Consumer and community Participation Fact Sheet T03: Ladder of participation

Being clear about the level of involvement you are seeking is very important. It helps you understand what you are aiming for, and in turn enables consumers and community members to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to work with you.

Using a ladder, as shown below, can help to illustrate the levels of consumer and community participation. It can also be shown as a continuum where there are no clear steps but a gradual change from low to high level as modelled by INVOLVE. www.invo.org.uk. Using either model can be helpful in identifying and explaining the level of participation that is planned for a research project.

The Ladder of Participation

- **HIGH**
  - The community identifies the research needed and sets the appropriate agenda.
  - The researcher asks a community to identify a problem and make all key decisions. The researcher is willing to provide support.
  - Researchers identify the research needed and present to the community, with defined limits.
  - Researchers present a tentative plan to the community. The plan is open to change (slight or substantial) by those affected.
  - Researchers try to promote a plan. They seek to develop, support or facilitate acceptance of the plan.
  - Researchers make a plan and announce it. The community is convened for information purposes.

- **LOW**
  - Community not involved.

Taken from McKenzie & Hanley, (2007) Consumer and Community Participation on Health and Medical Research: A practical guide for health and medical research organisations.