

Covid-19 & public engagement - an NIHR perspective



Jeremy Taylor, NIHR Director for Public Voice
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NIHR working with patients and public

- UK's largest funder of health and care research
- Longstanding commitment to partnership with patients & public: in order to improve reach, quality & impact of research
- Leadership for this formerly with NIHR Involve
- From 1 April 2020, this role absorbed in new NIHR Centre for Engagement and Dissemination
- Plus my role of NIHR Director for Public Voice

Covid-19 has challenged partnership working:

- Much research on pause
- New processes and fast timescales for Covid research
- Lockdown changed engagement opportunities
- Finding trial participants a priority

What we learned

- Some evidence of decline in commitment to engagement
- Mixed picture: engagement worked best where researchers had pre-existing networks of public contributors.
- Covid-19 highlighted and reinforced known health inequalities- those most likely to suffer were least likely to be involved
- Lockdown expanded the limits of what was thought possible in digital engagement
- Spontaneous local organising but also calls for national leadership

twitter.com/QIPatient/status/1266367285335175174

Apps NIHR Hub Outlook Twitter LGC OneDrive BBC News

Tweet

 **Jonathan Broad**
@QIPatient

Today we launched the hashtag #CoProCovid to support the 'Co-Production and Involvement in Covid 19 and Beyond' group, supporting leaders & the public involved in Co-Production, sharing best practise of digital inclusion & ensuring co-production. @swahsn is supporting this work.

2:54 PM · May 29, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

11 Retweets 25 Likes

   

 **Scott Ballard-Ridley** @ballardridley · May 30
Replying to @QIPatient and @swahsn
Hi Jonathan I'd really like to be involved with this if at all possible?

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NIHR response

- publicly reaffirm commitment to public engagement
- collaborate with other lead organisations in health & care research
- support efforts to improve connections between researchers and public contributors
- secure public voice in strategic decision making on Covid-19 research

UK Standards For Public Involvement



Reflections: “Restart” = “Refresh”

- Perhaps public engagement was not as embedded as we thought.
- As we slowly return to “normal”, time for fresh thinking and resolve:
- Engagement as key research discipline
- Engagement as ecosystem of relationships, not bodies for studies
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Digital engagement
- Recognising & supporting local initiative
- Make it simple, normal, universal

Thanks for listening!

Looking forward to discussing!

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