

Our plain language panel – what the members think of the journey so far

Our plain language panel has been helping us improve our research summaries since the end of 2016, and between them they've completed nearly 70 pieces of work.

The panel gives us vital input whenever we publish a new research summary on the website or are going to publish findings from an existing research project. There are six members at the moment, and for each draft research summary we send them, two members will give us feedback.

We get together with the panel members a couple of times a year to work through a few summaries together and hear how they feel things are going.

We asked them what they thought of being involved with the panel. Here's what they said:

"I heard about the request for plain English panel members through an Age Concern magazine, and was delighted to be chosen. It has been encouraging to have the opportunity to use my old professional English language skills (teaching and writing) at the age of 85. It is also a privilege to learn what research is going into matters of vital importance, and to be useful in some small way to help those projects to move one step forward." – Margaret

"Being part of the Plain English Panel has really sharpened up my reading skills and made me engage much more with what's on the page. I've learnt about lots of innovative and ground breaking health research, and I feel proud that we as a panel are helping to make that research more readily understood by everyone. We get a lot of support from the academic staff and I really enjoy being part of it."

"I am pleased to be a part of the Plain English panel. I'm keen to ensure that everyone can read and understand the reports we edit without a medical degree! I think we're able to offer an impartial, lay perspective which can help report writers find clarity and avoid jargon."

"I have learned a lot about how research is undertaken, and each report is full of fascinating information which keeps my task interesting. I'm grateful that I can pass a report to another panel member if I'm unable to take it on at any time. I don't think I've taken advantage of this opportunity yet, but it's good to have the option. I find Zoe, Rosie and Mike a pleasure to deal with, and I hope they'll let me carry on for a while yet!" – Geraldine

CLAHRC West's Communications Manager Zoe Trinder-Widdess said:

"We are very proud of our plain language panel. They are a delight to work with. They really add value to our work, bringing a fresh perspective."

"They are a lovely group who always respond quickly and get the work done well within deadlines. They enhance our work, and it's great to hear how they value working with us. It shows that this kind of set up is a two way street – everybody benefits! They make our research summaries so much better, and they get to learn more about research and get an insight into some of our projects. It's heartening when people outside the CLAHRC see the value in what we do."

The panel has been such a success that their services are sought after by other research teams.

More information: if you would like to find out more contact Zoe Trinder-Widdess email: zoe.trinder-widdess@bristol.ac.uk or Mike Bell email: mike.bell@bristol.ac.uk