**Recommendations: funding and incentives for collaboration**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #1 | **Current research funding arrangements in the UK are a substantial structural barrier to routine collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities.** **Funding needs to be available pre-award to support to co-design of research; simper ways of making direct, and timely, payments to community organisations, not just individuals, are needed; sustained, routine collaboration needs funding that is not connected to individual projects.**  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | This recommendation was universally judged to be the most important of our eight recommendations to support increased collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities. More and better collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities will not be possible without changes in how and when funding is made available, and how that funding can be used. Collaboration requires trust, and trust takes effort to build and sustain, which requires funding. Moreover, trust requires an equal partnership, which implies a joint enterprise between researchers and diverse ethnic communities working together from the very start of a piece of research. Funding to support early co-creation work prior to the award of a project grant is currently extremely limited. While in the past universities and other research institutions may have had funds to support pre-award work, this is no longer the case. What funding is available is modest in scale, piecemeal and involves applications processes that may not be successful. Funder payment models used for universities that run on payment in arrears do not work for community organisations, which do not have the financial capacity to do work without being paid up-front. Moreover, while funders and research institutions such as universities are becoming familiar with paying individuals for patient and public involvement, direct payment to community organisations is much harder, and harder than in was in the past. Both funders and research institutions need to make direct payment to community organisations more straightforward. Community organisations do not have finance departments that can cope with systems developed with large organisations in mind.  |
| Comments | Some potential funding models to support this recommendation were suggested and are listed below no particular order. The models are not mutually exclusive, and all would need to support other features of Recommendation #1 such as simpler and timely payments to community organisations.**Model 1**Funders provide a block grant that institutions can apply for to support pre-award collaboration co-design work between researchers and diverse ethnic communities. This funding could also support co-design work with other under-served groups in addition to ethnic minority groups. ‘Institution’ here could also mean community organisations, meaning that community organisations could apply for the funding on their own behalf, meaning they are then funded to work with research organisations on co-design and collaborative health research. **Model 2**Funders provide pre-award funding to research teams that have promising ideas based on e.g. an expression of interest or Stage 1 submission. Not all of this funding will lead to a successful proposal (e.g. at Stage 2), but it could be considered as an investment in more informative research for those that are funded. More careful selection of proposals put forward to later stages (because progression to later stages comes with pre-award funding) may also reduce research waste by having fewer research teams spending time on proposals that ultimately are unsuccessful. **Model 3**Funders offer early engagement or seed funding schemes that do not come with substantial grant submission processes, and which are flexible regarding how they are used beyond being used to support engagement with diverse ethnic communities (and other under-served groups). These schemes could also support direct application from community organisations.**Model 4**Funders consider non-traditional funding routes such as variants of community commissioning or participatory budgeting to directly support diverse ethnic community organisations’ ability to both contribute to research agendas relevant to the communities they represent and to support and work with researchers to design and deliver projects addressing questions on those agendas. **Model 5**Institutions such as universities reallocate some of their existing funding to support pre-award co-design work. This does happen already, but on a small-scale and is institution dependent. UK universities are in a difficult financial situation at present so it is unlikely that they could scale-up current initiatives without there being a mechanism to get back some of their investment, perhaps as a budget line in successful grants. This would require funders to accept a general ‘Diversity-related pre-award budget’ in grants, similar to some FEC costs now that are accepted as the cost of doing business with the institution.   |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #2 | **Funding should be used as a tool to mandate that researchers work together with diverse ethnic communities.**  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | Researchers respond to conditions placed on the award of funding because, simply put, they have to pay attention to the conditions to get the money. Funding and the funding processes can therefore be tools to change researcher and institutional behaviour regarding working together with diverse ethnic communities. For example, funding calls could mandate collaboration and look for evidence of this within the submitted proposal. Institutions and researchers that were better at doing this would be more successful at getting research funding. Collaboration with diverse ethnic communities needs to be recognised with academia as an expected and valued part of an academic career. It should be noted that funder-mandated requirements would need to come with money to support meeting the requirement, including pre-award co-production work (see Recommendation #1).  |
| Comments | A mandate would not, on its own, be enough to lead to substantial increased collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities. As mentioned above and in Recommendation #1, financial support is needed to allow pre-award collaboration, and to sustain beyond funding from a single project. Researchers also lack confidence in how to engage with diverse ethnic communities, reducing their ability to meaningfully comply with mandates. Lists of community organisations that are able to help would be useful. See Recommendations #5 and #8.  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #3 | **Researchers need to work with community organisations and members to better understand what motivates community members to contribute to research.**  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | Money is essential to support collaboration, but it is not sufficient to build trust and support collaboration with diverse ethnic communities. Researchers need to work more closely with diverse ethnic communities to understand what the additional incentives are, but these include working with communities from the start of projects, addressing research questions that are of direct relevance to community members, having endpoints and outputs from the research that are important to community members and sharing results with the community (see Recommendation #8). Researchers and research institutions could also provide support to communities that is non-financial. For example, institutions could offer training in research and data collection methods or offer institutional research structures such as ethics committees to local community organisations to support their own work.  |
| Comments | Building, and keeping, trust requires an ongoing relationship where diverse ethnic communities are involved from research conception through to completion, that results are shared with communities and that the relevance of the results to communities is clear. Sustained relationships are currently difficult because funding comes piecemeal, usually linked to individual grants. Relationships are formed, lost and then reformed as projects get funded. Institutions such as universities rarely offer (or have) resources to sustain relationships between projects.  |

**Recommendations: responsibility for collaboration**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #4 | **Collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities should be an institutional, not only individual, responsibility.**  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | Generally, where collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities takes place, it does so because of the enthusiasm of individuals, not institutions. These individuals are also often researchers who are early in their research careers, rather than as a task for senior staff. Even where senior research staff are involved, collaboration is an individual initiative not an institutional one. Collaborations that rest on the goodwill of individuals are vulnerable. For collaboration to be routine and sustainable, responsibility for collaboration needs to be placed at the level of the institution. Additionally, collaboration needs financial support to sustain it beyond individual projects and individuals, otherwise trust and motivation will wane. Participation by researchers in this institutional collaboration should be acknowledged by the institution and others as an important marker of academic career progression. Finally, improved diversity is about more than more diverse public involvement. Funders and others need to provide training and guidance to researchers to ensure that their whole approach to research design, conduct, analysis and reporting considers equity, diversity and inclusion. See Recommendation #5.  |
| Comments | Community organisations could also identify community champions at their organisation who are responsible for supporting greater involvement of their community in research locally.  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #5 | **Institutions need to better support their researchers to collaborate with diverse ethnic communities.**  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | Working with diverse ethnic communities should be part of the training of all researchers, especially early career researchers. This would raise the importance of working with diverse ethnic communities, making it more likely that it will become a natural and routine part of a researcher’s way of working. Training should provide researchers with the confidence to engage with diverse ethnic communities, highlight local diverse ethnic community organisations willing to support research, cover intersectionality, be anti-racist and raise awareness of the discrimination and oppression that having some ethnic characteristics can lead to within the UK. This training should directly involve community organisations and will help to change and improve research design so that it becomes more ethnically inclusive. Community organisations are willing and able to contribute to training and development, but this needs to be funded. At present many early career researchers, especially PhD students, come to community organisations looking for help but with little or no resource to pay for it. Additionally, contact may be made well into a project and after the community organisation has any opportunity to influence the design of the study. This makes collaboration haphazard, modest in scope and poorly integrated into researcher training.  |
| Comments | None. |

**Recommendations: developing research projects**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #6 | **Diverse ethnic communities need to be involved in research design discussions from the beginning of the research**.  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | The current model for collaboration between researchers and diverse ethnic communities is that researchers have a research idea, which they may then choose to discuss with diverse ethnic communities. This assumes that only researchers know what needs to be researched. Diverse ethnic community members are often invited to work with researchers well after the work has started, when many decisions have already been made. Indeed, funding may already be in place, which limits further the scope for change.A better model would be for research projects to be developed together with diverse ethnic communities from the very start, especially through collaboration with community organisations. Early discussion would also help to ensure that researchers recognise and account for the diversity of views and perspectives within different ethnic communities rather than thinking that there is a single perspective held by minoritised groups. Diverse ethnic communities also need to be involved in all aspects of a project. In other words, design, conduct, analysis, writing and reporting. Dissemination of results direct to communities is also an area where diverse ethnic community organisations can have a role. Sharing results directly with communities is likely to increase trust in research by those communities (see Recommendation #3).  |
| Comments | A constant criticism by members of diverse ethnic community organisations is that researchers involve them too late to make important changes to research design and conduct. This limits the impact their involvement can have on the utility of the research results for members of the communities they represent. Involving diverse ethnic communities from the beginning of research as genuine partners in the research is an essential component of improving the ethnic diversity and relevance of research. Note: there can sometimes be a tension between what drives researchers (e.g., getting a publication) and what community organisations have to do (e.g., run a food bank). The published output may not be as important to community partners; there is a day job to do. It is important to make sure expectations are matched. Is a person bringing lived experience to a discussion, or is the person there to represent a community? Some people may be more comfortable with one than the other, or it may be just one of these that is needed. Everyone needs to be clear what is expected of them.  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #7 | **Some projects may be better led by community organisations rather than researchers or co-led by both.** |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | Current collaboration models and funding mechanisms favour researchers as leaders and community organisations as co-applicant partners. Depending on the topic, it may be better for community organisations to lead and researchers to partner, or for both to co-lead as equal partners. Many community organisations include staff with research experience, and trust levels between community members and community organisations are often much higher than that between researchers and community members. Community organisation leadership may itself promote greater research collaboration and participation of community members. Allowing community organisations to lead or co-lead projects would in many cases mean changes to how funding can be awarded to enable non-higher education intuitions to be the lead organisation. Moreover, community organisations have access to types of funding (e.g., lottery funding) that may be less open to researchers. Once again, researchers would be partners but not formal leaders in projects taking these funding routes. Funders also need to develop black and ethnic minority researchers. Ideally projects working with ethnic minority communities should be led by researchers from ethnic minorities. Where this is not possible, efforts are needed to at least diversify the research team. Funders themselves need to be trained, especially with regard to intersectional approaches to research. [**Detailed justification**](#Cost_effectiveness_C) |
| Comments | Researchers should not be considered the automatic choice for leadership of ethnically inclusive research. Genuine co-leadership as equal partners is often likely to be the best choice, and funding mechanisms should acknowledge and facilitate this.Researchers in the UK are not as ethnically diverse as the general population; this is especially true of those leading the research. This affects the perceived relevance of the research, and the perspectives that are considered when choosing research questions and designing research delivery. More diverse public contributors will help, but the ethnic diversity of researchers themselves needs to increase.  |

**Recommendations: bringing researchers and diverse ethnic communities together**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| [Recommendation](#TypeofRecommendation_C) #8 | **Researchers and diverse ethnic communities need a platform to facilitate collaboration and the sharing of results.**  |
| [Justification](#Justification_C) | Researchers and diverse ethnic communities can struggle to identify who to talk to. A member of a community organisation may recognise a research problem and know that research expertise is needed but be unsure of who to approach to get that expertise. Similarly, a researcher may know that the involvement of one or more particular ethnic groups is essential, but not know how to achieve this.An electronic platform that brings together researchers and diverse ethnic communities would make this easier. In particular, the role of community organisations as a bridge between researchers and diverse ethnic communities could be made more obvious to researchers, as well as providing the means to approach community organisations. The platform could also be used to share results with communities, along with the impact collaboration has had, including changes that have come about because of collaboration. The platform would be an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the contribution made by community organisations and members. The platform could also encourage community organisation involvement in analysis, interpretation and publication. [**Detailed justification**](#Cost_effectiveness_C) |
| Comments | A full-scale platform was considered exciting but a more long-term priority than the other recommendations, especially the funding related changes of Recommendation #1.  |