

# Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) Strategy for NIHR Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing<sup>1</sup>

January 2024 – December 2028



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<sup>1</sup> Formerly the NIHR Policy Research Unit in Older People and Frailty (2019-2024).

## 1. Strategy overview: aims and objectives.

This strategy for Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) sets out the way in which the NIHR Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing (HAPRU) will include the contribution of experts by experience (professional, lived and living experience) in our work. It also sets out the way different perspectives might be best garnered, understood and represented to ensure diversity of viewpoints are included. Underlying this intention is a desire to allow for meaningful involvement. We will ensure that, where possible, our research is visible, accessible and responsive to the views of those with lived experience.

We take account of the NIHR INVOLVE ([www.invo.org.uk](http://www.invo.org.uk)) definitions of Public and Community involvement, engagement and participation alongside the standards, values and principles of public involvement in research, recognising that all three elements are complementary, and essential to maximising the relevance, quality and impact of our work. We acknowledge the INCLUDE roadmap for including engagement of under-served groups in research, aspiring to ensure we maximise all opportunities for involvement, actively seeking to reduce barriers to inclusion.

Our PCIE activity is aligned to the UK standards for public involvement framework reflecting inclusive opportunities, working together, support for learning, governance, communicating and impact. We achieve this through our PCIE collaboration partnerships, whilst also building upon strong regional networks in our respective centres, enhanced and developed through the Policy Research Unit in Older People and Frailty (2019-2024). Through our established capabilities we have developed well practised methods for reaching the public and diverse community groups to inform healthy ageing policy research.

The PRU in Healthy Ageing delivers timely responses to immediate questions of policy, whilst also anticipating future challenges, identifying important trends in health and social care needs and developments in service provision. Our PCIE activity is intended to, where possible, ensure all policy research activity is visible, accessible and responsive to the public, professionals and their communities.

## **Aims**

1. To deliver effective PCIE, where possible<sup>2</sup>, in research and responses produced by the PRU.
2. To establish and maintain clear routes and transparent processes to support meaningful PCIE, working with our collaboration partners.
3. To make our research and wider activity visible and accessible to the public, professionals and their communities.
4. To have a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion across under-served communities.

## **Objectives**

1. To devise and regularly review bespoke processes to enable us to understand the diverse perspectives of the public and communities on research and policy relating to healthy ageing policy research.
2. To provide opportunities, where possible, for the public to inform and to provide a '*reality check*' on research and responses, both through our PCIE collaboration partnerships and wider networks.
3. To ensure, where possible, that our research is informed by Public and Community priorities and needs. Our projects have a responsive and bespoke interaction with Public and Community participants which allows for more a more bespoke and compelling connection.
4. To engage meaningfully with the public, communities and professionals in debate and dialogue on research related to healthy ageing.
5. To produce and disseminate information that is accessible to both policy, practitioners, the public and communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Some activities of the PRU may preclude 'good practice/INVOLVE' approaches to PCIE. For example, requests for rapid responses may impede the opportunity for PCIE due to time constraints, or in cases where we are required to protect confidential and/or sensitive information. To best mitigate in this case, our PCIE collaboration partnerships enable regular and timely access to representative members of the public, who we report to and update regularly. Additionally in cases where PCIE views were contained in the research under review we will ensure inclusion of this in the response.

<sup>3</sup> We recognise that information which is accessible to different audiences will need to be produced. For example, we will utilise the 1-3-25 format for all our outputs, with one-page summaries (1) and executive summaries (3) being accessible to those with different levels of technical knowledge, whilst full reports (23) will include detailed analytical detail and insight. Short reports including series of questions may be more effective in seeking public engagement. Whereas, longer, more detailed reports may be required by policy makers. We will also share our research through accessible webinars, presentations and posters as well as use videos hosted via our YouTube channel.

## 2. Processes for involvement and engagement

### ***PCIE Collaboration Partnerships***

The PRU has established two formal PCIE collaboration partnerships with the Newcastle Elders Council and the Greater Manchester Older People's Network. Through these partnerships we have co-developed a Framework for PCIE which sets out the ways we will work and aligned to the UK Standards for Public Involvement and based on a co-designed set of shared vision/principles:

### **Shared Vision/Principles**

1. Ensuring **inclusive** and accessible **opportunities** to encourage involvement and participation.
2. **Working together** to establish and maintain mutually beneficial, flexible and responsive collaboration partnerships.
3. Providing opportunities and **support** for **learning**, skills and development.
4. Enabling ownership and nurturing agency through clear **governance** and processes.
5. **Communicating** with compassion and respect, developing trust and confidence.
6. Achieving collective **impact** through involvement and engagement good practice that seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of older people throughout mid to later life.

Through these collaboration partnerships, the PRU's PCIE Lead, along with relevant research team members, regularly attends meetings with our partner organisations, to share research project ideas and requests as well as to discuss and agree effective approaches for PCIE across the PRU's portfolio. These sessions are timed regularly to enable better integration of PCIE in rapid response work, as well as supporting longer term research projects. These partnerships enable us to engage with policy user views – the experiences of users of health and social care services – and include a range of ageing well groups, equalities panels, health and social care boards and community groups based throughout Newcastle and Greater Manchester. Levels of inclusion and engagement are varied, being co-designed to fit within the parameters of the research projects undertaken, reflecting the theoretical models of involvement and engagement (including Arnstein's Ladder of Community Participation) and range

from informing and discussing through to collaborate and empower. Through these relationships we can ensure amplification of issues raised at all levels of accountability.

### ***NIHR Infrastructure***

Building on our well-established relationships and networks at local, regional and national level we will, where possible, ensure PCIE is embedded in work streams and facilitates close collaboration with all project team members. To achieve this, we actively collaborate with the NIHR infrastructure for example working alongside the NIHR Applied Research Collaborations, NIHR Patient Safety Research Collaborations and with colleagues based in other NIHR Policy Research Units, in a meaningful and collaborative way, sharing good practice approaches, learning and insights.

### ***Financial Resource***

The PRU has allocated funds within the budget to resource a broad range of PCIE activities and enable engagement and inclusion of experts by experience both at portfolio level (PCIE Collaboration Partnerships) as well as in specific research projects and activities.

## **3. Reaching people and understanding perspectives**

We engage, as required, and collaborate with key partners, including the public, communities, interest groups, advocates, researchers, health and social care professionals, local health and care infrastructure and voluntary, community and faith organisations. We have a specific strategic focus on equality, inclusion and diversity: ensuring we are flexible, pro-active in our approach to PCIE and effective in capturing and listening to relevant and appropriate voices. This especially includes people who feel isolated or excluded by geography, ethnicity, sexual identity, culture, faith, technology or socioeconomic status.

We provide accessible information and support for PCIE (for researchers and PCIE members) to help develop practical skills and develop effective models for PCIE, building on what is needed and appropriate for specific settings, understanding the local environment and context. Our PCIE has a national reach and close collaboration between our partners is an essential ingredient of success. In addition to working closely with Greater Manchester Older People's Network and Newcastle Elders

Council we also work with VOICE Global to help deliver our PCIE aims and objectives. Through our partnerships we regularly connect, discuss and develop a shared and consistent approach which aligns to strategic priorities and shares learning. We will improve support available to researchers, the public and communities to raise awareness of PCIE in our research and link to a range of resources to help understand, develop and embed PCIE in our research. We have a continued and proactive focus on inclusion, equality and diversity and widening participation – working closely with public and community partners and groups in each region to ensure any approaches are sensitively developed in specific social and cultural contexts.

### ***Working with VOICE***

VOICE-Global is an established national organisation, hosted at the National Innovation Centre for Ageing and the NIHR-Innovation Observatory, established to specifically harness the insights and ideas of the public on research and innovation. The VOICE public engagement programme ensures that the research is focused on, and driven by, public insights, needs and priorities. The PRU will utilise the VOICE digital online platform which has national reach, and this will be a key innovative mechanism for us in enabling and facilitating the public to have visible opportunities to connect to each other as part of our activity. VOICE is an open platform, but partners can host activity in closed areas open only to invited members if preferred. The platform translates into most languages and is fully accessible for people with sight and hearing loss. The VOICE platform will enable us to co-ordinate the active involvement of members of the public across our centres and beyond. It also provides a forum for researchers, PCIE members and wider collaborators.

### ***Working with the Healthy Ageing Research Group***

The Healthy Ageing Research Group (HARG), which includes all University of Manchester team members enables us to engage with a large network of organisations, health care professionals, community groups and individual older adults and carers. The HARG has long term and well established relationships with the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub, within the GM Combined Authority, tasked with bringing together plans to support local older people. A range of key policy and practice representatives from across Greater Manchester and the UK participate as hub partners. HARG has strong links to Vocal a community organisation creating

opportunities for people to find out about, and have a voice in, health research in Greater Manchester. As well as with the [Caribbean African Health Network](#), alongside a vast network of South Asian community groups across Greater Manchester.

To see examples of how we have previously, and will in the future, work with experts by experience, see the following content.

### ***Experts by Experience***

[Working with Experts by Experience in Policy Research \(HAPRU\)](#)

[Engaging Older People in Policy Research \(HAPRU\)](#)

### ***PCIE Collaboration Partnerships***

[Greater Manchester Older People's Network – Collaborating with Policy Research \(HAPRU\)](#)

[Newcastle Elders Council – Collaborating with Policy Research \(HAPRU\)](#)

### ***Experts by Experience Personal Stories***

Jamil talks about the importance of peer-to-peer interactions to make connections with communities: [Jamil – Connecting with Communities: Peer to Peer](#)

Gill talks about bringing lived experience to policy research:

[Gill – Bringing Lived Experience to Policy Research](#)

Gerry talks about contributing lived experience to research and how it built his confidence: [Gerry – Bringing Lived Experience to Policy Research](#)

Sarah talks about the importance of trust, her role in research and how this gave her a sense of achievement: [Sarah – Bringing Lived Experience to Policy Research](#)

John talks about learning more about himself and how he can manage his own addiction and mental health better: [John – Bringing Lived Experience to Policy Research](#)

## **4. Implementing, reviewing and updating the Strategy**

This strategy document is complemented by project level approaches, which we will use to implement PCIE within and across the PRU portfolio. To ensure that involvement and engagement is meaningful, appropriate and progressive in approach, this strategy is annually reviewed, updated and signed off by the Senior Leadership Team.