

## NIHR School for Primary Care Research Public Steering Group Ways of Working (Terms of Reference)

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## Background

Established in 2006, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) School for Primary Care Research (SPCR) is a partnership between nine leading academic centres for primary care research in England (University of Bristol University, Exeter University, Keele University, Manchester University, Nottingham University, Oxford University, Queen Mary University of London, Southampton University and University College London).

The primary mission of the School is (1) to increase the evidence base for primary care practice and (2) to increase research capacity in primary care.

The SPCR vision for patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) is to:

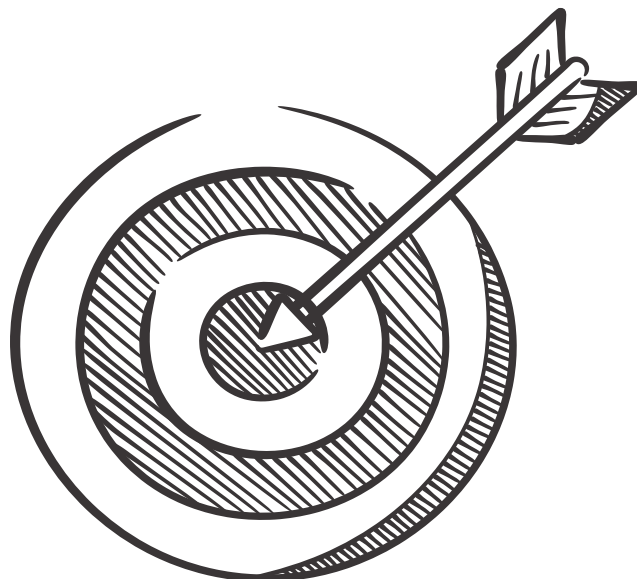
- create an environment where everyone in primary care has the skills and support they need to make the most of PPIE; and
- make sure PPIE is part of everything we do and is included in all the research we support.

The [School's PPIE Strategy](#) sets out how the SPCR plans to involve and engage the public in research, governance, and capacity building over the 5-year funding period (2021 – 2026).

## Purpose of the Public Steering Group

To support the SPCR to make decisions related to public involvement and engagement from a public perspective through:

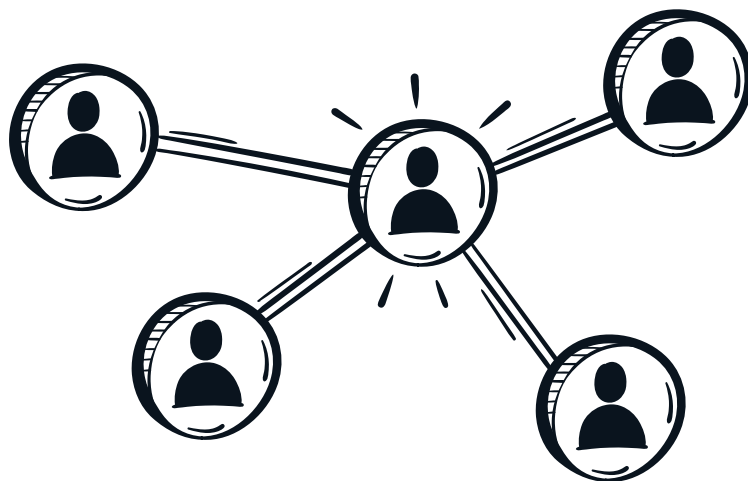
- Informing and monitoring progress against SPCR PPIE Strategy and holding the SPCR accountable to the delivery of the PPIE Strategy
- Providing advice to support the SPCR to undertake high-quality public involvement and engagement activities
- Reviewing PPIE processes
- Strategically steering the direction of PPIE across the SPCR
- Championing public involvement and engagement and the views of the public in SPCR Decision-Making
- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion in all decisions and activities related to PPIE



## Ways of working

### a. Duration of the role & Membership

- Membership to the Steering Group is until end of March 2027. Any extension to this term will be communicated by the SPCR PPIE Manager.
- Membership to the group may change over time if the Steering Group feels key perspectives are missing from the group, and on occasions relevant others may be invited to participate in Steering Group Meetings when appropriate.
- Steering Group members are able to leave the Group at any time before the end of the term if they wish. It is recommended that those who do wish to leave the group, for whatever reason, have a call with the SPCR PPIE Manager.
- Membership in this group does not exclude Steering Group Members from getting involved in other SPCR activities and projects.



## **b. Meeting frequency**

- The Steering Group will meet twice a year at a minimum.
- Further meetings may be held on an as-need basis and could include extraordinary meetings where an urgent meeting needs to be called to discuss a pressing issue.
- Frequency of meetings will be reviewed each year, and any proposed changes to the frequency of meetings will be communicated and discussed with Steering Group Members.
- Dates and times for each meeting will be decided via a Doodle Poll and be based on the date/time that works for the majority of Steering Group Members.
- Depending on the content of the meeting and the availability of Steering Group Members a decision will be made by the SPCR PPIE Manager before each meeting whether just one meeting will be held or the meeting will be repeated in a second session to facilitate involvement of steering group members.

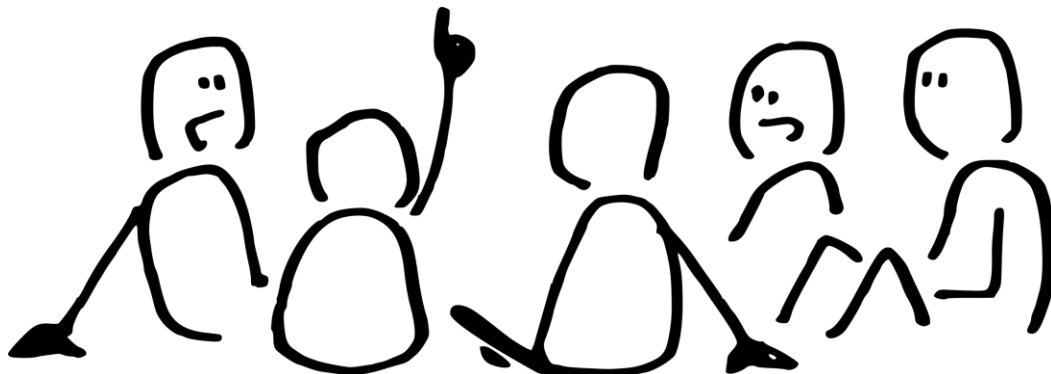
## **c. Meeting format & length**

- Steering Group meetings will mostly be held online.
- Online meetings will be no longer than 2-hours with appropriate breaks and will start and end on time.

- We will aim to hold one face-to-face meeting each year at rotating locations. Face-to-face meetings will also aim to have one hybrid component during the meeting, allowing others to join.

#### d. Meeting attendance & engagement

- While membership to the Steering Group is voluntary, membership does require members to be committed to attending and actively contributing during meetings either via the chat function, in breakout group discussions, or wider group discussions and responding to emails and correspondence in between meetings.
- If unable to attend a meeting, Steering Group Members are expected to let the point of contact (SPCR PPIE Manager) know.
- If Steering Group Members are unable to attend a meeting, alternative opportunities to provide feedback will be provided (i.e. by sharing meeting recording to watch in own time and providing feedback over email, and/or having a 1-to-1 call with the SPCR PPIE Manager to discuss content of the meeting and provide feedback).



### e. Preparing for meetings

- An agenda for Steering Group meetings will be sent at least one week ahead of upcoming meetings with the opportunity for Steering Group Members to make amendments to the agenda and/or suggest additional items.
- Steering Group Members will be expected to prepare for meetings by reading any relevant documents sent in advance.
- Relevant documents will be sent at least one week prior to the meeting to allow time for Steering Group members to prepare.
- Payment for preparation will be provided (approx. 1 hour of time) for meetings which require review of relevant documents in advance.



### f. Meeting facilitation & decision-making

- In the first instance meetings will be facilitated by the SPCR PPIE Manager.
- Due to the size of the Steering Group, all discussions will take place in smaller groups initially (break out rooms) and key points from breakout group discussions fed back to the group as a whole.
- Decisions will be made either through discussion, and where appropriate an anonymous votes across the group.

### g. Record of meetings

- At the beginning of each meeting it will be decided as a group whether the meeting will be recorded (or if more appropriate what sections of the meeting should be recorded).

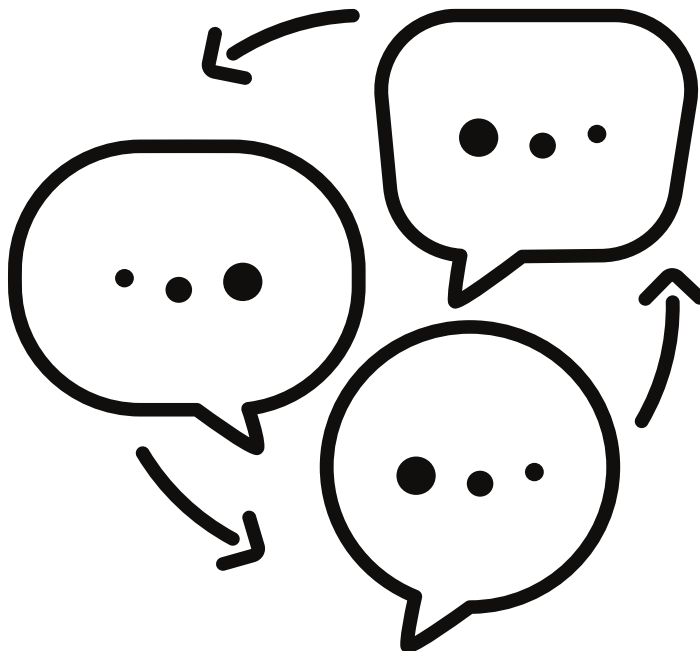


- Recording of meetings will be for the purposes of sharing with Steering Group Members who aren't able to attend a meeting and for minute-taking purposes.
- Brief written minutes will be taken from the meeting (responsibility of the SPCR PPIE Manager) with a summary of key discussion points and an action/objectives log which can be reviewed each meeting.
- Minutes will be shared with Steering Group Members in a timely manner following the meeting with opportunity for Steering Group Members to provide amendments if needed.



## h. Feedback loops with SPCR Decision-Making Bodies

- As per diagram one, feedback to and from the Board will be facilitated by two representatives from the Steering Group, with support from the SPCR PPIE Manager (Halle Johnson) and SPCR Academic Lead for PPIE (Miriam Santer).
- To ensure key points taken to the Board are based on discussion and views from the wider group, 'Feedback to the Board' will be a standing agenda item for each meeting, alongside 'Feedback from the Board' to make sure any key points from the Board are shared back to the Steering Group.
- On occasion, discussion from the Steering Group may be fed directly to the SPCR Executive (instead of the Board), and this will be facilitated by the SPCR PPIE Manager, SPCR Senior Operations Manager and/or SPCR Assistant Director. These individuals will also be responsible for feeding back any key points from discussion at the Executive.



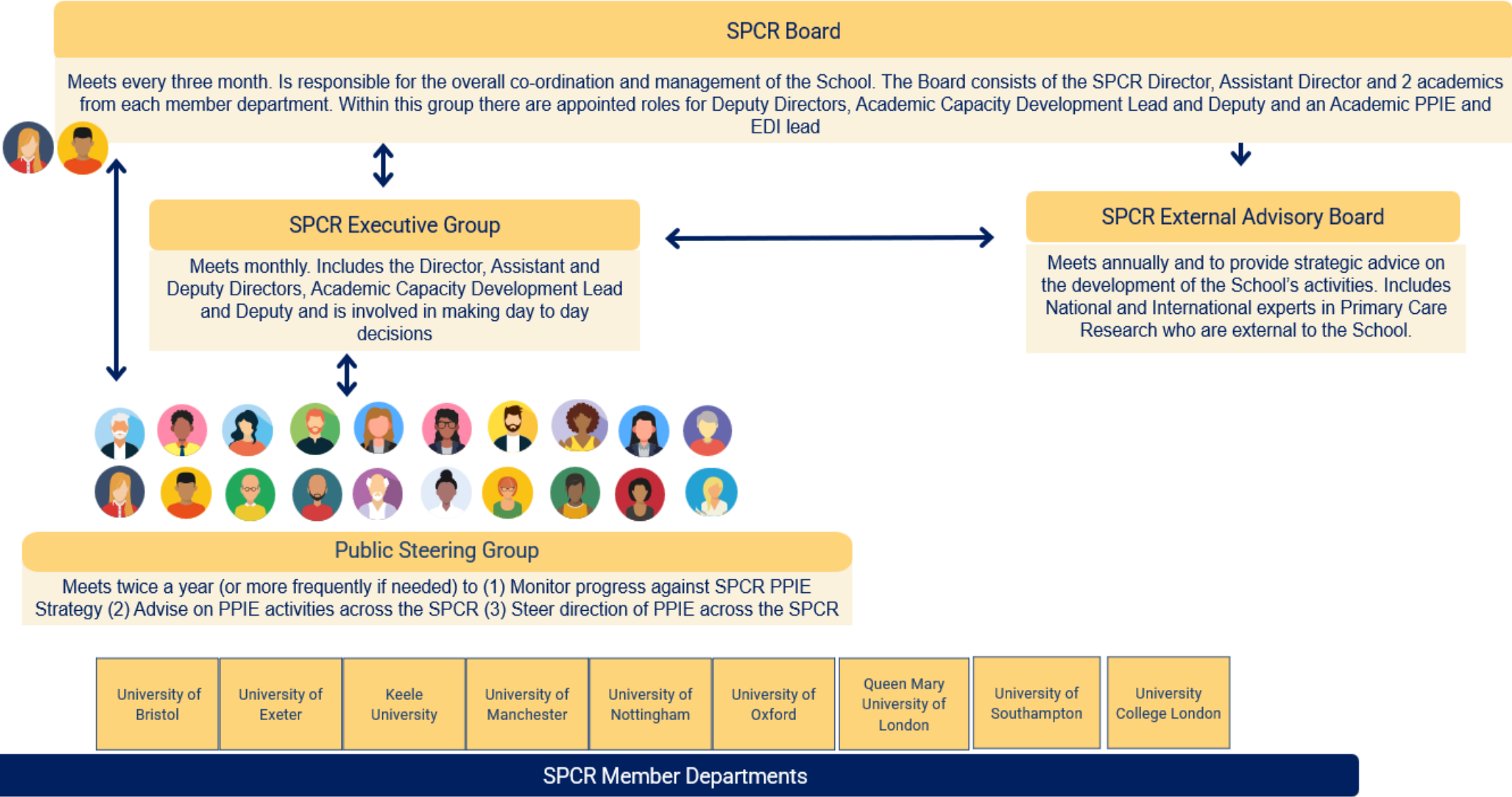


Diagram 1- SPCR Decision-Making Feedback Loops

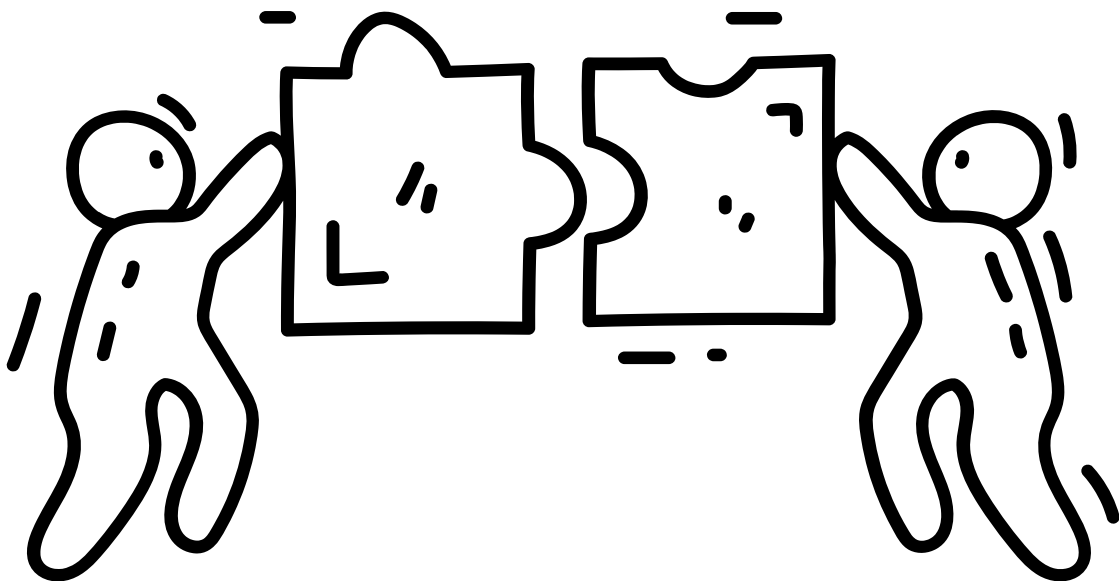
## i. Confidentiality

- Due to the nature of research and its potential to be confidential, the Public Steering Group will be guided by the SPCR PPIE Manager about what information and when this information should be kept confidential. Any information that is flagged as confidential must be treated with strict confidence.

## j. Conduct

- We expect Steering Group Members, and anyone attending Steering Group Meetings to:
  - Be respectful of the feelings, wishes, viewpoints, dignity, and rights of others
  - Listen to others and express own views in a constructive way
  - To refrain from using any offensive comments or language which could cause distress to others, such as comments related to gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, disability or other similarly sensitive issues
  - Be mindful of how much they are contributing to discussions, and be willing to make space so we can hear from all Steering Group members
- We recognise that behaviour of Steering Group Members may differ due to their personal circumstances and as a means to help facilitate their own involvement (for example, using the chat more to engage, and keeping cameras off) and we will be sensitive to different needs and
- If at any time members of the Steering Group feel unsafe or unwelcome, or observe someone not acting in line with the conduct expected during meetings, this should be raised as soon as possible with the SPCR PPIE Manager to be addressed.

- Any issue raised will be handled with the upmost sensitivity and will always involve reaching out to the individual first to understand the reasons for the behaviour and how they may be better supported to be involved.
- Continued issues with conduct and behaviour may result in Membership to the group being removed, but only after a thorough review and discussion with those involved, and when all other strategies for further support have failed.



## k. Support

- The SPCR PPIE Manager, Halle Johnson, will be available as your point of contact for queries, questions or further discussion at any time via email or phone.



- Where possible, necessary adjustments will be provided to support Steering Group members to be involved, this includes providing documents by post, and ensuring there is a transcription option available for meetings. If Steering Group members would like to discuss further adjustments, they can contact the SPCR PPIE Manager via phone or email to discuss.
- If support is required in-between meetings, public steering group members can request this via email or phone, and support can be provided on a one-to-one basis as needed.

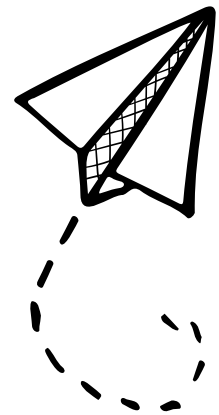
## l. Training & Development

- Where possible, Steering Group Members will be supported to pursue training and development opportunities which would support them in this role.
- Steering Group Members will be given the opportunity to complete a skills and training review. This will be used by the PPIE Manager to help identify relevant training and development opportunities and also understand Steering Group Members unique skills and interests. This will be reviewed and refreshed at 1 – 1.5 years into the role.

- The SPCR PPIE Manager will share relevant training and development opportunities as well as opportunities to attend relevant Primary Care and/or Public Involvement events.
- Steering Group Members are also encouraged to identify and raise any training and development opportunities they feel would be relevant to the group.
- Where possible, Steering Group Members will also be invited to events in their region relating to primary care research and/or public involvement which might offer training and development opportunities.

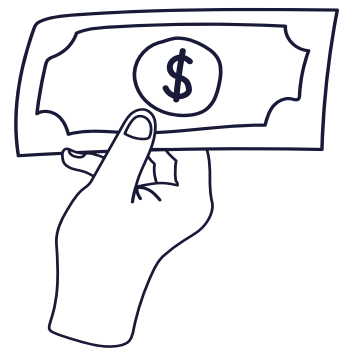
### **m. Additional opportunities**

- Where there may be further opportunities for involvement for Steering Group Members we will seek to offer equal opportunities to apply for these roles. This includes ensuring there is adequate time given for applications, and ensuring different methods of applying are available. We will ensure a fair and inclusive selection process which promotes equal opportunities regardless of race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.
- Where possible, we will seek to ensure everyone feels equally involved in additional opportunities, by sharing opportunities across the group, tracking involvement in these activities and prioritising future expressions of interest from those who may not have yet had the opportunity to be involved in an additional activity.



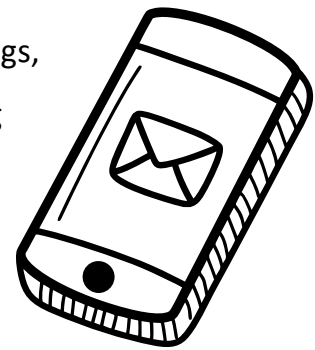
## n. Payment and expenses

- You will be offered payment for your time in this role. All payments will be in line with the [NIHR Payment guidance for members of the public](#) (last updated April 2024). This includes payment for attending meetings, any preparation time required and for activities in-between meetings which require involvement.
- Payment will be provided either via bank transfer or voucher, depending on Steering Group Members preference.
- Steering Group Members accept responsibility for declaring any recognition payments to HMRC (if required).
- Recognition payments and vouchers may affect the receipt of benefits. Signposting can be provided by the SPCR PPIE Manager to further information and support for those receiving benefits before receiving payments.
- Reasonable expenses will also be covered when required, including travel to and from activities and/or overnight accommodation as part of this role. Other expenses such as childcare and carer costs can be reimbursed if the SPCR PPIE Manager (Halle) is notified prior to the activity.
- This Ways of Working document is not intended to create or construe a relationship of employment between the NIHR School for Primary Care Research and Steering Group Members.



## o. Staying in touch

- Regular email updates will be provided in between meetings, which will include relevant news from the SPCR, upcoming opportunities for involvement and/or training and development. These will be facilitated by the SPCR PPIE Manager.



- Additional avenues for communication between meeting will be explored for those who rely less on email (for example, a WhatsApp channel)

## p. Reviewing our ways of working

- The working processes of the group will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, with opportunities for Steering Group members to provide feedback on processes after each meeting (either through an anonymous feedback box, over email or over a phone call).
- Feedback will then be integrated alongside a review of the document each year, with the next review of this document happening in October 2025.

