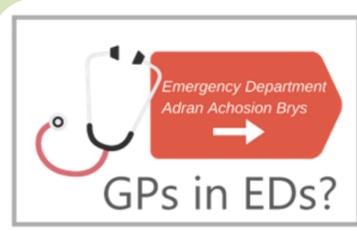


Achieving inclusive public involvement throughout the research process – experience and learning from evaluation of GPs in Emergency Departments



Bridie Evans 1, Barbara Harrington 2, Julie Hepburn 2, Alison Cooper 3, Freya Davies 3, Michelle Edwards 3, Tom Hughes 4, Delyth Price 3, Niroshan A Siriwardena 5, Helen Snooks 1, Adrian Edwards 3

1 Swansea University
2 Public contributor
3 Cardiff University
4 John Radcliff Hospital, Oxford
5 University of Lincoln

Background

Public involvement in health services research is encouraged. Descriptions of public involvement across the whole research cycle of a major study are uncommon and effects on research conduct poorly understood. We recorded and reported our experiences from the GPs in EDs study which evaluated how general practitioners work in or alongside Emergency Departments at UK hospitals. We describe our experiences in a large-scale multi-site research study and present learning for future involvement practice.

Results

Public contributors' activities went beyond strategic study planning and management to include active involvement in data collection, analysis and dissemination.

They attended management, scrutiny, planning and task meetings. They also facilitated public involvement through annual planning and review sessions, conducted a Public Involvement audit against the UK Standards for Public Involvement and coordinated public and patient input to stakeholder discussions at key study stages.

Group interview respondents said involvement exceeded their expectations. They identified:

- effects such as changes to patient recruitment, terminology clarification and extra dissemination activities
- factors enabling effective involvement including:
 - ✓ team and leader commitment;
 - ✓ named support contact;
 - ✓ building relationships and demonstrating equality and inclusivity;
 - ✓ public contributors being confident to challenge and flexible to meet researchers' timescales and work patterns.

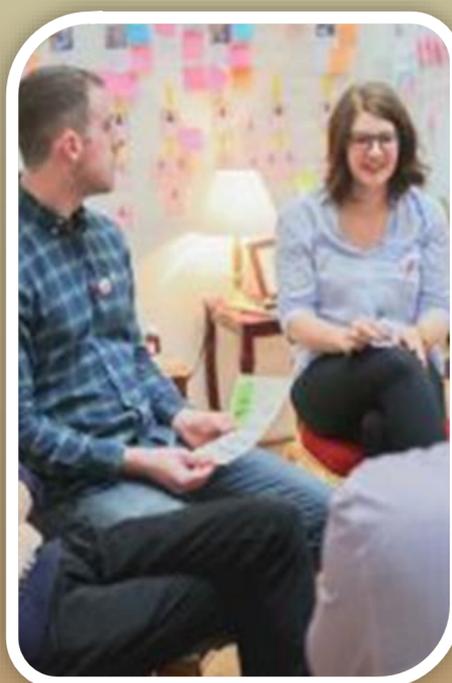
There were challenges matching resources to roles and questions about risk of over-professionalising public contributors.

Methods

We recorded public involvement roles and activities throughout the study and compared these to our original public involvement plan in our project proposal. We held a group interview with study co-applicants to explore their experiences, transcribed the recorded discussion and conducted thematic analysis. We synthesised findings to develop recommendations for future practice.

Conclusions

We extended our planned approach to public involvement and identified benefits to the research process which were both specific and general. We identified good practice to support effective public involvement in health services research.



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For more information:
b.a.evans@swansea.ac.uk
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