

INVOLVE

INVOLVE Strategy 2012 – 2015

Putting people first in research

1. Introduction / background

INVOLVE (www.invo.org.uk) was established in 1996 and is part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). INVOLVE supports active public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research and is one of the few Government funded programmes of its kind in the world.

Our role is to bring together expertise, insight and experience in the field of public involvement, with the aim of embedding it as an essential part of the process by which research is identified, prioritised, commissioned, designed, conducted and disseminated.

INVOLVE seeks to maximise opportunities for public involvement in research¹ and to ensure that researchers, research commissioners, research funders and the public have access to the support and guidance that they need.

Our strategy for 2012 - 2015 sets out the overall direction for our work over the next few years. It will inform not only the development of our annual priorities but also the way in which we work with our partners in the interests of research for public benefit.

¹ INVOLVE defines public involvement in research as research being carried out **‘with’** or **‘by’** members of the public rather than **‘to’**, **‘about’** or **‘for’** them. This includes, for example, working with research funders to prioritise research, offering advice as members of a project steering group, commenting on and developing research materials, undertaking interviews with research participants.

When using the term **‘public’** we include patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services. Whilst all of us are actual, former or indeed potential users of health and social care services, there is an important distinction to be made between the perspectives of the public and the perspectives of people who have a professional role in health and social care services.

2. Development and implementation of the Strategy

Following initial discussions with INVOLVE members, we carried out a consultation through our website and networks in Spring 2011 to elicit people's views on the development of our Strategic Plan. We have since been meeting with various stakeholders as well as developing the plan further with INVOLVE members.

This plan outlines our vision and four broad strategic objectives. Our plans to take forward these objectives will be detailed in our annual Operational Plans which prioritise our activities and projects for each year.

3. Context

There are now many more organisations and individuals supporting public involvement, but also many more researchers and research commissioners working alongside the public for the first time. INVOLVE is uniquely placed to advocate, motivate, support and innovate in the field of public involvement, working with organisations and individuals who share our aims and objectives to further the active involvement of the public in all forms of research. Our ongoing funding by the NIHR is a key strength which has allowed us to build and develop a range and depth of knowledge, expertise and experience. Our member-base ensures that we remain in touch and close to the needs of public involvement participants and the research community. Our staff are leaders in, and facilitators of public involvement work. Together these strengths enable us to take an important overarching view of public involvement with a view to coordinating and identifying areas where the work and evidence can be strengthened.

Our challenge remains that of ensuring all research has the active involvement of the public. We can only achieve this by working with, and assisting other organisations. Our strategy is aimed at setting out our direction over the next three years but also making transparent the key areas and opportunities where we are keen to work with others.

4. Our Vision – what we aspire to

A dynamic partnership between the public, researchers and others, to advance NHS, public health and social care research and improve the health and well being of the population.

5. Our approach

We will work in partnership with researchers, research commissioners and the public to:

- maximise the opportunities for public involvement
 - learn and share knowledge and experiences of public involvement
 - support inclusion, diversity and equity and the active involvement in research of groups and individuals who are often excluded from research
 - make our work accessible
 - strengthen and build upon existing work by INVOLVE and others.
-

6. Our strategy – what we will do to achieve our vision

To achieve our vision we will:

- lead on public involvement across the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
 - build and share the evidence base
 - develop capacity and capability for public involvement in research
 - influence research policy and practice.
-

Objective 1: Lead on public involvement across the National Institute for Health Research

We will encourage and facilitate a coordinated approach for promoting and developing involvement in NHS, public health and social care research, whilst recognising the value of different models of involvement. We will challenge ourselves and those we work with to find new ways to strengthen and improve public involvement. We will work with others to develop mechanisms to reward and encourage involvement in research as part of this.

Objective 2: Build and share the evidence base

A key part of our work is to develop understanding and knowledge of the extent, nature and impact of public involvement in research. We will continue our work to promote and share examples of public involvement in research and encourage innovations that enhance our knowledge of involvement. We will encourage, support and disseminate evaluations and monitoring of involvement including analysis and learning about public involvement through feedback in the monitoring and reporting stages of commissioned research. It will be a key task to bring this evidence to the fore in all our work to influence the behaviour and attitudes of different audiences.

We will do this through effective and targeted communications using a range of media.

Objective 3: Develop capacity and capability for public involvement in research

We will develop sustainable approaches to promote and support effective public involvement in research. This includes providing practical support to involve people or to enable people to get involved in research. A key aim will be to explore and develop ways in which INVOLVE and the public involvement community can better address the support and training needs of researchers and the public. We will maintain our mission to encourage greater user-led research in the future.

Objective 4: Influence research policy and practice

We will strengthen and build strategic partnerships with organisations whose work will have a clear impact on extending the reach and depth of public involvement in research both in England and internationally. We will work to improve the quality of public involvement in research studies and research funding processes as well as challenge some of the institutional and cultural barriers to involvement. To do this we will work with research funders, research councils, universities and research regulators as well as the public.

March 2012