

Running a ‘Public Panel’ meeting

4-5 times a year, the Consumer Panel based at Population Data Science Swansea meet to act as an advisory and consultative panel to [SAIL](#) and the [Centres](#) on issues in research from the perspective of service users, carers and the general public.

Author: [Claire Newman](#), Public Engagement Officer, Population Data Science Research at Swansea University.

Who carried out this project: Claire Newman and Lynsey Cross former Public Engagement Officer for Population Data Science at Swansea University.

The ‘why’: All research projects conducted at [Population Data Science](#) are designed to work with the public and patients, as we recognise the importance of providing a public voice and measure social acceptance to our work. We have been entrusted to best manage and utilise health and administrative population data and understand the responsibilities this presents as we endeavor towards the delivery of data use. Researchers that use the data held in SAIL databank have access to the use of the group for free.

The ‘who’: The [Consumer Panel](#) was originally assembled in 2011 and has continued to provide a public and public engagement to SAIL and associated researchers for over 10 years. The Panel is comprised of around 16 members from diverse backgrounds and all share an interest in data and how it can be used to help society and inform policies.

The ‘where’: The Consumer Panel is comprised of the general Welsh public who currently or have previously lived in urban or rural Wales, Originally the meetings were conducted in person at Swansea University but moved to virtual during the pandemic. We have continued this as we recruited new members during Covid who would find it difficult to travel if meetings resumed face to face. Also many of the researchers find it easier to attend virtually for an hour meeting as they are not always based in Swansea.

The ‘how’:

Meeting Preparation: Our meetings take place on the last Wednesday of January, April, June and September between 10am and 3pm. The dates for the meetings are normally sent out 6 to 12 months in advance advising researchers to email a request to present at one of the slots which are usually up to an hour in duration.

The researchers email to enquire about attending the next available meeting and if they are new to the Panel, an introductory meeting is arranged to share information about the members, the meetings, discuss the research and why they want to present to the Panel.

We talk through how to make the experience a success for the researcher and how to engage with the Panel, what questions they want to ask to gauge public opinion on their work. Have the researchers considered everything in terms of their research and how to involve and engage with the general public or patient advisory groups if appropriate.

Researchers are emailed an 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) to complete for them to attend the meeting, this enables them to give an overview on their project, gives them an opportunity to explain why they want the Panels views and what questions they would like the members to consider. This needs to be returned a month before the planned Consumer Panel meeting and gives me the opportunity to amend if required.

This 'Expression of Interest' including supporting information is used to form the agenda and is emailed out to the Panel members at least 7 days before the planned meeting. The previous meeting's notes is also sent out as a review and any actions takes place at the start.

A Zoom meeting is created and the invite is sent between 6-8 weeks before the meeting to help Panel members plan in the time, especially if they have responsibilities that need to be considered. This invite is also sent to the presenters to communicate their presentation time and confirm when they need to attend. The invite is also shared with a co-host that helps share responsibilities on the day, these can include sharing documents and recording the meeting which helps when writing up the minutes for the meeting, and collating feedback for the researchers on the presentations and discussions on their projects.

The researchers are emailed the week of the meeting to request them to send me a copy of their presentation to avoid any technical issues the day of the meeting and the Panel members are emailed the day before to remind them to attend.

Meeting: On the day of the meeting the chair and co-host sign in to the Zoom meeting early to make sure all is working well, and sometimes some Panel members join before the meeting starts just to have an informal chat.

The meeting starts at 10am with the remainder of the Panel members join the Zoom call, we all greet each other and thank everyone for attending the meeting. We starts by addressing the agenda, first action to review the previous meeting minutes to make sure the Panel members agree with them, any actions that needed addressing, and are there any questions or comments relating to these.

The first researchers are introduced to the Panel and I remind them to listen to the presentation first that can be between 20-30 minutes long. They will have the opportunity add comments to the chat but to wait until the researchers finish for an open discussion and address questions about the project. After the presentation has finished, the comments in the chat are addressed by either the researcher or facilitator and then the Panel have further opportunity to answer questions posed by the researchers by raising their virtual hand to be invited to speak.

Once the agreed time slot has come to an end, we thank the researchers for coming and will email the recorded comments and suggestions on their project.

After a quick 5 minute comfort break the Panel are welcomed back and the researcher are introduced for the next presentation which follows the same principle as the first one.

The 3rd presentation resumes after another 5 minute break and then we stop for a deserved lunch before the last researchers attend the meeting.

The meeting is concluded by addressing the last point on the agenda, 'Any Other Business,' (AOB), this can be anything I want to discuss usually operational questions, and open up the discussion to the group.

The meeting comes to a natural close, minutes to follow and looking forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting.

Post Meeting: Once the meeting has finished, it is time to review the recording and start compiling the minutes without personable information are distributed to the Consumer Panel members between 7 and 10 days after. They are also sent a meeting feedback form giving them the opportunity to say how it went and if there was any part of the meeting they didn't understand, comments for the researchers or subsequent Panel meetings.

These notes then form the feedback from the presentations and discussions and are sent to the researchers for their records. On some occasions the group are invited to send post meeting comments that I can include in the notes I send to the presenters with a section for them to complete and give us feedback on their visit to the Panel meeting. This can help develop or improve meetings in the future.

All discussions and information discussed in the meetings are confidential unless I request permission from the Consumer Panel members and the visiting researchers or presenters.

Successes:

Researchers have given the following feedback on their experiences when visiting a Consumer Panel meeting.

'We had a useful discussion about ethics in administrative data research, with some really useful themes coming through about the need for the appropriate use of data in research. Some other interesting insights came across about accountability, the need for clear communication and lack of public awareness about how data is used.'

'That was a really great discussion - thank you to you and the Panel for some excellent points!'

'It was great having the opportunity and time to speak to the Panel, which include members of the public, about our planned research and ensuring our aims are of interest to the public and

will benefit our society. We received invaluable feedback which will support our SAIL application and we were able to discuss and mitigate any concerns on using patient data for our research outcomes.'

The Consumer Panel members have given the following feedback on the meetings.

I enjoyed the AI (Artificial Intelligence) presentation because it did not include PPI and we always need a voice.

'Multimorbidity research is important, results can help practitioners in better decision making about medication also help in long term cost reduction in NHS.'

'Although it may take two or three years to work towards developing the use of A.I. in order to streamline, make more efficient, improve patient experience, the services offered by G.P. Practices in Wales is extremely important. It is important to try and it would be great if it is successful. A long way to go but exciting to learn about the process and journey.'

The Consumer Panel was mentioned and recognized in the latest report from the Office for Statistics Regulation (ONS)

<https://saildatabank.com/sail-recognised-in-osr-uk-data-linkage-overview-and-future-recommendations/>

Better Outcome through Linked Data- Substance Misuse Pilot presented to the Panel.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-justice-better-outcomes-through-linked-data-bold/ministry-of-justice-better-outcomes-through-linked-data-bold>

NDL Wales (Networked Data Labs funded by the Health Foundation) continue to use the Panel to present their research and the following was published last year after presenting before and recently presented their findings to the Panel.

<https://saildatabank.com/new-study-examines-differences-in-mental-health-hospital-attendances-for-children-young-people-in-wales/>

Lessons learned:

Over the last 2 years I have learnt that preparation is key for the meeting to be a positive experience, not just for the researchers but also the Consumer Panel members feel they have contributed to the research and have learned something new. A pre-meeting discussion with researchers is beneficial for me to give an overview of the Consumer Panel members, and the researchers the opportunity to cover their project and why they what to come to the Panel.

A good balance of words and visuals help the Panel's engagement, and it's important to consider they are a lay audience, therefore not too technical and full of jargon.

The Consumer Panel and their opinions are extremely important to the research being conducted by users of SAIL data as it brings the research to life and keeps it relevant for the general public.

Who to contact to find out more: Please email claire.newman@swansea.ac.uk