

# INVOLVE

IN: Bulletin

INSPIRE, INVOLVE, INFLUENCE, INNOVATE

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## My Role as a Public Contributor

**Ruth Day** Public Contributor and **Raksha Pandya-Wood** Regional Lead and Senior Advisor for Public Involvement, Research Design Service East Midlands

### How did you become involved in health research?

**Ruth:** I got into health research after a training course. I'd met someone who told me about the National Institute for Health Research and it sounded interesting. I was put through to the local Research Design Service (RDS).

**Raksha:** When we met Ruth asked lots of questions about the RDS, what kinds of roles there are for a Public Contributor and what training and support was offered. I was keen to listen to her and find out about her story and why she wanted to get involved.

Ruth told me about her daughter who has Cystic Fibrosis and as a result Ruth has lots of contact with health care professionals on a regular basis.

I could tell she was really interested in getting involved and I asked her the kind of things she'd be willing to help with. She said she would be interested in everything which was brilliant!

### What have you been involved in?

**Ruth:** My main role is reviewing scientific health research. Within a research summary there has to be what is called a 'Plain English Summary' which should contain no medical jargon and be easy for a lay person to understand. I also help see that the practical and emotional issues of patients and carers are addressed when they are being asked to take part in a research trial.

**Raksha:** Ruth has got involved in absolutely loads of things. She recently spoke at one of our workshops about some of the things she does with the RDS. These include the Lay Review Service, the RDS East Midlands Scientific Panel and public talks about involvement in research. Funnily enough, there was a researcher on Cystic Fibrosis at this workshop. It was just amazing to see them both being able to talk about the condition and Ruth had some great ideas.

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Ruth Day



Raksha Pandya-Wood

*"I have found I have a passion for health research and hopefully can inspire more people to learn more about public involvement."*  
Ruth Day

## Highlights of your involvement so far?

**Ruth:** There have been quite a few highlights this year. I was asked to speak at a conference to tell my story of how I got involved in health research. This was quite a challenge as I am not used to public speaking and was really nervous but I think it went down well.

Another highlight was attending a scientific panel at the University of Leicester. I was given the opportunity to review three research proposals prior to attending a meeting with the panel. I was quite nervous as I wasn't sure if I would be able to speak up among a table of researchers. However, my nerves were unfounded as I felt valued and listened to and that I gave some worthwhile advice.

## What has Ruth brought to the research team?

**Raksha:** I think Ruth offers the other side to the research world. Research is so much about systems and people working to busy schedules, people having busy lives and people wanting to win funding and all the rest of it.

When Ruth gets involved and meets researchers she brings them back to reality and helps them to understand that their world view might be important, but her world view and experience is equally important. I think she helps to ground researchers and offers the other side to the research world.

## What has Ruth's impact been?

**Raksha:** I think Ruth has enriched what we offer. She has been able to give the patient and public perspective on what we do. For example, Ruth has commented on research proposals that concern children, where parents are key stakeholders and in other family related issues.

Ruth has also helped to keep our work that we do with patient members grounded and helped us to think about what we can be doing differently. She knows the business of the RDS and offers the public perspective.

## What would you say to others looking to get involved in health research?

**Ruth:** Please don't be put off by the word 'research'. Public involvement is about giving a human perspective on what it is like to live with different medical conditions.

You do not have to understand the research just give your opinion on how you would feel if you or a family member were asked to take part.

There are many opportunities to meet other people, the work is flexible and you will be supported by your Public Involvement Lead. Raksha has supported me throughout my public involvement journey. She has seen potential in me that I didn't know I had myself and I would like to thank her for this.

## About INVOLVE

INVOLVE is part of the National Institute for Health Research and supports active public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research.

INVOLVE's vision:

'A world of active public research partnerships leading to improvement of health and care for all.'

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