

Discovering the role of public co-applicant

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More public co-applicants being appointed but no shared understanding of the role

BACKGROUND	
<p>NIHR Programme grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second five-year programme with focus on suicide prevention (2012-18) • Three centres - Bristol, Oxford and Manchester • Main areas: a) the adverse impact of the economic crisis on suicide; b) improving the care of people who self-harm; and c) identifying and reducing access to high-lethality methods of suicide 	<p>Public involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual service users involved 2006-12 in specific studies • Second programme included service user co-applicant and a team of service user advisors • Co-applicant personal background of bi-polar disorder including clinical depression and prior mental health involvement
ROLE	REFLECTIONS
<p>The role I have developed has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop and support involvement across studies and universities • To provide advice, guidance and encouragement to researchers and public contributors • Some liaison and co-ordination across centres, research cycles and time • Recruitment and support of public contributors in Bristol, and advising other centres on these issues • Co-ordination of reporting and reflection for programme meetings and NIHR reports • Helping to identify involvement tasks and methods across research cycle – recently on dissemination • Membership of study Steering Groups • Facilitate sharing of involvement capacity e.g. enabling remote public contributions on health economics issues in Manchester • Role has not included supporting and facilitating involvement in studies – this was provided by researchers but not directly specified in their roles. <p><i>Resources for the role have included ongoing payment and support from Professor David Gunnell, Principal Investigator in Bristol and Dr Maria Barnes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially helpful to clarify the difference between a public co-applicant role and involvement lead role <i>Some public co-applicants may do both, in other situations it may be best to have two roles with clearer differentiation of work.</i> • In a future programme I would like to see clearer allocation of researcher time to involvement and more focus on stakeholder involvement <i>Capacity for involvement work continues to be a challenge when people have a range of roles.</i> • I have felt responsible for involvement – both successes and limitations. <i>It has been hard to judge what is enough when there is always potential to do more. My work has been appreciated and supported but my time and capacity are limited.</i> • How much influence do I have and how do I use my influence most effectively? <i>It would help me to have links with others doing this role and support to develop leadership skills.</i> • I have been pleased to develop more links across centres, and this has taken time to get going with scope for more collaboration. <i>It has taken time to build relationships and links.</i>
OUTCOMES OF ROLE	LEARNING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More involvement in overall programme meetings and in planning for third bid. • Improved co-ordination and reporting • Stronger involvement in Bristol with ongoing public contributors with relevant experience • Input by co-applicant and others in Bristol on Manchester based studies • Co-applicant is co-author on papers in Bristol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed involvement is inappropriate in work on suicide methods and relative lethality • Limited experience of self-harm of co-applicant enabled broader involvement across programme. • Ways of working with vulnerable public contributors who cannot contribute consistently. This includes agreeing contact with other family members and how contacts are managed.

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