

Guidance for including peer researchers in qualitative studies

Differences between peer researcher and PPIE involvement in a study

Peer researcher: A lay person who shares similar characteristics or experiences to the study participants becomes a member of the research team and helps conduct the research in some way, such as collecting or analysing data.

PPIE: A PPIE* representative or group is involved in shaping the study design and/or guiding the study as it progresses but does not become involved in actually conducting the research.

* PPIE = *public and patient involvement and engagement*

Factors to consider for peer research

- **Rationale.** There should be a clear rationale for what the peer researcher brings to the study. For example, their lived experience might help engage participants or they might provide a different perspective when developing themes during the analysis stage.
- **Planning.** Peer research should be built into the study design and budget at the outset. The budget should include training, equipment (e.g. encrypted voice recorders, computers), additional time for researchers to support the peer researcher, and payment for the peer researcher's time.
- **Feasibility:** The involvement of peer researchers should be commensurate with the type and levels of skills involved, recognising that qualitative research is a broad field and some methods are more advanced than others. For example, content analysis is relatively manageable for a novice researcher whereas reflexive thematic analysis or realist evaluation require more expertise. Peer researchers' backgrounds and skills, in terms of education for example, will also vary.
- **Training:** Peer researchers should have received adequate training in qualitative methods relevant to those being used in the study, data management, research ethics, and also Good Clinical Practice if involved in a trial.
- **Insurance:** Peer researchers should be covered by indemnity insurance, and should be included in the university's insurance policy.
- **Data protection.** The peer researcher should have training in data protection and GDPR. If accessing raw data or large sections of transcripts/documents containing multiple quotes, they should also have access to facilities to acquire, transfer and store data securely. The principal/chief investigator of the study should act as the guarantor of data security for the study.
- **Ethics.** The peer researcher should be included and inducted into any ethical frameworks and regulations, including confidentiality arrangements, being adopted for the study.

References

[Bell et al.\(2021\) Peer Research in Health and Social Development](#)

[Bell et al. \(2020\) Working with Aboriginal young people in sexual health research: a peer research methodology in remote Australia](#)

[Price and Hawkins \(2002\) Researching sexual and reproductive behaviour: a peer ethnographic approach](#)

[Burke et al. \(2018\) Experiences of being, and working with, young people with disabilities as peer researchers in Senegal: The impact on data quality, analysis, and well-being](#)

[Di Lorito et al. \(2016\) A synthesis of the evidence on peer research with potentially vulnerable adults: how this relates to dementia](#)