

Health and Care Research Wales

Guidance for Paying Public Contributors

Contents

Expenses for members of the public.....	2
Planning and discussing expenses	2
Paying expenses upfront.....	2
Travel costs.....	2
Subsistence (meals and refreshments).....	2
Overnight accommodation	3
Paying for public members who may be carers	3
Steps to follow before the activity	4
Confirming caring responsibilities	4
Payment information.....	4
What cannot be covered:	5

This guidance is for researchers and professionals on how to pay public contributors involved in shaping research studies. It offers general advice on key considerations when making payments, including expenses and covering carers costs.

Expenses for members of the public

When involving members of the public in research, it's essential to ensure they are not left out of pocket. In addition to offering payment for their time, all reasonable expenses should be covered. Their lived experience is a valuable contribution, and they should not incur personal costs to share it.

Planning and discussing expenses

At the start of their involvement, discuss with contributors any additional needs they may have, such as travel, access, or support requirements. Agree on what the organisation can reasonably provide to support their participation.

Paying expenses upfront

Where possible, cover costs in advance, such as booking accommodation or providing train tickets. This is particularly important for people receiving welfare benefits, who may be unable to pay upfront. If costs must be reimbursed afterward, ensure repayment is prompt, especially for those on low incomes.

Travel costs

Travel expenses should be fully covered. This typically includes:

- Standard class rail fares
- Bus fares
- Mileage if using a personal car (according to your organisation's or HMRC rates)

Remember that some contributors may need to travel by taxi or other methods due to health or mobility needs. Booking rail tickets early and using off-peak times can reduce costs.

For national studies or those involving people from a wide area, travel can be a significant cost. Consider using a hybrid approach, combining in-person and remote participation to manage the budget.

Subsistence (meals and refreshments)

If contributors are away from home for several hours, the cost of meals and snacks can be reimbursed. However, receipts must be provided. Reimbursements follow NHS Wales guidelines:

- Breakfast: Up to £5.00
 - Eligible if the contributor is away from home for at least 5 hours, and this includes the breakfast period (7:00 AM to 9:00 AM).

- Lunch: Up to £5.00
 - Eligible if the contributor is away from home for at least 5 hours, and this includes the lunch period (12:00 PM to 2:00 PM).
- Evening Meal: Up to £20.00
 - Eligible if the contributor is away from home for at least 10 hours and returns after 7:00 PM.

Always reimburse the actual amount spent, not a rounded figure, especially if the person receives benefits, to avoid this being treated as income.

Overnight accommodation

If someone is travelling a long distance or attending a multi-day activity, overnight stays may be necessary. Book affordable accommodation in advance. Local tourist information centres or hotel websites can help find reasonable rates.

Paying for public members who may be carers

When involving people who are carers or who regularly support someone else, it's important to consider the impact their involvement may have on their caring role. Taking part in your activity may mean they need to arrange alternative care for the person they support.

To ensure carers can get involved without added stress or financial burden, you can cover the cost of replacement care, but this must be agreed in advance. Below are some examples of caring responsibilities and how you can support them:

Childcare costs

Some contributors may need childcare to take part. They might already have arrangements in place, but costs can vary. Review current guidance to estimate typical childcare rates and ensure these are covered.

Carer costs

Contributors who provide care for others may need to arrange a replacement carer to participate. As with childcare, they may already have a system in place. Reimburse the actual cost.

Personal Assistant (PA) support

Some disabled contributors work with a personal assistant (also called a support worker). Costs vary depending on the role and location. If arranged through an agency, expect to pay at least the National Living Wage (£10.42/hour for over-23s). Overnight stays usually cost less per hour.

Steps to follow before the activity

Before each involvement activity, make sure to:

1. **Have a conversation about caring responsibilities**

Ask if the person provides care for someone and whether they'll need to arrange cover in order to get involved.

2. **Agree to cover care-related costs**

Confirm what support is needed and agree on what the organisation will pay for, such as the cost of a professional carer, childcare, or support worker.

3. **Collect relevant details**

You'll need information about the care arrangement (e.g. provider, expected cost) to approve and process the payment.

Confirming caring responsibilities

You may need to ask the public contributor to provide evidence that they have caring duties.

Examples include:

- A Carer's ID Card
- A letter confirming receipt of Carer's Allowance
- Proof of a council tax reduction due to caring responsibilities
- Evidence of living with someone who receives home care or respite services

Payment information

To process the reimbursement or make a payment for care costs, you may also need the carer's bank details. Ensure this is requested securely and stored in line with your organisation's data protection policy.

Paid carers or support workers

If the individual needs a paid carer or support worker to get involved in the activity (e.g., to travel to a meeting or assist with daily tasks), you can reimburse:

- The carer's hourly or daily rate.
- Travel or associated costs for the carer.

Requirements:

- Evidence that the carer is employed in a paid capacity (e.g., payslips, a contract, or care agency documentation).
- Proof of the carer's usual hourly rate.
- Payment can go directly to:
 - The carer (if self-employed).
 - The care company (if agency-employed).
 - The individual (if they directly employ the carer).

Payment should always be made through official means (e.g., invoice), to ensure proper due diligence.

If the individual employs the carer directly (as a private employer), they must also take on the responsibilities that come with that, such as payroll, tax, insurance, and record-keeping. In such cases, they can provide a formal employment contract showing duties, hours, and pay rate. Reimbursement should reflect only direct costs, not broader employment costs (like pension contributions).

What cannot be covered:

To ensure clarity and consistency, the following costs **cannot be reimbursed**:

- Any expenses not agreed in advance of the activity
- General household costs or loss of income that are not directly related to involvement
- Support provided informally (e.g., by friends or family)
- Employment-related overheads such as pension contributions, insurance, or tax liabilities beyond the agreed direct fees

This ensures fairness, transparency, and appropriate use of public funds.