



University
of Glasgow

Research Shaped Together: A Scottish Approach to Health Research

1. Why This Policy Is Being Developed

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) plays an important role in improving the quality, relevance and impact of research. Meaningful involvement of communities can help ensure that research reflects real-life experiences, addresses community priorities, and contributes to more equitable outcomes.

However, feedback gathered through previous engagement activities and discussions with community members has highlighted a number of ongoing concerns regarding how communities experience involvement in research.

Community members from the Greater Govan area, particularly individuals and groups who have historically been underrepresented or marginalised within research, healthcare, and public engagement processes, have described experiences where engagement has felt limited, inconsistent, or tokenistic. While the learning and principles within this policy may support work in other communities and settings, this policy is grounded in the experiences, priorities, relationships, and place-based context of Greater Govan. Concerns raised through community discussions and working groups have included:

- lack of trust in research processes and institutions
- limited opportunities for communities to meaningfully influence decisions
- researchers lacking appropriate knowledge, skills or cultural understanding when engaging with diverse communities
- insufficient awareness of safeguarding and trauma-informed approaches
- inaccessible communication and engagement methods
- limited time for communities to reflect on research proposals and discuss real-life concerns within their own networks and support systems

Community members have consistently emphasised that meaningful engagement requires more than consultation alone. Communities want to be recognised as partners in research rather than passive participants. This includes recognising lived experience, cultural knowledge and community expertise as valuable forms of knowledge that should help shape research priorities, approaches and outcomes.

There is also increasing recognition that some communities continue to face barriers to participation in research due to structural inequalities, discrimination, exclusion, or previous negative experiences of engagement. These barriers may particularly affect:

- ethnic minority communities
- socioeconomically disadvantaged communities
- vulnerable adults
- children and young people
- individuals affected by trauma or social marginalisation

As universities and research institutions move toward more meaningful models of community partnership and co-production in research, there is a need for clearer guidance and shared standards to support ethical, inclusive and safe engagement practices.

This policy is therefore being developed to support a more consistent, community-informed approach to Patient and Public Involvement and engagement. It aims to strengthen relationships between researchers and communities by establishing clear principles, expectations and codes of practice for working together respectfully, safely and meaningfully.

A key principle underpinning this policy is the belief that communities should have genuine opportunities to shape how research is designed, delivered and communicated. This includes ensuring that engagement processes allow adequate time and space for communities to discuss concerns, reflect on lived experiences, and contribute in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.

This policy has been informed through ongoing conversations, feedback and engagement with community members and reflects a commitment to developing research practices that are:

- inclusive
- respectful
- safeguarding-informed
- transparent
- equitable
- and grounded in genuine partnership working

The development of this policy represents an important step toward embedding community voices and lived experience at the centre of Patient and Public Involvement and engagement practice.

2. What Does This Policy Aim to Achieve

This policy aims to support the development of more meaningful, inclusive, and community-informed approaches to patient and public involvement (PPI) in research across Greater Govan, while offering learning that may also support work within other communities and settings.

The policy has been developed with the recognition that meaningful involvement is not achieved through one-off consultation activities alone, but through ongoing relationship-building, mutual respect, shared learning and genuine partnership between researchers and communities.

Aim 1: provide a clear framework and code of practice that supports researchers, institutions and community partners to work together in ways that are:

- respectful
- inclusive
- safeguarding-informed
- transparent
- accessible
- and grounded in lived experience and community knowledge

Aim 2: strengthen trust between communities and researchers by creating clearer expectations around how engagement should be planned, delivered and reviewed.

The policy seeks to support a culture where:

- community voices are listened to and valued
- lived experience is recognised as expertise
- underrepresented communities are meaningfully included in research
- safeguarding and participant wellbeing are prioritised
- communities have opportunities to influence decisions and outcomes
- engagement is ethical, accessible and culturally sensitive

Aim 3: ensure that researchers engaging with communities have appropriate:

- skills
- knowledge
- training and preparedness
- behaviours
- and awareness of community contexts and lived experiences

Aim 4: support and nurture meaningful engagement. Researchers should recognise that communities may require time to:

- build trust
- consult within their own networks and support systems
- raise concerns or safeguarding issues
- reflect on how research may affect their community

The policy therefore supports engagement approaches that are flexible, relationship-based and responsive to community needs rather than driven solely by institutional timelines.

Through the co-development of this policy with community members, it is hoped that the outcomes will include:

- stronger and more trusted relationships between communities and researchers
- increased confidence among community members to engage with research
- improved inclusion of underrepresented communities within research activities
- better quality and more relevant research informed by lived experience
- safer and more ethical engagement practices
- greater consistency in Public and Patient Involvement approaches across research activities

Ultimately, this policy aims to contribute to a longer-term shift toward research cultures that place community partnership, safeguarding, inclusion and co-production at the centre of Public and Patient Involvement and engagement practice.

3. Six Guiding Principles

Our six guiding principles are Safety and Safeguarding, Respectful Communication, Inclusion and Accessibility, Researcher Conduct and Competencies, Accountability and Feedback and Community Partnership.

These principles have been developed collaboratively with community members and will continue to evolve through ongoing dialogue, reflection, and shared learning.

Did you know?

During the community workshops, the most frequently discussed themes were:

- Trust
- Feeling safe
- Being heard
- Respectful communication
- Follow-up

1. Safety and Safeguarding

We are committed to creating environments where community members feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe when participating in involvement, engagement, and co-production activities.

We recognise that discussions within research and community work may involve sensitive topics, personal experiences, or unequal power dynamics. We will take steps to reduce harm and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

This includes:

- creating clear expectations for behaviour and participation
- providing information about support and safeguarding processes
- respecting boundaries and personal choice
- ensuring people can pause, step away, or withdraw from activities without judgement
- responding to concerns in a timely, respectful, and transparent way
- recognising trauma, distress, and the impact of lived experience

We acknowledge that safety may mean different things to different people, and we will continue learning from community feedback about how to improve safe practice.

Community Quotes: *“feeling listened to,” “not being judged,” “clear boundaries”*

Community Insight

Community members told us that safeguarding is not only about responding to risk. It is also about creating environments where people feel emotionally safe, respected and empowered to participate in research. Trust, clear boundaries and compassionate communication were seen as essential elements of safe engagement.

Our Commitment

We are committed to creating research environments where safeguarding, emotional wellbeing and respectful engagement are embedded throughout every stage of Patient and Public Involvement. Researchers will be expected to understand that safety includes physical, emotional, cultural and psychological wellbeing, and to adopt approaches that build trust, respect individual boundaries and support meaningful participation.

2. Respectful Communication

We are committed to communication that is honest, inclusive, compassionate, and understandable.

We will:

- listen actively and value different perspectives and experiences
- avoid jargon, academic language, or language that excludes people
- communicate clearly about expectations, roles, timelines, and decision-making
- recognise the importance of culturally respectful and non-stigmatising language
- create spaces where people feel able to speak openly without fear of dismissal or discrimination
- respect confidentiality and privacy where agreed

We recognise that respectful communication includes how people are spoken to, listened to, represented, and involved throughout the research process.

Community Quotes: *“remove barriers,” “Consider different ways to communicate,” “want to feel listened to”.*

Community Insight

Community members described respectful communication as being about more than sharing information. It is about creating genuine two-way conversations where people feel listened to, understood and valued. Participants highlighted that effective communication should remove barriers rather than create them, recognising that people communicate in different ways and may require information to be presented in accessible, culturally appropriate or alternative formats.

Our Commitment

We are committed to promoting respectful, inclusive and accessible communication throughout every stage of Public and Patient Involvement and community engagement. Researchers will be expected to communicate in ways that are clear, compassionate and responsive to individual and community needs. This includes actively listening, removing barriers to participation, recognising different communication preferences, and ensuring that every individual feels heard, respected and able to contribute meaningfully.

3. Inclusion and Accessibility

We are committed to reducing barriers to participation and making involvement opportunities as inclusive and accessible as possible.

We will:

- Reasonable adjustments and accessibility for all disabilities
- consider accessibility from the beginning of projects rather than as an afterthought.
- recognise that people have different communication needs, access needs, cultural backgrounds, and ways of participating
- provide accessible formats, materials, and engagement approaches where possible
- offer flexibility in how people contribute
- value lived experience equally alongside professional or academic expertise
- actively work to include communities and voices that are often excluded, underrepresented, or less frequently heard

We understand that inclusion is an ongoing process, and we will continue adapting based on feedback and learning.

Community Quotes: *“flexible participation,” “plain language – no jargon,” “transport/access support”*

Community Insight

Community members told us that respectful communication is about more than sharing information, it is about building genuine two-way conversations where people feel listened to, understood and valued. They emphasised the importance of removing communication barriers, recognising different communication needs and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to contribute in ways that work for them.

“Please thank all participants at the end of each session or project”

Our Commitment

We are committed to promoting respectful, inclusive and accessible communication throughout every stage of Public and Patient Involvement. Researchers will communicate in clear, compassionate and responsive ways, actively listening, adapting to individual needs and removing barriers so that everyone feels heard, respected and able to participate meaningfully.

4. Researcher Conduct and Competencies

Researchers and facilitators involved in community engagement and co-production should demonstrate respectful, reflective, and accountable practice.

This includes but is not limited to:

- building trusting and transparent relationships
- recognising and addressing power imbalances
- valuing community knowledge and lived experience
- being open to challenge, reflection, and learning
- communicating honestly about what can and cannot influence decision-making
- understanding the ethical responsibilities involved in engagement and co-production work
- participating in relevant training and development, including safeguarding, inclusion, and culturally responsive practice where appropriate

We recognise that meaningful involvement requires time, relationship-building, and ongoing commitment. Researchers are expected to review the appendices to this policy, including the Researcher Code of Practice.

Community Insight

Community members told us that the qualities and behaviours of researchers are just as important as the research itself. They want researchers who are approachable, honest, respectful, and willing to listen without judgement. Participants emphasised that trust is built through openness, genuine relationships, and recognising the value of lived experience alongside professional knowledge. Communities also highlighted the importance of researchers understanding the barriers that some people may face, including trauma, inequality, disability, cultural differences, and previous experiences, and felt that researchers should receive the training and support needed to engage safely, confidently, and respectfully with everyone.

Our Commitment

We are committed to supporting researchers and facilitators to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to work in genuine partnership with communities. We will promote reflective practice, ongoing learning, and inclusive approaches that recognise the value of lived experience, build trust, and reduce barriers to participation. Through our Researcher Code of Conduct, training recommendations, and continued support, we will encourage researchers to work with openness, respect, accountability, and cultural awareness, helping to ensure that meaningful community involvement is recognised as an essential part of high-quality research.

5. Accountability and Feedback

We are committed to being accountable to the communities we work with.

We will:

- explain how community feedback and contributions have influenced decisions
- be transparent when suggestions cannot be acted upon and explain why
- Provide feedback on progress throughout projects and activities
- review concerns, complaints, or challenges fairly and respectfully
- regularly reflect on whether involvement processes are meaningful, inclusive, and effective
- use feedback to improve future practice

We recognise accountability as a shared and ongoing responsibility rather than a one-time process.

Community Quotes: *“check understanding,” “regular updates and feedback,” “what do you do with date and results?”*

Community Insight

Community members told us that trust is strengthened through open, honest and ongoing communication. Participants wanted researchers to check understanding, explain how information and data will be used, and provide regular updates on research progress and outcomes. Knowing how their contributions have influenced research was seen as an important part of feeling valued and respected.

Our commitment

We are committed to being open, transparent and accountable throughout every stage of Public and Patient Involvement. Researchers will communicate clearly, check understanding, explain how information will be used, and provide timely feedback so that communities understand how their contributions have shaped research and its outcomes.

6. Community Partnership

We believe community members are partners in shaping research, policy, and practice.

We are committed to:

- involving communities as early as possible in decision-making processes
- recognising lived experience as expertise
- supporting shared decision-making wherever possible
- working collaboratively to identify priorities, approaches, and solutions
- acknowledging contributions appropriately and fairly
- building long-term relationships rather than one-off engagement

We recognise that co-production can take different forms depending on the project, community, and context. We will continue working with communities to define what meaningful partnership looks like in practice.

Community Quotes: *“shared decision-making,” “feedback loops,” “valuing lived experience.”*

Community Insight

Community members told us they want to be recognised as equal partners in research rather than being consulted after decisions have already been made. They highlighted the importance of being involved from the beginning, sharing decisions where possible, and seeing their lived experience valued alongside professional and academic expertise. Participants also spoke about the need for stronger feedback loops, meaningful collaboration, and long-term relationships that build trust over time, rather than one-off engagement that ends once information has been collected.

Our Commitment

We are committed to working alongside communities as genuine partners in shaping research, policy, and practice. We will create opportunities for meaningful involvement from the earliest stages of projects, support shared decision-making wherever possible, and recognise lived experience as an essential form of expertise. We will value every contribution, provide clear feedback on how community input has influenced decisions, and invest in building lasting relationships based on trust, respect, openness, and mutual learning.

4. Responsibilities

Responsibility for upholding this policy is shared by all individuals involved in community engagement activities, including researchers, support staff, managers and community partners.

All researchers and support staff involved in community engagement activities are responsible for:

- Understanding and adhering to the principles and requirements set out in this policy.
- Planning, delivering, and evaluating community engagement activities in accordance with the policy and associated guidance.
- Promoting inclusive, respectful, and meaningful engagement with community partners and identifying and addressing barriers to participation wherever possible.
- Raising concerns where they believe the policy is not being followed, is not being implemented effectively, or may no longer be fit for purpose.

Managers and senior leaders are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that values and supports effective community engagement.
- Ensuring staff have access to the training, resources, and support required to meet the expectations of this policy.

The Community Engagement Officer is responsible for:

- Providing advice, guidance, and support on the implementation of this policy.
- Monitoring its effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.
- Coordinating periodic reviews of the policy to ensure it remains current, relevant, and aligned with best practice and legislative requirements.

Community partners are responsible for:

- Upholding the principles and values outlined in this policy when taking part in engagement activities.
- Communicating any concerns, barriers, or issues that may affect meaningful involvement and engagement.
- Providing feedback to help evaluate and improve community engagement practice.
- Raising concerns where they feel research activities do not align with the principles of this policy.

5. Raising Concerns and Resolving Issues

We are committed to creating a safe, open and respectful environment where concerns can be raised without fear. This helps us learn, improve and remain accountable.

How to raise a concern

You can raise concerns, feedback or complaints about researchers in the community or research that falls under this policy in a way that feels most comfortable to you. You can do this by:

- Emailing the PPI Manager mvls-ppie@glasgow.ac.uk
- Completing our online form <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/MuxtZFPpRG>
- Sending a letter by post: PPI Manager, Level 5 Clarice Pears Building, University of Glasgow, 90 Byres Road, Glasgow G12 8TB

You will not be treated differently for raising a concern in good faith.

You can also raise a concern informally through discussion with a research team member or your main point of contact for the research activity. Please be aware that they may need to share your concern with others so they can take appropriate action.

Confidentiality

We will treat concerns sensitively and, where possible, keep information confidential. However, we may need to share information if there are safety or legal reasons to do so.

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

We are committed to ensuring that community members involved in PPIE are treated with dignity, respect and care, and that their safety and wellbeing are considered throughout their involvement.

We recognise that community members may have different life experiences, circumstances and support needs. Participation in research and PPIE should not create unnecessary distress or place people at risk.

Where a concern relating to the safety or wellbeing of a community member is identified, it will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. We will seek to understand what support the individual would find helpful and, where appropriate, provide information or signposting to relevant services and sources of support.

Community members will not be expected to manage a safeguarding or wellbeing concern themselves, and staff and researchers should not attempt to provide support beyond their role, knowledge or training.

University safeguarding arrangements currently focus primarily on student welfare and do not provide a dedicated safeguarding pathway specifically for community members involved in PPIE. We recognise this gap and are committed to developing appropriate and sustainable arrangements as the University's PPIE structures continue to develop.

In the interim, PPIE activities will use a proportionate, person-centred approach to responding to concerns, drawing on appropriate University procedures, community resources and external health and support services where required.

Any concern involving an immediate risk of serious harm or a medical emergency will be escalated appropriately and emergency services contacted where necessary.

Further practical guidance for researchers, staff and community representatives is provided in the Researcher Code of Practice.

Learning and resolution

Where appropriate, we will use reflective approaches to resolve issues, focusing on understanding, learning and improving future practice.

Community Quotes: *“realistic times and expectations,” “regular meetings, handovers, visibility and adaptability,” “Implement recommendations”.*

6. Learning and Review

This policy is a living document. It will continue to evolve through ongoing collaboration, reflection, and learning with community members and their experiences with researchers from the University.

Community feedback will be encouraged at all times to shape revisions and determine if the policy is meeting its aims and having a positive impact. Feedback may be gathered verbally, or through using surveys or ratings. Community members who have taken part in an activity may be asked to evaluate the activity and the researcher/research team and this will always be kept confidential.

The policy will be reviewed every 2 years, initiated by the Community Engagement Officer and the PPI Manager. A formal update to the document will be made after an iterative review process has been undertaken with a group of members of the community, which may or may not include the original authors.

It is particularly important to ensure that any learning from practice can inform updates, and as part of this, researchers will be asked to complete an evaluation of their involvement practice after the activity has concluded.

By ensuring that the document is subject to an ongoing co-development process with the community and also evaluation of the information given to researchers by researchers, we hope that the document remains fit for purpose and in use for many years to come.

Community quotes: *“Come back and tell us what happened,” “Keep us updated, even if nothing has changed yet” “Feedback should be part of every project, not an afterthought.”*

7. Commitment From the University

“At the University of Glasgow, we believe research is at its strongest when it is shaped and informed by the people and communities it seeks to serve. Reflecting the spirit of People Make Glasgow, we recognise that meaningful health research is built on trust through collaboration, shared experiences and diverse perspectives.

Working in partnership with communities, particularly those whose voices have historically been underrepresented in research, is essential if we are to address health inequalities and improve outcomes for everyone. By involving people throughout the research process, from identifying priorities to designing, delivering and sharing research, we can ensure that our work is relevant, inclusive and capable of making a real difference.

Meaningful involvement requires time, mutual respect and sustained commitment. Within the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, we are committed to fostering long-term partnerships with communities across Glasgow and beyond. Through listening, learning and working together, we can generate knowledge that not only advances scientific understanding but also contributes to healthier, fairer and more resilient communities. By embedding these principles across our research, we will strengthen the quality, relevance and impact of our work, ensuring that the benefits of research are shared by, and accessible to, all.”

Professor Iain McInnes, Vice Principal and Head of the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, University of Glasgow

8. Who to contact

If you have questions about this document, the development of the policy, or want further information about working with the community or any other related question then please contact us by:

- Emailing the PPI Manager mvls-ppie@glasgow.ac.uk
- Completing our online form <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/MuxtZfPRG>
- Sending a letter by post: PPI Manager, Level 5 Clarice Pears Building, University of Glasgow, 90 Byres Road, Glasgow G12 8TB

9. Author Acknowledgements

This policy was co-designed with our communities.

This policy reflects the knowledge, experiences and aspirations shared by community members who generously gave their time, insight and lived experience throughout the co-development process.

Their voices have shaped not only the content of this document but the principles upon which future Public and Patient Involvement and community engagement at the University of Glasgow will be built.

We extend our sincere thanks to every individual and community organisation that contributed to this work.

“Research is stronger when communities are equal partners.”

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Appendix list:

Appendix A Researcher Code of Practice
Appendix B Recommended Training and Development
Appendix C Language Guide
Appendix D Evaluation and Feedback
Appendix E Safeguarding Resources List