

Understanding the impacts of public involvement in policy-engaged health research

Insights from participatory evaluation of a multi-sector sexual health research collaboration (CONUNDRUM)

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What do we mean by impacts of public involvement?

“the **changes, benefits, and learnings** gained from the insights and experiences of patients, carers and the public when working in partnerships with researchers and others involved in [NIHR] initiatives.”

(NIHR working definition)

How can we capture and understand impacts of public involvement?

- There are lots of **frameworks** for supporting and evaluating PI in research (e.g. see Greenhough et al systematic review)
- But far fewer **methodological tools** for researchers to co-develop understandings of impacts with public contributors.

Public Involvement Log

Date	Project	Type of involvement	Who took part	Outcome*	Impact**	Reflections/learning

*Outcome: Immediate, demonstrable change

**Impact: Sustained change, can be intended/unintended, positive/negative

The CONUNDRUM collaboration

Phase 1: CONUNDRUM (2019-2021)



Phase 2: CONUNDRUM Action (2022-2023)



All outputs at: www.gla.ac.uk/conundrum

A short animation on young people's involvement in sexual health policy and service improvement. Produced by the media co-op, in collaboration with researchers at the University of Glasgow and members of the CONUNDRUM Action Group.

What is Ripple Effects Mapping (REM)?

- ✓ A participatory way to evaluate an intervention with those involved – usually via workshops
- ✓ Focus on evaluating **contribution** towards change in a system (i.e. as one of many things contributing to change), rather than **attribution** of effects to a specific intervention
- ✓ Helps understand intended and unintended impacts

Nobles et al. *BMC Medical Research Methodology* (2022) 22:72
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-022-01570-4>

BMC Medical Research
Methodology

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Check for updates

Ripple effects mapping: capturing the wider impacts of systems change efforts in public health

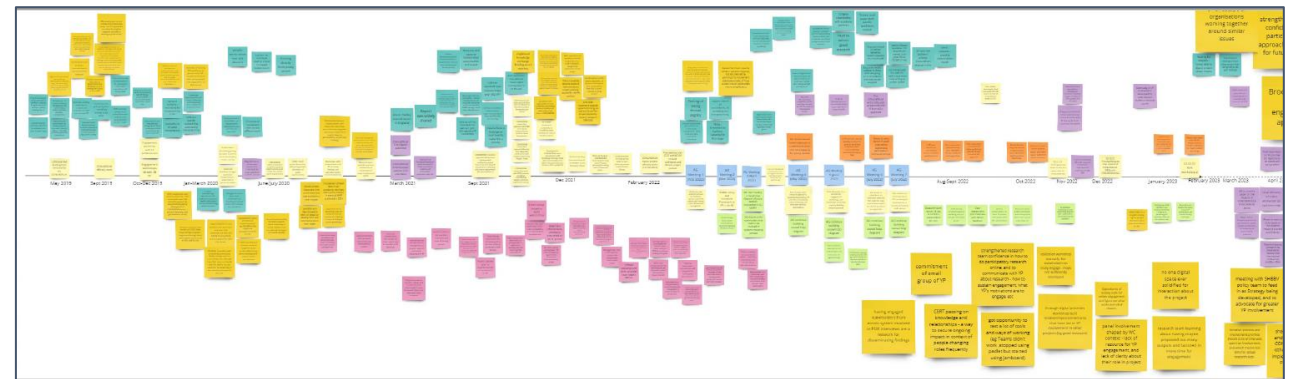
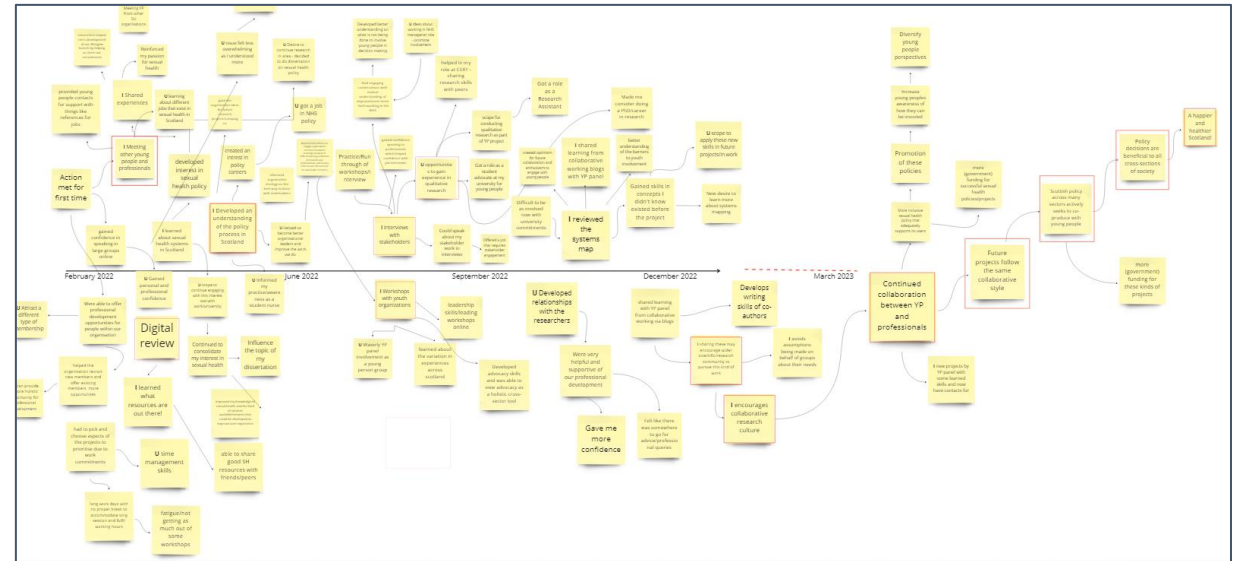
James Nobles^{1,2*}, Jessica Wheeler^{1,2}, Kirsty Dunleavy-Harris^{3,4}, Richard Holmes⁵, Alan Inman-Ward³, Alexandra Potts⁶, Jennifer Hall^{7,8}, Sabi Redwood^{1,2}, Russell Jago^{1,9} and Charlie Foster⁹

Abstract
Background: Systems approaches are currently being advocated and implemented to address complex challenges in Public Health. These approaches work by bringing multi-sectoral stakeholders together to develop a collective understanding of the system, and then to identify places where they can leverage change across the system. Systems approaches are unpredictable, where cause-and-effect cannot always be disentangled, and unintended conse-



Using REM to evaluate impacts of PI

- Conducted 3 online REM workshops with 15 stakeholders (YP, policy, practice).
- Used Miro to: map key actions and impacts, identify intended and unexpected impacts; reflect on wider context.
- Positive feedback on process from stakeholders (easy to understand, liked opportunity to reflect on unintended impacts).
- Stakeholders identified multiple impacts across system – analysis of impacts is ongoing.



Wider systems impacts documented through REM

- **Events:** Informed local and national efforts to involve YP in developing sexual health policy and campaigns (e.g. via consultation, coproduction)
- **Structures:** Strengthened sexual health networks via formation of new cross-sector partnerships; bonding of existing partnerships.
- **Goals:** Raised priority of YP involvement in stated ambitions of organisations at local and national levels.
- **Beliefs:** Change in “mindsets” about YP involvement in shaping policies and service (e.g. its importance relative to other priorities).

See “Action Scales Model” (Nobles et al, 2021)



Reflections on REM as an evaluative tool

Strengths:

- ✓ Can generate rich insight on impacts across wider system
- ✓ Can be used in combination with other evaluative tools
- ✓ Flexible (e.g. online/in person; a/synchronous; one-off or ongoing)
- ✓ Intuitive/easy to engage for professional and public contributors
- ✓ Low demand on time for public contributors
- ✓ Emphasis on reflective discussion (doesn't require everyone to write)

Challenges:

- How to capture ongoing impacts over time
- Eliciting reflection on any negative impacts of PI is key for learning, but can be difficult in group environments – careful facilitation is key!

Thanks for listening, and keep in touch:

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Factors facilitating impacts identified through REM

- **Trusting relationships** developed in first phase of project
- **Funder flexibility** over project spending enabled coproduction process to evolve organically
- **Regular sharing of research insights** that could be discussed and acted upon by stakeholders has helped maintain currency of project, and fed back into shaping new research questions
- **Tight-knit practice networks** enables diffusion of project learning
- **Policy timeliness** (project occurred during updating of Scotland's national SHBBV Action Plan)

