-2020

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to review this communication article, which addresses an important topic relevant to patients, researchers, and health professionals..</p> <p>The article is very well written and presented and has a clear message. It draws on a wide range of relevant literature. It is sensitive to the issues and challenges of conducting co-design research and engaging with service users and other stakeholders. The paper clearly reflects the sensitivities of engaging with vulnerable groups when co-designing activity. The tool is novel and provides a useful framework to aid researchers and practitioners when engaging in co-design activity.</p> <p>This is a really interesting paper and will make a worthy contribution to the field. It will be interesting to see the learning from the studies that go on to test the application of this tool.</p>
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## VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Thank-you for your comments about our communication article "Are you really doing "co-design"? Critical reflections when working with vulnerable populations". We appreciate the thoughtful comments and feedback from both reviewers. We have carefully considered the questions raised by Reviewer 1, and have the following responses.

- The first relates to concerns that the paper is "a bit short on methods" and "mostly opinion-based". Although this is in part due to the nature of the communication paper and limited word count, we do appreciate that additional context for our responses could strengthen the credibility of the arguments. We have therefore added a paragraph outlining the standpoint of the authors as inter-disciplinary researchers who have engaged in co-design work with a range of end-users, from children and youth through to older adults.

- The reviewer also asks "How have end-users been involved in writing this manuscript? We did not actively engage end-users in the writing of this manuscript. As noted above, our perspective has been shaped by co-design projects with a range of communities that have included prior co-authorship with service users. We do recognize the importance of active service user engagement in this dialogue, and have explicitly acknowledged this in the paper.

- The reviewer also asked about our use of 'really' in the title, and the implication that there is someone who might "get to decide" whether or not specific criteria are met. Removing the word from the title would be fine, although our intent was to be provocative and challenge readers to engage in critical reflection about their own work. The tool in Table 1 is not a checklist, but rather a guide to inspire reflexivity.

## VERSION 2 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Harm van Marwijk Brighton and Sussex Medical School UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	12-Oct-2020
<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	Happy to tick the accept button