

Chapter 7: Dissemination and feedback

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Introduction

Through its research, Pocklington aims to identify practical ways to improve the lives of people with sight loss. Dissemination of findings is a central part of this. The dissemination strategy for a project is first considered during the initial planning stages. It may evolve as the project progresses and through discussions with the participants, the Project Advisory Group and the Research and Development Team.

Please note the clause in the contract of Pocklington-funded projects states that, while Pocklington encourages dissemination of results, consent must be gained before any dissemination occurs.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first highlights the importance of ensuring that every aspect of dissemination is created with people with sight loss in mind, and provides guidance on how to do so.

The second section concerns a crucial part of the dissemination strategy: giving feedback on the results of the project to the research participants. There are several methods that research teams might wish to consider.

Making dissemination accessible

Each project typically produces a range of publications for lay and professional audiences. For details on the types of Pocklington publications, what they include and how to structure them see 'Pocklington research reports: Standard content and style guidelines' which can be obtained from the project's R&D lead.

Pocklington generally makes its publications freely available on the research pages of its website as Word and PDF documents. They can also be ordered in alternative formats, such as large print, audio and Braille.

Pocklington's research publications are found at:

Thomas Pocklington Trust, Research publications
www.pocklington-trust.org.uk/researchandknowledge/publications
[last accessed July 2014].

This section provides some guidance on how research teams can make all outputs accessible to people with sight loss. Remember, it is not just the research participants that require information to be produced in this way. Any professionals that the project relates to might have sight loss.

Diversity is a key consideration when putting together a dissemination strategy. It is not just the presence of sight loss that will provoke the need for alternative formats. Age, access to technology, levels of literacy and the presence of additional impairments must all be considered to ensure that everyone can receive the findings in a format most suitable to them.

In fact, it is more appropriate to see accessible dissemination not as 'tailoring' information to a particular 'group', but rather as making the research more structured, clear and inclusive for all readers.

Make the research accessible

- **Language and vocabulary.** Consider the audience when choosing the tone and style of language to adopt and the extent to which you should define terms. For example, Research Findings (a Pocklington publication) should not include academic language or jargon as this document is intended for an informed lay audience.
- **Formatting.** See Chapter 6 of this toolkit on Producing Accessible Materials for techniques to apply to written reports.
- **Word limits.** Adhere to word limits. Word limits for the different types of Pocklington Research Reports can be found in the Style guidelines.
- **Preferred formats.** Ensure that dissemination can be provided in people's preferred formats. Include a note at the beginning of the

document in Arial point size 16 that advertises the availability of other formats.

- **Structure.** Think about what the reader should take away from the document and make it clear. For example, it may be more effective to begin the document with the key findings in a bullet point list. Write clear conclusions and recommendations based on what you wish the readers to do as a result of having read the research.

Make the research available to a wide and relevant audience

To find the most effective way of reaching relevant groups and individuals, consider the different resources, interactions and media they can access.[1] It may be effective to disseminate findings through the same channels by which you recruited participants. For example, if you attended a coffee morning organised by a local sight loss group to invite participants to take part in the project, you could tell them at the time that you will return to a future meeting to discuss the findings. Depending on the nature of the project, research teams may wish to consider:

- Giving a talk to local sight loss groups.
- Social media, such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Guidance on using this can be found at the following: User Involvement in Voluntary Organisations Shared Learning Group (2013), Using social media to involve people. It can be downloaded from www.user-involvement.org.uk/resource-centre/14/11/methods-for-involving-people&highlight=344#item_344 [last accessed July 2014].
- Online forums
- Dedicated websites and blogs
- Publications produced by sight loss organisations, such as RNIB's Vision Magazine and NB magazine, Macular Society's annual Digest magazine and Vision 2020 UK's Vision Research News.
- Journals such as the British Journal of Visual Impairment, Age and Ageing and Sense and Society.
- Conferences such as Visionary Annual (in October, for local sight loss societies), Vision 2014 (in June, for the whole sight loss

1 INVOLVE, You've done the research – now what? www.invo.org.uk/youve-done-the-research-now-what/ [last accessed July 2014].

sector) and the British Society of Gerontology (in September, for those involved in research relating to older people).

- Service providers
- Other related organisations

Providing feedback to research participants

This section concerns a key part of the dissemination process: feeding results back to participants, and explores some of methods research teams might adopt.

Returning results to participants should be prioritised within the dissemination plan. Information about how this will be done can be provided in the initial contact with the participant, as well as during data collection. By giving participants the option of being informed of the findings, research teams acknowledge their contribution. Furthermore, participants may wish to make use of the results and recommendations that grow out of the research.

Researchers reported that it was relatively straightforward to offer bespoke dissemination to research participants as they already had a record of people's preferences from an early stage in the research process.

Of course, the level of involvement that a participant wishes to have in the research project will vary considerably. While some may wish to limit their involvement to the hour of their time they give during an interview, others will want to know how their involvement shaped the research and how the results will be used.

It may be the case that some people made contact with the research team at the initial stage of the research but were either not eligible or chose not to be research participants. It is good practice to ask these individuals if they would like to be informed of the project outputs and provide information as appropriate.

Deciding how to provide feedback

The method of feedback will vary depending on the nature of participant involvement. Options can be explored by:

- Asking participants what they would find most helpful and convenient – would they like to receive the findings? If so, how much detail would they like?

- Discussing ideas with the Project Advisory Group

Highlight the availability of Pocklington publications

Research teams should tell the participants:

- Which type(s) of Pocklington research reports will be produced
- When they will be published
- Where they can be found
- Which formats will be available
- How alternative formats can be sourced. Research teams can send requests from participants to Pocklington, which will ensure that the alternative format is produced professionally and is fully accessible.

Participants may wish to receive feedback in another form, instead of or in addition to Pocklington publications. Some suggestions are detailed below.

Lay version of the executive summary

In most circumstances, the full report will begin with an executive summary. This may be appropriate for some of your participants but to make it more inclusive you may wish to write a lay version, taking into account the following:

- Avoid academic terminology or jargon.
- Consider the likely levels of literacy and understanding among your participants.
- Include only the most important points.
- Give the contact details of a member of the research team so that people can follow up with questions.

Participant report

This may be an appropriate method if the research project is based on interviews and looks broadly at the effect of an issue on people's lives. The report could highlight the diversity of responses and the main issues that participants highlighted. This format may also be appropriate if the methodology included focus groups. For example, participants may appreciate a summary of the discussion that took place at the particular focus group they attended.

A Participant report might include:

- A message of thanks to participants for their time and efforts.

- Brief background of the study.
- An overview of the participants.
- Research methods used.
- An update on the current stage of the research and how it is taking shape.
- Basic or preliminary findings.
- An indication of when the findings will be produced and in which formats.
- Instructions outlining how participants can access more detailed reports, for example an email address to send a request to.

Letter of thanks to participants

A letter of thanks, in appropriate formats, could highlight the main research findings.

Individual face to face feedback

If a researcher visits a participant at their home for an interview, the researcher might consider making a return visit to discuss the findings. As this is a highly resource intensive method it is very much project dependent. A previous Pocklington research team that disseminated results in this way factored it into its costing at the initial stage and the pool of participants was in a relatively small area and easily accessible.

Holding an event

An event may be an appropriate method through which to feedback results if it is reasonable to expect participants to travel to a chosen location and if the research budget allows for their expenses to be covered. If research teams choose to hold an event, they should be sure to offer an alternative means of feedback to those that are unable to attend.

Think broadly about the different needs of your audience. For guidance on how to make events and presentations accessible, see Chapter 4 of this toolkit.

In particular, research teams may wish to consider the following:

- **Advertising the event.** Inform attendees in advance that the event will be accessible and that support / interpreters can be booked.

- **Assistants and carers.** Attendees may require British Sign Language Interpreters, lip speakers, note takers, speech-to-text reporters or a hearing loop system. If space is limited, you may wish to ask if attendees will be bringing someone with them, rather than assuming that they won't. You may also wish to consider if you will be covering assistants' expenses.
- **Guide dogs.** Check that they are allowed in the building, that there are available areas for them to rest and that owners can find water for them if necessary.
- **Number of facilitators.** Think about how many people you need to ensure that the meeting runs smoothly, whether that be by greeting attendees at the front entrance or guiding people to available chairs.
- **Materials in advance.** Interpreters and people with sight loss should receive any written materials at least two weeks in advance in their preferred formats.

Helpful resources

The following resources provide guidance on how to develop a dissemination plan:

Big Lottery Fund, Good Practice Guide. A PDF version is available by clicking on the following link: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/global-content/research/uk-wide/good-practice-guide-dissemination [last accessed July 2014].

INVOLVE, You've done the research – now what?
www.invo.org.uk/youve-done-the-research-now-what/ [last accessed July 2014].

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