

Health and Care Research Wales

'Discover Your Role in Health and Social Care Research'

Draft Action Plan

Notes:

This document provides an initial outline of the key themes emerging from the co-design and engagement events and the proposed actions and activities to achieve the ambitions for public engagement and involvement as outlined in 'Discover Your Role in Health and Social Care Research'.

The final version of the action plan will complement the revised 'Discover Your Role' document. Therefore, this outline does not cover the broader importance of public engagement and involvement in detail. The format of the action plan is still being discussed, but this document starts to consolidate the content.

Please note that the final document will be simplified, focusing on solutions. However, for this purpose, we have included problem areas, key focus points, and suggested actions.

Importance of Patient and Public Involvement:

Health and Care Research Wales is committed to making public involvement in health and social care research more meaningful. This means ensuring the public has a real say in research, which takes time and resources. We expect everyone we fund to prioritise public involvement as we do.

We are proud of the progress made by public contributors, researchers, and others involved in our community. Their efforts have helped improve public involvement in research across Wales and even contributed to national discussions, such as the UK Standards for Public Involvement and guidance on paying public contributors. However, we know there's always room to improve.

Discover Your Role 1.0

In 2020, we introduced Discover Your Role in Health and Social Care Research, an action plan to boost public involvement in research. It was developed with input from the public, researchers, and research administrators, focusing on seven key areas. Over the past four years, public members and researchers have worked together to tackle barriers and develop solutions. While we've made progress—like creating a forum for sharing good practices and developing public engagement strategies—some areas still need improvement, and new challenges may arise.

Decision to move to phase 2:

As we neared the end of this four-year plan, we reflected on what had been achieved and what still needed attention. We held co-design and engagement events to explore ways to overcome barriers and further improve public involvement. We realised that this work is a continuous journey, with progress opening doors to future improvements.

We identified four key areas to focus on to move forward:

1. Learnings from *Discover Your Role 1.0* and identify ongoing challenges.
2. Engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including motivated and less experienced researchers and public contributors.

3. Develop a new action plan (*Discover Your Role 2.0*) that outlines the steps needed to turn ambitions into reality.
4. Finalise the plan, ensuring we have a way to evaluate and measure progress.

Approach to Phase 2 – discovery:

During public forums in late 2023 and early 2024, we gathered feedback on barriers to public involvement. We worked with various groups, including public members, our involvement alliance and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group, to review our action plan and refine the focus areas. From this, we created 15 problem statements and invited over 80 public members and researchers to rank these issues through an online survey. We then narrowed them down to five main topics:

- **Resources:**
 - Insufficient funding for involvement activities.
 - Lack of time allocated for developing public involvement activities.
- **Inclusivity:**
 - Difficulty in involving under-served groups with limited time and resources.
 - Need for more skill development opportunities for public contributors, such as chairing meetings.
- **Payments:**
 - Complicated payment processes that discourage involvement.
 - Invoices often lack details, making it hard to manage finances.
- **Impact:**
 - Poor ongoing communication from study teams leaves contributors unaware of outcomes.
 - Unclear how research affects Welsh services and the role of public involvement.
- **Opportunities:**
 - The process for finding involvement opportunities is repetitive and time-consuming.
 - Opportunities often require prior experience, excluding newcomers.
 - Difficulty in finding a comprehensive list of available opportunities.

During the last six months from March 2024 – August 2024, we have undertaken a series of co-design and engagement events to address barriers and develop solutions, continuing our commitment to improving public involvement.

Throughout all focus areas, the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#) will serve as the framework guiding the change. All actions should be viewed through the lens of these standards.

Participants worked together to suggest practical and strategic solutions. Some were simple fixes, while others laid the groundwork for future improvements. This action plan reflects the collaborative work and shared ideas from the workshops.

We remain committed to improving public involvement and will continue to refine our approach to make it more accessible and impactful for everyone.