

Examples of public involvement in the Research Design Service (RDS)

Small grant schemes for involvement in research design

Purpose of the small grant schemes

These small grant schemes have been set up to enable people to apply for funds to support public involvement in the design stage of a research project.

It has been recognised that before a research project receives funding, it may be difficult to fund public involvement. These schemes have been launched to support the costs of involving patients and the public in the **early stages** of research, for example when research protocols are being developed and before projects are submitted for funding. Involving patients and members of the public at this early stage is particularly important to ensure the public perspectives have scope to influence the whole project. It also helps researchers to present a more compelling case for their study when submitting an application to research funding bodies.

Currently, six of the Research Design Service (RDS) network offer these grants (East Midlands, London, North West, South East, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humber). The other four regions in the RDS network support involvement in the protocol development stage in other ways, for example by funding costs directly on request and facilitating meetings.

What are the grant schemes like?

The funds available range from £350 to £500. Applications are usually assessed on the quality of the proposed public involvement and how public perspectives will influence the design of the study. To apply, you may need to be registered for support from the RDS. The public involvement leads in the RDS oversee the fund and assess applications. In Yorkshire and Humber (www.rds-yh.nihr.ac.uk/) and South East (www.rds-se.nihr.ac.uk/), members of the public are also involved in assessing applications. Grant holders are often asked to complete a monitoring or evaluation form to feedback on how the grant was used and their experiences. Yorkshire and Humber RDS (www.rds-yh.nihr.ac.uk/) requests an account from the members of the public who have been involved.

What have the grants been used for?

Information from West Midlands RDS (www.rds-wm.nihr.ac.uk/web/guest/home) shows that researchers who have been awarded grants have mainly held meetings with small groups of relevant patients or members of the public. The funds have

covered the cost of refreshments, travel and payments to the participants for their time, skill and expertise. The public involvement leads in the London RDS (www.rdslondon.co.uk/) and East Midlands RDS (<http://rds-eastmidlands.nihr.ac.uk/>) RDS also help to facilitate meetings.

What are the benefits of the grant scheme?

Researchers report that the grant has enabled effective public involvement in the design stage. This has led to enhancing the design of the study, improvements to the feasibility and relevance of the study for patients and the public, and has helped to build relationships.

“It was extremely helpful, at that early stage, to be in a position to say that the research team were applying for funds to facilitate user and lay involvement because it demonstrated that the research team valued user and lay input and were committed to it.” (Grant holder from the West Midlands)

Currently some of the RDS are in the process of monitoring the effectiveness of these schemes.

This example has been produced by INVOLVE (www.invo.org.uk) working with members of the Research Design Service Involvement Forum. This Forum is facilitated by INVOLVE and brings together the patient and public involvement leads of National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Design Services. The Forum aims to support their work in advising on public involvement in research design and to share knowledge, resources and good practice.

For more information about public involvement in the Research Design Services see www.invo.org.uk/find-out-more/information-for-researchers/research-design-services-information