

Why should I get involved in health and social care research?

The potential impact of public involvement in research is considerable.

Your perspective can influence the research process: from the topic, the research question itself, the design and management of the study, the recruitment of the participants (the subjects of research), the collection of information and its analysis and interpretation, to making sure that people affected by the research understand the results or the impact of the study findings.

You can help to ensure that researchers research those issues that are important to patients and the public.

Who can be involved in health and social care research?

You do not need academic or other qualifications to be involved in health and social care research. Enthusiasm, curiosity and commitment are however a good place to start! While many will have first-hand experience of an illness or health condition, or caring for someone who does, this is not always the case or a pre-requirement for involvement.

May was a carer for her husband and found herself involved in research. One of her ideas became a research project and you can find out more here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYwlq2fq-EU&feature=youtu.be> (Credits: Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Partnership Trust)

On health talk on-line <http://www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/medical-research/patient-and-public-involvement-research/topics> you can find out more about what is like to be involved in research.

How can I get involved in health and social care research?

There are many different ways in which patients and the public can be involved. Some people get involved after participating as “subjects” in research studies or clinical trials or, like May, as a carer of someone who has gone through this process. Your involvement may be a one off or you may be involved on a more regular basis. Often, people are involved in individual research studies, as a member of an advisory or steering group or as part of the project team; others get more deeply involved in the research process,

including data collection and analysis, as well as in the dissemination process (to groups, conferences or publications). How much or how little you get involved is up to you; often it will depend on the project itself and the support it is able to offer patient and public members who wish to be involved.

You can also get involved in wider activities, for example working with organisations, helping them to prioritise research topics or helping to make decisions on which projects to fund like National Institute for Health Research which supports and funds research in the NHS <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/get-involved/> and the James Lind Alliance <http://www.jla.nihr.ac.uk/>

There may also be organisations local to you where you can get involved (for example, a health trust or charity).

INVOLVE the national advisory group on involving patients and the public in NHS, public health and social care research which is funded by the National Institute for Health Research has a web site <http://www.invo.org.uk/> which contains lots of information on public involvement and provides invODIRECT <http://www.invo.org.uk/find-out-more/invodirect> which lists organisations across the UK that support public involvement.

The People in Research website <http://www.peopleinresearch.org/> is where opportunities for patients and the public to get involved in health research studies are advertised.

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