

# The six SPHR knowledge sharing principles

A guide to the development and  
implementation of the NIHR SPHR  
Knowledge sharing principles



The principles and supporting material were shared with the SPHR Executive at their meeting in Bristol in October 2017 (and in advance) for comment and input. Feedback led to some slight amendments to the principles. Given these slight changes, and that some collaborators had not been able to attend the second workshop, the principles and supporting material were once again circulated for comment across the collaborating SPHR centres. Feedback was taken and some changes were made to the supporting material. The principles and supporting material were then circulated once again for final approval and passed on to the SPHR executive with the supporting material for inclusion in their November 2017 Sandpit meeting.

## Background

The six principles below, are informed by: the extant literature; examples of good practice across the 8 SPHR centres; examples of principles from other funding bodies in the UK and internationally, views of academics, practice and policy partners and other stakeholders involved in sharing knowledge and working collaboratively across academe-policy boundaries in public health and agreed collaboratively across the 8 centre members of the SPHR.

Overall, research that takes account of end-users needs, knowledge and context is more likely to be considered relevant, useful, and used. Regular engagement with research end users and stakeholders enables research to remain relevant in changing contexts. Additionally, such approaches contribute to the democratisation of the research process and addresses the impact and return-on-investment agendas.

However, exactly 'what works' in creating and sharing useful and useable knowledge to help address public health issues, varies according to the topic, context and nature of the research. The principles are therefore 'high-level' to enable applicants to consider the issues, and decide what they mean, and how they apply, in any particular piece of research, whilst maintaining the integrity of that research.

The principles are listed below (in bold), with some clarification (in italics). You should identify how each principle applies in your proposed research and provide a rationale and justification. Addressing these is mandatory. The bullets points may provide helpful prompts and starter questions to illustrate issues you might wish to consider, but they may not be relevant in every case. NB: Although the principles are numbered and appear sequentially below, they may not (and need not) occur in that order.

## The six SPHR knowledge sharing principles

**1. Clarify your purpose and knowledge sharing goals** - What do you want your findings to do, or to change? (Delphi 2 result: Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree = 98.7%)

*(for example: add to knowledge (challenge, refute, establish), raise awareness, provide insight, empirical evidence, raise awareness, influence practice, influence policy)*

Consider:

- The NIHR SPHR is a programme of applied research and the expectation is that there should be an identifiable benefit to policy-makers or practitioners in PH, the populations they serve, or the wider health system in the UK.
- A useful phrase might be: 'We aim to share knowledge / work together with... in order to...'

**2. Identify knowledge users** - Who would be interested in this research, or need to know about it? (Delphi 2 result: Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree = 94.4%)

*(for example: certain individuals, groups, organisations, decision makers, communities, the public, other researchers)*

Consider:

- Why is the topic of interest to the end-users you identify?
- Who will be affected by any changes (benefit or loss)?
- Who has the authority and / or connections to influence any changes?
- Who has an understanding of the context, culture, language and terminology, current priorities, up-coming changes involved in the area of study?

**3. Design the research to incorporate the expertise of the knowledge users** - How will you design the research to benefit from knowledge users' expertise and knowledge? (Delphi 2 result: Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree = 95.8%)

*(for example: establishing the RQs, contributing to the proposal, via consultation, advisory / steering groups, knowledge users as co-applicants, as researchers, in data interpretation, in preparing written materials, in helping to share the knowledge, or in its implementation)*

Consider:

- How will you engage knowledge users, when, and by what means?
- How can you embed these activities in the design?
- Can you build-in early gains for knowledge users to maintain enthusiasm?
- What will it take to resource engagement activities (time, people, money)?
- How will the rigour of the research process be ensured?

**4. Agree expectations** - How will you get a shared understanding what is expected of everyone and what can be achieved? (Delphi 2 result: Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree = 94.4%)

*(for example: an agreement, or terms of reference that spell out roles, timelines and deliverables)*

Consider

- What will 'success' look like to the different knowledge users?
- How will you deal with unexpected or unwelcome findings?
- Consider that the perspectives of some stakeholders may be irreconcilable (conflicting and competing). Is it possible (or desirable) to engage all stakeholders if they are strongly conflicted? What strategies can help deal with any adverse reception to your findings?
- How will you manage potential conflicts between different knowledge users and stakeholders?
- Who will be responsible for any diffusion of the findings, (passive e.g. published papers), dissemination (targeted: e.g. policy briefs, lay summaries for communities), or implementation (active: putting findings into action)?

**5. Monitor, reflect and be responsive in sharing knowledge** - How will you know if your knowledge sharing activities have met your goals? (Delphi 2 result: Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree = 95.9%)

*(for example: reaching practitioners, policy-makers or communities beyond the sites you are closely engaged with)*

Consider:

- Are you reaching potential knowledge users across multiple contexts?
- How can you put in place proportionate processes to assess your knowledge sharing approach?
- How will you remain open to new or changing opportunities to share the knowledge generated?

**6. Leave a legacy** - How can you develop, capture and sustain any benefits? (Delphi 2 result: Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree = 94.5%)

*(for example: Knowledge sharing builds, and rests upon, trusting relationships and conversely will falter if engagement is seen as instrumental and exploitative. The complexity of PH systems is that while organisations and structures disappear relationships may endure and open-up new possibilities.)*

Consider:

- How can relationships be sustained or extended beyond specific projects (if appropriate), and for what purpose?
- Can wider links be made to enable new relationships to be built?
- What written materials will capture any learning for all audiences?
- Can skills, expertise and other intangibles be left behind as a legacy?
- Report back on and publish on your knowledge sharing efforts to the funders and via publication.

## Concluding remarks

The six principles and supporting material represent SPHR members' own views on what they want (and have agreed) to see in the SPHR programme regarding sharing knowledge across boundaries. These views reflect, and were widely supported by, the extant literature on 'what works' in knowledge sharing and many of the centres had interesting examples of knowledge sharing practices with their PPPs and communities. High-level, broad purpose knowledge sharing principles that apply across all research in the SPHR were overwhelmingly supported. Wide support for the persistent promotion of the principles and the need to embed them in the application and review processes was considered to be important if the principles are to impact on the research conducted under the auspices of the SPHR. PPPs, in particular, were optimistic that this could be the opportunity for the SPHR to be at the forefront of knowledge sharing amongst UK funding streams and that it offered researchers the opportunity to be creative in developing new knowledge sharing methodologies. There was widespread support for an evaluation of the impact of the principles in due course and of their refinement.

**For more information, please contact [sphr@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:sphr@ncl.ac.uk)**

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The information in this report/brochure is correct at the time of printing.