**Author’s response to reviews**

**Title:** Effective involvement: a report on the evaluation of a research awareness training package for public involvement in health research

**Authors:**

Catherine Richardson (C.Richardson@hud.ac.uk)

Ilyas Akhtar (ily16@hotmail.co.uk)

Christine Smith (C.Smith4@hud.ac.uk)

AMANDA EDMONDS (A.Edmondson@hud.ac.uk)

Alison Morris (A.Morris2@hud.ac.uk)

Janet Hargreaves (J.Hargreaves@hud.ac.uk)

Christine Rhodes (C.A.Rhodes@hud.ac.uk)

Jo Taylor (jo.taylor@york.ac.uk)

**Version: 2 Date:** 10 May 2019

**Author’s response to reviews:**

Reviewer 1.

The plain English summary is very clear. It would however be useful to add a final paragraph highlighting the value of public research team members collaborating in the study and the challenges that were encountered. The only other change I suggest to the plain English summary is to replace the phrase "care in selecting a nice environment" with "taking care to create a comfortable training environment". Maybe only a personal opinion but to my mind this reads better.

Thanks for these useful suggestions – we have now incorporated these edits within the plain English summary. We have added the following fourth paragraph in the findings / recommendations section: 'The inclusion of public researchers in the evaluation team changed the way the work was managed and completed for the better. At times it was difficult; the public members needed to be assertive to get their views understood and the experienced researchers needed to allow others to lead'.
The Abstract also gives a useful summary of study. However the first Methods paragraph is unclear on first reading when describing how public members of the evaluation team contributed to the study. Clarity would be improved by the following redrafts "....public members of the evaluation team were co-collaborators....." and "This is evidenced by public team members' roles in undertaking....".

We have edited as suggested and agree that this makes clearer the role of the public members of the team.

On page 10 readability would be improved by avoidance of the terms 'pedagogic' (line 23) and 'pedagogical' (line 55) which are not in common use. These should be removed altogether or replaced by plain English phrases.

We have replaced these with ‘learning’ on line 55 and ‘facilitation’ on line 55.

On page 13 line 35 readability may be improved by replacing the term 'heterogeneity' with 'diversity'.

We have amended as suggested.

On page 14 line 33 readability may be improved by replacing the term 'paradigm' with 'model' or 'pattern.'

We have replaced with model.

Reviewer 2

This is an interesting article that highlights the issues of including PPI proper into research proper. I think the authors have addressed the comments by previous reviewers. However, I have a couple of questions/comments for the authors.

6 Line 22 - participants were already known SUC's who had knowledge of research process. There is no justification for using these participants and no comment about how this might have affected the outcomes of the training. These participants found the training difficult and it sounds as though health literacy for research was not considered by the team. A research naïve bunch would probably have been totally lost. This is a serious limitation of the evaluation.

Although participants were known to the SUCs, they varied in their background, health state, literacy and health literacy, and research knowledge and experience. Their interests in research also varied. We have added this sentence in the section on Participants on page 6. Additionally, the content of the programme had previously been piloted with a group which included research naïve participants. They expressed preferences to retain the content but recommended spreading it over two days. This became the structure of the programme which was formally evaluation.
Page 14 Line 1 - There are always some participants that are more forthright than others and the facilitator needs to be very experienced to ensure everyone has a say. One limitation might be that there were two large groups - quite daunting for PPI. Having smaller groups would have helped with inclusiveness.

We agree with this suggestion having since run the course with one smaller group on two occasions. We have added the following sentence to the end of this paragraph: ‘Alternatively, working with one smaller group could have helped with inclusiveness, although this has implications for future sustainability and capacity of training.’

Page 14 Line 22 - The authors comment on the "difficulty to unpick the deeply embedded power imbalances...", but fail to mention that research is difficult and complicated, especially for ethics and gaining approval of committees. There will always be power imbalance between people with knowledge and people without knowledge of a certain field.

Thank you for this comment. Whilst this is outside the scope of the current paper, we have added to the end of the sentence on page 14 line 22 ‘…and the different understandings about research that may contribute to this.’

Page 14 Line 50 - The authors make an interesting point about how PPI could be used effectively in research.

We thank the reviewer for acknowledging this.

Reviewer 3

The Authors have addressed a challenge that all working with PPI will meet - have met. How to train lay participants, content, format?? . The findings stress the diversity in the needs and outcomes of training for PPI for lay people. This may not be too exciting or new knowledge for those that for some years have worked within the PPI concept. The contribution from the this project is to documentation that this diversity. I wonder why the authors haven't challenged the approach to PPI that is the basis for the evaluation: that lay people should become competent to participate and contribute to all steps in a research cycle. It seems to me that the authors must have had such discussions - the discussion section is the far most interesting part of this paper. Have the authors considered a conclusion from the project like this: - "that although training enables lay people to feel more confident as partners in research it does not support the individual participant to understand - what is in it for me? how did I contribute?"

We agree that the paper does not fully engage with key debates about the extent of PPI and the growing argument that PPI members should contribute to all steps in the research cycle, and that the only barrier to this is lack of competence. However, although this is important to address, it is beyond the scope of the current paper, which aims to share learning about developing and
evaluating a PPI training programme, and involving PPI partners in that process. The training programme itself, however, does engage with these debates, and also includes discussions about the benefits for PPI members and the importance of evaluating the impact of PPI on research and sharing this in research outputs and with PPI members.