

NIHR ARC for the North West Coast Public Involvement and Engagement Policy

1. Introduction

This document sets out our policy for supporting involvement and engagement of the public in the work of the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaborations (ARC) for the North West Coast (ARC NWC).

- The term ‘public’ is used here to refer to a range of individuals including users of services, patients, carers and those sharing a particular interest, for example, people with disabilities or living in particular neighbourhoods. It also includes representatives from relevant patient groups, charities and/or voluntary organisations.
- Involvement and engagement refer to the many ways in which the public can contribute to our work including active co-production and involvement in: putting ideas forward, prioritizing our work, the design and conduct of our activities and the production and dissemination of outputs. Engagement also covers publicising and disseminating our work to the public and the process of recruiting them as participants for our studies.
- The term ‘public advisers’ is used to describe members of the public who collaborate in the work of the ARC NWC.

2. Principles for Public Involvement and Engagement

The following principles underpin our approach to public involvement and engagement:

- Participation of the public will be promoted and encouraged in all aspects of our work and we will follow guidance on good practice produced by INVOLVE and the NIHR Centre for Patient and Public Involvement, Engagement & Participation and Research Dissemination.
- Processes for recruitment, support and communication with members of the public will be transparent and inclusive.
- Public advisers will be treated with dignity and respect. Their expertise will be recognised as an essential complement to professional expertise and research evidence.
- Public engagement and involvement will make a real difference to the work of ARC NWC. The experience and impacts of engagement and involvement will be evaluated and findings will be used to improve our structures and processes.
- Appropriate training and development opportunities will be offered to public advisers and to staff and other ARC NWC members to ensure that they have the skills and competencies necessary to engage effectively.
- Our work will be conducted in accordance with the UK Standards for Public Involvement (2019).

3. Structures and processes for public engagement

A Public Involvement Manager, responsible to the Public Involvement Strategic Lead, will develop and maintain systems and processes to engage public advisors in all aspects of our work. Public advisors will have formal positions on the ARC NWC Steering Board and Management Team. Each Theme will have public advisers as co-chair(s) on their management committees. Additionally, public advisers can suggest areas to focus on and project ideas via ARC NWC mechanisms.

Public advisers will also be recruited as collaborators in specific pieces of work including contributing to:

- The development of proposals for primary applied research, evidence synthesis and implementation projects, capacity building and knowledge exchange activities
- Project advisory and/or steering groups
- Project information leaflets, research instruments, etc
- The collection, analysis and interpretation of data
- The production and dissemination of research outputs
- The conduct of implementation activities

We will also establish and support a group of *Public Involvement Champions* who will disseminate information about the ARC NWC to the wider North West coastal health community and help to recruit new public advisers. Finally, we will communicate with the public across the North West coastal region through our website and social media.

Strategic oversight of public involvement and engagement policy will be the responsibility of the Governance Sub Group, which will be supported by the Public Involvement Manager. Membership of the Governance Sub Group will consist of public advisers working across the ARC NWC. Additional members may be recruited through existing networks and advertising across the ARC NWC region. Members of the Governance Sub Group will attend the ARC NWC Steering Board and Management Team meetings.

Other groups will be established to take on specific tasks, i.e. Communications Group, to help with designing the ARC NWC's communication public adviser strategy.

Public advisers Forum

There is a Public Advisers' Forum, held every six weeks, where public advisers and members can attend to hear about the ARC NWC's work and contribute to the direction of the research (See Public Adviser Forum Terms of Reference).

4. Payment and rewards

Reasonable expenses incurred by members of the public engaging in ARC NWC work will be reimbursed. In addition, public advisers will be remunerated according to good practice guidelines (see payment policy guidance).

The ARC NWC Payment Guidance sets out processes for ensuring that access to remuneration is equitable. Costs of public engagement will be included in budgets for specific activities but to ensure that public advisers are able to participate in the

development of proposals for specific pieces of work ARC NWC will have a general public engagement budget.

5. Training and development for public engagement

Ensuring appropriate training and development opportunities for public advisers involved in ARC NWC activities will be the responsibilities of the Public Involvement Manager. It will be important to make available training opportunities. We will therefore:

1. Undertake an audit of training and development needs of public advisers involved in ARC NWC activities;
2. Identify existing courses/development activities provided elsewhere that meet these training and development needs
3. Develop, if necessary, bespoke training and development opportunities where existing provision cannot be identified.

Specialised training may also be needed for specific pieces of work and any costs involved will be included in funding applications. Other development opportunities may be funded through the Public Engagement Budget where appropriate.

The Public Involvement Manager will develop appropriate training and development opportunities, including identifying training and resources provided by others, to ensure that staff employed by ARC NWC or our Member organisations have the skills and competencies required to engage effectively with members of the public.

6. Communication

Where appropriate members of the public participating in ARC NWC activities, or interested in doing, so will have access to e-mail and social media. A diverse range of communication will be required to inform the public across the North West coast about ARC NWC activities and invite participation/involvement in our work. The Public Involvement Manager will work to ensure that the ARC NWC communications policy addresses these issues appropriately. Our group of Public Engagement Champions described briefly above will also help to ensure that the work of the ARC NWC is communicated in a variety of ways to diverse groups across the North West coastal area.

7. Monitoring the impact of public engagement

It is important to evaluate the impact of public engagement and involvement on the ARC NWC. The Public involvement Manager working with the Governance Group and supported by the Strategic Lead will develop an Impact Assessment Plan. We will explore the potential for doing this in collaboration with other ARCs. ARC NWC also has a responsibility to report our public involvement activities to the NIHR and public advisers will be involved in producing these reports.