Involving the Public in your Research

Are you thinking about involving external (non-academic) participants in your research?
For example: to help develop research ideas; to be part of an advisory group; as 'citizen science' researchers; to communicate results & findings. It's important to ensure research is carried out *'with'* or *'by'* members of the public rather than *'to'*, *'about'* or *'for'* them.

This table provides ideas to help you identify and plan specific public involvement tasks across the research cycle*. Being clear about your aims (and related tasks) will help you plan and conduct meaningful and effective involvement.

To use it, first consider which stage of the research cycle you are in, then clearly identify your aims. Finally, consider what role external contributors could play and what tasks would be appropriate.

Stage of Research	Aims	Potential task/s and questions for external contributors
Identify & Understand	To make sure the right research is being done	Identification and clarification of research focus & topics which are important for relevant societal groups (e.g. communities / users / patients / carers)
	To make sure research will benefit relevant communities / service users / affected groups	Do research questions address issues of importance?
		Will the research generate knowledge that could improve a service, product or experience?
		Is the research measuring and/or valuing aspects that are important to external groups?
Assess	To make sure research is acceptable for those taking part as participants	Research methods are reasonable, ethical and practical overall
		Implications of contribution to research for any participants are reasonable, ethical and communicated clearly
Plan	To make sure researchers communicate well with potential participants	Research summaries, tools, documents & information for those taking part are easy to read, accessible and straightforward to complete
	To help researchers consider whether there is support & approval for their research plan	Give opinions on participant or public support & approval for research plans
	To make sure there are appropriate plans for public involvement	Ensure research involvement plans are robust, clear and resourced appropriately

Do	To make sure researchers communicate well with participants	Information provision and collection is appropriate and timely
		Communication in recruitment and data collection is clear, using simple words and language - advising on and piloting such processes
		Documents are clear, of appropriate length, and easy to read and fill in
	To support recruitment and retention	Where, when and how to approach potential participants
		Advise on how best to keep in touch, retain participants, provide information on progress of research to participants
	To support data collection	When and where to collect data
		Pilot interviews and questionnaire completion – considering question order, clarity, time taken, and other practicalities
		Public involvement in collection of data e.g. 'citizen science' projects, with appropriate training & support
	To support data analysis	Providing external perspectives on qualitative coding, themes, and/or appropriate names of themes
		Conducting data analysis alongside researchers, with appropriate training & support
	To collaboratively write up findings	Co-authoring articles and papers, with appropriate training & support
Review & Act	To identify findings of most interest to communities / users / patients / carers etc.	Review range of findings to identify those of most interest/benefit
	To encourage communication of findings to participants / potential research users / other appropriate groups	Advise on communication of research findings to participants
		Advise on communication of research findings to other relevant groups
	To help to present/share findings	Attend events and meetings to support dissemination, or share online
	To encourage implementation of findings	Encourage researchers to explore how findings might change a service / product / experience etc.
	To encourage reporting of public involvement	Active contribution to reporting involvement processes and impact of involvement

Further Guidance, Ideas and Information

→ **How to involve people in research** – National Institute for Health Research (NHIR)
www.invo.org.uk/find-out-more/how-to-involve-people/

→ **Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) information** – Elizabeth Blackwell Institute for Health Research www.bris.ac.uk/blackwell/public-engagement/for-researchers/ppi/

→ **The value of involving people –** The SPHERE home technology project
www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/inspire-me/case-studies/sphere-project
& https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/publications/user-involvement-in-digital-health-working-together-to-design-sma

→ **Connected Communities** – ESRC-funded Participatory Research project & resources
https://connected-communities.org/

→ **Engaging Environments** – NERC-funded collaborative community-focused project & resources www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/completed-projects/engaging-environments & www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/engaging_environments_lessons_booklet.pdf

→ **Productive Margins** – Community Engagement in Decision Making through Arts, Humanities & Social Science research https://productivemargins.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/

For more advice or to discuss any ideas for involving the public in your research, please contact the Public Engagement team:
www.bristol.ac.uk/public-engagement/about/team/