

# CLAHRCBITE

Brokering innovation through evidence

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## Public involvement in major service change: lessons from recent research



### Results

Financial pressures and changing demands have prompted proposals for significant change in the NHS. Patients and the public should be involved in major change but their impact can be limited.

### Who needs to know?

- NHS Managers
- Patient and public involvement (PPI) Groups
- Clinicians and other healthcare professionals

## What did we do:

Using qualitative methods, we observed meetings where patients and the public were involved in designing, developing or commenting on plans for major service change in two STP areas. We interviewed over 50 participants—NHS and local authority staff, and patients and members of the public—about the process.

## What we found and what does this mean:

There was plenty of PPI activity in both sites, with patients and the public given ample opportunities to comment on proposed changes through consultation events and involvement forums. But the people who contributed most to PPI were a relatively small set, often selected because of previous experience of involvement in NHS services. They worked hard to put forward the views of the public, but usually had little connection to the wider community. Confidentiality arrangements surrounding the plans made it difficult for them to seek the views of others on contentious proposals. Often, they were selective in what they said, putting forward views they saw as more 'acceptable' and avoiding arguments that would fundamentally challenge the plans for change.

## What next:

Even active PPI can be limited in how far it brings the wealth of views of the public to bear on major service change. Extensive, well-resourced PPI processes do not guarantee that the full range of views will be included—especially views of more marginal groups, or those opposed to change. PPI leads should pay careful attention to the people involved and the mechanisms connecting them to the wider public.

## Evidence:

Martin, G.P., Carter, P. and Dent, M. (2018) Major health service transformation and the public voice: conflict, challenge or complicity?, *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy* in press, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1355819617728530>

## What is NIHR CLAHRC EM?

NIHR Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) are collaborations between the NHS, universities and local organisations. Our goals are to conduct applied health research across the East Midlands and translate our research findings into improved outcomes for the public.

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