TOP TIPS

NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration East of England

For Public Engagement

Building relationships & clear communication with the public

This resource was produced to reflect and re-evaluate our approaches to public engagement caused by the ongoing effects of Covid-19. This document was a collaborative effort, thank you to those who contributed across all themes.

Engaging with Stakeholders

01 — **Shared expectations**
Clearly outline what people can expect from working with you, and the requested level of commitment. What does the group hope to achieve together? How will you meet? How often? Ask community members what they expect in return by offering their time.

02 — **Be flexible and adaptive**
Choose a medium that suits the person you are connecting with. Make sure where you meet is comfortable and appropriate. You may need to schedule a time outside of office hours. Do not expect much commitment initially, and allow relationships to grow organically.

03 — **Sell working with researchers!**
Emphasise the benefits of working with researchers, such as opportunities for being heard and bringing about change. Collaborating with researchers can provide opportunities for building wider networks.

Engage early

"Build a rapport before starting research to understand local needs and develop a good relationship with the community. Before forming the Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group, I visited local dementia groups in Stevenage to get to know the members and learn what it is like living with dementia in Stevenage."

Nicole Darlington, Senior Research Assistant in Ageing & Multi-Morbidity

"Consider engagement unrelated to research. To engage with our populations in focus, we organised a photo competition. To celebrate all entries, we made a virtual exhibition."

Claire Thompson, Senior Researcher in Prevention and Early Detection in Health and Social care

[See pic below of virtual-reality exhibition. **Click here** to view.]

Communicate Effectively

Communicate visually where possible
Engage as wider audience as possible. Visual content is not just for social media, produce at-a-glance summaries of reports, and collate information through infographics, animations and illustrated mind maps.

Be sensitive
Consider appropriate language when communicating sensitive issues. Run by a trusted partner or community member if unsure.

Take Advantage of Free Creative Software

Make quick and easy animations with sites such as **Bitable** and **Canva**. Re-invent social media posts and produce short, explainer videos. Use **Shotcut** or **Divinci Resolve** for free video editing software.

Make online conferences more engaging by incorporating ideation boards such as **Miroboards**. Make meetings as interactive as possible by using **Zoom** breakout rooms and experimenting with presentation formats.

To enhance promotional content, use **Canva** to create tailored visual material for social media platforms: including photo collages, infographics, flyers, thumbnails and posters. Find free vector icons on **Flaticon**.

Find New Public Audiences

Alternative platforms
Introduce your research to wider audiences by expanding where you write, such as blogs or local newsletters. Writing for blogs can coincide with the publication of findings and can help disseminate results.

Only online?
Who do you exclude by only using online communication? what are the alternatives? Find more info **here.**

Improve representation
There is under representation when engaging with people from some groups; consider age, gender, economic background, disability and race. For advice on engaging with Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic groups, **click here.**

Emailing

✓ Be brief & friendly

✓ Make sure event links are easy to find

✓ Consider if a phone call would be better

✗ Don't be impatient - personal situations may delay responses

✗ Avoid large attachments

✗ Avoid long wordy emails

Social Media

Take a multi-platform approach: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram attract different audiences

Provide accessible content and avoid jargon

Be creative - get noticed! For more info on using creative software, read 'Take advantage...' section

Build trust with the public by engaging often

For more information about The **NIHR ARC East of England,** visit our website **here.**