

Supporting collaboration in learning and development for patient and public involvement

In the autumn 2016 edition of the NIHR INVOLVE newsletter, we reported on the development of the Sharebank, a network for training, learning and development in patient and public involvement (PPI). It brings together people from different organisations, including staff and patient/public partners, to share their training, knowledge and resources relating to PPI.

In 2015/16, the Sharebank was piloted amongst five organisations: two NIHR Biomedical Research Units in Nottingham (Hearing and Digestive Diseases); the NIHR East Midlands Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care; NIHR East Midlands Research Design Service; and the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust Research and Innovation team¹. Since that time, the Sharebank has expanded to include 14 research-active organisations in the East Midlands and it continues to grow! This grassroots initiative works in full partnership with staff and patient/public contributors and uses a mutually agreed terms of reference. It is built on the goodwill, hard work and mutual trust of those involved.

In 2018, INVOLVE offered the Sharebank founder, Dr Adele Horobin, the opportunity to explore the potential for establishing regional Sharebanks elsewhere in the country. Through a part-time secondment to INVOLVE, Adele has established links in various parts of the country to learn how other regions collaborate and explore which aspects of the Sharebank model can give added value.

As part of this secondment, Adele collaborated with fellow East Midlands Sharebank Co-ordinators Raksha Pandya-Wood, Njoki Pratt, Paul Radin, Deborah Wilson and Andy Wragg to coordinate a national meeting focussed on PPI. It provided the opportunity for staff and patient/public partners to share and explore collaborative ways of creating and delivering patient and public involvement (PPI) training, learning and development.

The event was held in Nottingham on 20 June 2019. It was free to attend and INVOLVE offered to reimburse expenses for any patient/public partners who wished to attend. In all, 29 people attended, from as far north as Newcastle and as far south as Southampton, including nine patient/public partners. The day included short presentations which introduced examples of how regions are already collaborating on PPI. These included: the Wessex Public Involvement Network (Wessex PIN)², by Heidi Surridge of the NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Co-ordinating Centre; the Working Together partnership in Oxfordshire and Thames Valley³, by Lynne Maddocks of the NIHR Oxford Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care; and the East Midlands Sharebank⁴, by Dr Adele Horobin of the NIHR Nottingham Biomedical Research Centre.

The presentations sparked a debate about the different ways that organisations collaborate and how issues such as finance and workload can be shared.

Also invited was Dr Kristina Staley, who introduced her team's approach to training for involvement. This focusses less on addressing gaps that a patient or public contributor might have in their knowledge of research. Instead, the emphasis is on building awareness of the expertise that they have to offer and how to influence researchers effectively⁵.

The event concluded with a workshop to uncover the challenges and solutions related to planning, delivering and monitoring/evaluating collaborative PPI training initiatives. Everyone really valued the discussions, and the opportunity to network with others. A number of practical tools were highlighted, such as the FutureNHS collaboration platform for invited users to collaborate online around specific projects (<https://future.nhs.uk/connect.ti>).

In feedback, people reported that they would follow up on connections made and report back to others in their teams. It appeared to have buoyed a number to look further into the scope for establishing a Sharebank in their area or in further encouraging colleagues to take up PPI training. One public member new to PPI reported that they felt able to contribute more to their PPI group. There was also interest in attending more events such as these.

Adele's secondment with INVOLVE is set to continue until March 2020 and new initiatives are being planned to help support regions in their collaborative working on learning and development in PPI.

References:

1. Horobin A. Going the extra mile – creating a co-operative model for supporting patient and public involvement in research. *Research Involvement & Engagement* 2016; 2:9. Available at <https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40900-016-0025-z>
2. Wessex Public Involvement Network. Available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/wessexpipin> [Accessed 29 July 2019].
3. Working Together Training and Development Programme. Available at: <http://bit.ly/workingtogetherprogramme> [Accessed 29 July 2019].
4. Sharebank. Available at: <http://learningforinvolvement.org.uk/sharebank/> [Accessed 29 July 2019].
5. Staley K, Cockcroft E, Shelly A, Liabo K. 'What can I do that will most help researchers?' A different approach to training the public at the start of their involvement in research. *Research Involvement & Engagement* 2019; 5:10. Available at <https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40900-019-0144-4>

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