

NIHR HealthTech Research Centre Network V3.0

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) Strategy 2025-2029

Introduction

The NIHR HealthTech Research Centre (HRC) Network is dedicated to coordinating and enhancing patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) across all 14 centres that develop and evaluate health technologies across the UK. The Network provides national strategic leadership, shares best practices, and establishes consistent standards while respecting the unique expertise and local contexts of each individual HRC.

Our Network is hosted by Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, with the PPIE function led by Newcastle, supported by South London and Maudsley and Nottingham Rehab HRCs. This strategy sets out how we will coordinate PPIE activities across the Network to create greater collective impact than would be possible through individual centres working in isolation.

Definitions

We use the following definitions from the NIHR for our Network wide approach:

Involvement: Research being carried out 'with' or 'by' patients or members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. It is an active partnership between patients and members of the public with researchers that influences and shapes research.

Engagement: Where information and knowledge about research is provided and disseminated.

Participation: Taking part in a research study, for example being recruited to take part in a clinical trial or another kind of research study, joining in a focus group or completing a questionnaire.

How this strategy was developed

This strategy is built on extensive consultation with the PPIE and RI workstream leads and with consultation with all the other HRC's, drawing on their collective experience and expertise in PPIE and RI. The strategy was developed ensuring that all perspectives were represented, and that the Network's approach would add value to individual HRC activities rather than duplicating efforts. It has been developed to support and enhance, rather than replace, individual HRC PPIE and RI strategies.

The strategy is aligned to national NIHR strategies including the [NIHR Strategic Commitments for Public Partnerships 2025-2030](#) and underpinned by the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#)

Vision and Purpose

Our vision is to establish the HRC Network as a national coordinator and exemplar for meaningful public partnerships in HealthTech research and innovation. We aim to create a unified approach that amplifies the impact of PPIE and RI across all 14 HRCs while addressing health inequalities and embracing diversity.

We will achieve this by:

- Coordinating PPIE activities across the HRC Network
- Sharing best practices and co-creating PPIE guidance for HealthTech research
- Supporting individual HRCs to enhance their PPIE activities
- Creating a collective voice for patient and public influence in HealthTech innovation
- Ensuring diverse perspectives shape the future of health technology

Our strategic objectives align with the five NIHR Strategic Commitments for Public Partnerships:

1. To support and coordinate efforts across all HRCs to **ensure effective and meaningful PPIE and research inclusion are embedded** throughout HealthTech development and evaluation.
2. To **coordinate and enhance partnerships** between HRCs and communities, particularly those experiencing the greatest health inequalities.
3. To establish consistent and equitable approaches to **rewarding and recognising the impact and contribution of public and community partners** across the HRC Network.
4. To establish consistent **feedback mechanisms** across the HRC Network to ensure public and community partners feel valued and understand their impact.
5. To **enhance skills and confidence in PPIE** across the HRC Network, including our public, community and industry partners, through shared learning and resources.

This strategy has been developed alongside and with alignment to the HRC Network Research Inclusion (RI) strategy. Effective PPIE with diverse public perspectives can support research inclusion; we will use learning and connections developed through our collective PPIE activity to support the inclusivity of all our activity and our HRC community.

To achieve our objectives, we will deliver activities focused on the short (1 – 2 years), medium (2 – 3 years) and long term (4 – 5 years) of our HRC Network award. The HRC Network Strategy PPIE Action Plan below outlines key activities and measures of success for each of our five strategic objectives. Progress against these will form the basis for monitoring and reporting on this Strategy.

Leadership and Governance

This PPIE and RI Strategy has been endorsed by the HRC Network Executive Committee and the Independent Advisory Committee. The PPIE and RI workstream function is led by the Newcastle HRC, with support from SLAM and Nottingham Rehab HRCs. Additionally, the remaining 11 HRCs are fully involved and engaged with the

PPIE/RI workstream that will deliver this strategy. The Network PPIE and RI Manager is responsible for delivery and review of this strategy, with direction and support from the Network PPIE and RI Lead and overall direction of the Chief Operating Officer.

The Network PPIE and RI Lead will establish a PPIE and RI Advisory Group consisting of public contributors and external stakeholders, including members of the Independent Advisory Committee with interest or expertise in PPIE and RI. This group will serve as critical friends and constructive advisors to the workstream. The Workstream Manager and Lead will coordinate feedback between this PPIE and RI Advisory Group and the 14 HRCs. The Network PPIE and RI Lead reports to the Network Chief Operating Officer and provides regular updates to the Network Executive Committee and Independent Advisory Committee. Public representatives will be involved in Network governance structures to ensure transparency and accountability.

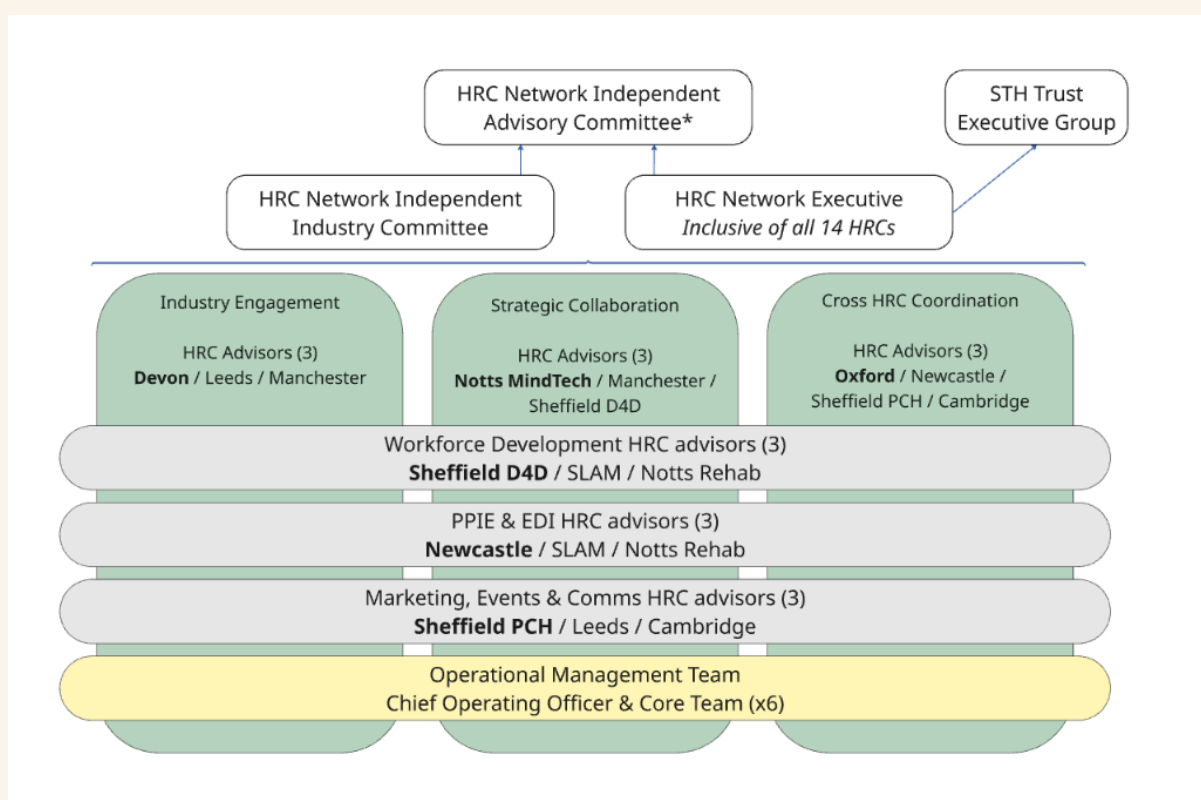


Figure 1: Governance structure for the NIHR HRC Network

Monitoring, review & reporting

To achieve our objectives, we will deliver initiatives focused on the short (1 – 2 years), medium (2 – 3 years) and long term (4 – 5 years) of our HRC Network award. The HRC Network Strategy PPIE Action Plan outlined below describes key activities and measures of success for each of our five strategic objectives.

We will monitor progress and capture impact of our HRC PPIE and RI Workstream and related activity by:

- Regular review of the HRC PPIE Strategy Action Plan activities and measures of success, led by the Network Manager and PPIE and RI Advisory Group
- Establishing a HRC–Network wide framework to capture PPIE and RI activity, co-ordinated by the Network Manager
- Conduct an evaluation of Network PPIE and RI co-ordination and impact, led by the Network Manager with the input of all stakeholders.

HRC Network PPIE Strategy Action Plan

Objective 1. To support and coordinate efforts across all HRCs to ensure effective and meaningful PPIE and research inclusion are embedded throughout HealthTech development and evaluation	
Key activities	Measures of success
<p>Short term (1 – 2 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate shared learning about effective approaches to reaching and working with groups currently underrepresented in health and care research • Share resources to support the participation, involvement and engagement of diverse public across the Network. • HRC PPIE and RI event is held every 18 months focused on shared learning and celebrating impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Community of Practice for PPIE and RI leads is established and meets regularly with an agenda including sharing learning about approaches to engaging different under-represented groups. • Shared repository of resources (including curated links and HRC-developed resources) for PPIE and RI leads to utilise in their PPIE and RI activities. • Summary of PPIE and RI celebration event with public and community partners including actions/direction for the HRC PPIE and RI workstream.
<p>Medium Term (2 – 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to facilitate shared learning about approaches to reaching and working with under-represented groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular learning forum meets regularly and supports learning and shared solutions for engaging different groups.
<p>Long Term (4 – 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance for PPIE and inclusive research design specific to HealthTech innovation, incorporating HRC exemplars from practice and PPIE strategies to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary guidance document of key messages for practice, including case study examples.

<p>enhance broader participation, involvement and engagement in HealthTech research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dissemination activities (journal articles, presentations etc) to share learning with different audiences.
--	--

<p>Objective 2. To coordinate and enhance partnerships between HRCs and communities, particularly those experiencing health inequalities</p>	
<p>Key activities</p>	<p>Measures of success</p>
<p>Short term (1 – 2 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Map existing partnerships with communities across all HRCs to understand our collective connections and identify opportunities for collaboration and priority communities to focus on in growing our connections. ● Coordinate engagement with national patient organisations and advocacy groups, led by the workstream manager. ● Establish a community of practice for PPIE and RI leads to share partnership approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Directory of current HRC relationship assets, identified opportunities for collaborations, and priority communities to build relationships and involvement with. ● Records of coordinated engagement activities with tracking of growth in number and range of organisations engaged. ● Schedule of quarterly community of practice meetings with documented attendance, topics covered, and actions generated.
<p>Medium Term (2 – 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create searchable HRC database of community connections to facilitate cross-HRC patient involvement for specific conditions or demographics. ● Demonstrate PPIE Advocacy for engagement on HRC programmes through targeted showcase events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Database launch with community organisations categorised by geography, specialty, and demographic focus. ● PPIE representation and engagement at HRC Events, with documented impact stories.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target PPIE recruitment activities to increase engagement and involvement among communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in connections and PPIE activity with communities experiencing health inequalities shown through i) database and ii) impact stories.
<p>Long Term (4 – 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate stories of PPIE impact involving a wide range of communities, partner organisations and HRCs. • Establish the HRC Network as a trusted partner for community organisations seeking involvement in HealthTech development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of person centred stories demonstrating engagement value, impact to the representatives and organisations. • Annual survey showing high satisfaction scores from community partners and increased inbound requests for collaboration.
<p>Objective 3. To establish consistent and equitable approaches to rewarding and recognising the impact and contribution of public and community partners across the Network.</p>	
<p>Key activities</p>	<p>Measures of success</p>
<p>Short term (1 – 2 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document current practices for paying PPIE representatives across all HRCs to establish baseline financial reward measures. • Record other forms of reward provided to PPIE representatives and a review of how valuable they are perceived to be. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive statistics on PPIE payments made through HRCs including voucher payment value, travel subsistence, etc. • Qualitative report on non-financial rewards and perceived value associated with them.
<p>Medium Term (2 – 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a collective report from the HRC Network to NIHR and relevant government bodies (including DWP) highlighting challenges and recommending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published HRC paper on paying PPIE representatives. • Provide guidance to other HRCs (and wider NIHR infrastructure) on non-financial rewards that

<p>system level improvements to payment processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the current range of non-finance rewards (e.g., training, access to digital tools, letters of recommendation networks, etc.) and share best practice. 	<p>may enhance? their PPIE offer and engagements.</p>
<p>Long Term (4 – 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include PPIE impact celebration within annual Network events, highlighting tangible research improvements while emphasizing collective learning. Adapt NIHR's Public Contributor Roles Framework for HealthTech context, identifying skill development opportunities aligned with individual aspirations. Create shared learning opportunities supporting growth for all participants, tracking engagement and retention across different roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual recognition event with formalised awards process and documentation of impact. Evidence of former contributors moving into paid roles within HRCs or partnering organisations. Comprehensive evaluation report with recommendations for sustainability beyond the current funding period.
<p>Objective 4. To establish consistent feedback mechanisms across the Network to ensure public contributors understand their impact</p>	
<p>Key activities</p>	<p>Measures of success</p>
<p>Short term (1 – 2 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage PPIE representatives to gather qualitative data on how they feel about feedback and what ways in which they would like to receive feedback. Map current feedback approaches across all HRCs, identifying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report using qualitative data and PPIE-driven recommendations to drive the development of a feedback strategy. Completed mapping document with analysis of gaps and

<p>strengths, weaknesses, and inconsistencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop templates for feedback at different stages of project involvement that can be customised by individual HRCs. 	<p>opportunities for standardisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suite of template documents available to all HRCs with guidance on implementation.
<p>Medium Term (2 – 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy for improving the way that feedback is delivered that is appropriate and consistent across all HRCs. • Work with the Networks Workforce workstream, create training for HRC staff on effective feedback approaches, and by working with the Networks Marketing and Communications Workstream, include how to communicate complex technical outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared strategy with action plan detailing stages and responsibilities in improving feedback loops. • Training delivered to at least 50% of relevant HRC staff with pre/post learning assessments.
<p>Long Term (4 – 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate effective methods of providing feedback to PPIE representatives based on new strategy, with collated reciprocal feedback from PPIE to the RI/PPIE teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published success story as a blog, vlog etc. Strategy and PPIE story published on NIHR website for use beyond HRCs.
<p>Objective 5: To enhance skills and confidence in PPIE across the HRC Network (including our public, community and industry partners) through shared learning and resources.</p>	
<p>Key activities</p>	<p>Measures of success</p>
<p>Short term (1 – 2 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow the opportunities for PPIE and RI learning opportunities for all in the HRC community – HRC staff across research, PPIE and other roles, and public and community partners. • Work with partners (including Industry and VCSE sectors) to understand what training, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule for PPIE and RI Community of Practice includes regular learning focused activities and events. • Opportunities for PPIE learning and development circulated as part of the HRC Network PPIE & RI newsletter

<p>resources and support are needed to strengthen PPIE in HealthTech research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repository of shared PPIE resources includes curated and co-created resources relevant to PPIE in HealthTech, including resources specifically for inducting and supporting public and community partners.
<p>Medium term (2 – 3 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support industry and academic partners to develop skills and deliver meaningful PPIE in HealthTech development. • Support diverse public and community partners across the HRC network through a range of learning opportunities. • Coordinate capacity-building activities with other NIHR infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-created guidance for Industry partners and related learning opportunities (e.g. webinars) on effective PPIE and RI in HealthTech development • Collection of resources, training, information to support induction and continued learning for public and community partners involved in the HRC Network. • Collaborative initiatives to support capacity building with other NIHR infrastructure.
<p>Long term (4 – 5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share best practice from across the network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources to support public partnerships and PPIE activity in HealthTech research shared and disseminated.