

Patient & Public Involvement PPI in Yorkshire and the Humber: A Knowledge Exchange Event.

At the end of November the National Institute for Health Research NIHR Research Design Service RDS held an afternoon of talks and group discussions to share information about work going on in and about Yorkshire and the Humber. The event was well attended and Sheffield MND RAG had two representatives present.

The RDS is a consortium of the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York, which supports researchers submitting to NIHR and other funding sources. Director, Dr Wendy Baird started off by outlining the structure of this service which was set up in 2008 to increase the quality and quantity of health research in our region.

She emphasised the importance of raising the profile of PPI and encouraging others to join the PPI forum, which is an advisory group to the service. The forum also links to the database of voluntary groups willing to be approached by researchers when they are developing their grant applications.

The group discussions for the afternoon included:

- The challenges of working with researchers on projects
- The experiences of reviewing grant applications
- Addressing the challenges

Within our group discussion it became clear that the Sheffield MND RAG was probably a smaller, but more focussed group for PPI as opposed to common medical conditions and general surgery for example where establishing PPI with a less cohesive group was thought to be more challenging.

Other speakers included a Speech and Language therapist explaining her experiences of engaging people with communication difficulties in PPI and the final talk of the afternoon was from a member of the Humber and Yorkshire Coast research panel who talked about the particular way they approached reviewing material in preparation for grant applications. The key points emphasised here were:

- Training
- Reading
- Practise
- Peer group learning
- Understanding scientific culture

This group held face to face group meetings with one of the co-researchers prior to reviewing an application and then reviewed all the material in the application as a round the table group.

This panel which has been running for 8 years produced a lay members guide on "How to Appraise Research Proposals". The comprehensive booklet which is available to other groups, also contains an extensive glossary of common terminology, though the emphasis is on cancer research.