# PiiAF

# The Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework: Executive Summary

PiiAF Study Group

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## The Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework Guidance

*What is PiiAF?*

PiiAF has been produced to help researchers assess the impacts of involving members of the public in health and social care research. It consists of two parts; with part 1 focused upon exploring a range of factors that might shape public involvement (PI) impact and part 2 providing support to develop an impact assessment plan.

*How are the public involved in research?*

Examples include deciding which research should be done and how; collecting and analysing data; and developing research instruments. The complexity of public involvement in research makes an assessment of its impact very challenging - no single assessment method will cover all situations. The PiiAF will help researchers to identify the issues that could affect the impacts public involvement can have on their research and to develop an approach to assessing these impacts that is tailored to their particular situation.

*Who is PiiAF for?*

PiiAF is aimed at researchers but members of the public interested in getting involved in research may also find it useful and some people have used it in training for researchers and the public. The guidance is designed to be used at the time research ideas and funding proposals are being developed.
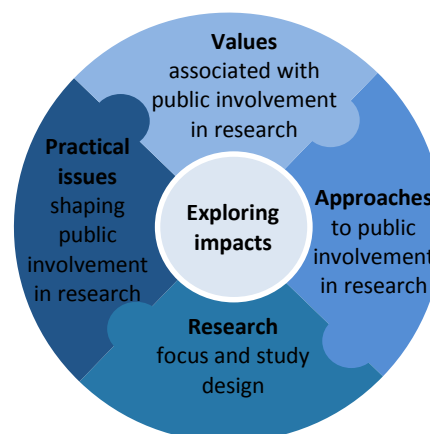
*Who are we?*

The PiiAF Study Group includes academics based at the Universities of Exeter, Lancaster and Liverpool, public involvement facilitators from NIHR Research Networks and members of the public, supported by a grant from the UK Medical Research Council.

## Part 1 Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework

**Part 1** begins with an overview of the PiiAF, which includes: *Values about PI; Approaches to PI; Research focus and study design; Practical issues shaping PI involvement in research; and the Impacts of PI.*

For each element we include sections on:

- Key issues for that topic
- Questions for discussion and debate
- A resource list

Key points from the discussion are captured on a Record Card which helps to inform **Part 2** when the focus is upon developing the Impact Assessment Plan.

| Recording key points from your discussion | |
|---|---|
| **Values** | |
| **Approaches to PI** | |
| **Research Topic and Study Design** | |
| **Practical Issues** | |
| **Identifying the Impacts of PI in Research** | |

*Values about PI*

Public involvement in research can challenge many of the values and assumptions that academic researchers hold. These may be values about what constitutes research quality or about the appropriate role of lay people in the research process. It is important to identify and acknowledge these values as they will shape the impacts that people anticipate from the public involvement.

PiiAF supports researchers and members of the public in identifying the values about PI that are held by the research team. It also helps them to think about how to manage divergent values both within the team and in the organisation funding the research or where PI will take place.

**Questions for discussion**

- What values about PI are held by you and other members of your research team?

- What values about PI can you identify in the organisation(s) in which your research will be based?

- How might these values shape your approach to public involvement, the involvement processes and the impacts public involvement can have?

- Do you think there is any potential for conflict over the values associated with public involvement in your team and/or the organisation(s) in which the research will be based?

- What processes can you put in place to manage divergent values
    - Within your team
    - In the organisation(s) where public involvement will take place
    - In the organisation funding your research or from which you intend to apply for funding

- How might an impact assessment be designed to take into account the values you have identified in your team and the potential for conflict between values?

## Approaches to public involvement in research

Naturally, the impacts of public involvement will be shaped by the approach taken to involving people in research. For example, having public members of a study advisory group would be expected to have different impacts than involving members of the public in data collection and analysis.

PI needs to be designed to suit the particular research study and may involve more than one approach and/or different PI approaches, methods and/or activities at different stages in the research. The PiiAF encourages researchers to think about what their overarching approach to and method for PI is, and how these may act as barriers and/or facilitators to achieving the desired public involvement impact.

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**Questions for discussion**

- What do you consider your overarching approach to PI to be and what specific methods will you adopt?

- Which aspects of your public involvement approach and methods might potentially act as barriers and/or facilitators to achieving the impacts you hope for?

- How might you address these barriers?

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## Research focus and study design

The research focus could be, for example, mental health/people with a particular health problem/the effectiveness of a new treatment for diabetes, while the study design refers to the type of methods used in the research, such as a randomised controlled trial or face to face interviews.

PiiAF suggests that researchers think about the implications of their research topic and study design and their approach to PI and the specific method(s) they will use, as well as identifying and considering any potential barriers to PI that might result from their research topic and design.

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**Questions for discussion**

- What is your research topic and what will your study design be?

- What are the main implications of your research topic and study design for the general approach(es) to public involvement you plan to adopt and the specific method(s) you will use?

- At what point in the research process do you anticipate public involvement will have an impact?

- How will you address any potential barriers to public involvement that could arise from your research topic and design?

- How will your research topic and design shape the type of PI impacts you might expect to see?

- How might an impact assessment be designed to take into account the relationship between the research focus and study design and the impact you wish PI to have?

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## *Practical issues that can influence PI and its impacts*

PiiAF encourages researchers to identify the important practical issues that might influence PI and to consider potential barriers to PI which might be caused by practical issues.

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**Questions for discussion**

- What are the important practical issues that might influence your PI and what consequences could they have for the impacts you wish PI to have?

- How will you address the potential barriers to your public involvement that might be caused by practical issues?

- How might you design an impact assessment to take into account the practical issues you have identified including the different levels of practical issues (e.g. personal, organisation and societal) that could influence PI as well as potential changes in the context for your research?

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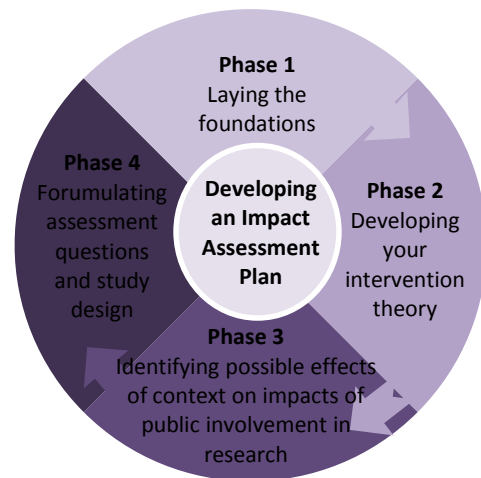
## *Impacts of public involvement in research*

Impacts can be classified as relating to the research (e.g. data collection, design and delivery, time and cost) or to the people involved (e.g. members of the public involved in research, academic researchers and funders). Identifying the impacts expected at the beginning may shape the processes and actual impacts of PI. PiiAF supports researchers to think about which PI impacts they wish to prioritise and to consider possible negative or unintended impacts.

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**Questions for discussion**

- What are the main impacts which you hope PI will have in the research? What potential negative impacts might there be and how will you identify these?

- How will you acknowledge and address the different impacts that might be expected by the different project stakeholders (including members of your project team, advisory groups, funders)?

- How can divergent views (if there are any) within your project team about the impact of public involvement be resolved?

- How might an impact assessment be designed to take into account any unintended impacts of your public involvement that may occur?

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## Part 2: Developing a plan to assess the impact of public involvement in research

The second part of the guidance is designed to support researchers to develop a plan to assess the impact of public involvement in their research. It takes people through four phases: Laying the foundations; Developing your intervention theory; Identifying possible effects of context on impacts of public involvement in research and Formulating assessment questions and study design.

**Phase 1** – *Laying the foundations*

The key questions to consider here are:
- Why do you want to assess the impact of public involvement in your research?
- Who should be involved in the design and conduct of the impact assessment?

It is important to give early consideration to who should define the scope and purpose of the assessment and what will be done with the findings. This may be a particularly sensitive issue if negative impacts of public involvement are found.

**Phase 2**– *Developing your intervention theory*

The key question to consider here is:
- How will your approach to public involvement lead to the impacts you want involvement to have?

This phase encourages researchers to describe *how* they think their approach to involving the public in research will lead to the impacts they want. PiiAf suggests that the intervention theory should inform the impact assessment plan (see Table 1 below for examples of this)

*Table 1: Summary of impact assessment plans to test different intervention theories*

| Intervention theory | Impact Assessment plan |
|---|---|
| Public involvement in writing recruitment leaflets could ensure that the leaflets were written in accessible language thus increasing the likelihood that potential participants agree to take part in the research | Record any changes in language resulting from public involvement |
| Public involvement in writing leaflets could result in more appropriate channels of distribution thus increasing recruitment by increasing the number of people being invited | Record any changes in distribution channels suggested by members of the public |

**Phase 3** - *Identifying how contexts may affect the impacts of PI*

The key question to consider here is:
- How might the context in which your research will take place affect the process of public involvement and/or its impacts?

The record card in Part 1 should help researchers to identify key aspects of context such as the research itself, team and organisational values as well as practical issues such as funding and time. Impact assessment plans need to take these influences into account.

**Phase 4** - *Formulating assessment questions and designing the assessment*

The key questions to consider here are:
- What specific questions do you want your assessment to answer?
- What approach to impact assessment will you use?
- What specific data will you need to collect and how will you do this?
- Are there any challenges which you need to address which might limit what is feasible?

PiiAF supports researchers in formulating clear and realistic questions that the impact assessment should aim to answer. See Table 2 for an example.

*Table 2: Generating a specific impact assessment question*

| WHO? | HOW? | WHAT? |
|---|---|---|
| Does involving young people | Via an advisory group helping to select appropriate outcome measures | Lead to evidence that is perceived to be more credible and relevant by a range of stakeholders? |

Once researchers have formulated a clear and realistic impact assessment question they need to think about the most appropriate way of collecting the data and evidence to answer it.

*Table 3: Framework for deciding what evidence to collect* (*Adapted from RCUK, 2011*).

| State your intervention theory*(Use Table 1)* | Impact Assessment Question*(Use Table 2)* | Identify Indicators | Develop Measures | Data | Method | Design |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *What is your public involvement intended to achieve?* | *Think about: Who, What and How* | *What will you look for in order to decide whether this has been achieved or not?* | *How will you assess whether it has been achieved?* | *Where will you collect the data from and how will you collect it?* | *What approach to collecting data will you use? E.g. Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed methods* | *What will your design be? E.g. Case study, quasi-experimental or randomised controlled trial?* |

## And finally……

There is still work to do before the impact assessment plan is complete including deciding on the approach to data analysis. You may find it helpful to look at impact assessments using study designs and methods similar to those you wish to use and there are some resources on the PiiAF website that could help with this.

The website contains a more detailed version of the PiiAF guidance document which can be downloaded. In addition to a worked example of the development of an assessment plan the website also contains:

- Map of resources linked to the PiiAF and guidance
- Summary of research underpinning the PiiAF document
- Glossary
- Further reading

The website address is: http://piiaf.org.uk/

We would be very keen to hear your feedback on the PiiAF and how you have used it – please contact us either using the feedback form on the website or using any of the following methods:

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- telephone: 01524 593377
- post: PiiAf c/o Libby Osborn, Division of Health Research,  Faculty of Health and Medicine, Furness Building, Lancaster University, LA1 4YG