Covid-19 & public engagement - an NIHR perspective

Jeremy Taylor, NIHR Director for Public Voice
5 June 2020
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
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?

1 Retweet 1 Like
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

- Working Together
- Inclusive Opportunities
- Impact
- Governance
- Support and Learning

Communications
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!

jeremy.taylor@nihr.ac.uk

@JeremyTaylorNB
@NIHRresearch
@NIHRinvolvement
@NIHRevidence