



NIHR | Policy Research Unit
Healthy ageing

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**Public and Community Involvement and Engagement
Collaboration Partnerships
A Co-created Framework**

Agreed March 2024 (Review Autumn 2024)

¹ Formerly the NIHR Older People and Frailty PRU (2019-2024)

Background

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing (formerly Older People and Frailty)² aims to produce timely, high-quality evidence for policy makers. We are a partnership between the University of Manchester, Newcastle University and the London School of Economics. Our role is to answer policy makers questions and help the Department of Health and Social Care and its arms-length bodies (e.g. National Health Service England and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) make informed decisions on new and emerging policy needs related to the health and wellbeing of people aged 50 and above living in England.

The Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing (HAPRU) is made up of an extensive community which includes globally renowned academic experts, specialist academic advisors, early and mid-career researchers, experts by experience (both lived and professional), public and community partners, policy and impact specialists and research support administrators. Through our people, structures, processes and culture (figure 1) we have developed a reputation of excellence, delivering responsive and rapid research insight and making impactful contributions to health and social care policy, practice and research.

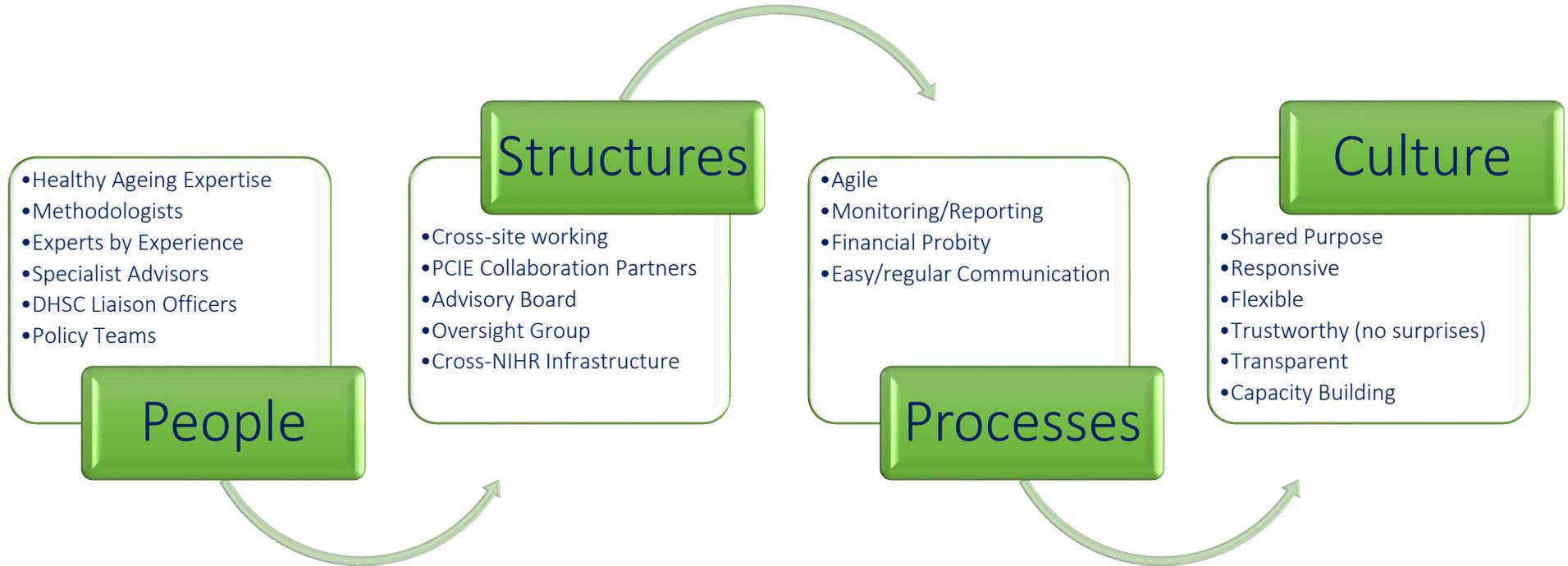
Public and Community Involvement and Engagement Partners

We proactively seek to regularly engage and collaborate with experts by experience in all of our work. We consider experts by experience to be people with recent lived, living and/or professional experience, knowledge and insight who directly contribute and engage with our research. Building on our well-established relationships and networks at local, regional and national levels, we ensure the involvement and engagement of experts in all our research, engagement and dissemination activities. We work closely with a number of community organisations who are key collaborators in our work – our public and community involvement and engagement partners.

The following document sets out the ways in which the NIHR Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing (HAPRU) will work collaboratively with public and community involvement and engagement partners (PCIE), specifically the Greater Manchester Older People's Network (GMOPN) and the Newcastle Elders Council (NEC).

² The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Policy Research Unit in Older People and Frailty (funding reference PR-PRU-1217-2150). As of 01.01.24, the unit has been renamed to the NIHR Policy Research Unit in Healthy Ageing (funding reference NIHR206119). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

Figure 1. Our people, structures, processes and culture



A Co-Developed Framework

Our public and community involvement and engagement partnership framework has been co-developed over the course of 18 months, building upon many years of collaborative effort between and across partners. It has been created as a result of a number of meetings, running from Autumn 2022 through to Spring 2023 (during the HAPRU application stages). Alongside a series of workshops held in Greater Manchester and Newcastle during Autumn and Winter 2023 following funding award announcement (Summer 2023). Workshops included representatives from across each organisation, older adult contributors from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, alongside team members from across the HAPRU partnership.

Notes from meetings and workshops, the latter of which included group activities with an assigned note taker who recorded key discussion points, were collated into a single shared document. Following the completion of the workshops, all content in the shared document was themed inductively in the first instance. Whilst we recognise there are a number of good practice frameworks and taxonomies in existence, it was agreed we would adopt an inductive approach in the first instance to ensure all contributions were acknowledged and included. Once themes were jointly identified, we agreed with partners to utilise the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#) as an overarching thematic framework - *inclusive opportunities, working together, support and learning, communications, impact, and governance*. This has been enriched and expanded upon, to include our specific context, shared vision and principles alongside agreed ways of working to enable the achievement of these.

Reflective Review

To align with the UK Standards for Public Involvement, the framework developed will form the basis of regular and timely reflective review sessions to be held with partners. Reflective review meetings will be held biannually, utilising the framework to prompt critical questions for mapping and measuring success. This will include monitoring progress against our shared vision and principles, as well as consideration of amendments to ways of working to enable ongoing mutually beneficial collaborations. This process will also feed into monthly DHSC progress and monitoring meetings and reports, alongside NIHR annual reporting.

Financial Resource

The proposed collaboration partnerships will include financial resource to support the infrastructure within each community organisation, for engagement and involvement with the HAPRU programme and portfolio. This will be paid annually, directly to the community organisation and be informed by biannual reflective review meetings. Payments for project specific level public and community

involvement, engagement and participation will be separate and additional (aligned to NIHR payment rates), payable directly to the individual and/or specific community group and/or organisation.

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.



Ways of Working

1. Ensuring **inclusive** and accessible **opportunities** to encourage involvement and participation



- a. Provide opportunities for the public and communities to engage in research projects contributing lived experience and knowledge at critical points across the PRU research portfolio and lifecycles³.
- b. Proactively ensure inclusive opportunities for those who are most marginalised and/or excluded through effective partnership working and outreach activity.
- c. Ensure research activities (e.g. focus groups, workshops, interviews) are held in accessible locations and include flexible options for those with differing needs and capabilities.
- d. Provide easy reimbursement (e.g. vouchers or cash payments) for those we involve and engage in research aligned to NIHR payment guidelines.
- e. Ensure transparent, equitable and fair processes aligned to equality and diversity commitments and duties.

2. **Working together** to establish and maintain mutually beneficial, flexible and responsive collaboration partnerships



- a. Identify clear ways of working that are jointly defined and include clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations (e.g. key contact personnel and processes for involvement and engagement).
- b. Co-creation, organisation and delivery of workshops, webinars and focus groups to inform research project questions, design, findings, and dissemination.
- c. Valuing all contributions, recognising and acknowledging difference of opinion, knowledge and experience.
- d. Adopt a pragmatic approach to partnership, working sensitively to varying levels of resource, capacity and capability.
- e. Regularly review, discuss, identify and create ways of working together which are adaptive and responsive to changing needs and priorities.

³ See [The INCLUDE roadmap](#) for potential points for inclusion of experts by experience and stakeholders in research activities.

3. Providing opportunities and **support** for **learning**, skills and development



- a. Identify learning and support needs through close consultation with partners and those involved in PRU related activities.
- b. Provide opportunities to meet these needs through training and development (e.g. research skills sessions, developing confidence in meetings, equality, diversity and inclusion etc.) across all partners and the wider communities which they sit within.
- c. Develop a repository of easily accessible information, including training resources, regarding support for public involvement and engagement for those interested in learning more⁴.
- d. Develop a culture of learning by doing, through embedding opportunities for reflection and discussion (e.g. through regular meetings and feedback) and recognise failure leads to success.
- e. Ensure flexible approaches to activities which adapt and respond to public and community partners needs as they change.

4. Enabling ownership and nurturing agency through clear **governance** and processes



- a. Representation on and across partnership governance structures (e.g. advisory board, research and impact committee, steering committee, joint site meetings) to ensure regular monitoring and reporting on progress, and to include arising issues for shared problem solving.
- b. Ensure the voices of those who are experts by experience are heard, valued and respected in decision making processes.
- c. Ensure each partner has specific people who are responsible for public and community involvement and engagement for visibility and accountability.
- d. Allocate an agreed number of resources (money, staff and time) for partners to engage with the collaboration, with additional funding available for direct participation in specific research projects.
- e. Ensure open, accountable and honest ways of working that instil confidence and transparency through effective leadership.

⁴ NIHR Applied Research Collaboration North East and North Cumbria [The Virtual College Training Hub](#) has a wealth of resources and online presentations on public and community involvement and engagement.

5. Communicating with compassion and respect, developing trust and confidence



- a. Regularly connect, share and discuss research priorities and issues identified within the Healthy Ageing Policy Research Unit inviting expert by experience insight and contribution, including “*reality checks*”.
- b. Share updates and progress on research activities in plain English in a range of formats (e.g. one-page summaries, visual slides, newsletter updates) for wider dissemination across partner networks, sharing knowledge equitably.
- c. Adapt communication to meet the needs of those involved and engaged in research, providing information in different ways (e.g. via email, verbally or in different languages).
- d. Deliver research findings and outcomes in a range of formats to maximise the potential for engagement (e.g. short bite size videos, presentations, webinars, workshops).
- e. Co-produce content and outputs for dissemination across a range of audiences where there is an appetite and interest in doing so across the partnership (e.g. for partners to take to key meetings across their own networks).

6. Achieving collective impact through involvement and engagement good practice



- a. Identify an efficient and manageable way in which to monitor involvement and engagement across the partnerships to understand the who, what and how.
- b. Reporting back on research activity and outcomes including impact to ensure all who engaged with, and were involved in research, receive feedback on what happened next.
- c. Take a collaborative approach to dissemination of research findings to maximise the potential for regional and local policy and practice impact.
- d. Proactively report back and share examples of impact from across partnership that would be of interest and demonstrates the value added (e.g. influencing local policy, increase in skills and capabilities, securing funding, etc.)
- e. Co-develop and design impact case studies to showcase examples of good practice whilst also seeking to engage those who are underrepresented in policy research.