

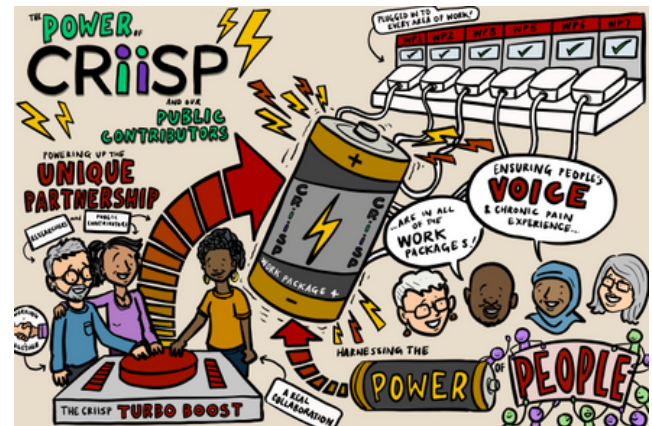
MAXIMISING THE POWER OF PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION TO RESEARCH

Working with people and communities is important and expected in health and care research (HRA 2025). This should be a proactive, ongoing commitment to a truly integrated, partnership approach from shaping the research idea right through to sharing the results.

BACKGROUND

The Consortium to Research Individual, Interpersonal and Social Influences was a 4-year UK university collaboration investigating how thoughts and feelings, personal relationships and lifestyle can affect chronic pain (<http://criisp.uk/>). Public involvement was fully integrated throughout the project via a public involvement group (Grieve et al 2025). Here we present key messages and recommendations from our experience on how to successfully define, integrate and maximise the impact of public contribution into research grant applications and throughout the research process, into disseminations and beyond.

This document has grown from feedback from our public contributors and researchers.



Public contributors are members of the public, working alongside the research team to ensure the research is relevant, accessible and meaningful.

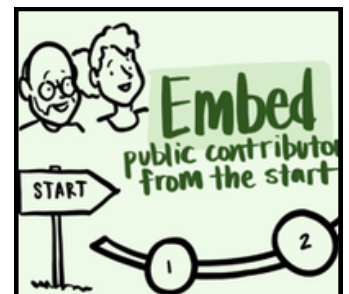
“having the same [public contributors] involved throughout has led to a more in-depth understanding, and richer, more meaningful discussions”
CRiisp RESEARCHER

“Researchers listen carefully ...you can see the information shaping their work”

**CRiisp
PUBLIC CONTRIBUTOR**



Graphics
by Tom Bailey



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REFERENCES:

- HRA (2025) Putting people first – embedding public involvement in health and social care research. Putting people first - embedding public involvement in health and social care research - Health Research Authority
- Grieve, S., Harrison, R., Chew-Graham, C., Taverner, I., Lloyd, J., Shivji, N., Readman, E., Higginbottom, A., Wilkinson, C., Austin, L., Keogh, E. and McCabe, C. (2025), Establishing a Public Involvement Network for Chronic Pain Research in the United Kingdom: Lessons Learned. Health Expectations, 28: e70373. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.70373>

ASPIRE TO EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (PI)

A

ADAPT



Be open to adapting your approach to PI as your research progresses

- Set up the infrastructure required, but be open to adapt as the research progresses.
- Build in methods which allow areas for flex at the earliest possible opportunities, taking into account feedback from the public contributors, researchers and project teams.
- At the centre of decision-making, always have in mind: (1) the health and wellbeing of public contributors, (2) the research aims and (3) budgetary frameworks
- Communicating changes positively and proactively builds stronger partnerships and project mobility.

S

STRUCTURE



Ensure your project has a diverse range of roles for public contributors

- Having public contributors as core members of the project, governance and executive teams will provoke PI to be actively considered throughout the entire research programme.
- Include public contributors in additional roles, e.g. Chair of research meetings. They can then work closely with researchers to develop meeting content, direction and scope.
- Diversity of public contributors is key to obtain a range of views and experiences, and to ensure representation from those whom the research will impact.

P

PARTNERSHIPS



Designing and implementing structures where public contributors and researchers work together as equal partners at all levels is critical.

- It is important to have a public contributor at appropriate research review sessions, so that public contributors and researchers are equal partners within the research programme.
- Actively address and remove “them and us” situations.
- Co-create methods of communication and language that are continually reviewed to ensure project efficiency and accessibility.

I

INVEST



Public contributors' time and effort is vital so reward appropriately

- Properly budgeting from outset for the full length of the research is vital to ensure proper reimbursement for the public contributors time and expertise, administrative support and involvement activities (including conference attendance and in-person meetings).
- Involve public contributors in dissemination activities e.g. scientific conferences, presentations and blogs. Their unique perspective shaped the research so celebrate and reward this throughout the research project.
- Public contributors invest physically and emotionally as well as giving their time. Providing support mechanisms will mean they are more able to provide meaningful and repeated contributions.

RE

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Building and maintaining strong relationships with public contributors accelerates thinking and research delivery

- The more time invested, the greater the chance of answering questions before they are asked, predicting and addressing potential issues and, most importantly, creating the environment that allows open, honest and developmental conversations to be had at all levels.
- We used a “You Said, We Did / Didn’t” to provide feedback to the public contributors after meetings on how their involvement had impacted the research.