



Research Involvement Groups: Recruitment Plan Checklist

Things to consider before opening recruitment

Role Specification

Ensure the role description and advertisement is clear and informative. Present the requirements, expectations and commitment necessary for the role.

Outlining your recruitment criteria makes applying easier for those interested, as well as for your team when it comes to shortlisting candidates.

Think Diversity

Encourage people with a range of different perspectives to apply, and recruit for diversity. This includes ensuring the group has a mix of people by age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race, geography, mental health experiences, neurodivergence and education or employment history. Explain clearly why you are asking for personal information and how it will be used in the recruitment process.

Disclosure of Lived Experience

Lived experiences are, by their very nature personal, and link to identities that can be stigmatised. Examples might be disability, poor mental or physical health, being a migrant, socio-economic status, being a single parent, experience of poverty and injustice.

Many advisory group roles require some personal disclosure; plan carefully about how you will ask potential candidates to describe their lived experiences.

Formats

Offering multiple formats in which people can apply will make the process more accessible and engaging for those interested.

There are ways to reduce the formalities and stress people can feel. For example, asking people to complete their application via email or over the phone with a member of staff can remove the barrier of it feeling like an insurmountable process.

Location

Where people reside may be important for some projects. If the project requires face-to-face meetings, consider where the group members would be travelling from and how they would travel. Do you have sufficient budget to cover the cost? Be clear in adverts if this is a global, UK-wide, country-specific, or even a locality-specific, opportunity.

Where will you advertise?

Where your opportunity is advertised is a key part of the process. Consider reaching out via channels that have diverse audiences, with the type of expertise and experience you are looking for outlined in the specification.

Support and other considerations

Actively seek out support and accessibility needs from the start of recruitment. What adjustments can you provide to ensure someone's involvement is accessible, supported, and meaningful?

Things to consider:

- Mental health supports in place in case they are needed. Ask people if they have existing support systems.
- Access to technology and problems of digital inclusion. Can tech be provided?
- Ability to travel. Is this essential?
- Childcare and other caring responsibilities that may impact involvement. Can you cover costs?
- Working hours and availability to attend meetings. Ask for preferences.
- Communication needs. Ask if they have any specific requirements.
- Neurodiversity and adjustments needed. Again, ask what adaptations might be necessary.

Things to consider before reviewing applications

Screening and your review team

Having people with knowledge of the research opportunity, study team and project requirements is vital for screening and reviewing.

A few things to plan: How will you check applications and screen those outside of the eligibility criteria? How many people will you involve in screening? Have they received inclusive recruitment training?

GDPR

Ensure GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) compliance once recruitment has closed.

The details people provide in their applications often have sensitive information.

Things to consider when reviewing and selecting applicants

Demographics

Groups should be inclusive and involve a diversity of people with different backgrounds and characteristics, even if they share the same lived experiences of mental health issues or diagnosis.

Interest in research

Research advisory groups are different to service development groups or campaigning groups. Not everyone finds working on research studies rewarding – although many do! It helps to ask people about their interest in mental health research generally, and your study in particular, to gauge suitability for the role.

Experience

We value a range of skills and experiences, not just professional roles or qualifications.

People bring more than lived experience of mental health issues and service use to a research advisory group.

They often have creative skills, previous research advisory experience, knowledge about community development, and experience addressing stigma.

Matching people's skills to the needs of the research project advisory group role is important, and these will change over time.

Credit: Emma Garavini, Youth Public Involvement in Research Officer at McPin.

We hope you find these tips useful. We are always keen to hear from people so we can update our resources and learn from others, so please do get in touch: contact@mcpin.org



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