

Promotion of your study for maximum recruitment

This document is designed to give research teams ideas on how you might like to promote your studies with the aim of increasing the number of research participants recruited. It is by no means an exhaustive list and is not designed to dictate where you can and cannot promote your study. Rather, it is designed to help you select the best avenues for communication for your particular study to include in your protocol *prior* to ethics approval. Some of these will be very familiar to you; others you may not have considered before.

Please note that all forms of study promotion / advertising must be included in your application to the regulatory bodies in order for approvals to be given. Promotion or advertising that has not been approved appropriately must not be used.

For further support and advice, please contact Rachael Dowling, Research Communications Manager, on 0116 2584971 or email rachael.dowling@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Consultant lists

For many research teams, the 'bread and butter' for recruitment is through consultant lists of patients who meet the criteria for the study. For brevity's sake, this document will not explore this angle further.

Please ensure that you are reviewing details of patients that you have legitimate access to as part of the clinical care team. You must not use patient lists to 'cold call'. You may consider telephone reminders to non-responders, but that must be included in your application.

GP surgeries

UHL has a monthly newsletter which is sent to all GPs in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. You may send information that is relevant to GPs to be included in the newsletter to Catherine Headley, Head of Services for GPs at Catherine.headley@uhl-tr.nhs.uk The information must be short and to the point, giving clear guidance on what you want the GPs to do. The deadline for inclusion is 10th of each month. If you have any further queries about the newsletter, please call Catherine on 0116 258 8598.

Posters

Almost all study teams produce posters, which are an easy, eye-catching way of attracting potential participants. There are many places you can display your posters, depending on your target audience:

- Outpatient clinics
- Research and innovation noticeboard (outside our office at LGH) – please note that space is limited so studies will be rotated on a fortnightly basis; we also have a rack for printed posters and leaflets. Again, space is limited so material will be rotated fortnightly
- Children's centres
- GP surgeries
- Pharmacies
- Libraries
- Education centres
- Faith centres
- Voluntary and community centres e.g. village halls

We are currently investigating the possibility of a research participation noticeboard at the LRI, as this is an area of the hospital that has a large footfall.

PDFs of your poster can also be displayed on our websites (see section below).

Please note: you may need to seek permission to display your poster outside of UHL.

A poster template is being developed between the University of Leicester and UHL to ensure that funders, hosts and sponsors are being acknowledged correctly and that branding guidelines for the lead organisations are being adhered to. If you would like your poster reviewed, please send it to Rachael Dowling. Once the template has been created, an updated version of this document - together with the template – will be circulated to research teams.

Databases

Some research teams keep databases that hold details of individuals who have previously participated in clinical trials. Individuals on these databases must have consented to have their data stored for this specific purpose. To set up a database, you will need to inform, and have agreement from, the Head of Privacy for the Trust. You will also need to give individuals on the database the option to 'unsubscribe'.

Leicester's Hospitals has a membership database of 10,000 individuals who are interested in the work of our hospitals. They are contacted on a weekly basis about news and opportunities to get involved with the Trust. The database is managed by the PPI team (Karl Mayes and Hannah Rooney). Its make-up roughly reflects the diversity of our City and County. It may be particularly suitable for recruiting healthy controls.

There is an expectation that teams who would like to use this service offer to run a [Marvellous Medicine](#) talk. If you would like to utilise this database, please contact Rachael Dowling in the first instance. In your protocol, please refer to this database as "Membership Engagement Services (MES Engage) which is part of Electoral Reform Services (ERS Group)".

As part of our plans to develop our service, we are considering creating a central database for healthy volunteers. Your feedback as to whether this would be a good idea would be most welcome.

Social media

Social media is a growing channel for communicating your research. They are free and easy to use, but a good account requires time to keep it up-to-date. If you don't have enough content, then think twice before setting up a new account and consider using official accounts (such as team accounts, the Leicester's Research account, or Leicester's Hospitals account) that already exist. Please do not use personal accounts to advertise a study. You are of course free to 'retweet' or 'like' study posts using personal accounts.

As with other forms of advertising, you will need to think carefully about developing an online advert that fosters interest without biasing the sample. However, recent research suggests that participants recruited via social media are very similar to those recruited through traditional methods.

If you are using social media to advertise your study, make sure you include it in your NRES application within section A.28 of the IRAS form.

Twitter

According to NRES, “*the reviewing committee will not review each individual ‘tweet’ and will consider the use of Twitter as recruitment strategy in a broad scope*”. In other words, you don’t need to submit a long list of Tweets for individual approval.

There is lots of evidence for what makes a good post on Twitter – videos and images have more clicks and likes than text alone. The algorithms used to decide what Tweets might be interesting also like words such as ‘congratulations’ – so please congratulate teams on key milestones like first patient recruited.

Remember with Twitter that you only have 280 characters. A simple way to convey all your information is to turn your poster into a jpeg. You can do this for free using www.pdfstoimage.com. You can also make links to websites shorter using free tools such as <https://bitly.com/>

To increase your reach, click ‘who is in this photo’ and add the handles for @Leicresearch @Leic_hospital and @LeicesterBRC (if relevant) as a minimum. The Research Communications Manager has access to all these accounts and can retweet to their followers (circa 11,000 followers in total). You can also add handles for any funders, such as charities (e.g. @theBHF) or public bodies (e.g. @officialNIHR)

Facebook

Facebook allows you many more characters than Twitter, but the basic ‘rules’ such as videos and pictures get more likes than text still apply.

Staff engagement – hospitals

Leicester’s Hospitals employs nearly 15,000 members of staff, many of whom are passionate about the NHS and contribute above and beyond to its core values. Some members of staff are willing to participate in research studies and may be recruited in the same ways as patients and members of the public.

In addition, staff can also be reached through internal communications channels, such as INsite and *In The Know*, our monthly newsletter.

INsite: any member of staff can 'Add Their Own News' using the form on the front page of INsite. Staff can also book 'Promo Boxes', which stay on the home page for one week. To book a promo box, you will need to contact the Research Communications Manager. If you are booking a promo box, you are expected to follow the booking policy, a copy of which can be obtained from the [communications team](#). Please note that a member of your team will need to have an active UHL account to be able to use this method of communication.

In the Know: this is the monthly e-newsletter for staff at Leicester's Hospitals. Items for In the Know can be sent to the Research Communications Manager for inclusion in the next edition.

Staff engagement – universities

Studies can be advertised to University of Leicester staff through their e-newsletter called the Insider, recently relaunched with a new format that is simpler, easier to understand, yet still contains great content. This is emailed to all staff on Wednesdays.

In addition, studies can also be advertised through the staff intranet and newsblog webpages throughout the week. Send your information to communications@le.ac.uk

Local media

Local media, such as newspapers and radio, can be an excellent tool for recruitment, particularly for healthy controls and for conditions that affect a substantial proportion of the population. They will usually require a senior person from your study team to talk about the condition generally, before speaking more specifically about current research programmes. It's even better if you have a patient who can talk about the condition. This is also a good way to boost recruitment halfway through a study. In your protocol you must state the type of media contacts you are going to approach – print, radio and TV.

You can approach the media to talk about a study in general without it being in the ethics approval document, but if you do this you cannot make a direct call for participants.

For more advice on pitching your idea to the media, please contact the Research Communications Manager.

Websites

PDFs of your poster can be displayed on the Leicester's Research website and on the Leicester BRC website (if your study is affiliated to the NIHR Leicester BRC). These are external, public-facing websites. To have your poster uploaded, please send it to Rachael Dowling.

Events

Many community, voluntary and faith organisations welcome speakers to their events and meetings. Depending on your study, you may also find it worthwhile engaging in community fetes, fairs and gatherings. One example is the annual City Ride Health and Science Fair that takes place in the city centre every August. Your PPI research leads should have more information on groups to approach. If you are an NIHR Leicester BRC affiliated study, or part of Leicester Diabetes Centre, your PPI Manager is Becky Pritchard. Becky can be contacted on Rebecca.pritchard@uhl-tr.nhs.uk or call 0116 258 8686.