

**Engaging the Less Often Heard in Public Health Research Grant Writing:
A Case Study of Co-Production Involving Underserved Migrant Mothers in the UK**

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Background

In the UK, one in three births is to a non-UK born woman, but there is a gap in co-produced research to understand their experiences. The UK National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) defines co-production as 'an approach in which researchers, practitioners, and members of the public work together, sharing power and responsibility'. This project co-produced a grant proposal to improve maternity care for underserved migrant women in the UK. We reflect on transferrable learning for engaging those whose voices are less often heard in grant writing.

Methods

An expert by experience, an underserved migrant woman who had given birth in the UK, joined the research team. Four online engagement workshops were conducted; two involved only migrant women, two were multi-disciplinary. 26 underserved migrant women attended. NIHR INVOLVE guidance was consulted.

Findings

Women said they were often asked about negative experiences which felt disempowering, and rarely asked about solutions. Thus, our proposal will focus on co-designing solutions. Women felt that having an expert by experience co-host workshops encouraged engagement, so we integrated this into our methods. Some women were uncomfortable in professional groups. Thus, our proposed steering and focus groups will have an expert by experience subgroup with elected members attending multi-disciplinary groups. We plan to engage mostly online as the women preferred this to enable flexibility with childcare. The lead expert by experience helped to form the proposal through brainstorming, co-drafting, and feedback; experts by experience commented on the draft via email and workshops. The lead expert by experience wished to gain further experience of research methods, for which we requested additional funding.

Interpretation

The findings from this project are limited as only migrant women who have given birth in the UK were engaged, so is not fully representative of all migrant groups. However, the work has highlighted the immense potential for co-production in public health research, and the value of adapting how we plan research to maximise the voices of the less often heard.

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Contributors

KO and KS were responsible for the conceptualisation, planning, group facilitation, data curation, and writing (original draft, review, and editing); YC, MK, RA, and FS were responsible for refining the ideas, methodology, supervision, and writing (review and editing). All authors have seen and approved the final version of the Abstract for publication.

Conflicts of Interests

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.