Support for public reviewers

Most public reviewers will require some support, especially if they are new to the task. This might include:

Practical support – Ensure people can access the applications or reports you are asking them to review – this might mean offering to send paper copies or to cover the costs of printing documents at home. Ensure they are paid promptly for their time (see **INVOLVE payment for involvement guidance**).

Please note that benefits guidance and tax legislation been subject to considerable change/reinterpretation since 2019. Any INVOLVE documents referring to the payment of involvement fees may now be out of date and are pending a review during 2020. INVOLVE's guidance should not be substituted for professional advice, and INVOLVE accepts no liability for decisions or actions taken as a result of its guidance. You are always recommended to take your own tax, finance or legal advice.

On-the-job support – A glossary of research terms and acronyms, that are common to the research areas they are being asked to review, can be helpful. For new reviewers, it can also be helpful to talk through a draft review before they submit a final version, or to share other public reviews with them once the review process is complete. Some public reviewers find it helpful to know from the outset what will happen to their review, and to be reassured that they will be told about the outcome of the application they have reviewed.

Personal development – Review people's progress and performance to provide positive feedback and encouragement and / or to see if they need any additional pointers to further develop their skills.

Emotional / psychological support – Occasionally public reviewers may find reading research applications or reports

distressing. It's therefore important to be clear about who reviewers can talk to if they wish to discuss this, and to stress that they can withdraw from the process at any time if they wish.

Not all of these types of support are necessary or appropriate for every individual nor for every kind of review. You will need to adapt the support you provide to the needs of the people you are working with and the demands of the review process.

Useful practical approaches include:

- asking members of the public about their support needs as part of any induction training, and then on a regular basis, to find ways to meet these needs
- not making assumptions about people's support needs and being honest about what you can deliver
- asking people to feedback on their experience of undertaking a review — particularly when they are new to reviewing
- giving people constructive feedback about their reviews — telling people what was particularly helpful about a review they have written, or suggesting what they could add or build on
- sharing examples of good quality reviews (if confidentiality policies in your organisation allow this) — this can help people to think about how they might improve the quality of their own reviews
- encouraging peer support, for example experienced public reviewers can be paired with new reviewers to offer mentoring and support. They may wish to review as a pair rather than offering two individual reviews. In some organisations, small groups of public reviewers meet (by phone or in person) to discuss their review. They may then submit one collective review or individual reviews.