

ARC East of England Public Contributor Payment Guide

April 2026

Version 5

Payments for members of the public who are involved as public contributors to ARC EoE activity include payments for an acknowledgement for their time spent (preparation time and meeting time, for example), plus reimbursement of any expenses incurred. Public contributors should be told in advance what is offered and provided with information about welfare benefits and tax, to ensure they can make informed decisions about involvement.

This document outlines guidance for the payment and reimbursement of public contributors to ARC East of England Core Team activity. This includes the Research Inclusion Forum, Public Involvement Hub, ARC Representation on Regional PPI Groups, ARC Expert Advisory Group, Inclusion Steering Group and ARC EoE Board and for public contributor payments that go through ARC EoE host organisation, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust. This document is guided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust Recognition Payments to Service Users and Carers Policy (April 2025).

Payments or reimbursement for public contributors within research themes will continue to follow their host University policies and we acknowledge that Universities have their own policies and rates will vary.

This guidance updates the previous version (January 2026).

It is your choice whether or not you accept payment for involvement in research. Receiving payment of a fee for involvement is likely to have implications for you if you are currently employed, unemployed, receiving state benefits or retired – this is because the payment you receive will be treated as earnings. If you are receiving state benefits, receiving any form of payment may affect your benefit claim, and therefore it is vital that you also get expert advice from a benefits advisor regarding your personal circumstances.

More information can be found on the [NIHR website](#). A free, confidential and personalised service to support members of the public whose welfare benefits may be affected by payment for involvement is provided by the Benefits Advice Service. For more information on how to access this service, please contact NIHR publicpartnerships@nihr.ac.uk or call 020 88437117.

Tax

In accordance with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) guidance that covers research volunteers, public contributors (known by HMRC as lay participants) and participants in trials and research:

- HMRC agrees that the amounts paid to public contributors (and participants) are unlikely to fall within the definition of “earnings” for PAYE or NI
- Under Section 16, Taxes Management Act 1970, HMRC is entitled to ask for details of payments to non-employees at their discretion; but they would not routinely ask for details for small payments such as these.
- There will be no tax or NIC liability arising on the individual if the sums received do no more than reimburse the individual's reasonable costs of participating in the trial or research, including costs of travel and subsistence. However, should the sums paid

exceed those reasonable expenses then the excess may fall to be chargeable to tax as Miscellaneous Income, potentially giving rise to personal tax liabilities of the individuals which should be notified to the HMRC under Self-Assessment. Depending on the level of involvement, a participant may wish to declare this payment to HMRC through self-assessment (e.g., if they are receiving a higher payment or if your payments become regular)

Welfare benefits

Participants should check their benefit conditions if they are getting involved in research (as a participant or public contributor). Different benefits have different earnings limits and individuals should know what their limit is if they are in receipt of a benefit, benefits can be affected if payment for involvement is made.

Where people are receiving state benefits, they are required to notify Jobcentre Plus of any paid or voluntary activity. They may also need permission to undertake any paid activity. If the individual requires a letter as evidence of involvement, this can be requested from ARC (ARCOffice@cpft.nhs.uk). It is advisable in all cases to seek advice from an appropriate source. There is more information provided on the NIHR website payment guidance for members of the public and about on the Benefits Advice Service below.

Reimbursement of expenses

The DWP and HMRC ignore any expenses that are received when they are calculating entitlement to means-tested benefits and tax obligations. This means that a participant (or public contributor) can receive full reimbursement of all receipted expenses without any problems, as long as they receive exact reimbursement of actual receipted expenses.

Participation payment rates

ARC East of England usually makes honorarium payments to public contributors as below. The payment offered will depend on the volume and nature of the activity, ARC EoE will advise on the nature of the task and the payment rate offered prior to starting any activity. These can be reduced or declined should the contributor require it.

Meeting (informal meeting not expected to require any preparation or formal ARC meetings as listed below) or involvement in task or activity requiring little or no preparation.	£27.50 per hour
Preparation for formal meeting, task or activity (as required and agreed prior to activity)	£27.50 per hour
Involvement in a task or activity representing ARC EoE which equates to approximately half a day's activity. For example, interviewing candidates or delivering training.	£82.50 (half day)
Involvement in a task or activity representing ARC EoE which equates to an all-day activity.	£165 (all day)
Agreed Rates for ARC Formal Meetings	
Research Inclusion Forum (including 2 hours preparation time and attendance at 2-hour meeting)	£110
Co-Chair of Research Inclusion Forum (including 2 hours preparation time and attendance at 2-hour meeting)	£165
ARC EoE Expert Advisory Group (including 2-hour preparation and attendance at 2-hour meeting)	£110

ARC Representative on Regional PPI Group (including 1 hour preparation and attendance at 2-hour meeting)	£82.50
ARC Representative at the HRA shared commitment to public involvement group (includes 1-hour public contributor meeting and two-hour learning and sharing meeting)	£27.50 £55
ARC EoE Board (including 2 hours preparation time and attendance at 2-hour meeting)	£110
ARC Public Involvement Hub (90-minute online meeting)	£41.25
NIHR Inclusion Steering Group (pre-meet with chair 1 hour, preparation 1 hour, meeting 1 hour)	£82.50
Additional payment for online meetings	£5

Expenses

Where possible, we will always aim to ensure expense are booked or paid for prior to the activity taking place. The following types of expenses may be claimed, **with prior agreement from ARC**:

- Travel / Parking
- Accommodation
- Food
- Stationery and equipment needed to carry out activity
- Facilitator fees (e.g., advocate, translator etc.)
- Conference / Event booking fees
- Costs for carers or childcare cover –We acknowledge that funding carers or cover for childcare can facilitate public contributions to NIHR research. If this is necessary for participation, please contact us first to discuss what provision we may be able to fund.

Public transport and parking claims must be supported by appropriate receipts. Claims for using own vehicles will be paid at mileage rate for cars 56p per mile and for motorcycles is 33p per mile.

Subsistence allowances:

Lunch	Evening meal	Bed and breakfast	Non-commercial accommodation
£5	£15	£55	£25

Activities where no payments are offered

There are some circumstances where we would not pay an acknowledgement payment or expenses:

Activity	Public contributor payment	Travel / subsistence	Fee
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Training	Not offered	Not normally reimbursed	Sometimes paid if part of strategic training plan
External seminars or events	Offered if presenting or representing on behalf of the ARC	Reimbursed if representing the ARC	Costs paid if representing the group
ARC events	Offered if presenting or representing on behalf of the ARC	Reimbursed if representing the ARC	Fees covered

Process to claim payments and expenses

Payments to public contributors through ARC Core Team activity can only be made by BACs transfer and a New Payee registration form will need to be completed.

Further information:

Further payment guidance for members of the public can be found on the NIHR website: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-members-of-the-public-considering-involvement-in-research/27372>

Guidance for organisations on employment status and tax can be found from NIHR: [Payment for public involvement in health and care research: a guide for organisations on employment status and tax | NIHR](#)

NIHR Payment Guidance for Researchers and Professionals [Payment guidance for researchers and professionals | NIHR](#)

For HMRC advice, see <https://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/employment-income-manual/eim71105>

Benefits Advice Service

This free, confidential and personalised service (launched in January 2015) is coordinated by the Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau to support members of the public whose welfare benefits may be affected by payment for involvement.

Who is the Benefits Advice Service for?

Members of the public involved with NIHR organisations or NIHR funded research projects.

Some other health and social care research organisations also subscribe to this service. Other partners who are also part of the service are:

- HRA
- Social Care Institute for Excellence
- NHS England
- Health and Care Research Wales (was Involving People)

It is important for all staff and researchers to allow members of the public with enquiries to contact the benefits advice service directly, rather than raising any enquiries on their behalf. This will avoid misinterpretation or confusion in any advice offered.

How to access the Benefits Advice Service

For more information on how to access this service, please contact NIHR publicpartnerships@nihr.ac.uk or call 020 88437117.