

Institute of Mental Health

Patient and public Involvement Reimbursements and expenses guidance

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Introduction

It is widely recognised that public contributors to health and social care research in the UK are reimbursed for their involvement.

Here at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), we encourage thanks, rewards and recognition for experience and knowledge.

Rewards, in whatever form, demonstrate value, with financial rewards allowing public contributors the time and space to commit to opportunities at the IMH. Rewards should be offered and discussed with individual project teams, team leaders and importantly, public contributors to ensure they are fitting, relevant and appropriate to each individual circumstance. This guidance talks specifically to the financial rewards processes here at the IMH.

Financial offers are not made in lieu of employment and do not form any part of employed income. However, this is a subject where only the recipient can seek advice based on their individual circumstances and at the IMH, we cannot offer advice or knowledge on tax credits, benefits or taxation. Public contributors involved in National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) funded projects can find further advice and information on the NIHR website. [View payment guidance for members of the public considering involvement in research \(nihr.ac.uk\)](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/view-payment-guidance-for-members-of-the-public-considering-involvement-in-research/)

How Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) funds are managed will vary according to the team, funder and organisation holding the budget. The IMH does not have a central budget for PPI; researchers are encouraged to include these costs from the very beginning of planning their overall research funding.

When payments are made, they should be made quickly. It is the role of the research team to put in place reimbursement processes to ensure payments are made as swiftly as possible.

The table below outlines recommended reimbursement amounts with examples. These have recently been revised in line with recent guidance from the NIHR. This is our internal guidance, and we understand each project will have its own budgets and capabilities. However, we strongly recommend you use the details in the table below as a minimum guide in all future grant applications and costings.

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Table of recommended reimbursements

The following table contains suggestions based on regular and common PPI activities. If you would like a version of this table that is suitable for screen reader use, please email

IMHInvolve@nottshc.nhs.uk

Task or role	Estimated time taken	Example	Guide amount
Involvement in a task or activity such as reading and commenting on a written piece of work	Equates to approximate 30 minutes	Reviewing papers for the development of a patient information sheet which have been sent by email.	£13.75
Involvement in a task or activity requiring little or no preparation that is interactive. Such as a meeting - online or face to face	Equates to approximately 1 hour	Participating in a focus group or meeting to provide feedback on specific proposal or topic for an hour	£27.50
Involvement in a task or activity likely to require some preparation	Equates to approximately 2 hours	An online meeting for an hour and a half with papers to read and understand in advance of the meeting OR A group meeting requiring little to no preparation which will last for 2 hours	£55
Involvement in a task or activity where preparation is required, or a substantial amount of time is taken in the activity	Equates to approximately half a day's time taken	For example, participating in a meeting to interview a small number of candidates OR participating in a long focus group	£82.50
Involvement in a long task or activity	Equates to a full day of time taken	Attending a committee or event for the day as an observer or	£165

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		invited to attend as part of a team	
Involvement in all-day meetings that require substantial preparation	Equates to a full day presence and preparation	For example, when chairing or co-chairing a long meeting OR Attending a conference as a presenter or representative of research / the IMH / a project	£330
Additional reimbursements for online meetings – since 2020, online meetings have become more familiar to us all. We are aware that when public contributors are invited to attend meetings online, they will have less access or use their own resources to be able to attend these meetings. As such we make the below recommendation:			
Public contributors participating in meetings remotely from their home		To cover the cost of telephone calls, paper, printing ink, paper, internet connection & other home sundries	£5.00

When changes may occur

If the requirements of the activity are reduced with little notice or warning, we recommend that the amount of honorarium or payment offered is honoured wherever possible. The public contributors will still have allocated time, effort and engagement to be involved in the activity and we recommend this is acknowledged. Additionally, if the task or activity is extended, made larger or increased substantially, we also recommend this increase in time and input is acknowledged with an increase in the financial input, wherever possible.

Exceptionally, in circumstances such as illness or an emergency, public contributors may have prepared for a meeting but become unable to attend a session. We advise that these circumstances be considered and discussed. Public contributors will have important things to contribute outside the scope of the meeting so finding alternative ways to continue to contribute should be valued as a priority with teams continuing to offer rewards commensurate with these continued connections.

Out-of-pocket expenses

Out of pocket expenses occurred in the process of being involved in research as a public contributor should always be reimbursed. To help with understanding what this might be, we have covered what these kinds of expenses are likely to be and what any organisation level limits or expectations may be.

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When expenses are required, as with staff, contractors or other people we work with, we ask that everyone tries to get the best value for money possible.

All out-of-pocket expenses must have claims submitted within 3 months of the expense. Anything claimed outside this time frame may not be paid and will need to be discussed with the finance team. Receipts should be kept and attached with any claim forms, without these, payments cannot be guaranteed.

Travel to attend meetings organised at the IMH

Travel costs should be reimbursed. We ask travellers to use the most cost-effective mode of transport however, we acknowledge the most accessible transport is not always the most cost effective so we encourage research hosts and public contributors to discuss travel requirements before making journeys.

Booking advance tickets and using discount cards can produce further savings and if public contributors are travelling ahead of time, the IMH can offer the ability to book trains, coaches and taxis through our systems as both Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Nottingham use travel booking systems. Booking by our staff can make booking easier, allow us to pay direct for travel and this will reduce public contributors' out-of-pocket expenses.

We advise using the following HMRC approved mileage rates for all driven journeys:

- Car (all engine sizes): 45 pence per mile
- Motorcycle (all engine sizes): 24 pence per mile
- Bicycle: 20 pence per mile

Any claims for mileage need to state the mileage travelled and parking receipts should also be reimbursed. If unsure we recommend using Google Maps to calculate the mileage from the starting address to the meeting address.

For any other transport arrangements, we recommend that Public Contributors are encouraged to discuss transport arrangements in advance of travel with their research host and / or the IMH Public Involvement Lead.

Fines, tips, gratuities and service charges

Irrespective of the reasons for travel, the IMH will not cover any fines or penalties relating to travel. This includes speeding fines, parking penalties, boarding transport without tickets or any other responsibilities that would automatically be the responsibility of the vehicle driver, owner or passenger.

Tips and gratuities that are offered as part of service satisfaction and offered above and beyond the cost of the service or item will also not be covered by the IMH. These include (but are not limited to) tipping taxis above and beyond the cost of the journey or leaving voluntary tips after restaurant meals.

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Service charges which are included in bills as mandatory and therefore part of the service or item will be covered providing this is clearly identified within receipts. If a service charge is optional or voluntary this will not be covered and will need to be removed in any claim forms submitted.

If there is any doubt as to whether something is considered a legitimate out-of-pocket expense, please contact the Public Involvement Lead for further advice.

More extensive travel, accommodation, and caring responsibilities

Air travel

Air travel can be cheaper than other forms of available travel in some cases and some journeys may be more economical to be undertaken by air travel. In such cases, air travel is a rare but legitimate expense. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis with Institute of Mental Health staff and information demonstrating a flight as the cheapest viable form of travel and should only use economy class with low fare airlines.

Overnight accommodation

Occasionally overnight accommodation may be needed. For example, when making an unreasonably early start is the only alternative or distant two-day meetings. However, overnight accommodation must be discussed and agreed in advance with Institute staff being asked to make advance bookings on behalf of the traveller to ensure any accommodation is in line with wider finance policies.

When booking accommodation, the limits of allowable expenditure are:

- In London up to £150
- Elsewhere in the UK up to £95

If overnight accommodation is required and the preference is to stay with a friend or relative, a claim of £25 per night is considered permitted expenditure.

Meals and other refreshments

If attending a meeting organised by the Institute of Mental Health then refreshments will usually be provided and this should be made clear in the joining instructions for the meeting or event. Lunch is provided for all-day meetings involving Public Contributors and we ask that research hosts speak in advance with their visitors to ensure caterers are aware of any special dietary requirements or necessary eating arrangements.

If refreshments such as a drink on a train journey or an evening meal, is necessary then costs for these out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed so long as they are reasonable and supported by VAT receipts.

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Caring responsibilities and associated expenses

As many meetings have converted to a virtual setting, caring responsibilities and the associated expenses have not been reviewed for a substantial amount of time. As such, we are actively encouraging these conversations go ahead in advance to ensure public contributors are able to join in with meetings and activities. The IMH currently encourages research hosts to find ways that best incorporate involvement without compromising the needs and expectations of public contributors. If this conversation does not feel comfortable between the research host and a public contributor then either party is welcome to contact the IMH Public Involvement Lead to talk confidentially in more detail about this to ensure appropriate and suitable support is in place for Involvement activities.

Remote working costs

If there is a need to post items back to the IMH, public contributors may reclaim postal costs. Anything that is posted or agreed to be posted should not include sensitive or confidential information. For postal amounts exceeding £5.00 receipts will need to be provided.

Other communication and support needs

Where the costs or methods of involvement are a barrier in ways not specified within this guidance, we invite research hosts and public contributors to discuss these methods and seek new or innovative ways to encourage inclusive PPI. The IMH will try to support additional methods of involvement, and we wish to discuss these on an individual, accessible and respectful way.

Further information

For further information not addressed within this guidance you can contact the Public Involvement Lead of the IMH for a more detailed or specific conversation.

Document information and controls

Public Contributor is an umbrella term the Institute of Mental Health uses to describe members of the public who take part in patient and public involvement activities. We use this definition of 'public' to include patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services as well as people from organisations that represent people who use services and we consider public contributors to be when they are representing this public experience of supporting research with lived experiences.

This guidance was revised on 21st January 2026 and will be revised periodically in line with any new national guidance issued and information and experiences localised to the IMH. We welcome feedback on the contents and usability of this guidance and if you have any feedback or comment on this document, please email IMHInvolve@nottshc.nhs.uk for a conversation or to offer written feedback.