NHS AI and Digital Regulations Service for health and social care

Blog post

Public involvement in research

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What is public involvement in research?

Public involvement makes sure research is relevant and meaningful to those it aims to serve. Involving the public in decision-making processes related to research design and implementation makes sure the interests of patients and the public are adequately represented in a research study.

If you're a researcher who is consenting participants into your study, or using their data for your research, the Health Research Authority (HRA) recommends you involve patients and the public in your work at the earliest opportunity.

If you're developing or researching a digital technology that you hope will help patients with a certain condition, talking to patients with lived experience of that condition will give you a better understanding of how your technology can help them. Also, talking to the healthcare professionals who look after these patients will offer insights into how your technology might be able to help.

If you're a developer, having these conversations with patients, healthcare professionals and the public early on will give you a stronger understanding of the intended purpose of your technology.

Why does public involvement matter?

The HRA protects and promotes the interests of patients and the public in health and social care research. It recognises that diverse perspectives enrich research and contribute to development of more equitable and inclusive healthcare solutions.

For information on what the public think about AI, read the Ada Lovelace Institute's review on understanding public attitudes and how to involve the public in decision-making about AI.

For information on how to involve patients and the public in research, visit the HRA's webpage on public involvement. You can also subscribe to the HRA's public involvement newsletter.

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