

Research User Group Buddy Scheme - Role description

Background

As the number of studies and trials have grown in the School of Primary Community and Social Care so has the number of Research User Group members. The School has 133 members in January 2020, compared to 80 members in September 2016. The roles of the Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement team have also expanded. Therefore, in order to ensure that both Research User Group members and the academic teams they work with are still adequately supported in their roles, the RUG Buddy Scheme has been created.

This is a mentoring-type scheme in which more experienced RUG members attend meetings with new or less experienced members, to provide support, reassurance and a friendly face. This is an additional method of supporting the RUG members on top of support already provided by the PPIE team. RUG Buddies will be supported in their role by the PPIE team.

The RUG Buddy scheme aims to provide:

- Extra support for all RUG members, in particular new RUG members
- Help with easing new members into public involvement
- Reassurance to new members that they are not alone
- Support from someone who has personal experience of being a public contributor at Keele
- Practical advice on payment forms, parking etc

This will be a 6-month pilot, involving a pool of around 10 RUG members. Initially it will be focussed on advisory group meetings and this could be extended to include Trial Steering Committees and Public Co-Applicant roles after review.

RUG Buddies can attend meetings they are already going to as a contributor (for which they will receive their usual payment) or they can attend the meeting to provide support only.

RUG Buddy responsibilities:

Before an advisory group meeting

- Arrive 30 minutes before the start of the meeting to meet and greet the new member. A member of the PPIE team will be with you if needed
- Discuss the meeting process with the new member
- Answer questions and address concerns
- Take them to the meeting room
- Make them feel at ease

During the meeting

- Introduce the new member to the other RUG members and the research team
- Sit next to the new member
- Provide help with vouchers and payment/expenses forms
- Encourage contribution to the meeting
- Interject the meeting as appropriate to ask for clarity or summaries
- May be asked to attend the first three meetings

After the meeting

- Provide a debrief and opportunity for feedback
- Ask how they found the meeting
- Address concerns and manage expectations
- Help the new RUG member to leave the building
- Bring payment forms to the PPIE room

Qualities of a RUG Buddy:

- Reliable
- Willing to help other RUG members
- Willing to share your personal experience
- Has at least one experience of being a RUG member
- Friendly and approachable
- Empathetic nature
- Enthusiastic about research and patient and public involvement in research
- Willing to attend initial training session (fire and safety, equality and inclusiveness, confidentiality and data protection)

PPIE team responsibilities:

- To provide training for RUG Buddies
- To be available for RUG Buddies to discuss questions or concerns at anytime during the working week
- To provide touchpoint meetings for RUG Buddies for review and feedback on the role
- Help RUG Buddies to meet and greet where needed