

# The Role of Public and Patient Involvement in Clinical Commissioning Groups

Ali O'Shea, Annette Boaz and Mary Chambers

Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education (FHSCE), Kingston University/St. George's, University of London

## Contact information

Ali O'Shea:

[a.oshea@sgul.kingston.ac.uk](mailto:a.oshea@sgul.kingston.ac.uk)

Annette Boaz:

[a.boaz@sgul.kingston.ac.uk](mailto:a.boaz@sgul.kingston.ac.uk)

Mary Chambers:

[m.chambers@sgul.kingston.ac.uk](mailto:m.chambers@sgul.kingston.ac.uk)

## 1. Background

- There is growing interest in public and patient involvement (PPI) in all aspects of healthcare in the UK. Little is known about the role of PPI within the new structures of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and their decision-making processes.
- Debate exists regarding the meaning and nature of 'involvement' in healthcare decision-making, with little empirical data on how involvement is manifested, or its impact.
- This is a single case study of a CCG, looking at the PPI in decision-making around healthcare services.
- What is reported here is a summary of the initial findings from the observations of meetings.

## 2. Aim

- To explore the role of PPI in a CCG, and how PPI is experienced by those involved.
- The study addresses the following question: What is the role of public and patient involvement in Clinical Commissioning Groups?

## 3. Methodology

- **Observations of meetings:** 6 CCG public Board meetings and 6 PPI Reference Group meetings (PPI RG).
- **Interviews:** with CCG Board staff and public representative on the board, and with PPI RG members.
- **Data sources:** field-notes from meetings observed; interview transcripts from interviews; documents, including minutes and reports from meetings.
- **Data analysis:** using an inductive approach, looking for patterns in the data to develop theories that can explain those patterns.
- **Public and Patient Involvement:** PPI RG members have been involved in the design of the research and are participating in data collection and analysis of findings.



## 4. Initial main findings

- The CCG Board comprises clinicians, managers and two public members - one with a remit for governance and the other for PPI.
- Membership of the PPI RG includes a public member who chairs meetings; further public members representing other public & patient groups in the borough; Healthwatch representative; CCG staff - clinical lead and managers.
- There is interest and support from the CCG for PPI in healthcare services: members of the public are kept informed of meeting dates/times/venues and given copies of agendas and other relevant papers. The CCG also provides staff and admin support to the PPI RG.
- 'Open space' slots are available during CCG public Board meetings for members of the public to ask questions and express views. Time restraints often mean that their views are not heard and/or their questions are responded to outside the public meeting.
- Members of the public commit to giving much of their own time to attend and prepare for CCG public Board meetings and PPI RG meetings. Less clear are the outcomes of PPI RG work.
- The PPI RG provides 'early on' consultation over commissioning proposals and advice on strengthening PPI across the CCG. However, there remains some uncertainty about the role of the PPI RG: **'it's not coming together, my jigsaw is getting bigger and none of it's coming together'** (PPI RG public member).
- There is concern around how much influence the PPI RG has on decision-making in the CCG: **'on service delivery and design the group does make a difference, but not at strategic planning level'** (PPI RG public member).
- Lack of feedback about the PPI RG's input means it is unclear whether the group is influencing decision-making in the CCG and more broadly what difference PPI is making.

## 5. Initial conclusions

- There is a general perception that public engagement with statutory authorities is important and will make a positive difference.
- Statutory authorities tend to use strategies both to promote and to limit public engagement, for example promoting engagement by including an 'open space' slot in the CCG public meetings. Due to lack of time during meetings, the public's views/questions are at times not heard.
- Decision-making often occurs in less transparent, 'closed' meetings which are less likely to involve PPI.
- Statutory authorities generally control the nature and level of public engagement, for example arrangements for meetings including the form and content, or closing down public voices and questions on non-agenda issues.