

Section 3: Extending influence and widening impact

Introduction

This section will help you understand how to engage three of the key audiences for research dissemination and achieve impact on policy and practice.

By working through this section you will:

- see how research communications can help to achieve impact
- understand the principles around engaging policy, practice and public audiences, with tips and guidance from researchers with a track record in doing this
- see what other researchers have done to engage policy, practice and public audiences in the communication of their findings.

There are four parts to this section:

1. Demonstrating impact through communications activity.
2. Influencing a policy audience.
3. Engaging a practice audience.
4. Communicating with the public.

Demonstrating impact through communications activity

Academic institutions are required, via the [Research Excellence Framework](#), to demonstrate the impact of their findings beyond research and academic audiences. It is possible to shape your communications in order to monitor and gather impact indicators.

[Find out how to demonstrate impact through communications activity.](#)

Influencing a policy audience

Some research findings may have a relevance and potential application that can influence health policy. If this is the case, to influence any issue at scale it is necessary to communicate and engage with policymakers. With this much targeted, time-poor audience, knowing who to approach and how takes on particular importance.

[Learn how to influence a policy audience.](#)

Engaging a practice audience

Spreading evidence of good practice or any research that has implications for practice audiences will increase potential impact. The term 'practice audiences' covers a myriad of professions and levels. Here we explore some tried and tested means of targeting and reaching them, with examples from researchers who have engaged practice audiences in their findings.

[Learn how to engage a practice audience in your findings.](#)

Communicating with the public

Communication of research findings relevant to a public audience can lead to more informed choices, better population health, and less anxiety or confusion around treatment (for example). Effective communication can also help build trust between the research community and the public but it carries some risks – predominantly of misinterpretation of findings. Well-planned, well-targeted communications can help maximise opportunities and manage those risk factors.

[Read about how to communicate with the public.](#)