

# Vocal Payment Policy

## Purpose

This policy outlines a clear and consistent approach to the costing and payment processes for Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) activities applicable to all Vocal-led activities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vocal is hosted by Manchester University Foundation Trust. Please note, other organisations running PPIE activities will have different policies for public contributor payments.

## 1. Honorarium payments

### 1.1 Overview

Vocal offers honorarium payments for PPIE activities. Honorarium payments are a form of reward and recognition offered for the contribution that public contributors make to our work. These payments do not constitute employment. Our payment rates are based on the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) guidelines (as of December 2025), see *Section in 2.3*.

Public contributors must be informed in writing of any honorarium payment they are eligible to receive before agreeing to participate in any activities.

### 1.2 Method of payment

Honorarium payments and expenses will ordinarily be made via BACS transfer. To be paid via BACS, the public contributor must provide details of a valid bank account with an account name that matches their name on Vocal's records. Vocal cannot make payments into any other accounts, for example a relative's account or a charity.

If a public contributor does not have access to a bank account, the public contributor will be given a form, by a Vocal staff member, to take to the Cashiers office (ground floor of Manchester Royal Infirmary) to receive a cash payment.

### 1.3 Honorarium payment rates

The table below provides details of the rates of honorarium payments for PPIE activities.

Document reviews	
<b>£13.80</b>	Reviewing 1–3 page documents e.g. lay summary or project summary and completion of a feedback form. The document in review should not include complex or specialised scientific language (Estimated time 30mins)
<b>£27.50</b>	Reviewing 4-10 page documents e.g. Patient Information Sheets, short grant applications, Expressions of Interest including appendices and completion of a feedback form (Estimated time 1 hour)

<b>£41.30</b>	Reviewing 11-15 page documents e.g. Patient Information Sheets, grant applications, Expressions of Interest, including appendices and completion of a feedback form (Estimated time 1.5 hours).
<b>£55</b>	Reviewing 16-25 page documents e.g. grant applications, academic papers, including appendices and completion of a feedback form (Estimated time 2 hours).
<b>Variable</b>	For documents that are longer than 25 pages, estimate the time using the guidance above.
<b>Face-to-face or virtual activities</b>	
<b>£27.50</b>	For an activity requiring little or no preparation and which equates to up to one hour, e.g. a discussion group.
	For activities lasting between 1 hour and 1 hour 45 mins payment will increase by £6.80 for every additional 15 minutes.
<b>£55</b>	For an activity likely to last 2 hours.
	For activities lasting between 2 hours and 2 hours 45 mins payment will increase by £6.80 for every additional 15 minutes
<b>£82.50</b>	For an activity which equates to half a day's activity (3 hours – 3 hours 30mins).
<b>£165</b>	For taking part in all-day activities (5-7 hours).
<b>Meeting preparation or follow-up work</b>	
<b>£13.80</b>	For preparation or follow-up which equates to around 30 mins. For example, completing a survey or reading a short document.
<b>£27.50</b>	For preparation or follow-up which equates to around one hour.
<b>£55</b>	For preparation or follow-up which equates to around two hours.
<b>For involvement in all-day meetings that require substantial preparation</b>	
<b>£330</b>	For example Chairing a Committee meeting, membership of Scientific Advisory Board. Preparation may include extensive reading of documents provided, summarising, preparing detailed feedback, identifying discussion points, additional research.
<b>Other activities</b>	
<b>Variable</b>	For any activities that fall outside or in between these categories, these guidelines should be used as a reference to determine payment amounts.

**Exclusions:**

- Please note that Vocal does not pay public contributors for any time they may spend traveling to attend a meeting or event.

## **1.4 Changes in circumstances**

### **1.4.1. Cancellations**

If a public contributor prepares for a meeting but is unable to attend in exceptional circumstances (e.g. illness or an emergency), a payment to cover any previously agreed preparation time (e.g. commenting and feeding back on documents) may be offered where appropriate.

If an activity is cancelled, Vocal will give as much notice as possible to public contributors.

If an activity is cancelled at short notice, e.g. within 24 hours of the planned start time, and budget allows, the payment (or part-payment) will be honoured where the public contributor can evidence that they have made arrangements that can't be changed at short notice and which incur costs to them e.g. taking time off work.

For cancellations within a week of the planned activity, Vocal staff will give consideration to any expenses that had been agreed in advance of the activity and which have already been incurred by contributors. For example, if a contributor can evidence they have paid for travel then these expenses should be covered, if the journey cannot be rearranged and budget allows.

### **1.4.2. Duration**

If the requirements of an activity are reduced at short notice because of changes initiated by Vocal or our partners, we will honour the original agreed honorarium payment offered. If the activity requirements are increased, we will increase the payment offered in line with the additional public contributor time required. The change to the payment will be outlined in writing.

## **1.5 Employment Status**

Honorarium payments do not mean that public contributors have an on-going contract of employment. Public contributors can:

- choose not to accept an honorarium payment
- request a lower amount
- request payment be delayed (this will be dependent on project timelines and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis)

## **1.6 Implications of accepting payments**

Receiving payment of a fee for involvement can be treated as earnings and can have implications for public contributors if they are employed, unemployed, receiving state benefits or retired.

If public contributors are receiving state benefits, any payment (including payment in vouchers), and expenses may affect their benefit claim. A Benefits Advice Service is provided by NIHR which is available to members of the public who are involved in, or considering involvement in, research with the NIHR. Public contributors can find out how to access this service on the [NIHR website](#).

To use this service public contributors will need to know the name of the NIHR organisation they are involved with, or the NIHR programme that is funding the research they are involved with. Public contributors can ask their Vocal contact for information about the specific programme that they are involved in.

Vocal staff can supply a Welfare and Benefits letter to public contributors, if they need to obtain permission for paid involvement or notifying payments received for involvement in their Universal Credit Journal.

## **2. Remote / home working costs**

An optional £5 remote working allowance is available to cover any out-of-pocket costs public contributors may incur by taking part in activities, such as use of mobile data, printing costs or additional telephone costs. This is an expense claim rather than a payment.

Vocal staff will make public contributors aware of this optional fee where applicable.

## **3. Expenses**

### **3.1 Travel expenses**

For face-to-face meetings, Vocal will reimburse reasonable travel expenses as follows, in line with The University of Manchester NHS Foundation Trust's policy.

Mileage can be verified using the distance between the journey's starting postcode and the postcode of the meeting venue, using Google Maps. As actual

mileage will fluctuate dependent on the route taken, the distance from postcode to postcode will be used as a guide to check the mileage claims.

<b>Travel expenses</b>	
<b>Motor Vehicles</b>	40p per mile (each way), per session.
<b>Motorcycles</b>	24p per mile (each way), per session.
<b>Parking</b>	The cost of parking will be reimbursed against parking receipts, or screenshot of a smartphone app.
<b>Bicycles</b>	20p per mile (each way), per session
<b>Public Transport</b>	Bus - the cost of the journey (each way) will be reimbursed against bus tickets or screenshot of a smartphone app.
<b>Taxis</b>	The cost of the journey (each way) where justified will be reimbursed against the taxi receipt or screenshot of a smartphone app.
<b>Rail travel</b>	The cost of the journey (each way) will be reimbursed against train tickets or screenshot of a smartphone app.

If travel costs are likely to be over £20, the public contributor must discuss this with their Vocal contact in advance.

Travel expenses will ordinarily be reimbursed via BACS. See section 2.2. of this policy for further details on payment methods.

### **3.2 Subsistence**

Refreshments will be provided at face-to-face activities. This will vary according to the event and will be communicated to public contributors in advance of the activity.

Public contributors cannot claim for food and drink expenses unless agreed in advance with their Vocal contact.

When expenses for food and drink have been agreed, these will be paid in line with The University of Manchester NHS Foundation Trust's policy. Up to £5 for lunch allowance and up to £15 for an evening meal (when an overnight stay is required). Expenses will be reimbursed against receipts or a screenshot of a smartphone app. If the claim exceeds these values due to restrictions of venue or availability, this will need to be agreed in advance with a Vocal staff member.

(Please note alcohol may not form part of any claim).

### **3.3 Fines**

We will not reimburse or cover any fines, including parking fines, travel penalties, or other personal penalties.

## **4. Accessibility**

We're committed to making our activities as accessible as possible. In the context of this payment policy this could include, but is not limited to:

- Covering higher costs of travel
- Covering costs of contributor's carer's travel
- Covering costs of child/dependents care

Vocal staff will discuss accessibility support with individual public contributors as part of our sign-up process and prior to activities taking place.

**Document version control**

<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>5.10.22</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>23.02.24</b>	Layout adjustments
<b>3</b>	<b>30.04.25</b>	Addition of clarification of payment of fines (4.5).
<b>4</b>	<b>18.06.25</b>	To clarify subsistence payments (4.4).
<b>5</b>	<b>07.07.24</b>	To add additional NIHR rates information, & clarify travel
<b>6</b>	<b>27.08.25</b>	Context added, format amended for wider circulation
<b>7</b>	<b>16.12.25</b>	Update payment amount in line with NIHR guidance