NIHR | School for Public Health Research

A strategy for public involvement & engagement

2018 – 2022

Building the evidence base to support public health practice

A strategy for public involvement & enggement

Background

The NIHR School for Public Health (SPHR) was set up in 2012 and renewed for five years in 2017. It is a partnership of eight leading academic centres of excellence. Its remit is to produce robust applied research evidence to support effective and cost-effective local public health policy and practice to improve population health and reduce social inequalities in health.

This document sets out a strategy for involving the public in all stages of our research and for engaging with the wider public over the period 2019-22. It has been informed by a review of existing guidance on good practice and a detailed and substantial internal review of previous public involvement and engagement (PI&E) practice in SPHR. This review was guided by a panel of members of public with experience of SPHR research and a review of public involvement in our research between 2012-2017. We found evidence of good practice in public involvement across the School but also things that can be improved.

A public panel provided advice on the development of the strategy and responses from a public consultation have informed the production of this final version.

The strategy sets out our vision for public involvement and engagement in our research; the values that underpin our approach; what we mean by public involvement and engagement; why we think it is important and the objectives we have set ourselves in order to achieve our vision. Our action plan to deliver on these objectives is included in Appendix 1. There is a glossary explaining some of the technical terms (Appendix 3). The INVOLVE national standards for public involvement are also included in Appendix 4.

Vision

Our vision is to have inclusive public involvement and engagement in our research and to give members of the public real influence in our decision-making processes.

We believe that by providing opportunities for all sectors of the population to get involved in and engage with our research we will increase our accountability for the way we spend the public funds we receive. By embedding public involvement and engagement in our usual practice we will maximise the relevance, timeliness, utility and uptake of our research.

We will use our distinctive position as a centre of excellence to make a significant contribution to the evidence base on effective public involvement and engagement in public health research.

Our Values

We will strive to achieve:

- Equity in delivery of the strategy to ensure consistency of public involvement and engagement across the eight academic centres that make up the School
- Clarity and honesty about how members of the public can be involved and engaged in our research and how much influence they can exert on our decision making
- Recognition of the value of the experiential knowledge and experience that members of the public can add to the work of SPHR in general and our research in particular

What do we mean by public involvement and engagement in research?

Public involvement in research is **research done with or by the public and not to, about or for them** (Involve www.invo.org.uk). This means the members of the public are actively involved in the research process itself and are not participants or subjects of the research. It includes direct involvement with members of the public and with organisations representing particular population groups. It requires approaches to involvement and engagement to be inclusive of different population groups

By members of the public we mean people from all population groups whose experience, knowledge or perspective is relevant to the research. We believe that the public can be involved in all types of research and all stages of the research process. It can include:

- Working in partnership with others to establish research priorities
- Co-production of research between the public, policy makers, practitioners and academics
- Collaboration with others in the design, delivery and dissemination of research

Public engagement with research involves sharing information and knowledge about research conducted by SPHR with the public. We believe that effective public engagement is a dialogue that will also involves SPHR in listening and responding to engaged members of the public. (https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-engagement/what-public-engagement) This will include inviting the public to open days to engage with research and/or raising awareness about public health research through different media such as blogs, twitter, newspaper, television and radio. In turn SPHR staff may seek opportunities to engage with diverse groups in community/public spaces

Involving and engaging with public health practitioners and policy-makers is equally vital if SPHR is to conduct research that is relevant and timely, and to ensure findings are effectively communicated. To this end we have developed a Policy and Practice Engagement and Collaboration Strategy in parallel to this Public Involvement and Engagement Strategy.

Why is public involvement and engagement in SPHR research important?

Public involvement and engagement in public health research are closely linked. Greater public engagement with, and knowledge about, the research conducted by SPHR will lead to more members of the public willing to get involved in the research we do. Greater public involvement will improve the quality and relevance of our research. Research that is high quality and relevant is more likely to be translated into local public health policy and practice

to improve population health and reduce health inequalities. Public involvement and engagement in our research is therefore essential if we are to achieve our aim of increasing the volume and quality of evidence on cost-effective public health interventions. In addition, both public involvement and engagement in public health research ensures accountability of SPHR research. and the public's right to have a say in publically funded research.

SPHR provides a unique context for public involvement and engagement in research. We are focused on delivering applied health research directly relevant to local policy and practice to improve population health and reduce health inequalities. Our academic members are centre of public health research excellence and we have relatively long term funding. SPHR is therefore has an unparalleled opportunity to monitor the impact of public involvement and engagement in public health research and to learn about the most effective approaches to involvement and engagement with different population groups We recognise that developing evidence on public involvement in public health research is not an end in itself but is an important way to improve the effectiveness of research and ensure that both members of the public and researchers have a positive experience.

Our strategic objectives

To achieve our vision, we have developed three strategic objectives. These draw heavily on the recently published INVOLVE standards for public involvement and engagement in research (see appendix 4). The actions required to achieve these objectives and how we will monitor our progress are described in Appendix 1.

Objective 1.: **The Organisational culture objective**
To develop shared principles and an organisational culture and supporting infrastructure that establishes and maintains respectful and collaborative relationships between academics, research staff and members of the public, recognising the time required to develop these relationships and to undertake effective public involvement and engagement in research.
(_National Standards for Public Involvement: Working together; Communications; Governance)._

Objective. 2: **The Involving objective**
To develop SPHR as an inclusive and _'involving'_ organisation, providing high quality impactful opportunities for the public, particularly members of groups most adversely affected by social inequalities in health, to influence decision-making and to work in partnership with academics across the research cycle from priority setting, through design and delivery of research to dissemination and knowledge exchange.
(_National Standards for Public Involvement: Inclusive opportunities)_

Objective 3: **The Learning objective**
To establish and maintain systems that support shared learning and constant improvement in public involvement and engagement amongst research staff and members of the public in SPHR including systems to monitor the impact of PI&E and leaning about the relevance and transferability of different approaches to involvement and engagement for different population groups.
(_National   Standards   for   Public   Involvement: Support   and   learning;   Impact)_

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Appendix 1: Planned Actions

Objective 1: The Organisational culture objective			
To develop shared principles and an organisational culture and supporting infrastructure that establishes and maintains respectful and collaborative relationships between academics, research staff and members of the public, recognising the time required to develop these relationships and to undertake effective public involvement and engagement in public health research. (*National Standards for Public Involvement: Working together; Communications; Governance*).			
	Action plan	**Milestones & outputs**	**Timelines**
1.1 Recognise the time taken to develop effective and inclusive public involvement & engagement relationships	• Ensure plans for PI&E in research are realistic and achievable • Ensure senior staff have active roles in supporting PI&E in specific research projects	• Include 'lay' reviews of all proposals • Management group monitoring of proposals	• Achieved • Achieved
1.2 Value and respect the contributions that members of the public make at a School level	• Develop cross-School policies on public involvement reward and recognition, including a common approach to paying expenses and public involvement payments; co-authorship opportunities, attendance at conferences • Establish a process to ensure that members of the public involved in SPHR projects/activities are given clear feedback on their contribution, its impact and an opportunity to provide feedback to the research team on their experience	• Policies in place and on website • Include in reporting documents and reviewed by Public Advisory Network (obj 1.7) and SPHR Executive	• From September 2019
1.3 Ensure that there is a shared understanding of the roles,	• Identify examples of good PI&E practice from across SPHR and beyond including innovative approaches to involvement & engagement (e.g. participative action research)	• Examples of good practice on website	• From September 2019

responsibilities and expectations around public involvement in research projects	• Require all proposals for SPHR support for research and other activities include clear descriptions of the approach to public involvement, anticipated benefits/impacts and pathways through which these will be achieved. • Require all projects to provide role descriptions for and agreed with public advisers	• To be evidenced in project proposals • Templates to be developed and circulated	
1.4 Establish decision-making processes that respect diverse contributions	• Ensure that Chairs of meetings and panels have the necessary skills to genuinely involve public contributors in decision-making • Minutes of meetings describe and reflect how decisions are made for the research and where the public have contributed to the decision	• Include in training provision (Obj 3) • Exemplar minutes disseminated across SPHR	• From September 2019
1.5 Establish regular, appropriate and clear communications with members of the public involved in specific projects and across the School	• Each project to appoint a single point of contact for communication with members of the public • Recognise and provide support for different ways of communicating with the public	• In place • In place	• From September 2019

1.6 Establish PI&E leadership structures across SPHR	• Recruit a minimum of two members of the public with relevant experience of public health research to sit on SPHR advisory board • Identify an academic PI&E lead and staff resource centrally to act as a main point of contact and information internally and externally and to co-ordinate the implementation of the PI&E strategy across SPHR • Establish a PI&E Strategy Implementation Group to support to delivery, oversee implementation and monitoring of the PI&E strategy. The group to comprise a School PI&E lead and leads for each SPHR member, ensuring representation from research programmes and themes plus at least two representatives from the Public Advisory Network (see objective 1.7 below)	• Already in place • PI&E strategy group already in place; PI&E lead in place • PI&E SIG in place and TOR agreed	• Achieved • Achieved • By October 2019
1.7 The voices of members of the public involved in SPHR research will be heard in all SPHR decision-making bodies	• Create a Public Advisory Network (PAN) comprising members of the public and third sector groups involved in research programmes and themes across SPHR and from across SPHR geographies. Terms of Reference to include: representation on PI&E Strategy Implementation Group; advising on developments in PI&E; contributing to PI&E training; reviewing study documents, particularly PI&E to be a standing item on the agenda of the SPHR Executive which will receive regular reports on progress against strategic objectives from the PI&E Implementation group (with input from the Public Advisory Network).	• Network in place • In place and reporting in progress	• By December 2019 • From December 2019
1.8 Ensure adequate resources are made available to support high quality PI&E across SPHR	• Provide guidance and support for the construction of realistic project level budgets for PI&E and what should be included in these. For example[1] • Require all proposals for research and other activities to include a realistic plan and budget for public involvement and engagement and put in place robust systems to monitor expenditure of this element of budgets.	• Guidance on website and signposting in place • Already in place	• From September 2019 • Achieved

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[1] Involve provides budget guidance: https://www.invo.org.uk/posttypepublication/budgeting-for-involvement/

	• Clearly identify funds for PI&E held centrally and within members budgets to support the implementation of the PI&E strategy which could include: - Funding to 'Enable involvement' to support innovative inclusive approaches to PI in writing SPHR research and, in some circumstances, other applications related to SPHR research - Funding to establish in-house PI&E training and development opportunities for SPHR researchers and members of the public - Funding to support public engagement in enabling public involvement as well as public dissemination and impact	• to be agreed with SPHR director	• From September 2019
1.9 SPHR PI strategy and related policies to be readily accessible across and beyond the School	• Develop and maintain dedicated webpages on PI&E on SPHR website • Post the SPHR PI strategy on the School website together with information on related PI policies (e.g. fees payment)	• PI&E webpages done • Strategy and specific policies on website	• Achieved • From September 2019

Objective 2: The Involving objective
To develop SPHR as an inclusive and *'involving'* organisation, providing high quality impactful opportunities for the public, particularly members of groups most adversely affected by social inequalities in health, to influence decision-making and to work in partnership with academics across the research cycle from priority setting, through design and delivery of research to dissemination and knowledge exchange.
(*National Standards for Public Involvement: Inclusive opportunities*)

	Action plan	**Milestones & outputs**	**Timelines**
2.1 Broaden the range of public representatives involved in and engaged with SPHR research	• Explore alternative or enhanced models of involvement and engagement in relation to the population groups involved in SPHR research e.g. children and young people, people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, etc. • Building on the Public Advisory Network and Advisory Board membership establish partnerships with national and local NGOs and other groups that will represent the perspectives of particular	• Novel approaches to PI&E in place • Partnerships with relevant community groups and NGOs in	• From April 2019 • From April 2019

	population groups (particularly those less often involved in/engaged with research) and/or help to recruit individuals from these groups to be involved in SPHR research and knowledge exchange activities	place	
2.2 Establish diverse opportunities for members of the public to get involved across the research cycle	• Produce guidance on diverse approaches to public involvement relevant to: - Priority setting for research - Developing and delivering research - Dissemination and knowledge exchange • Establish public involvement as a requirement of all proposals for SPHR research, dissemination and other activities.	• Provisional guidance already available – ongoing updates to be undertaken • In place	• From Nov 2018 • Achieved
2.3 Establish effective, transparent and diverse approaches to PI&E in SPHR research	• Work with the Public Advisory Network (see objective 1.7 above) to establish more inclusive and diverse methods for recruiting, involving and engaging the public and/or relevant groups/organisations to SPHR research • Produce and disseminate a range of resources, including plain language summaries and more novel approaches (e.g. virtual research 'open days' for the public) describing on-going and planned public involvement in research opportunities and make these easily accessible	• Guidance for SPHR members in place • Resources available	• From September 2019 • From September 2019
2.4 Address internal and where possible external barriers to involvement in SPHR research	• As part of the monitoring of our PI&E strategy implementation to undertake annual reviews of the experience of academics and members of the public involved in SPHR to identify factors that influence uptake of involvement opportunities and put in place action to address these, where necessary. • Proactively target communities of interest and those facing greatest barriers to engagement	• Annually • Identification of action to involve members of the public who would not usually get involved is evident in all proposals and in progress reporting	• From January 2020
2.5 Ensure regular communications with	• Update public involvement and engagement section of the website regularly	• Plan in place	• Ongoing

the public about involvement opportunities in SPHR projects	• Develop and implement a communication plan for public involvement and engagement to include dedicated section on public involvement in SPHR research newsletters and research summaries; information or stories about public involvement in SPHR research in School-wide communications	• Evidence of implementation	• From April 2019
2.6 Ensure dissemination and impact strategies include engagement with the public	• Require all research proposals to include plans for public engagement as part of dissemination and impact plans	• Inclusion of sections in proposal and routine progress reporting forms • Plans and progress regularly reviewed by SPHR Management Group.	• Ongoing

Objective 3 The Learning objective
To establish and maintain systems that support shared learning and constant improvement in public involvement and engagement amongst research staff and members of the public in SPHR, including systems to monitor the impact of PI&E.
(*National Standards for Public Involvement: Support and learning; Impact*)

	Action plan	Milestones & outputs	Timelines
3.1 Designate resources to ensure and support effective public involvement and engagement	• Covered in Objective 2.3 above	• In place	• From April 2019
3.2 Make training,	• Co-produce a training resource focused on public involvement in public health research with public advisers and researchers involved	• Training resource	• October 2019

		disseminated	
development and support opportunities available and accessible	in the internal review of PI in SPHR research project • Establish training and development opportunities for researchers, PhD students and members of the public and explore potential for collaboration with other agencies and for accreditation could include Involving the public in delivering training • Establish ongoing monitoring to identify new externally available training opportunities and provide signposts to these • Ensure that funding for training for public involvement in research is costed into individual funding applications • Establish a cadre of the public and SPHR researchers willing to act as mentors for less experienced people • Explore the feasibility of making public involvement and engagement training part of induction	• Opportunities in place and widely advertised within SPHR	• From September 2019
3.3 Have a clearly identifiable point of contact for information and support	• Overall lead for PI&E appointed for SPHR and leads identified in all SPHR members. See objective. 1.1.	• Leads in place	• From Jan 2019
3.4 Provide opportunities for members of the public and SPHR researchers to come together to share	• As part of SPHR annual meetings, establish annual PI&E in public health research event for relevant people to come together • Ensure that public involvement and engagement in research features in the SPHR annual scientific meetings and other knowledge exchange events, showcasing examples of good practice	• Annual event • Activities set up	• From March 2019

good practice and resources			
3.5 Clearly articulate the anticipated benefits and impacts of public involvement & engagement activities and the pathways to achieve these	• Develop detailed statement on the anticipated benefits and impacts of PI&E in SPHR research at all levels (School as a whole, research programmes and cross cutting themes) and pathways to achieve these using the MRC Public Involvement and Assessment Framework	• Statement on pathways to impact agreed by Executive and widely disseminated	• December 2019
3.6 Systems to be established to collect a minimum data set on the experience and impact of PI&E in SPHR research, monitor and act on information about public involvement in SPHR research	• Work with INVOLVE, NIHR and SPHR members to develop a consistent approach to collecting information on the impact of PI&E, on the experience of members of the public and SPHR researchers (ref 2.4 above) and on the transferability of different methods for involvement and engagement across diverse population groups • Ensure that information on impacts of PI&E and feedback from members of the public and SPHR researchers is used to inform and improve SPHR PI&E practice in the future • An annual briefing on the delivery of public involvement and engagement in SPHR to be published on the SPHR website reporting on progress in relation to our objectives and the national standards for public involvement	• System for collecting information/data in place and data being collected • Regular reports on progress and experience produced and disseminated internally and externally	• From September 2019

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Appendix 2: Implementation action plan - September 2019 – March 2020

1. Convene and review membership and terms of reference for the PI&E Implementation group and establish 6 weekly meetings for next year
Timeline: Date to be set for meeting by early October 2019

2. PI&E lead to meet with directorate members to discuss potential for collaborative work
Timeline: date to be set by early October 2019

3. Establish the Public Advisory Network
Timeline: first meeting of the PAN January 2020 to agree TOR

4. Sign off with MG and then disseminate the PI&E Resource for researchers and the public developed by SPHR public advisers
Timeline: start dissemination early October 2019

5. Identify (or if necessary develop in-house) "Introduction to public engagement in Research" learning module and begin to collate information on learning/training opportunities for PI&E delivered by the NIHR family
Timelines: introductory module delivered November 2019; V1 of learning resources guide produced by January and then constantly updated

6. Review and collate information on approaches to PI&E in SPHR programmes and theme research
Timeline: report to MG/Exec summarising information and recommending action January 2020

7. Collate information on PI&E across SPHR members and other agencies on:
     i. Approaches to recruitment of the public
     ii. Range of methods for public involvement & engagement used
     iii. Policies on payment of fees/expenses to public advisers
     iv. Budgets if appropriate
Timelines: summary of information and proposals for SPHR policy to Exec March 2020

8. Identify and disseminate within SPHR good practice examples of exemplar documentation (e.g. checklist of questions to ask if you want to involve the public in your research; role descriptions for public members of research teams; public friendly minutes of meetings) and review SPHR proposal and reporting templates and make recommendations for improvements
Timeline: Complete initial work December 2019 then ongoing as necessary

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Appendix 3: Glossary of acronyms

Acronym	Full title
CLAHRC	Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research
ARC	Applied Research Collaboration
FUSE	The Centre for Translational Research in Public Health. Fuse is made up of the Universities of Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside
LiLaC	The Liverpool and Lancaster Universities Collaboration for public health
LSHTM	The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIHR	National Institute for Health Research
PI&E	Public Involvement and Engagement
SPHR	School for Public Health Research

Appendix 4: Involve National Standards for Public Involvement

Standard 1: INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES

We offer public involvement opportunities that are accessible and that reach people and groups according to research needs.

Standard 2: WORKING TOGETHER

We work together in a way that values all contributions, and that builds and sustains mutually respectful and productive relationships.

Standard 3: SUPPORT & LEARNING

We offer and promote support and learning that builds confidence and skills for public involvement in research.

Standard 4: COMMUNICATIONS

We use plain language for timely, two way and targeted communications, as part of involvement plans and activities.

Standard 5: IMPACT

To drive improvement, we capture and share the difference that public involvement makes to research.

Standard 6: GOVERNANCE

We involve the public in our governance and leadership so that our decisions promote and protect the public interest.

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