*The NIHR Health Protection Research Unit in Emergency Preparedness and Response at King’s College London*



**Public & Patient Engagement Plan**

1. ***Introduction***

This document outlines the Public & Patient Engagement (PPE) plan for the NIHR Health Protection Research Unit in Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR HPRU). The EPR HPRU is led by King’s College London (KCL) in partnership with Public Health England (PHE), the University of East Anglia (UEA) and Newcastle University. This unit brings together expertise in behavioural science and mental health (KCL), outbreak investigation and response (UEA) and medical toxicology (Newcastle) to produce multidisciplinary research to enhance PHE’s ability to minimise the public health impacts of emergencies.

EPR HPRU PPE policy is guided by the INVOLVE definition of public engagement as “where information and knowledge about research is provided and disseminated” (<http://www.invo.org.uk/posttyperesource/what-is-public-involvement-in-research/>). This plan therefore only focuses on activities that have the specific aim of raising public awareness of our research, sharing knowledge and engaging or creating a dialogue with the public.

This plan is designed to complement our Public & Patient Involvement (PPI) Plan (<http://epr.hpru.nihr.ac.uk/about/public-and-patient-involvement>), which focuses on activities where the public are actively involved in our research projects and in developing strategic policy for the Unit. Although PPE and PPI have different aims, these activities are often linked – for example involving the public in research may also provide opportunities for disseminating research outcomes. Similarly public engagement activities may help identify people who may like to be involved in future research projects.

The EPR HPRU maintains separate PPE and PPI plans to ensure that both sets of activities are given equal and separate consideration.

1. ***Purpose***

The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework to incorporate PPE at a strategic level and to support PPE activities across individual work themes and research projects. This plan will be reviewed annually by our strategy group and updated as required.

1. ***Programme***

This plan details the programme of activities that are undertaken at a central management level to raise public awareness of our research outcomes.

*3.1 Publication policy*

The purpose of our Unit is to carry out research and make it public so that others may benefit. To this end, all peer-reviewed journal articles that we publish are Open Access – i.e. they are free to the public at the point of publication. Copies of all of our publications are posted on our website (<http://epr.hpru.nihr.ac.uk/publications>) for ease of access.

To help our researchers follow best practice guidelines, we have produced a short document which lists the key points to consider when submitting a paper. It is available here: <http://epr.hpru.nihr.ac.uk/node/117>

*3.2 Website*

The Unit website (<http://epr.hpru.nihr.ac.uk/>) is a central repository for information about research activities, events, publications and opportunities for the public to engage with and participate in our research. The website is regularly updated and includes a live Twitter feed, a section for upcoming events and a news section that highlights new publications/events and provides recordings/podcasts of previous events when available.

*3.3 Social media*

Our Twitter account (@EPR\_HPRU) shares news about our research and opportunities to be involved in our research. Other individual researchers also regularly tweet about their work (e.g. our director @WesselyS).

*3.4 Media engagement*

We engage with traditional broadcast and print media both proactively and reactively in order to reach wider public audiences. We have representation from the Science Media Centre (<http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/>) on our advisory board to provide advice on how best to maximise the media impact of our research. Our proactive media engagement includes the use of press releases to promote new publications and to launch new studies. For example, a paper by our team on climate change and dengue fever was covered in detail by at least 90 media outlets worldwide, while the launch of the National Flood Study was covered by around 30 local media sources in the areas we were targeting. Examples of reactive media engagement include commenting on live issues informed by our work. For example, Professor Simon Wessely was extensively interviewed on the dangers of stigmatising people with depression following the crash of Germanwings flight 4U9525 in the Alps; Dr Brooke Rogers gave many interviews on national television the psychological impact of the Charlie Hebdo attacks and Islamic State terrorism; Professor Neil Greenberg was interviewed on the Today programme and elsewhere about the psychiatric impact of the Sousse terrorist attack.

*3.5 Events and other face-to-face engagement*

EPR HPRU staff regularly engage in public-facing talks about our research. For example, ‘Pint of Science’, University of the Third Age and schools talks. We also host talks and workshops that are available to the general public and to the wider academic and practitioner communities, such as public debates on ‘Public health – an individual’s or the government’s responsibility;’ a seminar, paper and podcast on ‘Communicating research to policy makers;’ and a talk to charity and aid groups on supporting humanitarian workers following the Ebola crisis.

1. ***Resources***

In addition to the usual support provided by our partner universities and PHE, and the funds that are available within theme budgets, £1,000 per year has been set aside from central HPRU funds to support public engagement activities, including event hosting, conference attendance and other costs associated with meetings and workshops with members of the public.

Researchers are also encouraged to make best use of existing facilities within their own organisations, particularly their PR / communications departments.

***5. Training***

All staff are encouraged to receive training in public engagement. Our partner organisations regularly run relevant training sessions on public speaking, or dealing with the media. In addition, staff can also make use of external resources such as the “introduction to the news media” training days run by the Science Media Centre (<http://www.sciencemediacentre.org/working-with-us/for-scientists/intro/>) or the media training sessions run for members by professional organisations such as the British Psychological Society (<http://www.bps.org.uk/>).

***6. Leadership, monitoring and review***

Public engagement activities are reported as a standing item at monthly Management Group meetings. A review of all PPE activities is produced by the PPI/E subgroup within the unit (Julia Pearce, Richard Amlöt & James Rubin) and reported to the strategy group. The HPRU strategy group reviews media engagement annually to ensure that sufficient and efficient activities are being undertaken by each theme. This is then discussed with our advisory group. This oversight is in addition to the usual arrangements within each partner organisation and activities undertaken by individual researchers such as obtaining written feedback from audience members or peer appraisal from a colleague.