V WARD: Decarbonising Acute Care

Public & Community Advisory Group Terms of Reference

Working together to ensure research is equitable, inclusive and impactful



1 Purpose of the Public & Community Advisory Group

The Public and community Advisory Group (PAG) will give independent advice, insight, and/or constructively challenge the research team throughout the project.

The PAG is advisory in nature and does not assume responsibility for project management, governance, or regulatory decisions.

The purpose of the group is to:

- Ensure the research is equitable, relevant, and important to patients, carers, service users, and the wider public
- Contribute lived experience perspectives to research decisions
- Advise on study design for participant materials, recruitment approaches, data collection methods, interpretation of findings, and dissemination plans
- Help ensure research is inclusive, accessible, sensitive, and equitable to the needs of people and communities
- Support public accountability and transparency in the conduct of the research

2 Objectives

The group will:

1. Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the project
2. Review study documents and participant-facing materials
3. Advise on recruitment and retention strategies
4. Identify barriers to participation and suggest inclusive solutions
5. Comment on emerging findings and interpretation
6. Advise on dissemination activities and outputs
7. Help find opportunities for impact and implementation
8. Help evaluate the effectiveness and impact of their own contribution
9. Assist in evaluating the impact of the research and possible future areas for investigation
10. Apply an equity lens to all the above activities

3 Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion

The project is committed to inclusive involvement.

The PAG can expect that the research team will:

- Provide accessible materials
- Offer reasonable adjustments
- Consider digital access needs
- Encourage participation from under-represented communities
- Keep everyone up to date with progress of the research

4 Public Contributor Roles & PAG Membership

The PAG will have 10–15 members, with lived experience relevant to the study.

The Public Engagement Lead for the project will be an Associate Researcher and experienced Public Contributor. An experienced member of the PAG will attend the Project Management Team on a regular basis alongside the Public Engagement Lead and Community Engagement Lead. PAG membership will normally continue for the duration of the project.

It will include:

- Patients, family members, or carers with experience of virtual wards or acute care
- Members of the public with relevant experience or interest particularly in climate change and care
- Representatives from other relevant community groups (where appropriate)

It will reflect diversity in:

Age | Gender | Ethnicity | Geography | Socioeconomic background

Experience of services | Health conditions | Experience levels of contributing to research

5 Roles and Responsibilities

Chair of meetings:

Meetings will usually be chaired by the Public Engagement Lead and/or the Community Engagement Lead or another member of the research team depending upon the focus of the meeting.

The Chair will:

- Facilitate meetings
- Encourage inclusive participation
- Ensure discussions stay focused and constructive
- Work with the research team and the PAG to set agendas

Principles of Working Together (Ref: Working Agreement)

The PAG and the research team agree to:

- Treat each other with respect
- Be sensitive to each other's culture, values, and perspectives
- Value lived experience equally with professional and academic expertise.
- Listen actively and constructively
- Public Contributors are not expected to have prior knowledge or experience of research
- Work together to improve the quality and impact of the research

Support for Contributors

The research team will:

- Provide information in accessible formats
- Circulate papers in advance of meetings where appropriate
- Respond to advice received
- Explain how recommendations have been acted upon
- Give feedback to PAG on any impact from meeting with the group
- Provide administrative support
- Ensure recognition for involvement in line with NIHR guidelines
- Use clear, jargon-free language whenever possible
- Create a safe and inclusive environment for participation
- Work with individuals to identify any specific training needs

6 Scope of Involvement

Public Contributors may advise upon or contribute to a varied range of activities, as a whole group or as individual representatives with work package teams

Research Activities	Example Contributions
Study set-up	Design of the project and research questions, protocol review
Recruitment Strategy	Recruitment strategies for public contributors & study participants
Information	Public documents EG: Participant information & consent forms,
Data collection	Interview guides, surveys, identifying accessibility issues
Analysis	Sense-checking findings, interpretation, identifying themes
Evaluation	Evaluating outcomes & impact of the research & public involvement
Reporting	Feedback to whole PAG form Work package &/or Management Team
Dissemination	Developing Plain English outputs, presentations, publications & other
Impact	Evaluating study impact, recommend-ations for policy and practice

7 Meetings and Communication

- Project communications will be usually every month to 6 weeks via various means EG: written updates, newsletters, and meetings
- Meetings will be held approximately every 3 months.
- Additional meetings may be held if needed
- Meetings will be held online for the most part
- There may be some in person or hybrid meetings
- Papers should normally be circulated at least one week in advance
- Typical meeting duration: 60–90 minutes
- Longer meetings to work together on specific tasks as needed
- Meetings with Work Packages will vary in frequency
- Communication with Work Packages will be varied and may be via:
  - Team meetings
  - catch-up meetings
  - written feedback
  - project newsletter
- There will be a project website

8 Decision-Making

The PAG is an advisory body. The research team retains responsibility for final project decisions.

Where recommendations are not adopted, the research team will provide clear reasons and record this in meeting notes.

9 Confidentiality

Members may have access to unpublished research information and sensitive data to protect the integrity of the study and the people involved there will only be disclosure of information with prior authorisation and approval by Ethics Committee.

Members agree:

- Not to share confidential information or documents outside the group
- Not to disclose personal information about research participants and other individuals involved in the project
- To follow applicable data protection requierments.

10 Payment and Reimbursement

Public contributors will be offered reinbursement in line with project policy and NIHR guidelines as stated in the working agreement.

This may include:

- Meeting attendance payments.
- Preparation time.
- Travel expenses.
- Carer or support costs where appliicable.

Payments will be explained clearly before/during participation and form part of a live working agreement.

11 Recording Public Contributor Impact

To capture the impact of public involvement throughout the project the PAG and wider research team will keep a record of:

- Advice given by the PAG
- Actions taken in response
- Outcomes resulting from PAG contributions

12 Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed:

- Annually
- When significant changes to the project occur
- Amendments will be agreed jointly between the PAG and research team.

Glossary of Abbreviations

NIHR: National Institute for Health and Care Research – funding body for this research

PAG: Public and Community Advisory Group: The group tasked with collaborative working with the research team to ensure members of the public, patients, carers, and communities influence the research for public good.

PPIE: Patient Public and Community Involvement and Engagement the process whereby People with lived experience of the area of study, service users, specific communities, and wider society have a voice in research.

WP: Work Packages – The work strands within the project that focus on various aspects of the research, often using different methods and expertise to investigate different areas relevant to the whole study.

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HMG