



National Institute for Health and Care (NIHR), Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS)

Buddy Scheme Handbook for Public Advisors

Our Vision:

Where meaningful public and community involvement and engagement are a central part of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex's health and social care research activities

We aim to use clear language in this guide but you may like to refer to the [NIHR Glossary](#) while reading this guidance



ARC KSS Public Advisor Buddy Scheme:

Working together is a fundamental value of ARC KSS and we recognise the benefit of peer-to-peer non-academic support for our public members. Through listening to feedback and collaboration with our public advisors the Public & Community, Involvement & Engagement (PCIE) team have developed this buddy scheme, which aims to provide an opportunity for our public advisors to support one another. Whether you are new to the role of a Public Advisor in research or have a wealth of knowledge and experience, joining a new organisation can be daunting and we feel that it is right you are supported throughout this.

We aim to build confidence and encourage new public advisors in contributing to research, sharing their experiences and expertise. Guiding them through the potentially less familiar world of research, helping all new public advisors to confidently become embedded within ARC KSS. Therefore, we ask a buddy to welcome a new public advisor and support them in their first weeks and months, helping to make the process comfortable and welcoming. We have created this guidance to support you in your role as a buddy and we will now explore what this will look like.

This is an informal role and no specialised training is generally required, however the PCIE team will provide a 2-hour information session before you are introduced to a public advisor. Through discussion and careful consideration, it is desirable however, not essential that a buddy will have been a theme public advisor at ARC KSS for at least six months and will be familiar with the general workings of the ARC.

The PCIE team will introduce the buddy and public advisor via email and from there you can both arrange a time that best suits you. This is an informal scheme however, we do ask that you meet with your public advisor for the proposed 3 meetings:

- First meeting within 4 weeks - 60 minutes
- Second meeting around week 4 - 45 minutes
- Third meeting around week 8 - 30 minutes

You may wish to agree the date and times of these meetings in advance and decide how you wish to meet (Face to Face, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or telephone). A total of 4 ¼ hours will be reimbursed for your time in line with the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) payment policy.

Both buddy and Public Advisor are welcome to decide by mutual agreement to meet in between the set four-week and eight-week period, and may continue to meet after the buddying has ended however, this will not be reimbursed.

The PCIE team will ask if you have any accessibility needs and these will be taken into consideration when pairing together. If you have any questions you can contact the PCIE team at PublicInvolvementARCKSS@spft.nhs.uk.



The aims of having a buddy:

- To be a supportive, friendly face.
- Help new Public Advisors become knowledgeable about ARC KSS practices and organisational culture.
- Reduce the initial uncertainty faced when joining a new organisation and, maximise contribution and involvement.

What attributes make a good buddy?

- Good effective communication skills, is patient and a good listener.
- Is motivated and has a positive outlook on their involvement. Use that perspective to help build confidence in the new Public Advisor.
- Is empathetic, reassuring and considerate, especially if the public advisor appears overwhelmed or confused about anything. Pace accordingly to the level of understanding of the new advisor.
- Has knowledge to share on how things work in the role and across the organisation.

A buddy is not there to replace training, they are there to offer a supportive, friendly face.

What is a buddy's role?

- Being a point of contact for a new Public Advisor.
- Offer support and encouragement, helping to build confidence, we are not asking you to teach them anything.
- Introductions to the theme team, if you are aligned to the same theme.
- Giving an over view of the Public Involvement Network (PIN), including giving examples of opportunities that have been offered as well as activities you have been involved in.
- Bringing a public perspective and only offering experiences of your own.
- Answering general questions in relation to ARC KSS and the Public Advisor role.
- Sign posting: you may not know the answer to a question and that is ok, or it might be something outside of your scope of practice. If you don't know the answer you can refer the Public Advisor back to the PCIE team.

Remember: You don't need to know everything! It is important to remember that a buddy is there to be a friendly face **not** an information hub of all knowledge.

Tips for conversation:

- What were your motivations to join ARC KSS as a Public Advisor?
- Previous experiences in a similar role
- Has there been any challenges you have come across within your experience?



- Where do you hope to contribute to the research at ARC KSS?

Boundaries, Confidentiality & Safeguarding:

To ensure a supportive welcoming environment for all Public Advisors participating in the buddy scheme, we encourage everyone to be mindful of the expectations which we maintain throughout the Public & Community, Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) team (community):

- Respect experience, views and diversity of people, inclusive of all ethnicities, genders, sexualities, neurodiversity and religions.
- Respect each other's boundaries and confidentiality.
- Do not share messages which advertise or promote commercial events, services or products.
- Do not give/receive personal or medical advice.
- You're not there to solve any personal/social problems.
- You do not have to answer emails at midnight!

You are not expected to deal with personal or social issues, you are not expected to provide any counselling. If a situation arises that is concerning and you feel you should not, or cannot handle, please contact the PCIE team via PublicInvolvementARCKSS@spft.nhs.uk.

Matching a Buddy with a new Public Advisor:

Buddy: All experienced public advisors at ARC KSS will be asked to express their interest in being a buddy. The ARC KSS PCIE team have an overview of the public advisor's background and involvement within ARC KSS, which can be used for the purpose of matching a new public advisor to a potential buddy. All information is confidential and not shared with other public members.

Public Advisor: New public advisors will be contacted by the PCIE team, they will be asked about how they feel they would benefit from having a buddy and, are there any particular characteristics they would value in a buddy.

Throughout the duration of the buddy scheme we ask that it is the responsibility of both the buddy and new public advisor to respond as promptly as possible via email or by other mutual means of communication you have both agreed on.

Tips for Buddies:

- Don't worry about being perceived as the expert, you are not expected to be an expert.
- Try to resist covering everything straight away.
- Be positive, promote positivity around the role, ARC KSS and the research conducted.
- Resist being judgmental, maintain a professional positive attitude.
- Try not to force a relationship, be patient: It takes time to develop relationships.



- Try to identify the new public advisor's communication style and personality, and adapt accordingly.

Monitoring and Feedback:

- Monitoring and feedback are important to the success of this buddy scheme. We aim to ensure it is working, for both buddy and new public advisors. Following the end of a buddy relationship, both buddy and public advisor will be asked to provide feedback on how the scheme has worked for them.

Data Protection/GDPR

Data protection is taken seriously and guidelines should be strictly followed. Under the Data Protection Act (1998) and General Data Protection Regulation (2018) individuals are as responsible for the information they collect and store as organisations. As a buddy there is a personal responsibility to ensure you are compliant. Therefore, all contact information received between buddy and public advisor should remain confidential.

We ask that you do not share any contact details unless you have consent. We do not expect you to share any more information with other than your contact details. Please do not share your address, bank details etc.

If you think there has been a data breach, please let the PCIE team know straight away.

Good Luck in your new buddy role!

We hope that the majority of buddy relationships run smoothly however, if there is a problem, either with the day-to-day running of the scheme or with the buddy relationship itself, please contact the PCIE team in the first instance: PublicInvolvementARCKSS@spft.nhs.uk.

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This guidance document was reviewed with ARC KSS Public Advisors: Karin Webb and Hasu Ramji.



Appendix 1

Some Common Acronyms - These may not all be relevant to this document however, you may have come across them at ARC KSS, and they may help when supporting public members.

ARK KSS	Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex
CRN	Clinical Research Network
EbE	Expert by Experience
PA's	Public Advisors
PCIE	Public and Community Involvement and Engagement
PIN	Public Involvement Network
PPE	Patient and Public Engagement
PPI	Patient and Public Involvement
SPFT	Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
TPA's	Theme Public Advisors
PACS	Public Advisors & Contributors Shared Space

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The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.