

Exploring the impact of public involvement in research: examples

INVOLVE has long been interested in gathering evidence about the impact of public involvement on research. In 2005 INVOLVE established invoNET (www.invo.org.uk/invonet/about-invonet/) as a network for researchers and others interested in developing evidence and learning about the impact of public involvement on research.

The evidence that we have to date suggests that public involvement can make positive contributions to research (Brett, 2010¹). The structured literature review of the evidence funded by INVOLVE in 2009 (Staley, 2009²), reported that public involvement in research can influence the research topics and direction of research, project design and methods, recruitment and data collection, analysis and dissemination. Public involvement can also positively impact on the people involved in the research.

Staley makes a plea for producing guidance on how to report on the impact of involvement in journal articles and reports; finding more consistent and robust ways of assessing impact; and helping researchers and the public to find the most useful ways of telling the 'story of involvement'. A similar recommendation was made by the authors of the 2010 systematic review which they followed up by proposing a 'GRIPP' checklist for reporting involvement (Staniszewska, 2011³), and more recently by the Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework (PiiAF) Study (Popay et al, 2013⁴).

To build on this work INVOLVE has published two new series of short, concise examples of public involvement in research (www.invo.org.uk/resource-centre/examples/). Six researchers

describe involvement in their study and its impact on research quality and ten researchers are interviewed on the impact of public involvement in the development of their funding applications.

The six [examples on the impact on research quality](#) are all from invoNET members. They offer a range of different perspectives on public involvement in research, and describe quite different approaches to research.

The following themes in relation to the impact of public involvement on the quality of research were drawn from the six examples:

- the relevance of the research topic
- the design of the study
- data collection
- analysis and interpretation of findings
- the implementation of research
- relationships and legacy.

This small piece of work aims to contribute to our thinking about how we report the impact of public involvement on research quality.

The ten examples of public involvement in National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) research funding applications (www.invo.org.uk/resource-centre/examples/) are drawn from a broad range of studies from across the NIHR. This new series illustrates the uniqueness of the public involvement in each study and the researchers tell their story by describing:

- how members of the public were involved in the funding application
- the origin of the research question
- the difference public involvement made
- knowledge and learning to share with other researchers.

The researchers talk about the impact public involvement had

on the:

- practical design of the research
- practical arrangements for the research
- outcome measures
- accessibility and acceptability of the research.

We hope that these two series of examples will provide learning and inspiration to other researchers. They will not only illustrate the specific context within which public involvement in research is situated, but also contribute to a more generalisable understanding of the impact of public involvement on research.

Thanks to Alison Faulkner and Kristina Staley who interviewed the researchers and wrote up the examples, to the researchers for giving their time and experience and to the advisory groups of both projects for their support and guidance.

References

¹ Brett J, Staniszewska S, Mockford C (2010) The PIRICOM Study. A Systematic Review of the Conceptualisation, Measurement, Impact and Outcomes of Patient and Public Involvement in Health and Social Care Research. London: United Kingdom Clinical Research Collaboration.

² Staley K (2009) Exploring Impact: Public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research. Eastleigh: INVOLVE.

³ Staniszewska S, Brett J, Mockford C, Barber R (2011) The GRIPP checklist: strengthening the quality of patient and public involvement reporting in research. International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care 27:4.

⁴ Popay J, Collins M et al (2013) PiiAF – The Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework and Guidance website: <http://piiاف.org.uk/>

