

'GUIDELINES' FOR GRANT APPLICANTS ABOUT INVOLVING THE PUBLIC IN RESEARCH

1. BACKGROUND

There are many reasons for involving the public in research, and public involvement is increasingly being recognised as an indicator of the quality of a research proposal. People who use services can:

- offer different perspectives
- help to ensure that issues which are important to them and thus health and social care services are identified
- help to ensure that money and resources aren't wasted on research that has little relevance
- help to ensure that research doesn't just measure outcomes that are identified and considered important by professionals
- help with the recruitment of their peers
- enable people who are often marginalised to contribute to research
- disseminate the results of research and help to ensure that changes are implemented.

(Hanley et al. (2004) *Involving the Public in NHS, Public Health and Social Care Research: Briefing Notes for Researchers* (2nd edition) INVOLVE ISBN: 0-9541215-2-X

In 1996 the Director of Research and Development in the Department of Health set up Consumers in NHS Research, as a standing advisory group on consumer involvement in the NHS. In 2001 the Group widened its remit to cover public health and social care research commissioned by the Policy Research Programme of the Department of Health. The Group has now been renamed 'INVOLVE – Promoting public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research,' to better reflect its extended remit.

INVOLVE was established to promote public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research, in order to improve the way that research is prioritised, commissioned, undertaken, communicated and used. We believe that the active involvement of the public in the research process leads to research that is more relevant to people and is more likely to be used. Research which reflects the needs and views of the public, is more likely to produce results that can be used to improve practice in health and social care.

INVOLVE has produced briefing notes for researchers on involving the public. Copies can be obtained from the INVOLVE Support Unit.

This brief document aims to outline the type of information that should be provided by grant applicants about their plans to involve the public. It also suggests some criteria by which public involvement could be assessed.

2. DEFINITION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

It is important to be clear about what we mean by public involvement.

By **'public'** we mean:

- patients and potential patients
- informal (unpaid) carers
- parents / guardians
- users of health and social care services
- disabled people
- organisations that represent people who use services
- members of the public who are the potential recipients of health promotion programmes and social services interventions
- groups asking for research because they believe they have been exposed to potentially harmful circumstances, products or services

By **'involvement'** we mean:

An active partnership between the public and researchers in the research process, rather than the use of the public as the 'subjects' of research. Active involvement of the public may take the form of consultation, collaboration or user control.

3. INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN APPLICATION

In order to assess the nature and extent of public involvement in a proposal, we suggest that the following information needs to be included.

Whom to involve

The organisation(s) or individual members of the public that will be involved (e.g. name of voluntary organisation(s) / the public perspective that individuals are providing)

How will the public be involved

- Whether there has been public involvement in the development of the proposal
- Whether any of the grant applicants are people who use services
- Whether people who use services will be part of a steering group for the project
- The stages in the research at which there will be public involvement (e.g. design and planning, conduct of the research, analysis, dissemination of research findings).
- The nature of involvement (e.g. consultation, collaboration or user led)

Why

It is important to explain the reasons underlying the approach to public involvement selected. (e.g. the anticipated benefits of people with experiences of a service carrying out the interviewing, or being on the steering group of the project).

4. ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN APPLICATIONS

The following should be taken into consideration in assessing public involvement:

- The extent and nature of public involvement proposed
- The potential for the public involvement proposed to enhance the quality of the research
- The appropriateness of the public involvement proposed (both in terms of the people involved and the nature of the involvement)
- The resources to be provided to support those involved in the project

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE FINAL OUTCOMES OF PROJECTS

It is essential that successful applicants ensure that they fulfil their plans to involve the public. A summary of public involvement should be provided in the final report. Public involvement in research projects should be assessed on:

- Whether the project fulfils the plans for public involvement outlined in the original proposal
- Whether the project demonstrates any ways in which public involvement influenced the research

Sarah Buckland
Vikki Entwistle
June 2000
Updated March 2004

INVOLVE
(formerly Consumers in NHS Research)
Upper Market Street
Wessex House
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 9FD
02380 651088
admin@invo.org.uk
www.invo.org.uk