

# Working well with the public in data research

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# Temperature check

How confident do you feel about engaging the public with data research?

A. I do it all the time

B. I've dabbled

C. I've heard of it, but haven't done it before

D. This is the first I've heard of it!

# Why work with the public?



**Identify  
priority &  
needs**



**Gain real-  
world insights**



**Co-produce  
solutions**



**Enhance  
transparency  
& build trust**



**Improve  
decision-  
making**



**Strengthen  
communication  
& reach**

# Definitions

## Engagement

describes the many ways in which the activity and benefits of an organisation or research can be shared with the public. Engagement is a two way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.

*This definition is from the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement*

## Involvement

means that activities and research are carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public, rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. Members of the public are actively involved in the development, running and management of research projects or activities.

*This definition is from the National Institute of Health and Care Research*

# Let's talk about audiences



March 2025

Exploring public attitudes to health data research across the UK

HDRUK  
Health Data Research UK

**?**

**NOT INTERESTED**  
See science as not for them

**⏻**

**INACTIVE**  
Interested in science but less likely to seek it out



**When it comes to doing public engagement in data research, what are your concerns?**

Who to engage?

How to engage?

How can I do it well?

When to engage?

Where can I get support?

How can I find time?

Who is 'the public'?

Why engage?

**When to engage...** As early as possible and across your project lifecycle

**Why engage...** What do you want to learn? What impact do you hope to achieve?

**Who to engage...** Who do you need to speak to? How do you reach them?

**How to engage...** What do you want to achieve? Accessibility, inclusion...

**How to do it well...** Be purposeful, transparent, accountable

**Who is 'the public'...** Depends on the context, but generally not academics or policymakers

**How do I find the time...** Plan public engagement into your project from the beginning

**Where can I get support...** Let's explore!

# **PEDRI** Good Practice Standards



## **Equity, diversity and inclusion**

Ensure representation of people from different backgrounds.



## **Data literacy and training**

Empower the public to understand and contribute.



## **Two-way communication**

Enable everyone to have open, honest, and clear conversations.



## **Transparency**

Project information is freely accessible for discussions with the public.



## **Mutual benefit**

There is benefit to everyone involved.



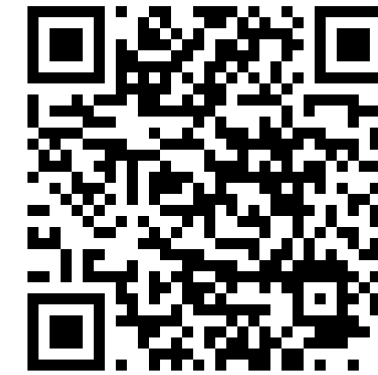
## **Effective involvement and engagement**

There are clear tasks, purpose and impacts that are not tokenistic.



## **Creating a culture of involvement and engagement**

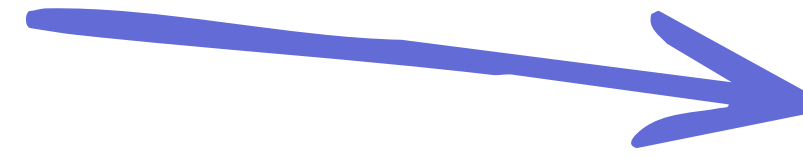
Public involvement and engagement is embedded into ways of working.



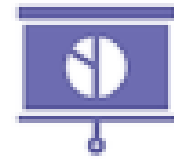
*“It’s not about getting people to trust you, it’s about demonstrating trust worthiness”*

**Public contributor**

# Make the PEDRI Pledge



To work in partnership with the public where all voices matter and differences are respected



To learn and grow together with the public, supporting each other as we explore data research



To have open conversations with the public and learn from their lived experiences



To be clear about our plans and share decision making with the public



To show the public how and when they have made a difference to our work



To engage and involve the public in our work and explore their ideas for change



That our organisation adopts a way of working where everyone understands and respects the importance and value of working with the public



**What are your experiences of working  
with the public in data research?**

# Reality check

It can take time.

It is under-resourced.

It can be resource-intensive.

**But it's worth it.**

# Public engagement in practice: Justice intermediaries

**2020:** MoJ & ADR UK Data First commit to meaningful public engagement

**2021:** Data First User Representation Panel (URP) launched (expert practitioners + charity & voluntary sector), offered Honoraria for their time

**What works:** Engagement embedded through research fellowships

## **How:**

- Structured roundtables with fellows at start, mid-point & end
- Lived experience informs research questions, analysis & dissemination
- Fellows hear peer projects and shared feedback

## **Impact:**

- Used in every ADR England justice fellowship
- Can lead to refined objectives, ongoing collaboration & co-produced outputs



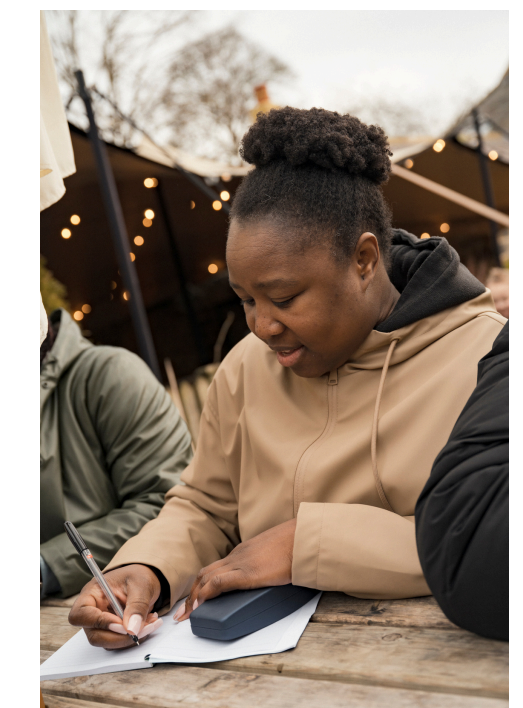
# Case study: Getting into ‘the community’

**Take the Lead grants:** Supporting community organisations working with under-served audiences to explore the role of data in improving health and wellbeing in their communities.

**Science festivals:** Supporting health data researchers and public members involved in health data projects to engage with new audiences.

Both programmes...

- Involve the public in development and delivery through e.g. consultation, decision-making, delivering activities
- Support the health data research community to develop public engagement skills and awareness
- Reach and engage new audiences with health data science



# Where do I find people?

## Questions to ask yourself

- Who do I want to involve?
- Why do I want to involve them?
- How do I want to involve them?
- What benefit do they get from being involved? (e.g. will I be able to reimburse them for their time through an honoraria or something else?)
- How will I ensure their involvement is meaningful?

Now you've asked yourself these questions, you can start looking for people to get involved...

- Platforms e.g HDR UK Voices
- Brokers e.g community networks
- Community events (festivals, etc.)
- 1-1 relationship building
- <https://voicein.org/welcome>

# Resources from PEDRI

The PEDRI resource hub includes a wide range of tools, guidance and information to support meaningful public involvement and engagement with data and statistics.



# More from PEDRI

**Data meets creativity: Arts-based approaches to data engagement**



Wednesday, April 22 • 11:30 AM - 12:30



PEDRI Forum 2026

Date: 22 September 2026

Location: Wellcome Trust, Central London

# Resources from HDR UK

**Engaging data researchers list - Join now!** For UK-based data researchers including data scientists, statisticians and data analysts, spanning health and beyond, interested in supporting HDR UK public involvement and engagement initiatives.



Information on how HDR UK involves and engages patients and members of the public and how to engage with HDR UK Voices.

# Resources from ADR UK

The public engagement page on the ADR UK Learning Hub, which details how the ADR UK Public Engagement Strategy can be put into practice (includes case studies!)



Information and how to engage with the ADR England Public Insights Panel

# PEDRI webinars

## Recordings

- [Prioritising equity in public engagement in data research](#) | Julian Harrison (Centre for Ethnic Health Research) introduces Equality Impact Assessments
- [Leading with empathy](#) | Leila Neshat Mokadem (Equity Lighthouse) and Amy Hodgkinson (PEDRI) discuss trauma-informed approaches
- [Using storytelling in conversations about data](#) | Anna Feigenbaum (University of Glasgow) shares storytelling methods
- [Exploring the power of co-production in data research](#) | Jack Palmer (previously HDR UK Wales), Georgina Ferguson-Glover (Public Contributor), Michaela James (Swansea University), Akansha M Naraindas (ADRC NI) and Katie Porter (PEDRI) share their experiences in co-production
- [Effectively engaging minority ethnic communities in data research](#) | Sunny Rohit, Krishna Patel and Gurpreet Grewal-Santini from the Centre for Ethnic Health Research explore approaches for working with new audiences
- [Can we create a culture of public engagement in data research?](#) | Doreen Tembo (PEDRI), Jan Speechley (PEDRI Public Contributor), Jo Lam (University College London), Simon Denegri (Sense about Science), Shayda Kashef (ADR UK) and Helen Craig (Co-Production Collective, University College London) grapple with whether the data research sector can truly embody a culture of public engagement at all levels of an organisation
- [Empowering young voices: Engaging young people in data research](#) | Maria Fanourgiaki, Kate Duggan and Richard Fitzpatrick from the University of Edinburgh and Maham Zaman (PEDRI) explore approaches to collaborating with children and young people

