

Making the case for PPI payments to nonsalaried Public Authors



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Introduction

The National Institute for Health and Care Research insists that the research it funds is coproduced with people who have lived experience, and this includes the co-authorship of academic papers reporting the findings of the study. This resource paper suggests possible reasons why some academic teams prefer not to offer PPI payments to Public Authors and gives examples of writing where PPI payments have been offered.

Previous work has considered:

- the extent to which health research funded by the NIHR has Patient and Public Involvement built into the study protocol¹
- whether adverts for Public Contributors meet the requirements set by NIHR².
- the role of the Public Author³ and what is required to satisfy authorship standards in peer-reviewed academic publishing⁴.

This investigation looks at outputs – what a sample of published papers can tell us about the conduct of research teams in relation to PPI payments for Public Authors. Others have already shown that reporting on PPI in general is rare and vague⁵, so we might guess that it will be hard to find specific examples where Public Authors are engaged and offered a PPI payment.

A sample of published papers

An alert was placed on Google Scholar to announce all papers published after 01 January 2026 that referred to PPIE. Any papers which used the PPIE acronym for another purpose were removed from the sample. Rather than Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement were removed from the sample. Single-author papers, such as PhD theses were also removed, in order to shine the spotlight on papers being written by a team.

Are papers open access?

Up to the date shown in the footer, a total of 55 titles were reviewed. Since these papers were making reference to PPIE, it is reasonable to hope that they would be open access, rather than hidden behind a paywall. There has been significant progress in recent years, so this sample had 85% (n=47) of papers that were open access, and just 8 papers were restricted to people able and willing to pay for them.

Are Public Authors identifiable?

Public authors were named on 28% (n=13) of the 47 open access papers. Ten different journals have published these papers. One paper anonymised individual Public Authors by naming their group in the list of authors rather than individuals⁶.

Does the paper report on PPI payments?

Public Contributors may engage in many different activities in the knowledge production journey, from being nominated as co-applicants in the funding application, through sitting on an advisory board or the Trial Management Group, to data collection and interpretation and publication. In our sample of open access papers published in 2026, each paper was scrutinised to see if it reported on PPI payments being made to the Public Authors for their work on the manuscript. None (n=0) of the 13 papers that included Public Authors declared that PPI payments had been offered to Public authors in respect of their contribution to the manuscript. Two papers noted that their Public Authors received no reimbursement for writing, and indeed, in one study, the offer of expenses reimbursement was rejected.

Who is doing this?

Public Authors who have been offered PPI payments	Research organisations that have offered PPI payments to Public Authors	Journals that have published papers written by Public Authors who have been offered PPI payments.
	ARC-NENC	
Victoria Abbott-Fleming ⁷	UoN Medical School	Research Involvement & Engagement

Public Authors who have been offered PPI payments	Research organisations that have offered PPI payments to Public Authors	Journals that have published papers written by Public Authors who have been offered PPI payments.
Alison Faulkner	The McPin Foundation	?
Sarah Greaves	UoN Medical School	Research Involvement & Engagement
	Isla Dowds-Skinner	
	ARC-NENC	

Conflict of interest

Academic papers generally conclude with a declaration of financial or commercial interests. In one of the published papers (#4) an academic author declared a financial relationship (consulting, advisory and funding grants) with no fewer than 16 pharmaceutical companies, with a second author of the same paper declaring 12 such relationships, yet without censure. This hints at the following possibilities:

- This publisher was unusually lenient
- As long as such interests are declared, there is no problem
- High status academic authors are valuable to publishers as they help with circulation, while Public Authors may be subjected to more scrutiny.

No Public Authors declared any potential conflict of interests in the sample of papers.

Rates and royalties

Once examples have been found, it may be possible to say something about the sums being offered to Public Authors and whether Public Authors are invited to register with ALCS⁸ to obtain royalties.

Do study teams respond to an inquiry?

The following email message was sent to the corresponding author as soon as their paper was included in this dataset. The aim is to locate specific examples of papers where Public Authors have joined the writing team, find out if they have been offered payment, and track some of the lessons for future practice. Here is the email message.

“Dear Researcher

I see that you are the corresponding author for a recently published paper entitled....and that your team of co-authors included one or more Public Authors (sometimes called Patient Authors, people with lived experience, experts by experience or Public Contributors).

I am trying to find out whether research teams offer PPI payments for Public Authorship, and why they choose to pay, or choose not to do so. This is not about whether you offer PPI payments for Public Contributors who attend an advisory group, review other documents, collect or analyse data, or speak at a dissemination event (the indirect activities that

legitimise the person being eligible to be a co-author). I am trying to locate examples where Public Authors have been offered a PPI payment for the time and effort involved in drafting, reviewing, commenting, editing and/or submitting the manuscript.

I appreciate that these are sensitive matters, as you balance obligations towards the funder, meet publication ethics requirements and uphold privacy rights for Public Authors, but I hope you or the Public Authors you have worked with will be able and willing to share with me what happened on this matter during the production of your paper.

As my investigations continue, I will continue to update my draft report on this topic, which anyone can freely access at <https://peterbates.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Making-the-case-for-PPI-payments-for-Public-Authors.pdf>. This is an unfunded bit of citizen science, driven by curiosity and a wish to see Public Authors being appropriately recognised for their knowledge, skills and efforts.

Finally, may I thank you for publishing in partnership with Public Authors and invite you to send me any reflections or comments on this topic which will enrich this evolving paper.”

Why deny PPI payments to Public Authors?

Some research teams choose not to offer a PPI payment to Public Authors, perhaps for one or more of the following reasons:

Topic	Claim	Response
Privacy	The offer of PPI payments is a private matter which is nobody else’s business.	Fair point. However, PPIU payments usually come from the public purse. If privacy means most people get nothing, then this is not right either.
Willing volunteers	Some Public Authors are willing to write for nothing, so no need to offer payment.	This arrangement excludes people on modest incomes.
Gratitude	Public Contributors have been offered PPI payments for other things they have done, so they owe the research team some free labour.	
Financial interest	Publishers are suspected of rejecting any manuscript where PPI payments have been made to Public Authors because they fear the payment will create bias.	PPI payments might be compared to the salary of an academic, which is not viewed as a cause of bias. Excessive payments would be deemed coercive, whomsoever received them.
Price setting	It is too hard to set a price on an activity that might be rushed in a few minutes or take many hours, so £0 is the easiest solution.	There are many other PPI activities (reviewing patient-facing documentation, preparing for meetings, planning a speech) that are hard to set a price on, but we do so.

Topic	Claim	Response
Cash handling	Getting the money to the Public Author is tricky, especially after the study has formally closed, which is when most academic writing takes place.	<p>This timing issue can leave academics with the feeling that they are writing in their own time rather than as part of the funded study. This is true for other dissemination activities too. The system for the administration of grants needs to be changed to enable PPI funds to be offered when they are needed.</p> <p>Public Authors to register with ALCS to obtain publication royalties.</p>
Overtime	Overwork means that salaried academics are obliged to write in their 'own time', so Public Authors should be treated the same.	Workload pressure on academics is not a reason to treat Public Authors badly. Salaried academics wage levels are considerably higher than the PPI payments offered to Public Authors.
Status and reputation	Academics advance through voluntary additional activities beyond their core roles, so Public Authors should match these additional duties.	Public authors are already contributing as non-contracted volunteers.
Writing is unique	Other PPI activities (such as creating Patient Information Leaflets attract PPI payments, but writing for the academic press is different.	
Journal editors	Journal editors fear reputational harm if they publish anything by a Public Author who has received a PPI payment for their writing.	Find out the policy of the International Society of Medical Journal Editors
Funders		Confirm funders are willing to assign funds to offer PPI payments to Public Authors.
Precedent	Researchers and publishers fear being innovative.	Find early adopters (Public Authors Research Teams and journals) to show that others have done this without difficulty. The guideline ⁹ for reporting research outcomes does not include a requirement to report on PPI payments.
Corruption	People who want paying are the wrong sort of human and so should be excluded.	Stop paying staff. As Marc Ewen has stated; "Payment isn't bias. Power imbalance is." This becomes a debate about PPI payments in general ¹⁰ rather than PPI payments specifically for Public Authors. Aim for co-production on the basis of equity rather than extractive approaches which retain academic power.

Conclusion

This is still the very start of this investigation, and, so far, I have found no examples of Public Authors who have been offered a PPI payment in relation to the specific task of contributing to the creation of the paper. I hope these inquiries will unearth some examples of Public Authors, published papers and journals that have understood that these offers are a sign of respect for the dignity of the Public Author, rather than an accusation that Experts by Experience would sell their souls for a few pieces of silver.

How this paper is being written

The investigation that generated this paper is driven by simple curiosity. The work is unfunded and is conducted as a piece of citizen science rather than under the control of any organisation. Accountability is achieved by following the *Writing in Public* framework¹¹. I am grateful to the people¹² who have contributed to this evolving resource but bear responsibility as author for the text appearing here¹³. Please send me your suggestions for further improvements.

¹ Bates P (2022) [The 37 Test](#).

² Bates P (2025) [Going cheap on expenses](#).

³ Bates P (2015) [How to involve the public as co-authors](#).

⁴ Pietramala, D., Zamma, G., Barrans, C. *et al.* Giving credit where credit's due - recognition of patient partners in health research. *Res Involv Engagem* **12**, 4 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40900-025-00817-w>

⁵ For example, in a systematic literature review of PPIE in randomised controlled trials in Otolaryngology research, a total of 346 papers were subjected to full text review and 268 of them made no reference to the presence or absence of PPIE in the study. There is no reference to Public Authors in either the production of the review or in the ten studies that were eligible for inclusion in the systematic review of findings. Lodhi, S., Kong, D., Linton, S. *et al.* Patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in Otolaryngology research: a systematic review of randomised controlled trials. *Eur Arch Otorhinolaryngol* **282**, 6005–6015 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00405-025-09515-5>.

⁶ See Bates P (2025) [Should I use a pseudonym?](#)

⁷ Blake H, Abbott-Fleming V, Greaves S, Somerset S, Chaplin WJ, Wainwright E, Walker-Bone K. Five years of patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in the development and evaluation of the Pain-at-Work toolkit to support employees' self-management of chronic pain at work. *Research Involvement and Engagement*. 2025 Jul 15;11(1):81.

⁸ ALCS is a limited company which harvests royalties for works published in the UK, takes an overhead and then distributes the payments to authors. See [ALCS](#).

⁹ Staniszewska S, Brett J, Simera I, Seers K, Mockford C, Goodlad S, Altman DG, Moher D, Barber R, Denegri S, Entwistle A (2017) GRIPP2 reporting checklists: tools to improve reporting of patient and public involvement in research. *British Medical Journal*. Aug 2;358.

¹⁰ A series of arguments for and against paying people for research participation are set out in Bates P (2022) [How to set payment levels for research participants](#). The arguments regarding PPI payments for Public Authors run parallel to those for study participants.

¹¹ Bates P (2024) [How-to-write-in-public.pdf \(peterbates.org.uk\)](https://peterbates.org.uk/how-to-write-in-public.pdf).

¹² Feedback was gratefully received from Isla Dowds-Skinner, Marc Ewen, Stan Papoulias, and Felicity Shenton.

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