

Public involvement in decision making at NIHR CLAHRC West

Public involvement in research agenda setting by reviewing research projects

Background

At the beginning of 2016 NIHR CLAHRC West advertised its second call for research projects. The call closed at noon on Monday 7 March. 29 research project applications were received.

Applications for support are considered by NIHR CLAHRC West's Research Advisory Panels (RAPs). There are three different panels to make sure the projects are considered from different perspectives. The membership of one panel, RAP(a), is made up of academics who assess the scientific quality and robustness of the applications. A second panel, RAP(p) is made up of members of the public and representatives of NIHR CLAHRC West's partner organisations, for example local hospital trusts. This panel assessed how the applications address patient, public and partner priorities. The People in Health West of England (PHWE) public involvement team had three representatives on the RAP(p) panel. These representatives were the PPI Lead for NIHR CLAHRC West, Andy Gibson (AG), and two public contributors from the PHWE Strategy Group. The findings from these two Research Advisory Panels were then considered by a third panel – RAP(f) – which made the final decisions on which applications to take forward. The Research Fellow for Patient and Public Involvement (PPI), Rosie Davies (RD), was a member of the RAP(f) panel.

Public Involvement

An essential part of NIHR CLAHRC West's work is ensuring that research addresses the issues and concerns of patients, carers and members of the public. In 2016 this was addressed in two ways. Firstly, there was a separate process for members of the public to submit their research ideas to NIHR CLAHRC West. For more information about our workshops for members of the public to generate ideas for health research see [here](#).

In addition, public contributors from PHWE were also involved in the review of applications in the in the RAP(p) and RAP(f) meetings (see above). To prepare for the RAP(p) and RAP(f) meetings three public contributors from People in Health West of England's Strategy Group met to discuss the project applications with AG and RD. The meeting focused on eight projects which the group had been asked to lead on for review at the RAP(p) meeting. The remaining projects were then equally divided up between the five colleagues from PHWE, each was reviewed by one of the PHWE team. All of the applications were therefore reviewed from a public involvement perspective, and feedback on each project were provided for those attending the RAP(p) meeting.

The RAP(p) meeting took place in April 2016. At the meeting each project was discussed in turn, introduced by two panel members and followed by a short general discussion. Following the discussion a vote was taken to rate each application. Public contributors led the discussion on 8 projects as well as participating in the general discussion on all projects.

The three public contributors working with AG and RD also supplied briefing notes for RD to enable her to make recommendations informed by their perspective at the final RAP(f) meeting.

Conclusion

Public contributors and the PHWE team participated fully in the 2016 RAP process. The public contributors felt their contributions were listened to and valued on an equal basis to those made by other members of the RAP panels.

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