

POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR THE PAYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH RESEARCH

1 INTRODUCTION

Whilst the University expects its employees and staff to comply with this policy, it does not confer contractual rights or form part of any contract of employment and may be amended by the University or replaced at any time.

Breach of this policy may be considered a breach of duty of care to Contributors, and as such would constitute research misconduct. Such incidences would be taken forward under the Research Misconduct Policy if applicable. Where the breach is not understood to be research misconduct, it will be addressed via the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and Code of Conduct.

2 OWNERSHIP

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee owns and manages this policy on behalf of The University of Northampton. This policy will be reviewed on a 3-year basis or amended in response to changes in future legislation and/or case law.

3 ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

This a corporate policy and applies to all those undertaking research at the University. This policy applies to all research conducted on behalf of the University, involving staff, students, visiting or emeritus staff, associates, honorary or clinical contract holders, contractors, and consultants. It is applicable to all academic disciplines and areas of study. This policy also applies to all individuals and/or organisations undertaking research on university premises.

4 DEFINITIONS

4.1 Officially [NIHR define](#) the following definitions as:

Patient and public involvement (PPI)

PPI is an active partnership between patients and the public and researchers in the research process, rather than the use of people as 'subjects' of research. Patient and public involvement in research is often defined as doing research 'with' or 'by' people who use services rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. This includes, for example, working with research funders to prioritise research, offering advice as members of a project steering group, commenting on and developing research materials.

Public engagement

Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit. (NCCPE, 2024)

Public Contributor

Public Contributor is an umbrella term used to describe members of the public who are involved or engaged with our research. We use the definition of 'public' including, but not limited to, offenders, patients, young people, their families, and people who use health, social care, and public services as well as people from organisations that represent people who use services.

Participation

The act of taking part in a research study, for example people being recruited to take part in a clinical trial or another kind of research study, joining in a focus group or completing a questionnaire.

Co-production

An approach in which researchers, practitioners, and the public work together, sharing power and responsibility from the start to the end of the project, including the generation of knowledge. The assumption is that those affected by research are best placed to design and deliver it and have skills and knowledge of equal importance.

5 POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1 This policy aims to establish procedures for the payment of individuals who contribute to research at the University of Northampton. It acknowledges the significance of their involvement in generating high-quality, globally recognised research. Aligned with the University's strategic ambitions for wider public and community engagement, this policy sets out reasonable levels of payment for involvement in a range of research activities. This should be considered in line with HMRC requirements and follow guidance from relevant bodies, such as the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), which provides guidance for [researchers and professionals](#), and for [members of the public](#) on payments for Public Contributors.
- 5.2 Involvement in research comprises either research participation (being subjects of research) or research contribution (assisting in the development and co-production of research projects). Research participation can involve various activities, such as participating in clinical trials, completing surveys, interviews, or physical tasks. Research contribution can entail tasks such as offering input on research methodologies, assisting in framing research questions, and reviewing pertinent materials. Contribution in research can occur on a one-time basis or extend over short- or long-term periods.
- 5.3 This policy therefore considers various examples of best practice, disciplinary criteria, external expert advice and legal requirements to identify reasonable thresholds for the payment of members of the public who contribute to or take part in our research.

6 KEY PRINCIPLES

- 6.1 The following principles should be adhered to when paying Public Contributors:
- 6.1.1 Research Contributors are valuable to the research process, and their time, effort, and experience should be fairly compensated or rewarded. Providing fair compensation is an integral aspect of conducting research. Public

contributors have the right to feel respected and appreciated in the research environment, and fair compensation is a crucial step toward achieving this.

- 6.1.2 Contributors retain the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, irrespective of any payments made to them. They also have the option to decline payment or be recognised in a different way, such as a written acknowledgement, if they choose.
- 6.1.3 Researchers should recognise the potential for perverse incentives when paying Contributors to research. For instance, Contributors might feel pressured to tailor their input to match the perceived expectations of the researchers, or they might assume that accepting payment invalidates the voluntary nature of their involvement, making them feel unable to leave the project. It is crucial to address these issues and to clearly communicate the expectations to participants. This includes emphasising their right to terminate their involvement at any time if they wish.
- 6.1.4 It is the responsibility of the researcher or research team to identify and mitigate risks associated with paying individuals to the fullest extent possible. Although it is the Public Contributor's responsibility to understand their tax and HMRC implications, see section 7.1 Respecting Contributors to research goes beyond merely checking boxes; it involves genuinely considering their wellbeing and personal circumstances, where known, throughout the research process.
- 6.1.5 The payment methods for individuals should be proportionate, considering the levels of risk involved and the time investment required for their contribution.
- 6.2 In compliance with GDPR and Data Protection regulations, Contributors should refer to the University's Service User Involvement Group Welcome Guide.
- 6.3 Engaging a minimum of three Public Contributors in research is considered good practice, as it provides peer support and ensures adequate coverage in case of illness or unforeseen events. Researchers should acknowledge that achieving

this level of involvement may be more challenging but should not let this hinder the progress of a project.

- 6.4 Unauthorised audio recording of conversations is prohibited. Anyone in breach of this may be subject to disciplinary action.

7 PROCEDURE

It is important that members of the public who are asked to become involved in this work are offered payment for their involvement and are informed of the rates being offered before they agree to undertake the work. Please note that involvement payments are not a wage, but a thank you payment for a Public Contributor's time, skills, and expertise.

7.1 Payment rates

Where budget constraints allow, colleagues at the University of Northampton will adhere to the NIHR payment rates listed on the [NIHR website](#) as they are deemed to be reasonable when paying individuals for taking part in research.

- 7.2 The University's evaluation of reasonable payment rates is in accordance with established funder payment guidelines, such as those outlined by the NIHR for Public Contributors in research. These rates may be subject to change if funder guidance varies). "Reasonable" in this context refers to an amount of payment which does not risk a volunteer entering into a worker arrangement (as defined by the HMRC). These payment rates are offered as suggestions, and researchers have the flexibility to utilize different rates if they prefer.
- 7.3 Further guidance on payment process is available to staff through the University's Patient and Public Involvement Payment Process Decision Making Guide.
- 7.4 In order to meet HMRC requirements where individuals are paid more than £1000 per financial year this must be declared to the University Finance Department. The Principal Investigators (PIs) are responsible for informing the Public and Community Engagement Officer to keep a record of each

Contributor. Contributors must self-declare their income to HMRC along with the University fulfilling these reporting requirements. For further guidance as to what information should be collected, see section 8 below.

- 7.5 The responsibility for handling the tax implications of these payments rests with the Public Contributor. Details regarding payment for research Contributors, including the payment process, is provided in the Service User Involvement Group Welcome Guide given to potential Contributors.
- 7.6 Payment may affect those receiving benefits. The University cannot offer financial advice on individual circumstances. For further information, members of the public can consult the [NIHR guidance](#).
- 7.7 The principal investigators (PIs) need to supply Contributors with a draft letter they can submit to the Job Centre if necessary. This letter must detail the extent of the individual's involvement and the compensation they received for their efforts.
- 7.8 A report on payments distributed during each financial year will be coordinated through the Research Support and Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise teams and presented to the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee on an annual basis.

8 Appropriate Methods of Payment

- 8.1 Researchers should consult the Service User Involvement Group Welcome Guide for guidance on payments for public contributors.
- 8.2 The decision as to what method of payment to use should be made with consideration of the appropriateness for the task and for the Contributor's circumstances. The responsibility of the University is to pay individuals in a timely and efficient manner, minimising the burden for Contributors however possible, should be recognised throughout.

- 8.3 A record must be kept of any amount paid to an individual and when this payment was made. This record must meet data protection requirements and be shared upon request in the event of an audit.

9 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

9.1 UON Policies:

- [Research Ethics Codes and Procedures](#)
- [Research Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Research Data Management Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Researcher Code of Practice](#)

9.2 PPI documentation:

- Service User Involvement Sign up documents
- Service User Involvement Group Welcome Guide
- Patient and Public Involvement Payment Process Decision Making Guide
- PPI involvement and related costs template
- UON Welfare Benefits Jobcentre Letter

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment must accompany this document.

11 VERSION CONTROL

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