



Payment Policy for Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) at Southampton Clinical Trials Unit: A guide for staff, researchers, and public contributors

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1. Introduction

The Southampton Clinical Trials Unit is committed to running trials which improve the health and care of the whole population. To make sure our research is relevant to everyone, we value experience and opinions from patients, carers and other members of the public who provide valuable feedback and input on how our trials are designed, run and published. This is called Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

We believe that people taking part in PPI, referred to in this document as public contributors, should not be left out of pocket for helping us with research. We therefore reimburse people for their time and expenses in recognition of their contribution.

This guide sets out the SCTU's policy for reimbursement, such as when, how and how much we offer to pay people, as well as information on how payments may affect benefit payments and tax, and what further support and resources are available.

2. Payment vs. Expenses

Reimbursement for PPI can fall into two categories: payment for involvement, and expenses.

Payment for Involvement

This is where we offer payment in lieu of the time someone has spent taking part in PPI activities. This could be a one-off activity or involvement in regular meetings. The amount paid may vary depending on the type of activity and the time involved. The amount offered should be agreed between the SCTU and the public contributor before the activity takes place.

For more on payment for involvement, see section 3.

Expenses

This is where we reimburse 'out-of-pocket' costs that public contributors may have incurred as a result of getting involved in PPI. This could include things such as travel or meal expenses. There are limits on the amount of expenses we can cover, and these should always be agreed before costs are incurred. Receipts also need to be provided for expense claims.

For more on expenses, see section 4.

3. Payment for Involvement

3.1. When is payment offered?

Payment for involvement is offered for the majority of PPI activities that require a lot of people's time. The amount of payment offered may vary depending on the type of activity, the role of the public contributor, and the time the activity is expected to take.

Whether payment is offered, and at what rate, should be clearly stated by the SCTU staff member running the activity and agreed with the public contributor before the activity takes place.

3.2. Roles and payments

Below are some examples of PPI roles and the payment offered. SCTU staff will use this table to decide what payment category a PPI activity falls into, and agree the payment offered to the public contributor before the activity takes place.

Role	Payment Category
Role 1: Choosing to respond to an open access PPI opportunity. e.g., responding to an online survey, sending responses to a short, informal document review, informal conversations.	Category 1: No expenses or payment can be claimed (In some circumstances a voucher may be offered as an incentive for this kind of activity at the discretion of the researcher).
Role 2: A short activity of less than an hour that requires no, or very little, pre-reading. e.g., Reviewing a short document, a short telephone/online interview with a researcher.	Category 2: A one-off payment of between £13.80 and £27.50 is offered depending on the time taken to complete the activity (exact rate to be made clear before the activity takes place).

<p>Role 3: Involvement in a longer activity that requires some pre-reading.</p> <p>e.g., a focus group or regular meeting, commenting on a longer or more complex document.</p>	<p>Category 3: Payment is offered at an hourly rate of £27.50/hr.</p> <p>Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses on provision of receipts. (see section 4 for details of allowable expenses).</p>
<p>Role 4: Ongoing involvement in a role with strategic and decision-making activities.</p> <p>e.g., Sitting on an oversight group such as a Trial Management Group or Steering Committee, interview recruitment, member of a board, help writing or drafting information on health research.</p>	<p>Category 4: Payment is offered at an hourly rate of £27.50/hr (up to £82.50 for half day, £165 for full day)</p> <p>Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses on provision of receipts. (see section 4 for details of allowable expenses).</p>

Please note - The SCTU payment rates are based on the rates set by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). These rates were updated in December 2025. Please note that for some existing trials that were already costed, trial budgets may not be able to accommodate the updated NIHR rates and may still use the previous rates at £25/hr.

3.3. Does payment have to be accepted?

Reimbursement for involvement should always be offered in line with the above roles and categories.

However, it is up to an individual public contributor whether they choose to accept payment. Some people may not wish to be paid, may only wish to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, or may wish to be paid in a different way, for example with vouchers.

Some people may find their taxes or benefit payments will be affected by payment (**see section 3.4**) and may therefore not want to accept payment.

We can acknowledge people's involvement and say thank you in other ways, e.g., in writing, supporting developing their skills and experience.

3.4. How might payments affect tax and benefit payments

Being paid for involvement, including payment with vouchers or other goods, may affect people's tax and benefits so it is important public contributors understand the implications of accepting payments before getting involved. They may need to fill in a tax return or declare payments. SCTU staff are not experts in this area, and **we recommend public contributors consult a tax or benefits expert before accepting payments.**

The [Benefits Advice Service](#) is a free, confidential and personalised service to support members of the public whose welfare benefits may be affected by payment for involvement.

If you are a member of the public involved in an NIHR organisation, or in a research project funded by the NIHR, you can use the service. For more information on how to access this service, please contact NIHR PublicPartnerships@nihr.ac.uk or call 020 3655 5925.

You can also get free confidential advice from your local Citizens Advice Bureau (phone 0800 144 8848, <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>)

The NIHR also has lots more information about the implications of accepting payment for involvement on its 'Payment Guidance for Members of the Public' webpage - <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-members-of-the-public-considering-involvement-in-research/27372>

People who are receiving benefits because their health status or disabilities that affect their ability to work will need to ensure that Jobcentre Plus understands that 'involvement' is different to employment. SCTU can provide a letter to make Jobcentre Plus staff aware of this and explain their involvement.

SCTU can be flexible in how we pay public contributors and offer alternatives such as vouchers, but it is the contributor's responsibility to ensure any form of reimbursement will not adversely affect them.

4. Expenses

Southampton Clinical Trials Unit will also cover reasonable expenses; these are 'out-of-pocket' costs that public contributors may have incurred as a result of getting involved in PPI activities.

4.1. What expenses are covered

The below list includes items that SCTU may be able to cover as out-of-pocket expenses, in line with the University of Southampton's expenses policy*. Public contributors should check with the SCTU staff member running the activity and agree what expenses will be covered for each situation before the activity takes place.

- Travel (e.g., public transport**, use of own car***, car parking, taxi)
- Subsistence/meal expenses, where the activity and/or travel means a public contributor will need to have a meal away from home and no food is provided.
- Accommodation (if activity lasts for more than one day, or travel for the activity in one day is unfeasible and the activity cannot be carried out virtually)
- Alternative carer or child-care costs (maximum rate of £27.50/hr up to a maximum of £110)
- Accompanying carer expenses (maximum rate of £27.50/hr up to a maximum of £110)
- Personal assistants and support worker expenses and costs (maximum rate of £27.50/hr up to a maximum of £110)
- Any other out-of-pocket expenses agreed in advance.

Accommodation and travel can be booked for public contributors by SCTU.

*Please refer to the University of Southampton document "[Guidance note - travelling and expenses non-university personnel](#)" for details of allowable expenses.

**All public transport should be economy class travel only, except in circumstances where a public contributor has specific travel requirements (e.g., wheelchair travel) and this should be agreed with SCTU in advance.

*** Use of own vehicle can be claimed at 45p/mile. Mileage rates are based on a single round trip i.e., a trip from the public contributor's home to the university and back again. The trip may involve stopping in a number of locations on the way or be over a number of days – this all counts as a single round trip.

4.2. Limits to expense claims

Expense claims are generally **limited to £110 per activity/meeting**.

If expenses are likely to exceed £110 and are felt to be necessary, the public contributor should discuss this with the SCTU staff member running the PPI activity **in advance and before the expenses are incurred**. Staff may need to discuss this with someone from SCTU finance before approving.

As we are often covering expenses through limited researcher budgets, we are generally unable to cover large expense claims.

PLEASE NOTE ALL EXPENSES MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY FULLY ITEMISED RECEIPTS, OR THEY RISK BEING REJECTED BY THE UNIVERSITY FINANCE TEAM.

5. How are payments made?

Note: SCTU staff and public contributors should make sure the PPI role, payment amount and allowable expenses are agreed before the activity takes place.

Payment and expense claims are usually paid by the University of Southampton finance department directly into the public contributor's bank account via the BACS system.

5.1. Making a claim for a bank transfer via the BACS system

For a regular PPI contributor

- The SCTU staff member leading the PPI activity should populate the [AP11 form](#) with:
 - Details of the PPI contributor (inc. six-digit supplier ID number).
 - Details of project/trial.
 - Detail of claim/activity, cost.
 - Account code and subproject code.
- Send AP11 form to PPI contributor to check, and if necessary, add any agreed expenses, before returning to SCTU staff member.
 - Signature only required where expenses are being claimed.

- Receipts must also be sent where expenses are being claimed.
- SCTU staff member to check, then forward the form (and receipts) to expenses@soton.ac.uk. The budget holder and SCTU finance team will then be able to approve the reimbursement in Business World which will then go to the central UoS finance team for payment.

To setup a new PPI contributor

- SCTU staff member to send new PPI contributor blank [AP07 form](#).
- PPI contributor to return completed AP07 form to SCTU staff member.
- SCTU staff member to send completed AP07 form to supsetup@soton.ac.uk requesting they be setup as a research volunteer/PPI contributor.
- PPI contributor should then be setup with a six-digit ID number (payee number) starting with a 7.
- Regular PPI contributor process above can now be followed.

Please be aware that reimbursement payments through the University finance system can take several weeks, and SCTU staff cannot chase until the claim has been in the system for four weeks.

Payment for involvement and expenses may be treated differently in terms of how they affect tax and benefit payments. If a public contributor needs to claim reimbursement and expenses separately, they should speak to the SCTU staff member running the activity as they may need to use two claim forms.

5.2 Alternative methods of payment

If a bank transfer is not suitable for a public contributor, we can sometimes arrange for vouchers to be sent instead.

The SCTU staff member will need to contact buy@soton.ac.uk to request the vouchers and arrange for these to be sent to the public contributor online or in the post.

6. What else should I consider?

6.1. Invisible Costs

The Southampton Clinical Trials Unit aims to ensure everyone can get involved in PPI for our trials, without being left out-of-pocket. We are aware that they may be 'invisible costs' associated with some people's involvement, e.g., phone calls, stationery, and printing, etc.

Public contributors can ask SCTU to phone them to avoid phone charges and can request paper copies of documents are posted to them. They should discuss any concerns and needs with their SCTU contact before agreeing to take part in PPI activities, to see what reasonable help can be provided.

6.2. Payments for children and young people

Some of our trials involve children and young people (under 16), and we therefore want to hear their view as well of those of parents and guardians.

Reimbursement for involvement applies to children and young people as well, but the appropriateness of any payment or reward, and how it should be made, should be discussed with the young person and their parent/guardian before they take part in any activity. Vouchers or another form of reward may be more suitable than bank transfers in some cases.

There are also legal restrictions on the time under 16s can take part in paid activities, and SCTU staff and researchers should be mindful of this.

7. Further information and resources

Below is a list of some of the places where you can find more information about reimbursement for public involvement, and how payments may affect a public contributor's tax or benefits situation.

For SCTU staff and UoS researchers, there is a central UoS finance SharePoint page - [Research volunteers lay participants & participants in clinical trials \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

NIHR Payment Guidance for Members of the Public -

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-members-of-the-public-considering-involvement-in-research/27372>

NIHR Payment Guidance for Researchers and Professionals –

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392>

NIHR Confidential Benefits Advice Service <https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/news-and-events/nihr-benefits-advice-service-for-public-involvement-in-research/>

HM Revenue and Customs has information about the need to complete a tax return - <https://www.gov.uk/check-if-you-need-tax-return>

Department for Work and Pensions' guidance is available on their website - www.gov.uk/dwp