A STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT (PI&E)

2023 - 2027
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Overview

We have developed four strategic pillars to guide and grow public and community involvement and engagement (PI&E) across SPHR over the next quinquennium.

The pillars are informed by three strands of focussed work, which included:

- Collaborative work via workshops and discussions between researchers and members of the Public Partners Advisory Network (PAN) undertaken between September 2022 – February 2023
- Collaborative work between members of the PI&E Operations Group between September 2022- February 2023 which included Dr Kath Maguire, Exeter; Dr Hannah Fairbrother, Sheffield; Ella Anderson, Fuse; Lesley Hayley, Fuse; Alan Griffiths, Public Contributor and was co-ordinated by Dr Rachel Proctor, Exeter, and led by Professor G.J. Melendez-Torres, Exeter.
- Consideration of the outcomes from collaborative work between researchers and the public, which underpinned the previous strategy.

The pillars are also informed by the INVOLVE standards for public involvement and engagement in research (2019) and the NIHR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy (2022).

The strategic objectives for PI&E are designed to guide and inform the underpinnings for PI&E across SPHR-funded research, including the central aspects of how PI&E are supported in SPHR. In addition, this will provide a tangible account of the ways in which SPHR colleagues and public contributors can collaborate, generating learning and outputs which support the School’s reputation for, and commitment to, excellence in public health research.

The pillars shaping our strategy are intentionally broad to capture the scope of PI&E that is undertaken at School level. They are also flexible and can be used to inform the bespoke PI&E which shapes practice at a project level.

Whilst broad, the pillars are also focussed on specific actions, and we have given close attention to the ways in which these actions can be evaluated. This balance between breadth and specificity acknowledges the complexities of PI&E, while also demonstrating how we can continue progressing PI&E to achieve our vision for public health research.
Plain Language Summary
Our public involvement and engagement strategy is made up of four key elements we call pillars. They are:

- ensuring we involve and engage with people from diverse backgrounds (involving everyone)
- ensuring we involve and engage people from all sorts of different places (involving everywhere)
- ensuring involvement and engagement activities have research benefits (impacting evidence)
- measuring the benefits to research from involvement and engagement (evidencing impact).

Each of the pillars was developed collaboratively with public contributors into the objectives, actions and outcomes set out in Appendix A.

Written by Public Advisory Network contributor Mike Etkind.

Background

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) School for Public Health Research (SPHR) was formed in 2012 and was renewed in 2017 for five years, followed by renewal for a further five years in 2022. SPHR is a partnership between nine leading academic centres with excellence in applied public health research in England. Its remit is to conduct applied research to increase the volume and quality of useful evidence on cost-effective interventions, to support local public health practitioners and policy makers to engage with research in their decision-making, and to contribute to ongoing efforts to build research capacity in public health research within an environment where first class research focussed on the needs of the public, can thrive (SPHR, 2022).

This strategy sets out an agenda for involving and engaging the public in all stages of research over the period 2023-2027. It has been informed by reviewing existing guidance on best practice (INVOLVE, 2019) in combination with a robust review of the previous public involvement and engagement strategy and practice in the School for Public Health Research (SPHR, 2019). This review work was undertaken collaboratively by members of the public with experience of being involved in School for Public Health Research alongside internal public involvement and engagement colleagues across partner institutions. Members of the School for Public Health Research Public Partners Network (PAN) provided ongoing co-development of initial ideas and the final version of the strategy. We also considered the lessons learnt from the recent Practical Guide to Being Inclusive in Public Involvement in Health Research published by INVOLVE (Cowan, 2020).
The strategy outlines our direction of travel for public involvement and engagement in our research. This vision is broken down into practical aims and objectives, including what we aim to achieve, how we will go about it, and how we will assess impact. Although it is important to recognise the role and values which underpin how public involvement and engagement shape research (Brett et al., 2014; Gradinger et al., 2015; UKRI (UK Research and Innovation), 2023) we also move beyond the justification of its importance to begin to think about how our research can diversify who is included in public involvement and engagement, the ways in which approaches can foster greater creativity and innovation, and perhaps most crucially, how we can better evaluate the impacts of public involvement and engagement on research outcomes (Russell et al., 2020; Liabo et al., 2020; Modigh et al., 2021).

Furthermore, we have considered how the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have influenced and may continue to influence, public involvement and engagement across the school (Clark et al., 2019). Our action plan to deliver on these aims and objectives is included in Appendix A. There is also a glossary explaining some of the technical terms included in Appendix B. The INVOLVE national standards for public involvement which we were involved in developing and have informed this refreshed strategy, are also included in Appendix C.

Vision

Our vision is to prioritise and support the development of inclusive, equitable, and impactful public involvement and engagement in our research by working collaboratively with members of the public to share capacity in ways that strengthen research outcomes. Central to this vision is a commitment to:

- Increase the relevance and uptake of our research
- Increase the translatability of our research findings to practice and policy
- Increase accountability for the ways in which we spend public funds
- Increase knowledge and understanding of effective public involvement and engagement through ongoing learning, contributions to the evidence base and disseminating outcomes

Our values

In addition to the values set out in the previous 2018-2022 strategy, which included equity, clarity, and recognition, the values which will further inform the growth and development of public involvement and engagement practices in the next stage of the School are:

- Sharing knowledge and capacity by sustaining existing reciprocal relationships between researchers and members of the public and by developing new relationships.
• Transparency in the ways we conduct public involvement and engagement to ensure that impacts can be better understood, evaluated and attributed.

• Inclusivity in the ways we approach members of the public, ensuring that greater attention is paid to reaching out to those who are underrepresented and seldom heard in applied health research.

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

Public involvement in research is research done in collaboration with or by the public and not to, about or for them (SPHR, 2023). Furthermore, involvement is a process not an event, it enables constructive and ongoing dialogue between the public and researchers (INVOLVE, 2019). Involvement plays a powerful role in ensuring that researchers better understand people’s views and experiences and how they respond to and negotiate health related challenges. And it ensures that the public understands the ways in which research aims to understand and improve society, as well as the implications and constraints of methods and findings.

When we talk about members of the public, we mean people from all population groups. We believe that the public should have a meaningful role in all types of research and at any stage of the research process. Typically, members of the public are often included in:

• Establishing research priorities
• Collaboration around the design, implementation, and dissemination of research which informs decision making
• Co-production of research

Public engagement with research plays a key role by sharing research findings and implications about research conducted by the School with the public more broadly. Although it differs from involvement, effective engagement is not a passive process, the public act as a critical friend or consultant, supplying some feedback to guide research, rather than to inform it (NCCPE, 2023). Effective engagement is a dialogue where researchers and members of the public listen and respond, learning from each other and providing each other with useful steers or fresh insights. Examples of engagement include:

• Open days which invite members of the public to learn and engage with research
• Awareness campaigns
• Consultation processes where the public guide rather than co-produce
• Engagement with the public through media platforms such as blogs, twitter, newspapers, television, radio, podcasts, and online streaming.

• Science cafes or community-based events aimed at sharing findings

Why is public involvement and engagement in the School for Public Health Research important?

To be impactful, democratic, and inclusive, research in applied public health requires the involvement and engagement of members of the public. We know that research which draws on meaningful and ethical involvement and engagement with public perspectives helps to make research more accountable, relevant, timely, and helps to ensure that research is of the highest quality (Staley, 2009; Jackson et al, 2020; Saini, 2021). High quality, relevant research can:

• Be translated more effectively to local public health policy and services

• Raise awareness and respond to the health inequalities across populations

• Ensure that the public's right to have a say in publicly funded research is enabled

Our strategy objectives

To break up our direction of travel into practical and achievable steps, we have developed four strategic pillars. These draw on the work between researchers and the public which underpinned the earlier strategy and the INVOLVE standards for public involvement and engagement in research 2019 (see Appendix C). These are also informed by recent workshops with PAN members, collaboration across the SPHR PI&E Operations Group and ongoing feedback received verbally and through written formats from PAN members. The steps we will take to move forward with these goals and how we will know we have been successful are broken down in Appendix A.

Pillar 1: Involving Everyone
This objective reflects SPHR's commitment to health equity by working to ensure that involvement and engagement reflects the diversity of our population, especially with regard to under-represented and under-served groups.

Pillar 2: Involving Everywhere
This objective reflects SPHR's commitment to addressing health equity by working to ensure that involvement and engagement reflects the full breadth of our geography, with particular regard to geographic inequities in health (e.g., as experienced by rural
and coastal communities) as well as issues which amplify isolation such as digital inequalities.

Pillar 3: Impacting Evidence
This objective relates to the ongoing development of innovation and impact in involvement and engagement through the optimisation of involvement and engagement processes, and through the sharing and generating of knowledge, capacity, and skills.

Pillar 4: Evidencing Impact
This objective relates to reporting and evaluating the impacts and benefits to research and public health that involvement and engagement can create.
Appendix A: Strategy Objectives, Actions and Outcomes

**Pillar 1: Involving Everyone**
This objective reflects SPHR’s commitment to health equity. It does this by ensuring that PI&E reflects the diversity of our population, especially in relation to those who are under-represented and under-served.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do we want to achieve?</th>
<th>What will we do to achieve our goals?</th>
<th>Who is involved and what level of the school?</th>
<th>How will we know we have been successful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 Increase SPHR-wide involvement and engagement relationships with under-represented and under-served individuals and groups in public health research | • Maintain an up-to-date thematic map of key involvement and engagement relationships across SPHR projects  
• Identify and engage through the PAN, organisations working with under-represented and under-served groups, focusing especially on ethnic minority groups and groups working on sexuality and gender-related health and wellbeing  
• Develop and maintain resources to support the recruitment of diverse participants for PI&E research activities, and ensure support systems are in place for new and established public partners | • Strategic School level e.g., PI&E Operations Group  
• PAN Network in collaboration with PAN Co-ordinator  
• Strategic School level e.g., collaboration between Communications team, PAN Co-ordinator with support from PAN members | • Up-to-date map used as a resource for involvement and engagement delivery  
• Sustained and meaningful engagement of representatives from relevant organisations  
• Updated, accessible and varied resources including use of social media |
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<tr>
<th>1.2 Develop and sustain SPHR-wide PI&amp;E relating to children and young people</th>
<th>• Develop and sustain a Young People’s Advisory Network (YPAN) including young people aged 13-21</th>
<th>• Strategic School level e.g., PI&amp;E Leadership, PAN Co-ordinator in collaboration with young people, relevant public sector stakeholders, PI&amp;E Operations Group, and colleagues across the CYPF workstream</th>
<th>• Group formed based on feedback from young people, youth workers and other stakeholders. Meetings, timings, and venues to arranged according to needs of young people.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a PAN ‘subtheme’ relating to carers (including of children, young people, and adults)</td>
<td>• PAN Network in collaboration with PAN Co-ordinator</td>
<td>• Formation of subgroup with regular communication (e.g., via email, meetings and other platforms which suit the needs of contributors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Develop and disseminate learning</td>
<td>• Develop and disseminate SPHR approaches and practices, supporting an equality of opportunity approach across PI&amp;E</td>
<td>• Strategic and project level</td>
<td>• Dissemination across multiple forms (public-facing resources, academic publications, internal resources)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop and disseminate SPHR approaches and practices to support fair and equitable involvement and engagement with young people</td>
<td>• Strategic and project level</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pillar 2: Involving Everywhere**
This objective reflects SPHR’s commitment to health equity. It does this by ensuring that PI&E reflects the full breadth of our geography, with particular regard to geographic inequities in health (e.g., as experienced by rural and coastal communities).

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<tr>
<th>What do we want to achieve?</th>
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<th>Who is involved and what level of the school?</th>
<th>How will we know we have been successful?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1 Identify and include under-represented and under-served communities across SPHR’s geography | • Maintain an up-to-date thematic map of key involvement and engagement relationships across SPHR projects  
• Develop a PAN ‘subtheme’ involving stakeholders reflecting a range of coastal, urban, and rural geographies  
• Mobilise existing relationships with stakeholders to develop PI&E approaches relevant to a range of geographies  
• Pilot novel PI&E activities relevant to a range of geographies (e.g., place-based approaches) | • Co-ordinated at a strategic School level e.g., PI&E Operations Group with contributions made at a project level.  
• PAN Network in collaboration with PAN Co-ordinator  
• Strategic and project level | • Up-to-date map used as a resource for PI&E planning and delivery  
• Formation of subgroup with regular communication  
• Piloting of at least three 'geographically diverse' PI&E activities by end of QQ3  
• Same as above |
| 2.2 Develop approaches to minimise geographic barriers to PI&E |  |  |  |


| 2.3 Develop and disseminate learning on geographically diverse PI&E | • Develop and disseminate SPHR approaches and practices to support the geographic dimensions of PI&E  
• Evaluate and disseminate pilot activities, with a focus on geographic equity and sustainability | • Strategic and Project level  
• Strategic level with guidance and co-development with PAN members and Co-ordinator | • Dissemination of learning across multiple forms (public-facing resources, academic publications, internal resources)  
• Publication of evaluation findings |
### Pillar 3: Impacting Evidence

This objective relates to innovation and impact in involvement and engagement. It does this through sharing and generating knowledge, capacity, and skills in PI&E.

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<tr>
<th>What do we want to achieve?</th>
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<th>How will we know we have been successful?</th>
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</table>
| 3.1 Expand the diversity of PI&E roles and methods | • Develop resources to support consistent and comprehensive description of PI&E roles and opportunities  
  • Cultivate a community of practice relating to creative practice in involvement and engagement | • Strategic level e.g., PI&E Operations Group in collaboration with PAN  
  • Strategic and project levels alongside public partners | • Updated, accessible and varied online resources to raise awareness of, and support for, varied PI&E activities  
  • Dissemination of learning across multiple forms (public-facing resources, academic publications, internal resources) around creative delivery in involvement and engagement |
<p>| 3.2 Optimise public partner-facing resources to support PI&amp;E | • Co-produce and maintain induction and orientation materials for new PAN members | • PI&amp;E directors, PAN co-ordinator and PAN members | • Published induction and orientation materials by end of year 2 with annual review thereafter |</p>
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<tr>
<th>3.3 Develop a standard package of PI&amp;E training for SPHR trainees and early career researchers</th>
<th>• Monitor and respond to public partner-identified learning interests in public health and research methods</th>
<th>• Same as above</th>
<th>• Recorded and audited account of actions taken from learning interests identified in PAN and other PI&amp;E meetings</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop and sustain a PI&amp;E mentorship ‘buddy’ programme for SPHR trainees</td>
<td>• Co-produce with relevant stakeholders, an involvement and engagement ‘kickstart’ programme for early career researchers as part of the SPHR ‘Added Value Training Programme’</td>
<td>• PI&amp;E directors, PAN co-ordinator, PAN members and ResNet members</td>
<td>• All trainees offered an PI&amp;E mentor/ ‘buddy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All trainees offered an PI&amp;E mentor/ ‘buddy’</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
<td>• Kickstart delivered at least twice by end of QQ3</td>
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## Pillar 4: Evidencing Impact
This objective relates to reporting and evaluating the impacts and benefits of PI&E for public health research.

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<tr>
<th>What do we want to achieve?</th>
<th>What will we do to achieve our goals?</th>
<th>Who is involved and what level of the school</th>
<th>How will we know we have been successful?</th>
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</table>
| 4.1 Increase reporting of PI&E impacts | • Co-produce and embed an impact attribution tool to support identification of impacts arising from PI&E activities  
• Evaluate impact attribution tool across SPHR projects and activities | • Co-ordinated at a strategic School level (e.g., PI&E Operations Group) with input from researchers and public partners at a project level  
• Same as above | • Impact attribution tool developed and piloted for selected round 1 research projects  
• Impact attribution tool implemented and evaluated across all round 2 research projects |
| 4.2 Close the feedback loop between researchers and public partners | • Identify and disseminate SPHR-based exemplars of ‘closed loops’ over time  
• Develop and formalise expectations for ‘closing the loop’ both throughout and at the conclusion of SPHR projects | • Same as above  
• Same as above | • Published at least three exemplar case studies by end of year 2  
• Published guidance outlining expectations for closing the loop for implementation within round 2 projects |
| 4.3 Embed reporting and attribution practices over time | • Develop and disseminate learning relating to impact attribution  
• Integrate impact attribution as part of programme-level and SPHR-level reporting mechanisms | • Co-ordinated at a strategic School level (e.g., PI&E Operations Group) with input from researchers and public partners at a project level  
• Same as above | • Published learning related to impact attribution by the end of QQ3.  
• Contributed to QQ3 reporting relating to impact of involvement and engagement |
# Appendix B: School for Public Health Research: Public Health Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPHR</strong></td>
<td>SPHR stands for School for Public Health Research. The SPHR is a partnership between nine leading academic centres with excellence in applied public health research in England. The SPHR aims to increase the evidence base for cost-effective public health practice. Find out more at <a href="https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/">https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public</strong></td>
<td>When we talk about members of the public, we mean people from all population groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PI&amp;E</strong></td>
<td>Public Involvement and Engagement is the common term currently used by the School for actively working in partnership with members of the public to plan, manage, design, and carry out research. It captures activities which can be undertaken at an involvement or engagement level, or can integrate both approaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Advisory Board** | The School’s Advisory Board provides independent strategic advice to the School Executive Group on the development of its activities in the context of national and international strategic opportunities and priorities. The Board includes people from a range of organisations involved in public health and practice as well as lay expert members.  
  
Advisory board meetings are held annually.  
  
Find out more at [https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/about/advisory-board/](https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/about/advisory-board/) |
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<tr>
<td><strong>ARC (Applied Research Collaboration)</strong></td>
<td>The NIHR (National Institute for Health Research) Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs) support applied health and care research that responds to, and meets, the needs of local populations and local health and care systems. Find out more at <a href="https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/collaborating-in-applied-health-research.htm">https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/collaborating-in-applied-health-research.htm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ARCD (Academic Research Capacity Building)</strong></td>
<td>Academic research capacity building. The School has a research capacity building programme to train public health research leaders of the future. The School provides a range of training opportunities for those interested in pursuing a career in public health research. Find out more at <a href="https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/training/">https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/training/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASM</strong></td>
<td>Annual Scientific Meeting. The SPHR has an ASM (Annual Scientific Meeting) each year, usually in Spring.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DHSC (Department of Health and Social Care)</strong></td>
<td>The Department for Health and Social Care. The DHSC supports ministers to lead the nation's health and social care. The DHSC is a ministerial department.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Executive Group** | The Executive Group is chaired by the School's Director, Professor Ashley Adamson. Each member institution has two representatives at each Executive Group, and this is rotated between the academic leads from each member institution.  
  
The Executive Group oversees SPHR’s development, decides the research priorities, monitors progress against strategic aims and helps ensure collaborative working between members. |
| **Fuse** | Fuse, the Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, brings together the five North East Universities of Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland, and Teesside in a unique collaboration to deliver world-class research to improve health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities.

Fuse is a founding member of the NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR). |
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<tr>
<td><strong>LiLaC (Liverpool and Lancaster)</strong></td>
<td>LiLaC is The Liverpool and Lancaster Universities Collaboration for Public Health Research. LiLaC is a member of SPHR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NIHR</strong></td>
<td>The National Institute for Health and Care Research. The NIHR is funded by the DHSC and was established in 2006 to &quot;create a health research system in which the NHS (National Health Service) supports outstanding individuals, working in world-class facilities, conducting leading-edge research focused on the needs of patients and the public&quot;. Find out more <a href="https://www.nihr.ac.uk/">https://www.nihr.ac.uk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPAN (Public Partners Advisory Network) or PAN (Public Advisory Network)</strong></td>
<td>The SPHR Public Partner Advisory Network (PPAN) also known by the shorter term Public Advisory Network (PAN) is for members of the public involved in our research to connect with each other. This offers people the opportunity to find out what is happening across the School and to support each other. The network helps advise us, particularly in our public involvement and engagement activities, allowing us to improve in these areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PhD/pre-doctoral/post-doctoral launching fellow</strong></td>
<td>PhD – PhD or 'Doctorate of Philosophy' is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase 'philosophiae doctor'. A PhD degree typically involves students independently conducting original and significant research in a specific field or subject, before producing a publication-worthy thesis. A full-time PhD usually lasts for 3 or 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-doctoral fellow</strong></td>
<td>a predoctoral fellow is someone engaged in academic study in preparation for a PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-doctoral launching fellow</strong></td>
<td>a postdoctoral fellow is engaged in postdoctoral research, that is, conducting research after the completion of their PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PHRESH**

Public Health RESearch for Health Consortium. The PHRESH Consortium is a member of SPHR and includes researchers from three leading universities in the West Midlands; Universities of Birmingham, Warwick, and Keele.

**Transdisciplinary**

Transdisciplinary research is research carried out by researchers from different disciplines/subject areas working together to create new and innovative approaches.

**Quinquennium**

Quinquennium means a period of five years. The School must apply for funding every 5 years. The School is now in its third quinquennium which is from 2022-2027.

You will hear phases of the school referred to as QQ1, 2 or 3. See below the time periods for these:

- **QQ1** 2012-2017
- **QQ2** 2017-2022
- **QQ3** 2022-2027

**ResNet**

The School for Public Health Research - Early Career Researcher Network. Find out more [https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/training/our-research-network-resnet/](https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/training/our-research-network-resnet/)

**Under-represented**

Individuals and, or groups who have insufficient or inadequate representation currently in public health research.

**Under-served**

Individuals and, or groups who are inadequately provided with a service, facility, opportunity.
| **Feedback loops** | A process in which the outputs of public involvement and engagement are circled back and used as inputs. |
| **EDI** | Equality, diversity, and inclusion |
| **Disseminate** | To disseminate or undertake dissemination means getting the findings of your research to the people who can make use of them, to maximise the benefit of the research without delay. |
| **Attribution** | Attribution is used within the strategy in relation to the development of an impact attribution tool. Attribution means acknowledging where information comes from in order to give credit. |

*The bulk of the work to generate this glossary was developed and undertaken by Communications Manager Amy Johnson.*
Appendix C: 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.
