

Public Involvement Impact Review

Steps to meaningful involvement - the positive impact on both the process and those involved, as experienced during the ARC KSS review of funding calls



Background

The Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) has offered a number of funding calls that address health and social care issues relevant to its themes' specialities. The ARC KSS Academy offers health and care staff/Early Career Researchers the opportunity to use funding for projects as a developmental stage in their research career. To decide which projects to fund within these calls, there is in operation a funding application process, often with an interview panel, to assess the quality and relevance of the proposal. Public members, with National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) reviewer training, are members of these panels.

This process is overseen by the Academy team at ARC KSS who report that *"We have found there to be a great value in public members being part of funding panels. They ensure projects are chosen with relevance to our communities and area's health concerns (for example areas such as neurodivergence and women's health, in future research leaders awards). Lay members pay particular attention to the appropriateness and inclusivity of the project plan, helping to ensure the research we fund is accessible to underserved and diverse communities."*

This impact review identifies the measure put in place to:

- ensure lay reviewers were able to be an equal part of this process
- identify what difference their contribution made
- identify suggestions of what can improve the experience for next time.

Steps taken to make sure lay reviewers were able to take an equal and meaningful part in the process (Research Inclusion, NIHR)

1. The opportunity to be involved was offered to those public members who had previously undergone appropriate training - selection supported by the Public and Community, Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) Team.
2. For those members new to the process or wanting additional support there was a chance to meet in advance to go through roles, processes and expectations.
3. Role descriptions were given to each public member prior to their involvement stating timelines, anticipated time commitment, payment arrangements and who to contact for support allowing members to feel valued and supported.
4. Applications were emailed to panellists to review and score prior to the funding panel. They were asked to pay particular attention to their area of expertise - PCIE plans.
5. Individual needs of the public members were considered to ensure best possible inclusivity and accessibility, including - paper copies of the application to those less familiar with on-line technology, accessibility tools such as transcriptions platforms accommodated to support disability, meetings arranged via Microsoft Teams or face to face depending on members requirements.
6. Carried out pre-meetings to ensure technology working for everyone.
7. Consideration was given to the time required from each public member and due to the large volume of applicants the workload was divided between a number of public members.
8. Where analysing entries took longer than expected due to the volume of applicants, additional amounts were paid to cover the extra time taken.
9. For each funding call a panel meeting was held to review the scores from all panel members (given separately), discuss the applications and give a space for all panel members to give additional context to comments, and to be a space to reach an accord across the panel on which applicants to approve for awards.
10. Time given to transcribe handwritten comments from public members.
11. For those calls that included interviews, public members were invited to be part of the face to face panels, paid for their attendance and invited to contribute with a specific PCIE focused question.
12. Feedback and thanks for the whole process was given via email - giving public members the sense of feeling valued and that their input had made a difference.

What difference public members contributions make

During interview panels lay members covered the PCIE involvement questions and were able to draw out additional details and considerations from the interviewees, such as further considering the benefits from participating for the study recipients and expanding on known limitations regarding Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

Specific examples include:

- adding details about the prevalence of trauma amongst young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other comorbidities
- suggesting that the inclusion of local authorities in the applicant's plans would strengthen the proposal
- spotting risks such as concerns about using just one NHS trust in a study
- ideas about involving community organisations other than the one or two that are identified in proposals
- raising awareness of the inclusion of participants with disability.



Enjoyable
Disappointing outcome
Supported
Friendly
Adequate Information
Interesting
Well organised
Approachable
Easy
Valued
Accessible

Lay reviewers feedback on the experience of their involvement

Lay reviewers were asked to comment on their experience of being part of the funding panels and the response was overwhelmingly positive with most comments about the process being well organised, they found it interesting and enjoyable as well as their contributions being valued.

I have really enjoyed undertaking the interviews and learnt a great deal... the Future Leader Awards covered topics outside my normal sphere of knowledge, yet I felt able to contribute my perspective. I enjoyed being part of a multi-disciplinary group in the Social Care Fellowship Awards and was interested to hear a range of perspectives.

Jean Boddy (Future Leaders October 24)

It was a pleasure working with the team and I am excited for the funded research projects.

Michele Powponne (Springboard October 24)

I felt valued and fully included as an equal partneralthough I didn't understand the rationale of the funding panel feedback.

Janice Clark

I am usually provided with clear descriptions of the process in advance, my role is clear, and I am encouraged to participate, offer ideas and the process is usually stimulating and enjoyable, I feel my participation is valued by applicants and colleagues.

Eleanor Levy (Springboard and various other projects)

It was good to hear who got the funding - it was followed through.

Lay reviewer unnamed

What we learnt/what we will do differently next time

Feedback was invited from the lay reviewers to help improve the process for future funding rounds. These comments included:

- To review the selection criteria questions, to emphasise the developmental nature of the awards.
- Lay reviewers would prefer to be involved in the whole of each funding round, rather than splitting it up, even if this does involve a lot of work, as this gives the opportunity to follow the decision making process which leads to the final decision of which awards to grant. Results in a feeling of job satisfaction.
- Some lay reviewers had experienced technical IT issues with the interviews being online and felt this might have detracted from the content and caused concern for the applicants. Could presentations be sent in advance to reduce potential for problems?
- Consideration of timings of meetings is appreciated.
- One reviewer suggested that it felt as though there was not enough consideration given to the economic impact of the project - would it be value for money?

Thank you to Beth Flowers and Debbie Hayward at the ARC KSS Academy who have gone above and beyond to help lay reviewers to be included, and to the lay reviewers themselves for their amazing support with the funding panels and this review.

