Trinity College Dublin PPI Ignite Office

PPI Impact Framework Report

February 2026

Contents

Encouraging, supporting and celebrating the involvement of those with lived experience across the research cycle through fostering Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) partnerships that define what research is done, how it is done and the impact it can achieve for service users, policymakers and society as a whole.

TRINITY PPI IGNITE OFFICE

PPI IGNITE NETWORK

Introduction

The PPI Ignite Office at Trinity College Dublin has been leading efforts to develop and co-design a PPI Impact Framework, as part of its work within the national PPI Ignite Network. To this end, an initial co-design workshop was held with 60 participants at the PPI Summer School at the University of Limerick in June 2025.

Participants, including members of the PPI community across Ireland, researchers and healthcare professionals, discussed and shared their views in relation to impact and a potential framework.

The PPI Ignite office at Trinity then held a second co-design workshop with stakeholders in October 2025, in which a prototype of the PPI Impact framework was piloted. Specifically, a workshop with approximately 60 participants was held as part of the launch of the PPI Ignite Festival 2025. Participants again included PPI contributors and members of the PPI community across the island of Ireland, academics, healthcare professionals and members of the NGO sector.

Participants organised into small groups, with each group given a hypothetical research project. Each group then piloted the proposed PPI Impact Framework in relation to their research project.

The initial sections below outline the goals of this project and provide some context for discussions. Specifically, current discourses around impact assessment frameworks and PPI, where this specific PPI Impact framework is situated, the details of discussions at both co-designing workshops and the process of the framework development are all presented below. The final section presents the finalised model for the PPI Impact Framework and methods for utilising it.

This report is primarily intended for PPI contributors and academics (or healthcare professionals/academics) who are collaborating on research projects. It is also intended for anyone working in the areas of PPI and/or research impact to be used as part of the current discourses on impact, including the importance of lived experience in research and the ways in which co-designed research can positively impact individuals and communities.

Section 1.1
PPI Impact framework goals

The goal of developing this PPI Impact framework is to create a framework that PPI contributors, researchers and other stakeholders can use to plan for and capture the impact of a research project that includes PPI contributors and contributions. In other words, this is a framework that PPI contributors and researchers could use to facilitate a discussion around impact goals for a given piece of research, with a view to planning for and then capturing these impacts. Specifically, this framework can be utilised at three different stages throughout a research project: at the development stage, to set out a roadmap for impact goals; at a mid-review stage to determine what has been done to date and what is left to be done; and at the end of the project, when the team is capturing their accomplishments, reflecting on learnings and determining next steps. See Figure 1 for an illustration of this.

It is important to note that the goal of this particular framework is not to create a model that PPI contributors can utilise to demonstrate the effect they are having on the project (although this goal is not without merit). Other frameworks have been developed with this goal in mind, and this framework is intended to complement those efforts. This will be discussed below.

Phases of Research

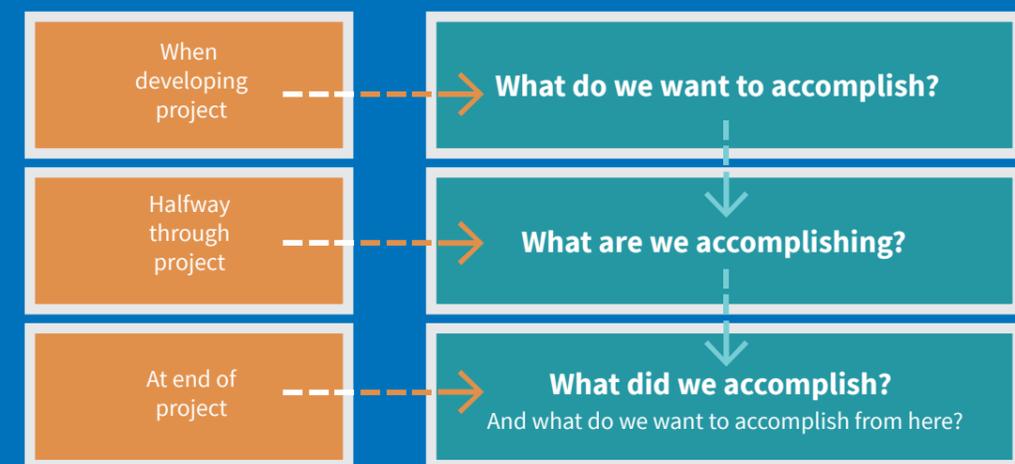| When developing project | What do we want to accomplish? |
| Halfway through project | What are we accomplishing? |
| At end of project | What did we accomplish? And what do we want to accomplish from here? |

Figure 1:

This framework can be used by research teams at the development stage, at a mid-review stage and at the end of the project to plan for and capture impact.

Section 1.2
Situating a PPI Impact Framework

Within the current focus on research impact, funders and research bodies have offered definitions of impact. Among these definitions there exists a general consensus that impact implies a positive change. For example, the EU Commission defines impact as *"a change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or public services, health, the environment or quality of life"* [1]. Similarly, the Health Research Board defines research impact as *activities that have an effect, benefit or positive influence on policy, society or the economy* [2], while Research Ireland (Taidghe Éireann) defines research impact as *the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy* [3].

Within this context, many universities and academics are developing impact frameworks that can be utilised to capture or describe the impact of a research project [4]. Of relevance to our work has been the impact framework offered by Kuruvilla et al (2006), which outlines four areas of potential impact including research, policy, services and society, with specific examples within each area [4]. Furthermore, the *Engaged Research: Planning for Impact,* from Campus Engage, offers further areas of impact that academic researchers might consider, which has informed the development of our framework [5].

There also exists a growing body of literature that evaluates PPI and the impact of PPI on research projects. For example, the Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework (PIIAF), which is based on research carried out by a multidisciplinary team across the UK, funded by the Medical Research Council's NIHR Methodology Research Programme, examines the elements that shape the impact of public involvement in research, that is, the impact that public involvement can have on a research project [6]. Specifically, the PPIAF framework aims to help researchers and others identify the types of impact they might reasonably expect public involvement to have in specific research projects/programmes and provides guidance on how to assess this work [7]. Meanwhile, a scoping reviewing from Nissen et al (2025) mapped evaluation tools that have been used in health research studies to assess PPI work within a research project [8]. While 30 studies were included in the review, the authors found that PPI evaluation tools are often developed or adapted to fit specific contexts.

Meanwhile, our work has also been informed by the impact assessment framework developed by the PPI Ignite Network [9]. That framework enables the Network (and others) to measure the impact of the Network's work, particularly in the areas of building capacity in PPI, policy change, public awareness of PPI, relationship capital and the international profile of the Network.

Within this context, the need for a PPI impact framework that complemented these existing ones was identified by the TCD PPI Ignite Office and within the co-designed workshops.

Why this framework is needed:

- **Impact priorities are different for different groups.** This framework allows research teams to discuss and capture these differences.

- **There exists a plethora of potential areas for impact.** This framework offers research teams the opportunity to plan for impact in different areas.

- **This framework takes a multi-stage approach.** This framework can be used for planning and capturing impact throughout research project cycle, including the funding application stage.

It is also important to note that while a focus on impact is an imperative component of health research, an overfocus on capturing impact primarily through quantitative metrics can potentially lead to a disregard or an under privileging of less measurable implications of research [9]. Therefore, it is of particular import that a PPI Impact Framework is co-designed and incorporates the voices of all members of the research team, including academic experts, experts by experience and other stakeholders.

According to workshop participants at the PPI Summer School, held in the University of Limerick in June 2025, representation and meaning differs for different groups. To have impact, participants suggested, the work must be diverse. A research team needs patients, who share their lived experience and help shape research, and it needs patience, as it is a long process from project conception to research to impact. There are also various levels of impact to consider, including practical feasibility and future impact.

Furthermore, a PPI Impact Framework must be in-depth and prescriptive enough so as to provide sufficient guidance and rigour for research projects. However, simultaneously, the framework must be flexible enough so as to accommodate the diversity of research projects and team members. It is hoped that the finalised PPI Impact Framework, presented below, navigates this liminal space successfully.

Section 2.0
Specifics of a PPI Impact Framework (Co-design Workshop 1)

Participants at the co-design workshop held at the PPI Summer School discussed PPI impact and what a potential framework would look like. Outlined below are potential areas of impact highlighted by participants. Below this are areas of impact that are of particular import to specific groups, according to workshop participants, including but not limited to PPI contributors, researchers and funders.

Across all participants, common areas of impact that were particularly valued included the desire to change research culture through increasing trust, transparency and good communication; producing strong evidence that would lead to improved health services and health outcomes; the privileging of patient and public voices in research and policy; influencing policy in order to bring about change; and engaging with the public.

Section 2.1
What areas do we want to impact?

Health services and health outcomes

- Improving services, treatments and interventions
- Improved integration of services
- Improved models of care
- Improved pathways to care / Accessibility to care
- Equity in access
- Improved user experience
- Improved communication
- Inclusion, respect, equity
- Earlier diagnosis
- Transparency
- Health system change
- Shifting policy to practice
- Improve health outcomes
- Quality of life / Health Quality of Life (autonomy)
- Changing people's lives on the ground

Research and funding

- Change in research culture with trust and transparency
- Increase in awareness, communication and knowledge sharing
- A culture shift for researchers and clinicians – seeing PPI as collaboration with experts in their own lived experience
- Strategic research aligned with public (multidisciplinary) strategies
- For lived experience to be the central voice in research
- Diversity in clinical trials
- Sharing what works and what doesn't work
- Conducting robust evidence that can then be shared with policy makers
- Shared partnership (power sharing)
- Good quality research, which leads to targeted research (which leads to more relevant interventions)
- Research exchange (international agreements)
- National and shared platforms for completed PPI projects
- Dedicated funding and valuing public work in research and public organisations
- Funder buy-in of patient-centred work, which leads to change in research culture (through transparency and trust)
- Less waste of public money
- A feeling of ownership for public, patients and researchers
- Adding value; making a visible positive impact (research is used, not wasted)

Relationships and Communication

- For lived experience to be the central voice in research
- Equal voice central to the table; collaboration
- Improving communication, awareness and knowledge sharing
- Inclusion, respect, equity
- Shared partnership (power sharing)
- Cultural shift to a more equal relationship
- Strengthening transparency and trust (which leads to a shift in research culture)
- Changes in Health Care Professional (HPC) attitudes, which promote greater understanding and respect for service users and their lived experiences
- Building trusted relationships between different sectors, groups and individuals
- Building collaborations and connections (including between researchers and clinicians)
- Create a space where conversation and listening is encouraged
- Collaborative approach
- Challenge unrealistic expectations / managing expectations
- Empowerment

Policy

- Align research with public (multidisciplinary) strategies
- Changing policy to facilitate improved access and outcomes
- Ensure research has a policy impact
- Challenging policy
- Fostering communication with policy makers (using robust research/ evidence)
- Policy development and implementation – targeting wider audience

Education and public awareness

- Training and support for patients and the public to get involved in research
- High quality education and training for researchers and health professionals
- Increase public awareness of PPI work
- Community involvement in research
- Changes in attitudes
- Acknowledging the value of PPI by researchers
- Promoting inclusivity

While these highlighted areas of impact demonstrate many shared impact goals across different cohorts, it is important to acknowledge within the context of PPI work that different impacts will be prioritised by different groups.

This prioritisation is shaped by their experiences and perspectives. Below are some of the areas of impact that might be emphasised or prioritised by the main stakeholders involved in most research projects, as suggested by workshop participants.

Section 2.2
Examples of differing priorities for different groups

a. Government Perspective:
- Public trust
- Public confidence

b. Funder Perspective:
- Hope
- Meaningful engagement
- Empowerment
- Improve patient outcomes
- Bridging gap between lab and bedside

c. Researcher Perspective
- Improved quality of research
- Creating more awareness
- Understanding patient needs
- PPI relationships resulting in improved change

d. PPI Contributors Perspective
- Giving something back
- Lay language to be listened to
- Different experiences for future patients
- Being involved
- Policy changes led by public
- Trust and transparency
- Seeing an increase in PPI in the community
- Inclusion
- Recognition of PPI work
- More PPI involvement in service planning
- Funding/PPI work not to affect Disability Allowance

e. Health services and planning perspective
- Responsive
- Accountable
- Trust and confidence in health services
- More PPI involvement in service planning

f. Migrant Health
- Accessible information for migrants
- Change in access
- Development in policy for this cohort
- Recognition of a plethora of wants and needs
- Inclusion of voice of people accessing care/services

g. Clinical Practice
- Change in care
- Access
- Change in policy
- Changing attitudes

h. Charities
- Positive change for the community, focused on patient voices
- Access – to treatments, services and quality of life

Section 2.3
Tools and mechanisms for capturing impact

Below are outlined the potential tools and mechanisms that research teams can use to capture impact throughout the life cycle of a project, as suggested by workshop participants.

- Case studies
- Stories
- Visuals
- Videos
- Word clouds
- Art / artworks
- Books (with visuals)
- Photography
- Inclusive tools
- Clear, concise, accessible language
- Workshop as a group what impact means to PPI and researchers
- Process evaluation for everyone involved

- Public consultation – include all stakeholders
- Hold open events that connect everyone
- Evaluate the experience process itself
- Integrate regular reflection and feedback cycles
- Regular check-in and communication from both/all sides
- Use simple, short, effective impact tools
- Finding mutual goals in between different sections
- Good collaboration in partnerships

Section 3.0
Initial model for PPI Impact Framework

From these discussions, an initial model for the PPI Impact framework was developed (**see Figure 2**). This potential framework allows researchers and PPI contributors to do three things: 1) Capture and incorporate the shared and divergent impact goals of multiple groups working on a research project (and facilitate discussion around this); 2) Select and prioritise impacts for a specific research project from multiple areas of impact; and 3) Draw from potential tools and mechanisms that researchers and PPI contributors can use to capture and describe the impact of their projects (see Section 2.3 for suggested tools and mechanisms).

It was envisioned that once the areas of impact have been determined and agreed upon by a research team, the members could draw from the list of potential areas, listed in Section 2.1, in order to discuss and agree upon the specific impacts that they want the research project to achieve. Research teams could then choose from the list of tools and mechanisms that would best assist them when capturing their impact.

PPI IMPACT FRAMEWORK

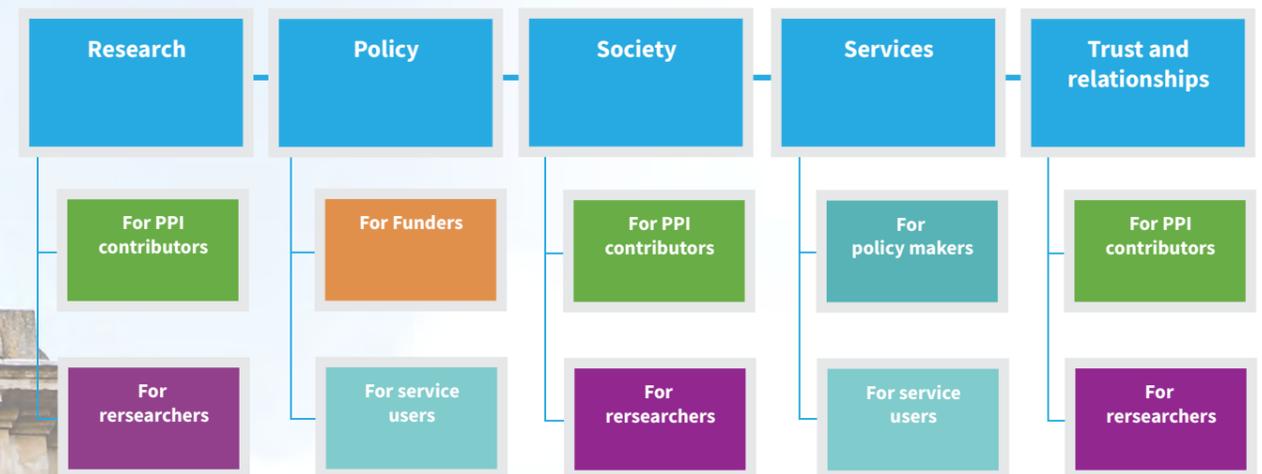| Research	Policy	Society	Services	Trust and relationships
For PPI contributors	For Funders	For PPI contributors	For policy makers	For PPI contributors
For rersearchers	For service users	For rersearchers	For service users	For rersearchers

Figure 2:

Initial model for PPI Impact Framework, based on first co-design workshop, capturing potential areas of impact and diverse priorities for different stakeholders within a project

Section 4.0
Piloting the PPI Impact framework (Co-design Workshop 2)

A second co-design workshop was held at the PPI Ignite Festival launch in October 2025. The workshop included approximately 60 participants, including academics, PPI contributors, healthcare workers, postgraduate students and representatives from the charity sector. The workshop included a brief presentation from the Trinity College PPI Office on work to date. Participants then formed small groups with each group given a hypothetical research project. Each group then piloted the proposed PPI Impact Framework in relation to their research project.

Feedback from participants, following the testing of the framework, was positive in general. Suggestions for adaptations centred largely around the addition of impact areas, with the Trinity team encouraged to provide greater clarity around the definitions of the impact areas included in the framework. For example, two additional potential areas of impact to include in the framework could be Economic Impact and Climate/Sustainability Impact.

Some participants expressed confusion around what was meant by the impact area of "trust and relationships", with queries around which relationships were being referred to. There were also queries around where community impact fits in, as well as queries around societal/civic impact. This perhaps indicates that the area of Societal Impact already included in the model might warrant greater clarity or definition, although research teams can draw upon their preferred definitions as needed. Meanwhile, one group

suggested that using the different impact areas to prioritise desired impacts was challenging as all the categories are intertwined. Other participants highlighted the importance of the inclusion of the voices of those with lived experience within the development process of the PPI framework.

As mentioned above, some participants wondered whether the current impact areas too broad. Others asked, what if the area you want to impact is outside the stated areas? They suggested that the framework needs flexibility.

One group of participants reflected on their experiences of setting priorities (within the confines of the pilot exercise and the hypothetical research project). They initially thought that the group members had different priorities. They then realised they had similar priorities but were thinking about achieving them through different channels. They asked how a research team might prioritise desired impacts, and what is the best way to visually represent these.

Another group suggested there can be similarities or consensus across impacts and priorities. They also noted that a number of areas that they wanted to impact came up but they were unsure about how to categorise them.

Finally, one group suggested that instead of referring to this as a PPI Impact Framework, it could be referred to as an Impact Prioritisation Framework.

Section 4.1
The finalised PPI Impact Framework

Incorporating the voices from both of these workshops and building on this work, the final version of the PPI Impact Framework is presented below.

Section 4.2
Areas of impact

Incorporating the advice from the co-design workshops, the areas of impact that are utilised within this framework are listed below. However, this framework can be used as a guide – research teams engaging with this framework can add additional areas of impact, if they wish to do so.

Research team members can refer to Section 2 to seek clarity or guidance around definitions or examples of areas of impact.

Areas of impact included in this framework are listed in the table below:

- Health services and health outcomes
- Research and funding
- Policy
- Relationships & Communication
- Society & Community
- Education & Public Awareness
- Climate & Sustainability
- Economic

Section 4.3
Final PPI Impact Framework model

Based on the input from the co-design workshops and the work of the Trinity PPI Ignite Office, we present below the finalised PPI Impact Framework model (see Figure 3). It visually captures the areas of impact that a research team can consider, while also representing the notion that different members or groups within a research team can prioritise different impacts. This framework can then be used to facilitate discussion and consensus around priorities and help research teams focus on the areas (and specific issues within these areas) that they want to impact. Please see Section 2.2 for specific examples of the issues within these impact areas that research teams might consider, and for examples of specific tools for impact. As indicated above, this framework serves as a guide for research teams conducting a project that incorporates PPI work and/or is co-designed by PPI contributors. However, research teams wishing to impact other areas can still utilise this framework while incorporating other issues or interests.
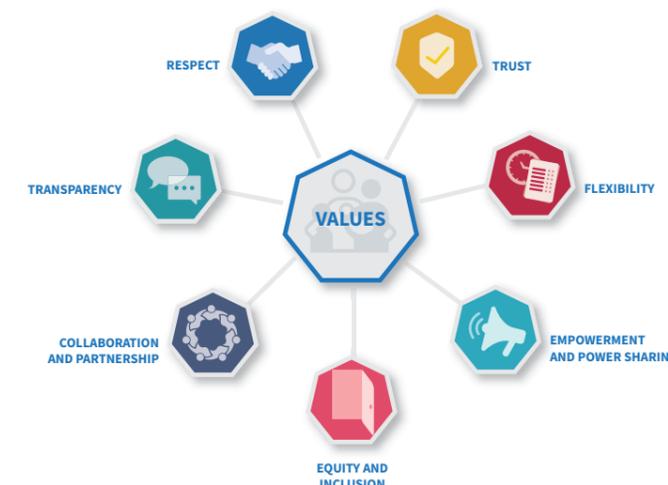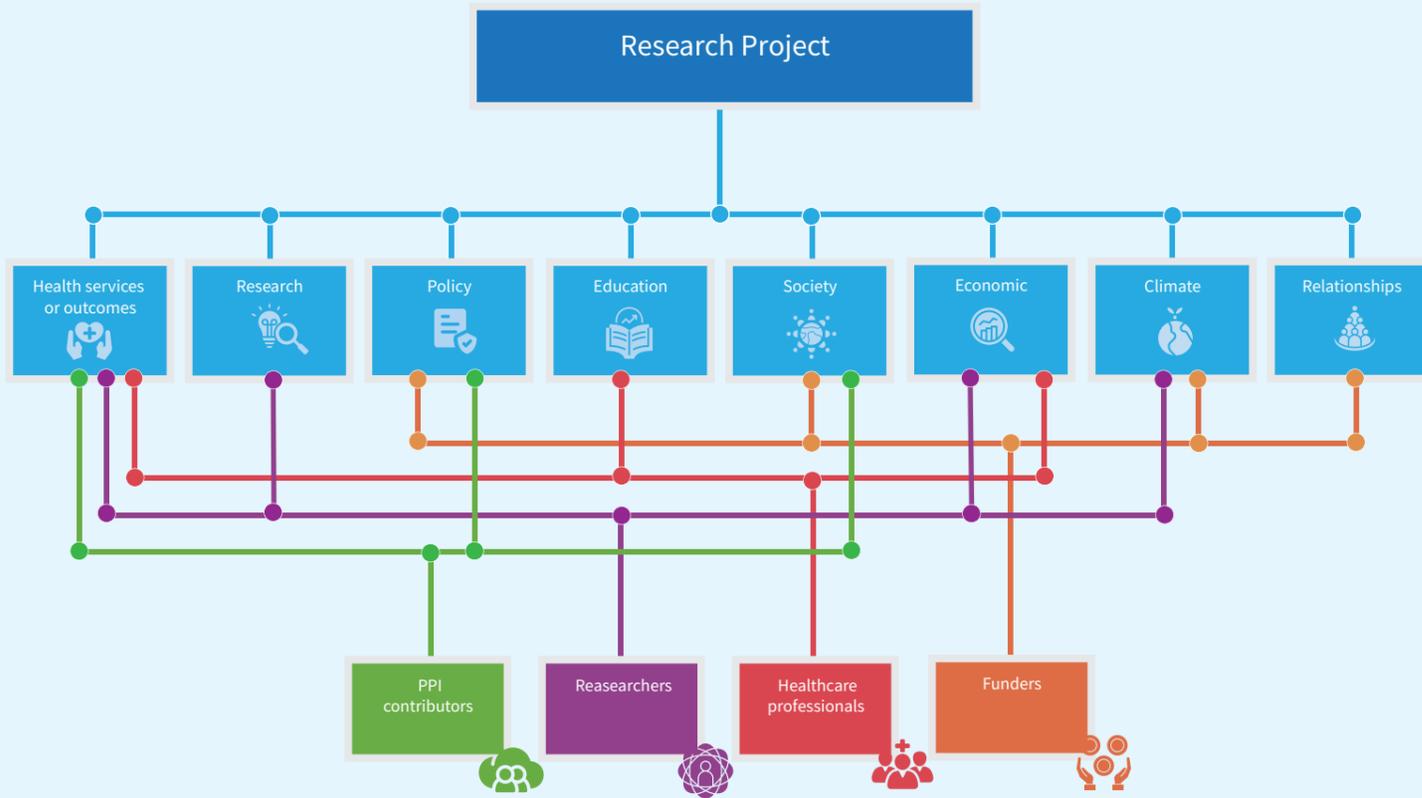
Figure 3:
The finalised PPI Impact Framework

Building on potential areas of impact as discussed in the first co-design workshop (see Table 1), examples of specific areas of impact, or specific issues to impact within the broader areas of impact, discussed in the second co-design workshop, are provided below (see Table 2). Through discussion, research teams can determine which areas they would like to impact and prioritise.

Specific areas of impact

Health services or outcomes:

- Improving services, treatments and interventions
- Improved integration of services
- Improved models of care
- Improved pathways to care / Accessibility to care
- Equity in access
- Reproductive justice

Research:

- Increase in awareness, communication and knowledge sharing
- A culture shift for researchers and clinicians
- Strategic research aligned with public strategies
- For lived experience to be the central voice in research

Policy:

- Align research with public strategies
- Changing policy to facilitate improved access and outcomes
- Ensure research has a policy impact
- Challenging policy
- Communication with policy makers (using robust evidence)

Education:

- Training and support for patients and the public to get involved in research
- High quality education and training for researchers and health professionals
- Increase public awareness of PPI work
- Changes in attitudes
- Acknowledging the value of PPI by researchers
- Promoting inclusivity

Society:

- Community involvement in research
- Greater equality and inclusion, particularly for marginalised groups
- Social and economic justice

Economic:

- Cost effective treatments
- Reduction in financial barriers to accessing healthcare
- Funding for community care

Climate / Sustainability:

- Strengthening linkages between human and planetary health
- Addressing impact of climate change on population health and health systems
- Creating more environmentally sustainable health systems
- Strengthening access to health foods and creating sustainable food systems

Relationships:

- For lived experience to be the central voice in research
- Equal voice central to the table; collaboration
- Improving communication, awareness and knowledge sharing
- Inclusion, respect, equity
- Power sharing

Section 4.4
Using the framework – a step-by-step process

As stated, this PPI Impact Framework offers a model that PPI contributors, researchers and other stakeholders can use to capture the impact of a research project that includes PPI contributions. Following the process outlined in Figure 1, the specific steps that a research team can take when using this model include:

1. All research team members, including PPI partners and other stakeholders, meet before the research project begins.
2. Using the PPI Impact framework model, the research team can discuss and determine the areas of impact that each member would like the project to impact. It is important at this stage to remember that different team members may have different priorities, and it is important to PPI work that all these are given due consideration before consensus is reached. In particular, each voice must be listened to and acknowledged.

3. Using the specific examples discussed in the co-design workshops, the research team can then determine the specific issues or areas they want to impact. These can include but are not limited to the examples mentioned in this framework.
4. Midway through the research project, the research team can revisit and reflect on these areas of impact to determine what has been accomplished, what has yet to be accomplished and what needs to be revised.
5. Following the end of the research project, team members can assess whether they have achieved the impact goals outlined at the start of the project, and determine future dissemination and impact goals, if any.

Section 5.0
Limitations

This PPI Impact Framework was created based on co-design workshops, the work of the TCD PPI Ignite office and the PPI Ignite Network. Further testing of this model, from research teams that include PPI contributors, is needed in order to assess and refine this model. This work will continue as part of the ongoing efforts of the TCD PPI Ignite Office and the PPI Ignite Network into the future. It is important to note that, as such, this continues to be a work-in-progress, and further iterations of this framework, as it is tested and as PPI work evolves, is expected.

Section 6.0
Conclusion

This PPI Impact Framework offers a model that PPI contributors, researchers and other stakeholders can use to capture the impact of a research project that includes PPI contributions. Specifically, the framework can be utilised to plan for and capture impact before during and after a research project. It is hoped this framework can help research teams reach clarity and consensus around the areas they want their research to impact and in doing so increase the positive impact that research can have on all aspects of healthcare and society.

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