
INVOLVE

Minutes of the Empowerment Sub-Group Meeting

Wednesday 21 March 2007

Present: Karen Collins, Jane Royle (Observer) Kate Sainsbury (chair), Roger Steel (minutes),

1. Welcome, apologies, introductions, declarations of conflict of interest and ground rules

Kate welcomed the group. There were no conflicts of interest declared.

Apologies: these were received from Sarah Carr, Mary Nettle, Susie Parr, Rachel Purtell and Deborah Tallis.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 21 March 2007

These were thought to be correct.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) work

The Inclusion and Exclusion 2007 Conference was a success despite there being fewer participants than for the previous year. There was a great deal of emphasis on the problematic issue of racial and minority identity and how this can be a problem in research and audit. INVOLVE had a high profile with a stand and badging as a co-sponsor. Following the conference the planning group had a meeting to review the event where Roger raised the potential of doing some ongoing work that would push the agenda on BME communities and research forward. The planning group were positive about doing something that would help close the gap between research, practice and benefits for BME communities. The idea is to collect examples of research projects that have covered BME communities, understand the characteristics of the research and get some idea of the impacts on the communities. From the examples, themes

and presenters could be identified for the next Inclusion and Exclusion conference in 2008. This conference could then be used to establish a working group on the issues. Roger is currently putting this into a short document for the group and when the wording is agreed will discuss the issues with the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) to see if they might be interested in supporting such a project.

The Empowerment sub-group highlighted the significance of the 'brokering' role in setting up joint work between organisations.

Jane said that she can help with identifying examples that have gone through the Research for Patient Benefit Programme.

3.2 Contributing to the research agenda

Roger had written a paper on behalf of the Empowerment sub-group which would be discussed in the main Group meeting. There was some discussion in the sub-group about the issues it raised, and how to take forward the discussion.

4. Operational Plans for 2006/2007

4.1 Accessibility

Roger has circulated a draft of the Accessibility Strategy within the Support Unit and has had some feedback, and is awaiting more. Roger apologised for the slippage in this project, but there had been other competing priorities in the last few months. It was important that staff were happy with the end result since it would be primarily the Support Unit that would have to implement the strategy. Roger will take the strategy back to the sub-group following the Support Unit's comments.

There was some discussion about issues of accessibility and what it means in INVOLVE. For example: How comfortable is it for disabled people and service users to become involved with INVOLVE, or participate in events? Is INVOLVE really accessible to its members? It was noted that in general the attendance of members seemed to be particularly poor recently – why might this be?

4.2 Public Information Pack

The Public Information Pack will shortly be published and a launch has been arranged for 30 March to which all Group members are invited. An audio version is also being produced. There is a budget for its dissemination in the plans for 2007/08.

4.3 Good practice leaflet

This was being printed and will be available at the end of March.

Action: Roger to send printed copies to group members when they are ready.

5. Budget

Roger explained the budget figures. Whereas there was a projected underspend on the good practice leaflet, Accessibility and the Public Information Pack were expected to be overspent by the end of the financial year. The Public Information Pack was probably going to be overspent by about 50% by the time the final invoices came in. There was some discussion about the unanticipated costs, and Roger explained that there was much to be learned about doing a project on this scale. It is hoped that the Support Unit will meet to evaluate the development of the project and learn from the experience.

6. Exploring pathways for seldom heard groups in making a difference through involvement with research.

This item was not prioritised for 2007/08 because it needs further development. Kate started the discussion pointing out that there were two elements to the issue; 1) the pathways to making a difference in research, and 2) the particular issues of seldom heard groups.

In respect of exploring pathways, there are links with the work of the Evidence Knowledge and Learning sub-group to gather examples of the impact of public involvement in research. It is possible that Empowerment could take this work further and follow up some of the examples.

There was a discussion about what we mean by seldom heard groups and how INVOLVE tends to prioritise particular groups without a clear rationale. Nevertheless, it is still important to recognise that seldom heard groups are important, and that their issues, which are usually different from the mainstream need to be addressed. There is often transferability of issues across different seldom heard groups. Examples are still needed from this sector.

There are links with other work planned on gathering examples of user controlled research, and the same for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups.

There is a need to approach this issue strategically so that it can be taken forward.

Action: Roger to write a short think piece for the sub group on the strategic options for this piece of work.

7. Draft Strategic Plan

7.1 The sub-group briefly discussed the Strategic Plan recognising that it was for the next four years, to 2011 when the current contract ends so it is an important document. For the first time the draft strategic plan is going out to a wider audience for consultation before it is finalised. The current draft will be discussed in the main Group following the sub-group meeting.

7.2 The Empowerment terms of reference have been signed off by Nick Partridge and are now embodied in the draft Strategic Plan.

8. Draft Operational Plan 2007/2008

The draft operational plan was discussed, and in general there was agreement about the activities of the Empowerment sub-group.

Item G – Identifying Empowerment issues for researchers – there could be links made with the Research for Patient Benefit Programme. It would be a useful way of following through with the Guide for Research Applicants. There are issues we are aware of that researchers struggle with:

- Doing lay summaries
 - Budgeting for public involvement
 - Considering the impact and dissemination of the research from the beginning
 - Finding people to involve
 - Giving researchers the process – e.g. a check list ‘is the involvement fit for purpose?’
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9. Any other business

Kate raised that we would be recruiting for new INVOLVE members soon as numbers had dwindled. A range of people was needed, from grassroots service

users to senior professionals from the research world. There was a need for a successor to the Empowerment sub-group chair as the next meeting would be Kate's last because her 6 years would be completed.