

National Institute for Health Research Programmes

Payment and reimbursement rates for public involvement

October 2009

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**Guidance agreed with the Department of Health on
payment and reimbursement rates to members of the
public for involvement with the NIHR programmes.**

Members of the public are increasingly being asked by research commissioners and funders to:

- 1) attend committee meetings (e.g. a commissioning or programme board, advisory group, funding or selection committee or panel meeting)
- 2) peer review documents (e.g. research briefs, grant applications and research reports)
- 3) undertake a range of other tasks associated with the research process
- 4) attend training courses and conferences.

Guidance has been agreed with the Department of Health that members of the public should be offered a fee for their assistance with such work.

This document summarises payment and reimbursement rates and provides guidance on involvement in other areas. This document is an update to the payment and reimbursement rates previously agreed.

A. Criteria for offering payment

People asked to be members of a committee or to review proposals or reports, should be offered payment if they are not in receipt of a full time salary from public funds and they meet **both** of the following criteria:

- **they are members of the public or people who use services (as defined by INVOLVE)**
- **they are being asked to provide a public perspective at the meeting or to the review**

In the following exceptional cases, people in receipt of a full time salary from public funds may be offered payment if:

- their paid employment is totally unrelated to the activity being asked of them by the Research Programme **and**
- they intend to undertake the work for the Research Programme in their free time (e.g. through taking annual leave).

In these circumstances, payment may be offered, providing the other criteria above are met and the individual signs a declaration to this effect.

By members of the public INVOLVE means this to include:

- patients and potential patients
- people who provide care or support on an informal (i.e. unpaid) basis
- parents/guardians
- people who use health and social care services
- disabled people
- members of the public and communities who might be targeted by health promotion, public health and social care
- groups asking for research because they believe they have been exposed to potentially harmful substances or products
- organisations that represent people who use health and social care services.

B. Level of payment

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) now commissions research under a wide range of different research programmes. It is important that members of the public who are asked to become involved in this work are offered payment for their involvement, and are informed of the rates being offered before they agree to undertake the work.

The following rates provide the parameters within which payment should be offered.

1. Committee fee

The four rates below are daily rates which include both attendance **and** preparation for meetings (such as reading and reviewing proposals), and may include post meeting follow up, including reading minutes and checking feedback to applicants. The examples below are provided to give an indication of the relative extent of work required in attending different meetings.

£150.00

The daily committee fee includes payment for both preparation and attendance at a meeting.

(e.g. reviewing up to 10 full research proposals, reading suggested research topics (up to 40) and reviewing up to 8 vignettes* for the Health Technology Assessment programme, reviewing up to 20 applications at the scrutiny stage of Research for Patient Benefit, or 1-2 applications for Programme Grants for Applied Research).

In certain circumstances where there is considerable additional preparation and / or responsibilities for the meeting, the following higher rates can be offered:

£225.00

For attendance at and considerable additional preparation and / or responsibilities for the meeting.

(e.g. reviewing between 11 and 14 full research proposals, or 21 or more applications at the scrutiny stage of Research for Patient Benefit).

£300.00

For attendance at and extensive additional preparation and or responsibilities for the meeting.

(e.g. reviewing 15 or over full research proposals, 3-4 applications for Programme Grants for Applied Research).

£450.00

For attendance at and preparation for meetings involving assessment of multi-stage, complex grant applications.

(e.g. reviewing 5-6 Programme Grants for Applied Research applications).

NOTE: *A vignette is a briefing paper which helps an advisory panel to consider the need for research

If a member of the public prepares for a meeting but is unable to attend (for example due to illness) a nominal amount can be offered depending on the level of preparation already undertaken prior to the meeting.

2. Peer review fee

These payments should only be made for peer reviewing where the work is not part of attending a committee meeting. The examples below are provided to give an indication of the relative extent of work required to undertake the different tasks.

Lower level £50.00

For reviews of short documents; for example research briefs, commissioning briefs, vignettes, outline proposals or lay summaries of reports (less than 50 pages).

Middle level £125.00

For reviews of larger amounts of information; for example reviewing several grant applications, or medium length reports (50 - 200 pages).

Higher level £200.00

For reviews of large reports or documents; for example reviewing long reports (over 200 pages).

3. Other tasks

The following are examples of the other activities that members of the public may be requested to get involved in:

- Feedback on documents
- Participating in teleconferences and support meetings
- Reviewing outline proposals online

The amount of payment offered should depend on the size and nature of the task. The guidance rates for peer review and attendance allowances should be used by the Research Programmes to help guide decisions as to the amounts to be paid.

4. Attending training courses and conferences

Payments may also be offered by Programmes for attending training courses and conferences.

For attending a full day of training or event organised by INVOLVE / NIHR programmes, which is considered essential for the involvement activity, a payment rate of £150.00 may be offered.

For attending other relevant training courses / conferences, agreed in advance between the NIHR programme and the individual, the following should be covered:

- paying the fee for the course / event
- paying out of pocket expenses

In addition, a nominal payment for attending the event may be offered.

C. Covering expenses

In addition to offering payment for involvement, out of pocket expenses should also be offered to ensure that individuals do not end up financially worse off for providing what is, in effect, a public service. The following expenses should be considered and offered where appropriate:

- Travel (public transport, taxi fares, or an agreed private car mileage rate which includes wear and tear)
- Overnight accommodation
- Subsistence
- Childcare or replacement carer costs
- Costs of a personal assistant or support worker
- Telephone / internet access / fax costs
- Stationery / equipment

Ideally, expenses should be covered in advance; for example, by booking accommodation or providing train tickets. For some people receiving welfare benefits it is essential to cover expenses in advance to prevent any adverse impact on their benefit entitlement. Where expenses are reimbursed after the event, this needs to be done promptly. This is very important to people on low incomes.

The exact nature and rates of reimbursement will be in accordance with the rules and procedures of the commissioning organisation.

D. National insurance and tax

These fees are liable to tax and National Insurance.

E. State benefits and allowances

It is important to be aware that benefits can be affected if payment for involvement is made.

Where people are receiving state benefits they are required to notify Jobcentre Plus of any paid or voluntary activity. They may also need permission to undertake any paid activity. Benefit conditions are complex and limits on payments that can be received without benefits being affected vary widely and can differ for each person, sometimes from year to year. It is advisable in all cases to seek advice from an appropriate source.

The NIHR Research Programmes have access (via INVOLVE) to the Milton Keynes Citizen's Advice Bureau Involvement Helpline. This is the specialist benefit and tax credit advice service which provides confidential, personalised and professional advice

to anyone who is considering paid or voluntary involvement with the health or social care organisations that subscribe to the service. Please contact INVOLVE if you would like further information.

F. Further information

Please refer to the following INVOLVE documents for additional information:

‘Policy on payments to members of the public (including INVOLVE Group members) and expenses that will be covered when participating in or contributing to the work of INVOLVE’. This is the INVOLVE internal policy explaining the procedures for covering expenses and payments to members of the public and INVOLVE Group members for their contributions to the work of INVOLVE (due to be revised in Autumn 2009).

‘Guide to reimbursing and paying members of the public who are actively involved in research’. This is the INVOLVE guide on the principles and practices of reimbursement and payment for active public involvement in research (due to be revised in Autumn 2009).

‘Payment for involvement in research: helpful benefits rules and systems for avoiding benefit problems’. This is a leaflet prepared by Judy Scott, independent consultant, for INVOLVE to provide information about certain benefit rules.

The materials and this paper are free and can be downloaded from the INVOLVE website: www.invo.org.uk/publications

Alternatively, you can request a hard copy by contacting INVOLVE.

If you need a copy of this paper in another format please contact us at INVOLVE.

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