The impact of patient and public involvement on UK NHS health care: a systematic review

CAROLE MOCKFORD1, SOPHIE STANISZEWSKA1, FRANCES GRIFFITHS2 AND SANDRA HERRON-MARX3

1Royal College of Nursing Research Institute, School of Health and Social Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK, 2Health Sciences Research Institute, Warwick Medical School, Gibbet Hill Campus, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK, and 3Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Richard Crossman Building, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB, UK

Address reprint requests to: Carole Mockford, Royal College of Nursing Research Institute, School of Health and Social Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK. Tel: +44-247615-0627; Fax: +44-247615-0643; E-mail: carole.mockford@warwick.ac.uk

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Abstract

Purpose. Patient and public involvement (PPI) has become an integral part of health care with its emphasis on including and empowering individuals and communities in the shaping of health and social care services. The aims of this study were to identify the impact of PPI on UK National Health Service (NHS) healthcare services and to identify the economic cost. It also examined how PPI is being defined, theorized and conceptualized, and how the impact of PPI is captured or measured.

Data sources. Seventeen key online databases and websites were searched, e.g. Medline and the King’s Fund.

Study selection. UK studies from 1997 to 2009 which included service user involvement in NHS healthcare services.

Date extraction. Key themes were identified and a narrative analysis was undertaken.

Results of data synthesis. The review indicates that PPI has a range of impacts on healthcare services. There is little evidence of any economic analysis of the costs involved. A key limitation of the PPI evidence base is the poor quality of reporting impact. Few studies define PPI, there is little theoretical underpinning or conceptualization reported, there is an absence of robust measurement of impact and descriptive evidence lacked detail.

Conclusion. There is a need for significant development of the PPI evidence base particularly around guidance for the reporting of user activity and impact. The evidence base needs to be significantly strengthened to ensure the full impact of involving service users in NHS healthcare services is fully understood.

Keywords: primary care/general practice, health policy, public health, evidence base, impact, patient and public involvement

Introduction

In the UK patient and public involvement (PPI) in health and social care policy is well established, with the Government committed to empowering individuals and communities to play a greater role in shaping health and social care services [1, 2]. Since 1997 there have been moves towards an open, accountable and patient-centred service and an attempt to establish the involvement of service users in healthcare services [3]. Referred to, variously as ‘patient and public involvement’, ‘user involvement’, ‘service user involvement’ or ‘lay involvement’ there have been a number of initiatives encouraging individuals and communities to have a stronger voice in National Health Service (NHS) such as in planning and development, and extensive activity within NHS Trusts. For ease of reference, the term ‘patient and public involvement’ (PPI) is used here which is inclusive of patients, carers and the public.

There is, surprisingly, a dearth of research about the impact of user involvement on services [4, 5], how services have changed (the outcomes) because of it [6], the extent of changes [7] or how much it costs the NHS to involve service users [8]. Crawford et al. [9] conducted a systematic review on PPI in healthcare services across the UK, Europe, Australia, USA and Canada from 1966 to the year 2000. They concluded that few studies describe the effects of PPI on the quality and effectiveness of services and that a better evidence base may be necessary to persuade providers to
give a greater voice to patients when making decisions about services. However, to develop a robust evidence base and to enable comparisons and evaluations to be made, there also needs to be a common understanding of what is meant by ‘PPI’ in practice and how it can be conceptualized and measured.

This paper, focusing on the UK, responds to the need for a better evidence base for PPI impact on services and economic cost by describing the findings from a systematic review of literature from 1997 to 2009. While UK focused, the implications of the study are likely to have relevance to a wider international PPI evidence base.

Aims
The aims of this systematic review were:
(i) to identify the impact of PPI on UK NHS healthcare services,
(ii) to examine the economic cost of PPI.
To achieve these aims, and to aid synthesis, the review also examined how user involvement is defined, theorized and conceptualized, and how the impact of user involvement is captured or measured.

Methods
An advisory group of 12 members, including two lay members and experts in the fields of PPI and systematic reviews, contributed to the study design. The group was also consulted at each stage of the study through regular meetings and by email.

Inclusion criteria
The eligibility criteria were broad to capture all types of user/patient activity which involved patients, carers and the public working: (a) in a collaborative way with health professionals or management, e.g. as lay members of NHS committees or in condition-specific groups or (b) in a user-led way where the service user was leading the involvement activity. It was anticipated that many authors would report their findings as case studies. All study types, from both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed literature were included but discussion papers, think pieces or editorials were excluded. To develop a manageable focus for this study, studies of or from the following were excluded: children’s services, health research, NHS research and development, the voluntary sector, independent healthcare services and educational services. Studies of involvement as part of an individual’s health care were excluded.

Information sources
Electronic databases searched comprised Medline, Embase, Cinahl, Health Management Information Consortium, PsycInfo, British Nursing Index, Social Science Citation Index, Conference Papers Index and the Cochrane Library and internet websites comprised King’s Fund, National Library for Health, Invonet, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Picker Institute, Social Care Institute for Excellence, theses websites and Opensigle (a closed library).

Electronic databases and internet websites were searched for the period from January 1997 to February 2009 and the search was limited to UK studies written in the English language.

As there was no Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) for ‘PPI’ a combination of search terms was used for the electronic databases (see Table 1) and a free text search related to ‘user involvement’, ‘consumer participation’, ‘PPI’ and ‘patient and public involvement’ was made on the sites where the search string was inappropriate. The search strategy was devised to maximize sensitivity and specificity. Reports and other non-peer reviewed documents were accessed via websites (above) and through citations.

Study selection
A total of 6110 titles and abstracts of studies were screened by one reviewer (C.M.) (after removal of duplicates) to include publications potentially relevant to the study. Where the abstract was unclear, brief or omitted, the full text of the study was obtained. Early in this screening process, a total of 248 of the 6110 titles and abstracts were screened by two other reviewers (F.G. and S.S.) to check inclusion/exclusion decisions. Where there was disagreement this was resolved by discussion and where necessary the inclusion/exclusion criteria were refined.

Quality assessment
A quality appraisal tool for assessing the quality of studies from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme [10] for

Table 1 Search terms

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<tr>
<th>Set 1</th>
<th>Set 2</th>
<th>Set 3</th>
<th>Set 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Patient*</td>
<td>Health*</td>
<td>Invol*</td>
<td>Empower*</td>
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<td>User*</td>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>Participa*</td>
<td>Experience*</td>
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<td>Carer*</td>
<td>‘NHS’</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Reform*</td>
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<td>Caregiver*</td>
<td>Engag*</td>
<td>Develop*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Evaluat*</td>
<td>Economic*</td>
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<td>Citizen*</td>
<td>Consult*</td>
<td>Cost*</td>
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<td>Client*</td>
<td>Audit*</td>
<td>Chang*</td>
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<td>Consumer*</td>
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<td>Reconfig*</td>
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<td>Lay</td>
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<td>Redesign*</td>
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<td>Stakeholder*</td>
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<td>Impact*</td>
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<td>Representative*</td>
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<td>Outcome*</td>
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<td>Relative*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effect*</td>
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<td>Famil*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
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<td>Survivor</td>
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<td>Policy-making</td>
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<td>Health planning</td>
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<td>Health priorities</td>
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research was used for assessing the quality of included studies.

Data extraction
The data extraction form was developed and discussed and agreed by three reviewers (C.M., S.S. and F.G.). Data extraction was piloted to ensure sufficient detail would be extracted from the papers (C.M. and A.L.). Three researchers extracted data (C.M., A.L. and D.M.B.). Any disagreements were resolved by discussion.

Extracted data were put into a database for comparison of the data. Extracted data included any definition concerning user involvement and details about the conceptualization and theoretical underpinning of patient and public involvement. The following was extracted for each study: study design, target population, health setting, period of the study, recruitment procedures and characteristics of the participants, data collection methods, type of measurement use, details of analysis and results specifically those concerning ‘impact’ and ‘outcomes’ directly or indirectly attributable to PPI, economic analysis or any references to cost.

Analysis and synthesis of results
Analysis involved familiarization with the studies, comparison of studies and then interrogation of the extracted data for each of the research questions. A narrative synthesis was developed examining relevant themes and identifying patterns and anomalies across the studies.

Results
Study selection
The search strategy identified 6110 abstracts. However, only 64 of these initially met the inclusion criteria for the review. During full text data extraction, a further 22 papers were excluded as on closer inspection they did not meet the study’s inclusion criteria. Forty-two papers remained representing 28 studies (Table 2) of which 20 were case reports. The lack of specificity in the search strategy is possibly due to the term ‘PPI’ (an accepted acronym for the term ‘PPI’) being a common acronym used in unrelated studies, absence of information in the abstract and no McSH term for ‘PPI’.

Study characteristics
The 28 studies comprised of 20 case studies or reports (many of which did not claim to be research), 5 evaluations, 1 survey and 2 secondary data analyses. The types of involvement studied were diverse including lay and professional members of Primary Care Groups or Trusts, audit teams and the inclusion of current and former patients in various activities such as leaflet design (see Table 3).

Table 2 Illustration of the results of the literature search

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6110 references retrieved</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>64 papers were included</td>
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<tr>
<td>for full data extraction</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 documents did not fulfill the study aims:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process only 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process and challenges 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extent to which PPI is used 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation only 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary report of 12 studies of which one satisfied this study criteria 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>42 papers=28 studies</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Quality assessment
Most of the literature lacked sufficient detail about the study design or activity or why it was chosen to be able to apply the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme quality assessment [10]. Many studies gave very little description of the lay participants particularly lay members of Primary Care Groups or Trusts, omitting details such as age, gender, ethnicity, whether they were employed or not and any previous experience with working in health care. Most studies failed to describe how participants were recruited. There was little evidence to support the claims of the impact of PPI.

Review results
This review indicates that PPI takes many forms within UK NHS health care. This ranges from lay membership of NHS managerial boards such as the former Primary Care Groups, Primary Care Trusts and commissioning boards to patient involvement in condition-specific groups of individuals with a solitary aim (e.g., information distribution as in leaflet design or awareness campaigns).

The impacts of PPI on NHS healthcare services were broadly divided into service planning and development, information development and dissemination and changing attitudes of service users and providers. These impact areas are described in the first section. The second section
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Lay involvement</th>
<th>Size of study</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Actual impact reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alborz [34]</td>
<td>Structured interviews and postal questionnaires</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>Survey of 72 PCGs</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>Nationwide</td>
<td>Unclear or negligible impact. The 2000 Tracker survey reported that 21% of public involvement committees or working groups had a designated budget most of which were £5000 or less.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson and Florin [11]</td>
<td>Interviews, observation and documentary evidence from meetings</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>One PCG</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>City and Hackney</td>
<td>The creation of a local sickle cell centre. Increased understanding across the health economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson and Florin [31]</td>
<td>Interviews, observation and documentary evidence from meetings</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>One PCG</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>Dagenham</td>
<td>An awareness of patient and community interests; some moderation of professional values and priorities by alternative perspectives; improved links with the local community/voluntary sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson and Florin [26]</td>
<td>Interviews, observation and documentary evidence from meetings</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>One PCG</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>Harrow East and Kingsbury</td>
<td>Better knowledge of local health services among some local people. Impact has been limited to public information and education. A professional acceptance of the value of non-professional views in decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry [18]</td>
<td>Interviews, observation and documentary evidence from meetings</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>Summary of activities over a period of time</td>
<td>Primary Care PPI forums</td>
<td>Kingston Hospital and Kingston</td>
<td>Some impact on culture of cleanliness and hygiene, storage of equipment in wards, booking system, cultural needs of patients, and waiting times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carney et al. [28]</td>
<td>User group</td>
<td>Former patients</td>
<td>22 patients</td>
<td>Colorectal cancer services</td>
<td>Frenchay hospital</td>
<td>Development of an information booklet for colorectal cancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challans [17]</td>
<td>Descriptive study</td>
<td>Former patients</td>
<td>20 patients</td>
<td>Primary care trust (PCT)</td>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>Improved information for patients, better access to other services. Introduction of drop in clinics and provision of training and education for GP staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challans [32]</td>
<td>Impact evaluation</td>
<td>Former patients as members of (CAPP)</td>
<td>20 patients</td>
<td>PCT</td>
<td>Sheffield South West</td>
<td>Working partnerships with staff improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotterell et al. [12]</td>
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<td>Nationwide</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crawford <em>et al.</em> [8]</td>
<td>Cross sectional survey</td>
<td>User groups</td>
<td>74 user groups</td>
<td>Mental Health Trust</td>
<td>Greater London</td>
<td>Examples: improvements in ward environments, organization of out-patient services and systems for supporting patients in crisis. Service users had influenced service development and policies (but no details given)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowley <em>et al.</em> [22]</td>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>Stakeholders included health professionals (60) and community activists (22)</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>Newcastle West</td>
<td>Minicomms were installed in acute trusts buildings. Staff reported that the project had changed the way they operated as they were now aware of user perspectives and health issues relevant to community, especially minority groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dearden-Phillips and Fountain [24]</td>
<td>Descriptive report</td>
<td>Self advocacy user group</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>Cambridgeshire</td>
<td>GP receptionists were trained in learning disability issues. Culture change with a new atmosphere of accountability, involvement and communication between service providers and users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milewa <em>et al.</em> [14]</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>167 including 78 lay members</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>Nationwide not including London</td>
<td>Provision of additional services, changes in the configuration of services, changes to the Health Improvement Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore [21]</td>
<td>Cross sectional descriptive survey</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>40 heads of audit</td>
<td>Clinical audit</td>
<td>South East Coast and London</td>
<td>Commode supplier changed as a result of patients’ feedback about the shape and discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountford and Anderson [19]</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Link person (between patient and PCG) and a lay member</td>
<td>Survey of 69 Primary Health Care Teams in Croydon plus in-depth interviews with a selection of PCG members</td>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>Central Croydon</td>
<td>Improved flow of information back to the patients in the way of leaflets, notice boards, educational meetings and self-help groups, information given in other languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murie and Douglas-Scott [15]</td>
<td>Mixed methods including postal survey and focus groups</td>
<td>A range of initiatives including a patient participation group</td>
<td>Summary of activities over a period of time</td>
<td>Community health Clydesdale, Scotland</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some preliminary evidence of joint working between practice staff and the public including support for an integral pharmacy in the new medical centre; a local X-ray unit, enhanced services for carers, improvements to a waiting room area, an interactive mental health website, smoking cessation clinics, phase 4 cardiac rehabilitation, a multidisciplinary network for mental health services, a drop-in facility for teenagers, and an integrated evening care service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peck et al. [20]</td>
<td>Semi structured interviews, focus groups, observations of meetings</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>96 service users</td>
<td>Mental health services and a Joint Commissioning Board</td>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>A review of day care services was conducted by the Trust, the review was undertaken by a working group including service users amongst others (no further details given)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perkins and Goddard [13]</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>User panels and a trust-wide user and carer quality group. One user rep sat on trust’s governance committee, education and development group, etc.</td>
<td>None given</td>
<td>Mental Health Trust</td>
<td>South West London</td>
<td>Involved in the planning of buildings and environment. Community groups were involved in the provision of bigger lockers and colour of ward walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickles et al. [23]</td>
<td>Case study using a story telling approach—evidence based design</td>
<td>Patient/carer</td>
<td>Not given</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>Luton and Dunstable</td>
<td>40 plus improvements to the head and neck service at Luton and Dunstable hospital were achieved through user involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richardson et al. (see also Cotterell et al. [16])</td>
<td>Experiential report</td>
<td>Cancer patients/people with family history of Cancer genetics services</td>
<td>Report which included data from 7 patients</td>
<td>Cancer genetic services</td>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>User involvement mostly in awareness raising/publicity/lay information work</td>
</tr>
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(continued)
consider the definition, conceptualization and measurement of PPI. The third section reports the economic costs incurred from patient and public involvement.

Impact on NHS healthcare services

Impact on service planning and development. Fifteen of the studies reported on the development of new and improved services attributed to user involvement. However, there was usually little description about how much influence service users had. Areas of impact could be grouped into seven categories as follows (with examples):

† The design of new healthcare buildings and their environment [11–13]. A mental health trust formed a series of ‘user panels’ and a trust-wide ‘user and carer quality group’ to advise on the design of new buildings and the surrounding environment. Another study described user involvement in the redevelopment of a cancer centre [12].

† The location of, and access to services [14–17]. The provision of community services [18] and the redesign of new healthcare buildings [19] and their environment [20]. The location of and access to services [21] such as the relocation of existing services [22] and the provision of transport and car parking [23]. The ability to talk to professionals on an interactive health promotion website co-designed by service users and patient involvement was described in producing public and patient information, raising awareness of chronic conditions and the development of training sessions for service users and health professionals [24].

† Improved dialogue between professionals and patients [25]. A local support group and enhanced services for breast/bowel/gynaecological cancers [26].

† Improved dialogue between patients and other patients [25]. A peer support group for stroke patients [25], and a local support group and enhanced services for 

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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert et al. [27]</td>
<td>Case studies including semi-structured interviews and observations of meetings</td>
<td>Service users</td>
<td>6 selected case studies</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Northern, Yorkshire and Trent collaborative</td>
<td>Some evidence of improvements in patient oriented materials and some service improvement, e.g. patient feedback systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South [33]</td>
<td>Audit including semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Lay member</td>
<td>16 managers or Professional Executive Committee members</td>
<td>PCTs</td>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>Found strong support for PPI in PCTs. Support was less obvious at general practice level with little awareness or not seen as a priority but some saw a moderate level of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart and Oliver [29]</td>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Parents and members of an expert group</td>
<td>45 parents and 35 health professionals</td>
<td>UK bloodspot programme</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Leaflet and guideline development</td>
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Table 3 Continued

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<th>Study</th>
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Impact on information development and dissemination. An important area of service user activity was around information development, raising awareness of chronic conditions and the development of training sessions for service users and health professionals.
• Production of public and patient information
Ten studies described the production of public information either for the local community such as newsletters [26] or for specific groups of patients, such as revised patient information booklets [25] or leaflets [19, 26]. Specific health areas included mental health [27], cancer [12, 16], colorectal cancer [28], UK bloodspot programme [29], stroke [25] and head and neck services [23]. One study described service users compiling an information directory enabling patients to access existing resources more easily [16].

• Raising awareness
Four studies described awareness raising through community campaigns on specific conditions such as diabetes [26], cancer genetics [30], testicular cancer [12] and stroke [25]. However, the level of involvement and influence of service users was unclear in these studies.

• Developing/contributing to developing training sessions
These were designed by, and for, other service users as part of a stroke initiative [25]. They were also held for health professionals to improve their understanding the patients’ perspectives for the training of General Practitioner’s (GP) receptionists [24] and in the breaking of bad news [16].

Impact on attitudes of service users and providers. Many studies noted that working with service users contributed to changing health professionals’ attitudes, values and beliefs about the value of user involvement, although in many studies this was described as a difficult task [11, 21, 26, 31 – 33]. Several examples were given of the difficulties encountered in involving service users in service planning [19, 20, 33] such as service users had their own agenda for being involved, and that health professionals lacked time, resources and had little experience in working with service users. However, one study [31] reported success—there had been some moderation of professional values and priorities in one Primary Care Group, although many of the GPs involved had initially been unwilling to accept lay skills and values. In another study [32], staff were described as beginning to feel comfortable with working with lay members.

Definition of PPI
It is important to understand the concept that studies are exploring and measuring and that there is some conceptual equivalence across the studies. Studies rarely provided an explicit definition of ‘user involvement’ or ‘PPI’ or any other similar term used. There were broad indications of what is understood by ‘PPI’. It is multifaceted and includes engagement [33] and communication [34] with the local community [33] focused on outcomes and improving local primary care services [31], based on building strong relationships between users and those in decision-making roles [24], direct, sustainable involvement at all levels [20, 24, 27, 30], openness [11] and acceptance and support [24].

Conceptualization of PPI. Conceptual or theoretical underpinning of the review studies was scarce; just two studies used a theoretical argument for their project. One study argued for collective self-advocacy in balancing the power between those with learning difficulties and those who have power over them such as parents or staff [24]. Another drew on social constructionism and post-modernism to challenge the professional narrative in mental health services [20]. Most studies relied on, and were driven by, current policy initiatives as their primary framework.

Measurement of PPI. Measurement could provide an effective way of understanding the extent of impact. However, there were no validated measurements mentioned specifically for capturing the impact of PPI. Data collection was undertaken using questionnaire surveys, semi-structured and structured interviews, focus groups, documentary analysis and observation of meetings. This captured mostly description of the activity and opinion about the difference user involvement has made. The variation in detail of reporting results prevented cross-study synthesis of impact. Impact was not captured through robust measurement using valid and reliable instruments.

Economic costs incurred from PPI
Full costings of the economic outlay of PPI were not evident in the review literature but are an important part of assessing impact. No studies reported the full costs attributed to PPI, although some gave an indication of the cost of a variety of activities [12, 24, 33, 34]. One study found that 21% of public involvement committees or working groups had a designated budget of £5000 or less [34]. A study of stroke services [25] claimed there were funds available to employ a user involvement lead working 50% of her or his time on user involvement activities, administrative support, transport costs for service users to attend meetings, venue hire and expenses for service users. One study simply claimed that not enough funding was available [13]. No meaningful economic analyses were performed. The details that were available were too idiosyncratic for comparison or synthesis of cost across studies (Table 4).

Discussion
This review found many and varied PPI activities in the UK NHS healthcare services but the studies did not provide robust evidence of its impact and almost no evidence of its cost. There was a lack of consistency of definition of public and patient involvement and no reliable measurement tool. There are limitations to this study, for instance there has been no reliability testing of the papers included in this review due to a lack of sufficient detail; it focuses solely on PPI in the NHS in the UK and results of PPI in health care may vary in other international settings; the literature search was limited to the sources listed (see methods section), and there may be other literature which has not been identified, because of this some important insights may have been omitted.
Although many studies described the inclusion of service users in their activities and changes which were made as a result of their input, it was difficult to discern the extent of the involvement of service users. However, in a broad sense, user involvement is becoming a priority in the planning of services. Service users were also involved in the design and distribution of patient and public information, training programmes and awareness campaigns. It seems that utilizing individuals’ knowledge and experiences of conditions for the benefit of others is a particular strength of user involvement. Health professionals and managerial bodies seem to be beginning to value service user involvement.

From a research and evaluation perspective, the findings from the review raise a number of issues. The definition of PPI was not explicit in the studies. There was a lack of description of many aspects of the studies particularly in the study or activity design, and in the process of the data collection. The reports were often written in response to current policy initiatives with authors failing to provide a comprehensible theoretical or conceptual basis for their work. There was a lack of available valid and reliable instruments to measure change resulting from PPI. Very little was reported on the economic costs of PPI and what there was showed a wide range of costs.

This study adopted a broad definition of ‘impact’ with the purpose of collating the changes PPI has made to services and to the individuals involved. ‘Impact’, therefore, encompasses ‘effects’ and ‘outcomes’ in their broadest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Nature of study</th>
<th>Funding activity</th>
<th>Source of funding</th>
<th>Amount of funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alborz [34]</td>
<td>National Tracker Survey (2000)</td>
<td>Public involvement committees or working groups</td>
<td>PCG/Ts</td>
<td>21% had a designated budget of £5000 or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson and Florin [11]</td>
<td>Report on PCGs and their work for PPI</td>
<td>Targeted at activities rather than the core work of the organization</td>
<td>PCGs</td>
<td>Funds were reported to be very limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotterell et al. [12]</td>
<td>The Cancer Partnership Project</td>
<td>A partnership group of 34 networks with a committee of NHS patients, managers and health professionals to provide a more coordinated and integrated approach to user involvement</td>
<td>MacMillan Cancer relief and the Department of Health</td>
<td>£150 00 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dearden-Phillips and Fountain [24]</td>
<td>A project adopting a Parliament style approach to addressing issues in the learning disability sector</td>
<td>One professional leader and two full time service users</td>
<td>A partnership between a voluntary organization and local statutory body</td>
<td>£60 000 a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudge et al. [25]</td>
<td>A study of stroke services</td>
<td>A user involvement lead working 50% of their time on activities; administrative support; transport costs for service users to attend meetings; venue hire; and expenses for service users</td>
<td>Charitable funding</td>
<td>There were enough funds available but they were ‘considerable’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perkins and Goddard [13]</td>
<td>A study of strategic, operational and individual attempts to increase user involvement in a mental health trust</td>
<td>The trust employed a service user to act as a consultant and link with local independent user groups and other constituencies of service users, and to sit on other committees to represent local user groups</td>
<td>Mental health trust</td>
<td>Some funding was available for the local independent user groups. No details were given on the employed service user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South [33]</td>
<td>A study of PPI in 4 primary care trusts</td>
<td>Resources for supporting PCT-led activities and community-based and community-initiated projects</td>
<td>Core PCT money</td>
<td>Budget allocations ranged from £42 000 to £150 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sense. It was possible to identify some of the impact that 
PPI was having on the design, evaluation and reconﬁguration of 
healthcare services. The ﬁndings are similar to those of 
Crawford et al. [9], and includes more recent examples of 
PPI. The review suggests that PPI is 
multifaceted and deﬁning what ‘impact’ can be complex as 
it is dependent on context, policy, people, resources, the 
purpose of consultation and culture of organizations and 
of individuals. It can be short or long term, and it has 
the potential to affect individuals, staff and organizations. 
Some forms of impact were relatively easy to demonstrate 
such as the impact on leaflet design; however the 
effect on others of receiving the literature was unknown. 
Other forms of impact were difﬁcult to demonstrate 
such as the impact of service users on strategic 
decision-making.

A conceptualization of PPI is important for policy-makers 
and those in research for understanding the components or 
dimensions of PPI. This has the potential to inform the 
development of measures of impact. As suggested by 
Crawford et al. [9], there is still a clear need to develop an 
instrument or groups of instruments that could measure the 
impact of PPI in different situations, and evaluate what 
works, for whom and in what circumstances [35].

Examining the costs of involvement was rare in the review 
studies, although may appear elsewhere such as in ﬁnancial 
reports. There is a clear need for future studies to consider 
the cost consequence of PPI.

Conclusion

The absence of evidence does not indicate an absence of 
impact rather it indicates inadequate reporting with a lack of 
valid and reliable tools to capture the impact of PPI [36]. Although the evidence base needs enhancement, this review 
suggests achievements of service user involvement in health-care design, evaluation and re-conﬁguration are being 
reported.

There is an urgent need to develop the tools necessary 
for developing the evidence base. The development of 
clear concepts and robust forms of measurement will 
enhance an understanding of the impact of PPI alongside 
clearer economic evaluation. Guidelines for the reporting 
of PPI might also improve consistency and comparability 
of studies.

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