

Change Makers:

Lessons learned
from the
UKRI SEE-PER
programme

December 2020



UK Research
and Innovation

Introduction

The UKRI Strategic Support to Expedite Embedding Public Engagement with Research (SEE-PER) call invited HEIs and research institutes to embed support for excellent public engagement with research (PER) within their policies and practices. The first year of this programme ran from October 2017 to October 2018. Two types of approach were funded:

‘Embedding change’ proposals that sought to enhance and embed an institution’s approach to supporting PER, building on the learning from the Beacons for Public Engagement, RCUK PER Catalyst and Catalyst Seed Fund programmes

‘Challenge’ proposals which addressed a specific challenge in supporting PER effectively, and which expanded the existing knowledge base about ‘what works’ in effectively supporting PER

In May 2018, the SEE-PER projects were given the opportunity to apply for a second year of funding to embed and expand upon work done in the first phase. Ten of the twelve projects received funding to extend for a further 12 months, and the programme concluded at the end of 2019.

UKRI appointed the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) to co-ordinate this work, ensuring learning was shared across the projects, and that evaluation was used strategically to inform and assess the value of the SEE-PER initiative.

This report

This report provides an overview of the twelve SEE PER projects. It summarises what they did, what they learned, their advice for others and provides links to useful tools or resources that others might apply to their practice.

It also distils the key new insights and evidence generated by the project mapped against the NCCPE’s EDGE tool. Many institutions use this tool to structure and develop their support for public engagement, and we hope this provides useful ‘tips and tricks’ to apply in other contexts.

Finally, we have also drawn on the learning from the project, and the new tools developed by the teams, to update the ‘Support it’ area of the NCCPE website, which provides a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to supporting public engagement within your institution.

Thanks to

The SEE-PER teams, for their expertise, determination and generosity. This report uses their words to tell the story of the programme.

UKRI for funding the programme, in particular Jenni Chambers and Lewis Dean who shaped and supported the project so effectively.



Universities’ engagement with the public has never been more important, as the impact of Covid-19 has demonstrated. This makes this report very timely, reflecting as it does lessons learned about how universities can build strong, supportive public engagement cultures.

The last 12 years has seen significant investment in ‘culture change’ programmes, starting with the Beacons for Public Engagement in 2008. This intelligence was originally captured in the NCCPE’s EDGE self-assessment tool, and the SEE-PER programme has deepened and consolidated this knowledge, adding lots of practical new insights and advice which you can explore in this report.

What the SEE-PER programme has also done is provide fresh perspectives on how – with a small amount of funding and skilled leadership – institutions can make significant improvements in their support for public engagement, and deliver this relatively quickly.

Four factors seem particularly important in accounting for the success of the projects:

1. A mandate for change

The SEE-PER call evidenced UKRI’s commitment to public engagement, and its expectation that institutions should evidence effective strategies and support. This provided each project with the legitimacy to really challenge their institutions. It gave them permission to ask tough questions and galvanise action.

2. Provide space to think and experiment

Every team reported how valuable it was to be provided with space and time to think and experiment. Day to day professional life is intense and every moment is accounted for. The SEE-PER funding allowed the teams to carve out time to analyse, consult on and re-focus their support for public engagement. The regular meetings between the teams, facilitated by the NCCPE, and ongoing reporting and reflection on progress, focused attention on what was and wasn’t working and why. The results speak for themselves, both in the improvements in institutional practice, but also in the enhanced leadership of the professional staff responsible for the projects.

3. Take deep dives

The ‘challenge’ projects in particular demonstrated the value of focusing down on specific enablers of high quality engagement. While it is important to work on a number of fronts to effect change, this can result in effort being spread very thinly. The chance to focus exclusively on specific challenges, like the take up of professional development, has yielded important new insights which are shared in this report.

4. Invest in expert staff

Public Engagement Professionals are vital to drive these initiatives, and empowering them is crucial. A key success for many of these projects was ensuring that the short term ‘pump priming’ from UKRI resulted in long term investment in highly skilled teams to sustain the gains made.

Finally, what stands out from this report is the diversity of approaches being taken to public engagement in different institutions. A host of types of institution took part – from focused research centres and facilities, to large research intensives. In each case, those different contexts and cultures provided significantly different challenges and opportunities for the teams to address. While this report identifies cross-cutting themes, it also demonstrates how important it is to develop strategies that ‘go with the grain’ of your institution.

Executive summary

Meet the SEE-PER teams

The SEE-PER programme demonstrated the vital contribution made by public engagement professionals – the project leaders, who shaped and delivered complex projects often in very challenging circumstances; the senior academic staff who championed and challenged in equal measure; and the public engagement teams who made sure the activities were realised to the highest possible standards.



Dr Laura Wick – Public Engagement lead at Heriot Watt University

Without SEE-PER, we would still be functioning in a reactive, ad-hoc manner. Taking the time to gather evidence, speak to those involved and those who might potentially be involved has given us both the clarity and the confidence to understand what we need to focus our efforts on for the maximum impact.



David Amigoni – PVC, Research and Enterprise, Keele University

For me, SEE-PER has meant re-learning what our research looks and sounds like, from the perspective of the dedicated publics who use it and help us to create it. The valued time that I've spent with public engagement professionals during the course of this project – in my own institution and through the networking opportunities with the SEE PER group – has not only embedded and enhanced PE at Keele but also, I hope, my leadership.



Dr Mhairi Stewart – Head of Public Engagement with Research, St Andrews University

SEE-PER came at the perfect time for St Andrews in our embedding journey and at an equally perfect time for me in my professional journey. It gave me the capacity and time to stand back, take stock, and think critically about what was needed for institutional culture change. It also brought me into a network that has become, and remains, a critical and creative sounding board in my wider engagement practice.



Dr Helen Featherstone – Head of Public Engagement, University of Bath

ChallengeCPD@Bath gave me space to think more deeply and critically about training. It also provided an opportunity to learn more directly from those who do Researcher Development, both at the University of Bath and across the sector. This was particularly useful as it helped me compare my new understandings of training and professional development to the broader, sector-level picture. Being a Public Engagement lead means I often can't justify taking such a deep dive into what could be seen as a fairly narrow area of work.

Here at the University of Bath, we are frequently approached by other people looking to embed public engagement. We are always happy to share our approaches and insight on what's worked for us. The ChallengeCPD@Bath project, its outcomes and outputs, have given us a new angle to these conversations.



David Read - Professorial Fellow in Chemical Education and Director of Outreach, University of Southampton

Being involved in the SEE-PER project gave us the opportunity to trial and evaluate new approaches to the delivery of training and CPD that have helped us to reach people who may not have been able to engage with such activity previously. It is evident that we've had a significant impact on the delivery of PE by those who participated in our training, and that brings us a lot of personal satisfaction as well as food for thought as we reflect on what we've learned from the process and how we can apply it to other areas of our CPD provision for researchers. Working on this project has been a real highlight of the last few years for me, and it's fantastic to be carrying that forward.



Dr Nicolette Fox – Development manager, CUPP, University of Brighton

CUPP has many years of experience of community-university partnerships, but Ignite was the first time we had designed and delivered a 12 month fast-track incubator programme. Our research highlighted that it is not only possible to develop a set of new partnerships in months not years, but within weeks they can start to have a positive impact locally, and in some cases even a wider influence. This work would not have been possible without UKRI funding, NCCPE support and insights, plus the generous feedback from colleagues across the country taking part in the inspiring SEE-PER programme. It has had a significant impact on our public and community engagement work at the University of Brighton, not least in that we are now planning for an Ignite 2. In the spirit of SEE-PER, we will continue to share our Ignite learning through our forthcoming online guide to setting up community-university partnerships in challenging times.

Meet the SEE-PER teams



Dr Nick Wells – Director of Impact and Innovation, UKCEH

SEE-PER was the first competitive funding opportunity for a Research Council Institute to deliver a robust review of PER and develop a new strategic framework. In retrospect, the time and indeed, legitimacy to challenge ourselves and stimulate change, were important, but the benefits of working with PER experts across NCCPE and HEIs was somewhat unexpected and yet proved critical. It provided challenge by thought leaders and their direct involvement in our strategy development, building our confidence to fully act on our conclusions. We moved from considering PER as a passion or an obligation, to seeing it as an essential part of science delivery, excellence and impact.



Carenza Lewis - Professor for the Public Understanding of Research, University of Lincoln

What's been so valuable about the SEE-PER programme is the opportunity (and funds!) it provided to put into place, in an integrated way, a range of actions I had been nigglingly aware were needed. The University of Lincoln has long had a good reputation for public engagement (this was one thing which attracted me to it), but as a new university engagement needed to adapt to keep pace as the quantity and range of our research has increased so rapidly. Our SEE-PER programme helped us do that, extending and innovating to create a comprehensive array of resources, programmes and networks for support and recognition that can be used to drive PER at new heights. It's great to see this benefitting our communities while also enabling students and staff at all levels to appreciate the value of PER for their work, our university and wider society.



Karl Byrne – Public Engagement Manager at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

SEE-PER allowed me to get a much clearer picture of the support researchers at LSHTM needed in regards to PER, and allowed us to increase the capacity of the PE team. By shifting the focus of the PE support we offer, it has allowed me and my team to work more effectively and efficiently, and offer more targeted, 1:1 support in the areas that make a significant difference to the amount and quality of the PER that we do at LSHTM.

I've also really valued the regular meetings throughout the project. Being able to spend time with PE professionals from other institutions has been immensely helpful, and an incredibly useful resource for my own personal growth, as well as helping me refine the PE support we offer LSHTM researchers.

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Project overviews: Embedding projects

7 projects were focused on culture change

On the following pages we provide a short overview of each project: their distinctive focus; key lessons learned and some key inspirational 'take aways' that other HEIs might apply.

We hope these summaries will encourage you to delve deeper into the project reports, and to contact the project teams.



Birkbeck Researchers' Engagement Development project (BRED):

Birkbeck College, University of London



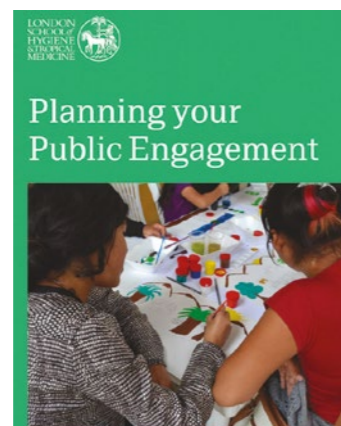
Evolving Engagement:

Heriot-Watt University



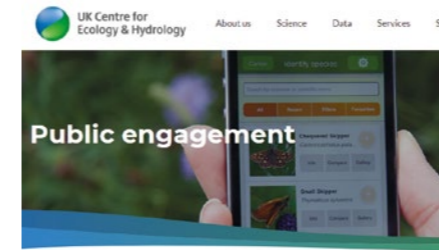
Co-Production and Creativity:

Ethos, typologies and innovation in public engagement practice: Keele University



Enriching, enhancing and embedding a culture of public engagement with research:

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine



Embedding Public Engagement with Research (EmBER):

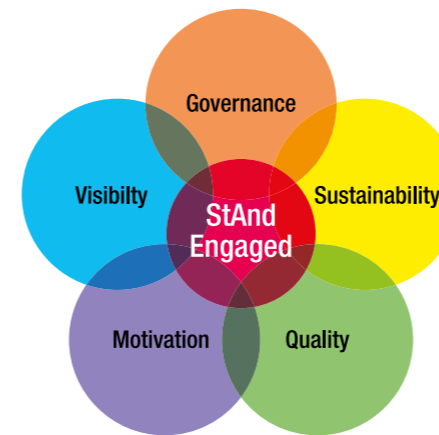
UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Our commitment to public engagement
We believe that public engagement is essential to ensuring that our research is both relevant and impactful. We are committed to fostering excellent public engagement with our whole research portfolio, in a way that benefits both scientists and publics, in the UK and around the world.



Public Engagement for All with Research at Lincoln (PEARL):

University of Lincoln



St Andrews Engaged (StAnd Engaged):

University of St Andrews

Embedding

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Birkbeck Researchers' Engagement Development project (BRED)



➤ The College required a step change to address its key challenge: to build sustained infrastructure for supporting Public Engagement with Research (PER), with a secondary focus on reward and recognition

SEE PER funding was made available at the perfect time for the delivery of the College's PER strategy, which is focussed on recognising and embedding PER across the College.

The College used SEE PER funds to appoint additional expertise in the form of a PER Coordinator (full-time) and a PER Evaluation Officer (part-time) and thus to ramp up activity, allowing us to directly support many more researchers and promote the concept of PER much more widely.

Our approach was to support researchers to understand PER and to empower them to build PER into their research activities as a conscious activity, and to celebrate their successes.

The additional expertise also enabled the College to establish a number of identified 'quick wins', including bespoke training; better support for activities by the provision of seed funding; rewarding and recognising PER through new PER Awards as well as increasing the support available to individual academics.

KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- The largest single impact from the SEE PER project is the work undertaken in year 1 and year 2 to have PER recognised in our formal recognition and reward processes – our revised promotions criteria with completely re-drafted requirements for engagement are due to be used in the 19/20 academic year for the first time
- One area where we struggled initially was to fully incorporate PER into the strategic research environment effectively (as opposed to having PER touching on but not fully embedded in a whole raft of institutional strategies), and it was this understanding which drove our decision to move the PER team into the Research Office when it formed.
- Birkbeck had a specific issue in that our researchers are fully committed to our mission and routinely undertake PER, but do not necessarily understand that what they are doing is PER. This may not be such a common problem for institutions with a different mission and ethos but is something other HEIs might want to consider.



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

The Birkbeck Awards for Public Engagement reflect the very distinctive qualities of PER within the university. You can access a very insightful account of the process of developing the awards – and ensuring the categories reflected Birkbeck's distinctive research culture here: <https://londonpen.wordpress.com/2018/06/07/categorising-public-engagement>



Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y6huzdt7>

Public Engagement webpages

www.bbk.ac.uk/research/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Professor Miriam Zukas, PER Champion (BRED 1); Professor Julian Swann (Pro Vice Master (Research) (BRED 2)

Public Engagement Leadership team: Mary-Clare Hallsworth, Katy Glazer, Ana Rita Rodrigues

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Heriot Watt University – Evolving Engagement



Heriot Watt's Strategy 2025

► “The influence of SEE-PER resulted in our new university strategy reflecting not only the importance of PE, but our wider role in the places where we have a presence.”

Professor Garry Pender, Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation)

We used an evidence-based approach to embed public engagement within the University strategy and management priorities. We consulted widely with stakeholders about how we can truly create a culture where public engagement is valued and supported – both internally within the University, and within our local communities. Our awareness raising activities included piloting high-profile activities, public engagement champions and networks, and training opportunities. Learning from these activities has enabled us to see what works and more importantly, what doesn't.

The success of the interventions is demonstrated by the high-profile of PER within the new university strategy, the imminent launch of the PER Implementation plan, and the revised structures and support mechanisms within the institution and an extremely positive team spirit across the professional services supporting PER and the academic staff community engaged in delivering PER.

KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

A key learning from the SEE-PER programme is that while it is difficult to evidence change robustly, it is useful to take the time to pause and reflect on what works and what does not. Collecting numbers is not always the best indication that an intervention worked. Running a training programme for a few people may not seem like value for money, however if those few people change their engagement approach based on that training, the ripple effect from the change could be immense.

For other institutions we have the following words of advice:

1. Understand the agendas, hurdles and drivers of different facets of the institution and how they can help you, and equally how PER can benefit them
2. Gather as much evidence of PER and its perceptions as possible, and share with senior management, even if not requested to
3. It is all about people; university leaders, public engagement professionals, internal and external communities. Talk to people, understand their values, and explore how PER can align with those values.



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

Developing high profile platforms for engagement

These events were hugely successful, primarily because we had the time and resource to plan events based on the audience and with a clear outcome. The success of these activities has allowed us to demonstrate their value to senior management. In a risk-averse sector, such activities which could have a negative reputational impact if done wrong are generally shied away from. We collected evidence of the want for such activities, and piloted them over two years, learning from each activity how to improve latter ones.

Spring boarding from these activities has allowed us to create a PER framework based on evidence. This will be a flexible plan, but by piloting activities to understand what our communities want, we have a better appreciation of how to achieve outcomes moving forward, and to secure buy-in from a risk averse leadership.



Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2tqpxeo>

Public Engagement webpages

www.hw.ac.uk/engage

Project team

PI: Professor Gareth Pender

Public Engagement Leadership team: Dr Laura Wicks

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Keele University – Co-Production and Creativity: Ethos, typologies and innovation in public engagement practice

“The SEE-PER funding has enabled us to move quickly from being an institution which believed in PER, doing so from the perspective of siloed excellence and uncoordinated enthusiasm: to one in which PER is integrated into the research management system and backed by a programme of reward, recognition and support”.

David Amigoni, PVC Research and project PI

Keele is a small, research-led university with a strong commitment to community. We started this project with a number of pockets of research-led public engagement excellence but without obvious coherent links between them, which it was our mission to foster. Our objective was to improve the visibility and connectedness of our PER. In the first year, we listened to publics, partners, professional services colleagues and researchers to understand their experiences of the barriers and enablers in this area.

In the second year, we applied this learning to a range of activities, strategically co-ordinated with other university initiatives and driven by significant input from our PVC R&E, to promote and embed connected PER and raise its profile across the institution.

KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Align culture change initiatives with wider institutional agendas

One of our project's major successes has been the development of an entirely new platform for PER: a local annual festival of ideas. The first Stoking Curiosity was held in November 2018 within the historic Spode Works factory regeneration area in Stoke-on-Trent. It was led by Keele University and Staffordshire University as a key aspect of our SEE-PER work, co-produced with input from local organisations, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and local residents. The festival, initially funded by SEE-PER, is now established as an annual event. Its second iteration took place in November 2019, with external funding secured to ensure its sustainability. This success is a critical example of the importance of aligning culture change activities with institutional aims and the wider local, regional and global engagement contexts in which these operate.

Invest in listening

Throughout the duration of our project, we became aware of a greater wealth of skills and expertise in this area (from both our researchers and professional services colleagues) than we had anticipated. The value of listening, scoping and understanding is perhaps the most important take-home message from our project. SEE-PER allowed us to indulge in an extensive period of exploration, consultation and reflection, which ensured our objectives and plans were tailored to the needs and agendas and our institution and that they addressed the most pressing of those needs and helped secure the buy in of those we needed to engage.



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

The 'hands on' role of our Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise

A distinctive feature of our project has been the active involvement of our PI, the PVC R&E, in driving and delivering all of its elements. Particularly given the personnel changes we experienced, he has provided an essential anchor to ensure its stability, and will do so beyond the project's life cycle. The PVC R&E has persistently championed the project, both its wider ethos and specific activities (including attending all workshops and training sessions), ensuring attention from critical high level stakeholders within and beyond our institution. The unique nature of this was evident from SEE-PER programme meetings, which brought together representatives from all funded projects. Our PVC R&E's presence was keenly felt and appreciated at these meetings, and this was often articulated by those present.

Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y233ged5>

Public Engagement webpages

www.keele.ac.uk/research/publicengagement

Project team

PI: Professor David Amigoni

Public Engagement Leadership team: Ann Pittard, Kerry Jones, Joe Clarke: with thanks for the earlier crucial work of Dr Gemma Scott, Eleanor Fogwill, Dr Jackie Reynolds and Dr Lotika Singha

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine – Enriching, enhancing and embedding a culture of public engagement with research

“The SEE-PER funded work has, for the first time, allowed for a systematic review of the level of public engagement with research (PER) currently conducted at LSHTM, and has helped the Public Engagement Team to alter how they work to meet the needs of researchers more strategically”.

Professor Anne Mills, Deputy Director & Provost and Professor of Health Economics and Policy

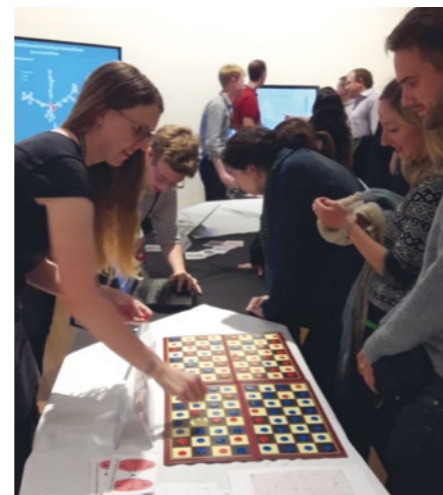
LSHTM’s position as a world-leading centre for research and postgraduate education focusing on all aspects of public health, with research spanning multiple continents, means that standard approaches to public engagement may not be as appropriate for us as for other institutions. For instance, our researchers do much of their public engagement with communities that are not as geographically close to the School.

With this in mind, we used the SEE-PER project to understand the challenges around awareness, appreciation and uptake of PER support specific to LSHTM, and implement changes in the way the PE team works. We worked with external evaluation experts to conduct a scoping exercise involving a school-wide survey and in depth interviews with heads of department. The results of this evaluation allowed us to implement changes to the way the Public Engagement team functions, shifting our focus to more 1:1 support for researchers and the development of both a new Strategic Action Plan 2018-2022, and an Evaluation framework that allows us to collect relevant information around Public Engagement Activities; creating a Public Engagement Network and the creation of a Public Engagement specific award at our annual Director’s Awards.

KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The SEE-PER project has been a fantastic opportunity to look at how we carry out Public Engagement in LSHTM. It allowed us to increase the size of our PE Team, and with that, the amount of support we can offer researchers in the school.

One take away message from this project is learning that there are some easy wins, but an institute-wide culture change takes time. It is an ongoing process to increase numbers of staff motivated to participate in PER. The biggest hurdles, besides “time”, are staff thinking PER is “not for them”, or being unaware of support offered by PE team. 1:1 meetings and engaging with individual groups is proving much more successful than emails or other methods of promotion, although this method proves to be time and resource heavy. One way around this is to attend centres or research group meetings, as a way of increasing awareness of PE and the PE team to captive audiences!



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

Our school-wide scoping exercise in Year One allowed us to evaluate the PE activities being carried out, researcher’s awareness of the support surrounding PE that is on offer and what the barriers are that are holding back more researchers from getting involved. On its own, this was a useful exercise, but when paired with the new measures that we implemented during Year Two (as a direct result of the survey results), we have seen a marked increase in the number of researchers coming to us for advice in creating PE activities, requests for support writing embedding PE into grant applications, and an increase in willingness amongst researchers, centres and faculties to consider PE activities.



Links

The full project report includes details of the scoping exercise, the strategic plan and monitoring framework, and links to various helpful resources including a guide to evaluating public engagement: <https://tinyurl.com/yy5b5rfo>

Public Engagement webpages

www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Professor Dame Anne Mills

Public Engagement Leadership team: Dr Erin Lafferty, Karl Byrne

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology – Embedding Public Engagement with Research (EmBER)

“Articulating our distinctive approach to PER via our Principles of Public Engagement with Research has been critically important in embedding excellent PER in the organisation. These Principles now provide the basis for carrying out PER that is truly integrated with UKCEH’s science projects, and the PER we do will make a material difference to the success of these projects.”

Dr Nick Wells, Director of Impact and Innovation and project PI

Our principal objectives for Phase II of the Embedding Public Engagement with Research (EmBER) project were to clarify the strategic purpose of public engagement with research at UKCEH and to continue to embed PER in our culture across all four of our sites in a way that was mutually beneficial to our organisation, our researchers and our publics.

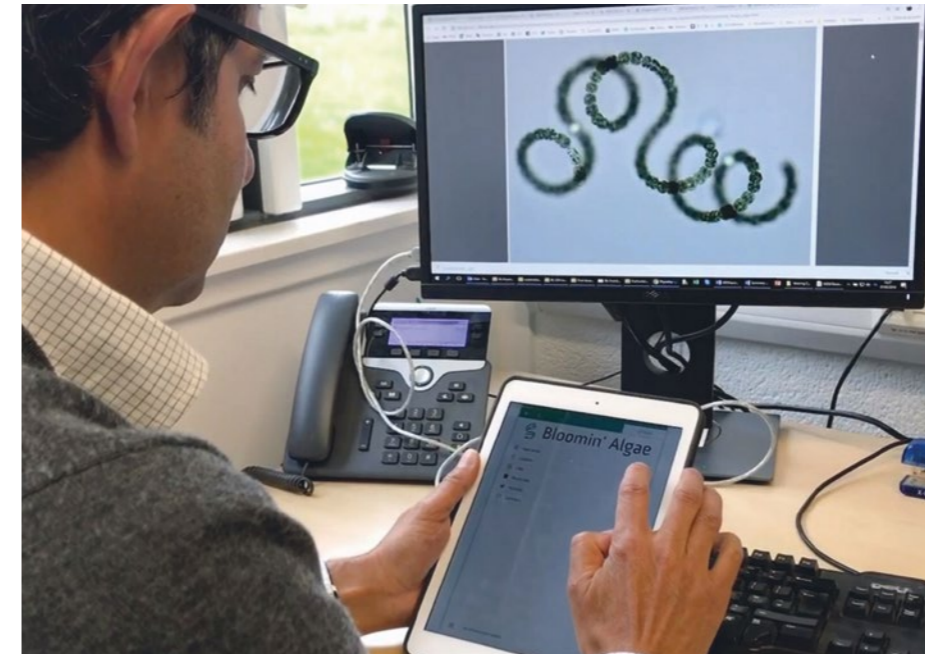
We wanted to extend the excellence, scale, scope and impact of our PER activities, to ensure that PER is integral to our research projects, and to establish formal governance of, planning for and reporting on PER within the organisation. We set out to become an exemplar for other RCIs of how to embed PER, and intended to share our experience with other NERC institutes.

KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

When we first set out to critically examine our PER activities, we had several questions that needed addressing. What should UKCEH’s role be in engaging the public with environmental science issues? Were some of our existing PER activities, such as visiting schools or engaging with the public at festivals and events, really having an impact? How could we ensure PER was aligned with and embedded into our core science delivery, which primarily happens through specific projects?

Through the two years of the EmBER project, we feel we have been able to address these questions, which means we are now truly committed to delivering the kinds of public engagement that work for us as an organisation and are aligned with our strengths and our science strategy. We identified that our core focus for PER as an organisation is to engage the public in the design, delivery and dissemination of our specific research projects.

This clarity of thought has provided the basis for us to embed PER effectively across the organisation through the co-creation and dissemination of our Principles of Public Engagement with Research. These Principles recognise the strategic importance of PER to UKCEH in delivering excellent science with impact, and are directly aligned with explicit responsibilities for PER and the KPIs to assess continued progress at an institutional level.



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

Developing Principles for Public Engagement

At the outset of the project, we did not have a clear focus for PER at UKCEH. The types of activities we supported centrally were diffuse, ranging from school visits and festival attendance to citizen science and community engagement, and the value of these activities to the organisation and its publics was not clear.

By articulating UKCEH’s approach to public engagement in a set of Principles of Public Engagement with Research, co-created with 10% of UKCEH staff and approved by the Senior Management Team, we laid a firm foundation for our PER activities that set PER at the heart of the research we do and its impact. The Principles deliberately align our PER with our core science work, so that PER is not seen as an ‘add on’ activity, but as a key part of the design, delivery and evaluation of science projects and their impact.



Links

The full project report includes the Principles for Public Engagement as an annex: <https://tinyurl.com/y3pw6fx7>

Public Engagement webpages

www.ceh.ac.uk/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Dr Nick Wells

Public Engagement Leadership team: Hannah Lacey, Anthea Milnes, Michael Pocock

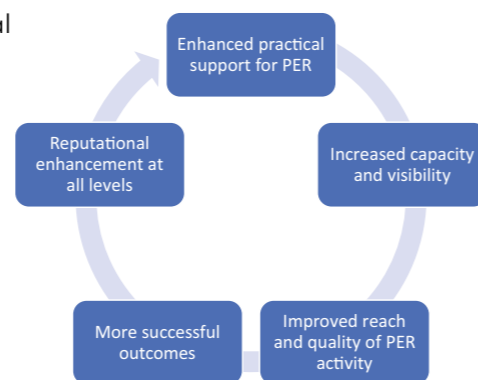
INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

University of Lincoln – Public Engagement for All with Research at Lincoln (PEARL)

“PEARL has helped make research at the University of Lincoln more accessible, relevant, valuable, visible, transparent and accountable, both through its achieved outcomes and through the processes it has introduced for the future.”

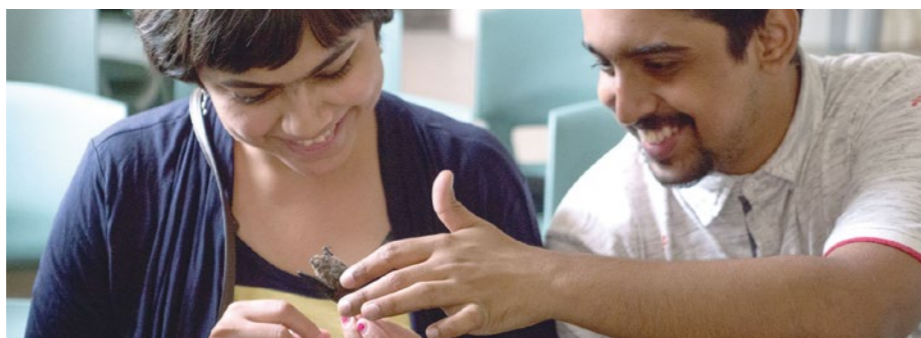
Carenza Lewis, Professor for the Public Understanding of Research, and Project PI

PEARL’s aim was to create a cyclical virtuous circle in which enhanced, strategic support built capacity (skills, interest and resources) for engagement and enhanced its reach and quality. This, when combined with improved visibility, helped deliver greater success, which could be recognised and rewarded, delivering reputational enhancement (at scales ranging from researcher to institution) thus making the business case for continuing support – completing and restarting the cycle.



KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Create opportunities for recognising, sharing and celebrating PER – this creates a ‘buzz’ around PER, inspires new activity, shares best practice and creates community and collaboration – these are all important for institutional PER ‘wellbeing’.
- Be present as a sounding board to help encourage and shape ideas.
- Understand your University’s needs so you can direct initiatives towards what researchers want. Nurture relationships with colleagues doing (or interested in) PER so you can communicate relevant opportunities directly with them.
- Be serendipitous and flexible - respond to what comes up and support it if you can.
- As well as long-term goals, look for quick wins that create momentum and change in support quickly. Prioritise opportunities to develop support for PER so that the offering remains sustainable and effective - small grants for new PER activity can be very impactful.
- Bear sustainability in mind throughout – for example research and create effective processes from the outset, log these carefully, and then repeat the following year – it will save you a lot of time.
- Collect as much data as possible - on everything!
- Engage with PER teams and support across the HEI sector to collaborate, share resources, tackle challenges – this will save time, give new perspectives and help maintain your momentum.



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

The team identified five critical ‘triggers’ of change:

1. A strong online landing point has made public engagement with research at Lincoln visible and accessible, including a dynamic website accessed from our Research home page with information, resources and contacts for support, and lively social media including Twitter to promote activities and build a community of engaged researchers.
2. Establishing a small annual competitive grants fund for new PER activities complemented by year-round support from the PEARL team encourages people to ‘have a go’ and increases opportunities to build experience.
3. Enhanced recognition for PER through annual appraisal, staff merit awards and Vice Chancellor’s awards has significantly increased the numbers of staff and students developing experience of, satisfaction in, and commitment to, public engagement.
4. Participation in national programmes, such as ‘Pint of Science’ and ‘Being Human’, as well as myriad local or one-off initiatives, has enhanced the reputation of the University both in wider society and across the HE sector.
5. Improved information management and archiving is enabling the PEARL team and researchers to evaluate and record public engagement in ways which help senior leadership demonstrate the impact of our research, including for REF and KEF, and under our societal commitment as signatories of the Civic University Charter and UKRI’s Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research.

Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2ujzue7>

Public Engagement webpages

www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/researchatlincoln/publicengagement

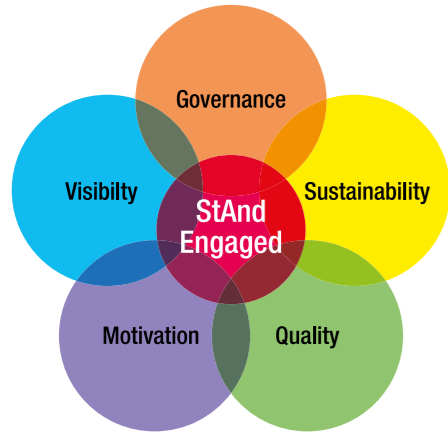
Project team

PI: Professor Carenza Lewis

Public Engagement Leadership team: Sarah Harris (RA), Dr Matt Young (Manager)

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

University of St Andrews – St Andrews Engaged (StAnd Engaged)



StAnd Engaged areas of priority

➤ “One lesson we have learnt is that the enabling activity our PE professionals undertake is essential to our success. We know we have to secure, nurture, and retain expertise in this area.”

Professor Tom Brown, Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) and project PI

SEE-PER support has enabled the University of St Andrews to capitalise on learning from the Beacons and Catalyst projects, avoiding pitfalls and leapfrogging ahead in its development of support for PER. High profile and highly regarded training and reward mechanisms are now in place and networks of engaged practice are gaining momentum and vitality, informing University policy and strategy.

The central public engagement team contribute to institutional documentation and there is a noticeable increase in requests for support from across the University, including from professional service units supporting research and researchers. The ongoing challenge is now one of maintaining the significant momentum we have developed.

KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Success isn't always about reaching a high-profile endpoint. Sometimes enabling, undertaking, and sustaining the most seemingly unexciting, routine, or minor activities are a greater measure of success than the big banner headlines. For example, we set up networks with both PE professionals and with professional service units. The units' networks include units we would not have normally considered approaching, such as alumni development, the sports centre, and our finance and business development teams. Attendees shared delivery opportunities, barriers to activity, and discussed best practice across all facets of engaged practice.

The outcomes from these networks included a shared understanding of the value of public engagement in each individual's field of expertise, and how each of us can support each other. This shared understanding has resulted in greater collaboration in activity, sophisticated and informed strategy in audience development, professional skills development, and in successful funding applications across network members. It's easy to overlook, and even disregard, the smaller successes, but we would urge you to recognise these, to record them and celebrate them as much as the big headline achievements.



INSPIRATION FOR OTHERS

A big success has been our PE Portfolio of training. To set up some kind of portfolio of training was in our original workplan as an important if not a priority activity. Driven however by closer connections to our professional development team gained through our internal networks, it became much more significant than in our original plans, influencing many of our other activities.

The University of St Andrews has a culture of training and of hosting passport programmes which are externally accredited. This meant there was a pre-existing framework and culture we could build upon. Guided by our professional development colleagues we set up a programme for PER which included the obvious skill sets gained through engaged practice (e.g. communication skills), but also the less obvious transferrable skills such as grant writing, budget, project, and people management skills. In doing this we created not just a tool for raising skills in PER, but also a way that we could raise understanding of the contribution of PER including all the areas of personal development it contributes to, for example widening participation, equality and diversity, social responsibility, responsible research and innovation, and researcher development.

Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/yyq5qjud>

Public Engagement webpages

www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/support/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Professor John Woollins

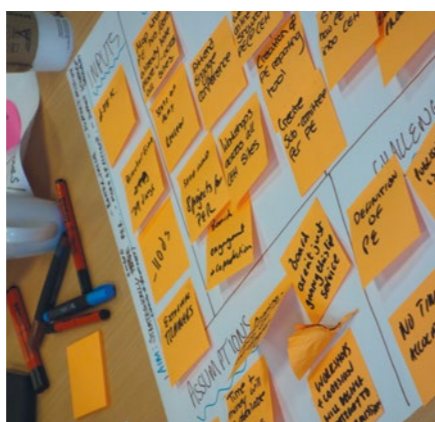
Public Engagement Leadership team: Dr Mhairi Stewart, Dr Alina Roth, Dr Kirsty Ross

SEE-PER Challenge Projects

5 projects were funded to address long-standing challenges in support for public engagement

On the following pages we provide a short overview of each project: their distinctive focus; key lessons learned and some key inspirational 'take aways' that other HEIs might apply.

We hope these summaries will encourage you to delve deeper into the project reports, and to contact the project teams.



ChallengeCPD@Bath

University of Bath

PER Challenge: Enhancing the take up of training and CPD for PER

University of Southampton

Supporting staff in Public Engagement with Research

The STFC National Laboratories



INGRAINED

UCL

IGNITE

University of Brighton

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

University of Bath – ChallengeCPD@Bath

“One lesson that I have personally drawn from the project is the importance of a differentiated offer, depending on the level of researcher involved. This is true not just in content but in the use of language too. Indeed, “PER” as a concept carries significant baggage, and other relevant words (e.g. “researcher development”, “training”, “CPD”) are likewise fully-loaded. If we want to get the most from our PER activities in the future we may wish to consider leaving some of the words behind, to enable us to reach the broader internal audience.”

Jonathan Knight
(Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research))
and project PI

Our challenge

This project investigated the provision, uptake and impact of training and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for researchers in public engagement. Training in public engagement is one of nine core strands of work when embedding a positive culture of public engagement with research at universities. However, research has highlighted that these opportunities also act as a potential barrier to engagement through a perceived lack of availability or relevance of the training on offer.

Our approach

Over the course of the two-year project, we critically examined our training and CPD offer for public engagement with research. We looked across the literature and worked with an Advisory Group of critical friends made up of academic and professional services staff from the University of Bath and external providers of public engagement training.



KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Through our ChallengeCPD@Bath work we identified four key learning points about training and professional development for public engagement:

- The issues associated with professional development for public engagement are not unique to public engagement training – there is a wider culture of resistance to formal professional development within universities which disadvantages CPD for public engagement.
- Professional development is more than just training - people are less tuned into training opportunities in general and perhaps have a limited view of what counts as training as a result of the culture around CPD at universities. This means significant interventions may not be reported as ‘training’ in surveys such as the Factors Affecting Public Engagement survey.
- It’s about the learner, not the intervention - we need to put the learner first in our training interventions through involvement in developing activities, assessing and surfacing their existing skills, knowledge and behaviours from other non-public engagement work, and evaluating the impact of the intervention on their broader professional development and career aspirations.
- Learning can take time to be realised - evaluation of professional development should not primarily be about the intervention but about the benefits the learner has derived from the experience. We need to take a longer-term approach to evaluating an intervention to fully understand the impact of those opportunities.

Recommendations to other HEIs

- Training for PER is important but will not cure all of Public Engagement’s ills. Training for PER is doubly disadvantaged: PER is still a minority activity and training / professional development in HEIs is poorly developed. Do not be surprised when people do not sign up, or do not prioritise your training.
- Put your learner first: think carefully about the broader professional development needs of the learners you are working with. Consider how your PER training can support those needs so that the training is more relevant and does more than enhance public engagement practice.
- Training is more than what you devise and deliver, it’s about the learning you help to foster. Think carefully about the opportunities for learning that you create – a chat over a cuppa, an internal news item, a small grant - you are probably doing a lot of training already. Can you reframe any of your activities to “count” as training?

Links

The full ChallengeCPD@Bath report, blogs and a range of useful resources, including a literature review and more details of the learning resources created by the team, are all available here: www.bath.ac.uk/projects/challengecpd-bath

Public Engagement webpages

www.bath.ac.uk/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Professor Jonathan Knight
Public Engagement Leadership team: Dr Helen Featherstone, Dean Veall, Robert Cooper

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

University of Southampton – PER Challenge: Enhancing the take up of training and CPD for PER

“SEE-PER funding has enabled the University of Southampton to identify the barriers to engagement with PER training at our organisation. We have been able to transform the way PER training is delivered at the grass roots level of researchers’ careers to improve confidence, awareness and skills, and crucially to spark the development of novel PER activity”.

Our project sought to establish how barriers that prevent engagement with PER training could be addressed and how the provision of a robust educational framework that could support them with their PER journeys could be developed. This diagram outlines the different stages of the project:



KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

There is still much work to be done. The continued difficulty of engaging academic staff in PER training poses a significant challenge.

- Internal partnership working can really help with this and here at Southampton, the collaboration between CHEP, an institutional Centre that supports academic professional learning, and our Public Engagement with Research Unit, engendered by the SEE-PER project, has been instrumental in moving us along the pathway to such a cultural shift. This was a real team effort, which broke down barriers between different ‘silos’ in the institution and laid the foundations for ongoing and fruitful partnerships to develop further innovative training opportunities; the learning from this experience will certainly influence the design, delivery and evaluation of other training activities within CHEP for years to come.
- We believe that we can continue to drive this shift by ensuring that training in PER is routinely encountered by researchers and academics at different stages in their careers. As we have shown, participation in training can drive ‘micro’ cultural change, i.e. shifts in perception on an individual level, which if extrapolated across an organisation would represent a significant shift in culture. With this in mind, the broadening of participation in training may help to drive a more universal culture change around PER.
- Our discussions with colleagues in other institutions indicate that the challenge of enhancing the take up of training and CPD for PER is widespread. In order to address this challenge, we recommend that other HEIs identify opportunities within their own existing frameworks of staff training and development in which elements of PER training can be incorporated. Ideally, this should include the postgraduate certificate programme that academics are required to complete at most institutions, as this will ensure that it is encountered universally and at a career stage where there may be more capacity to engage. At the same time, it is important that PER continues to be encountered at more advanced career stages, where CPD workshops could be implemented that target areas in which academics regularly seek support, such as writing successful grant proposals, evidencing impact for REF and leadership training. We recommend that such work is undertaken as a collaboration between experts in PER and those responsible for the provision of training to academics within an institution, as was the case here at Southampton.

Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y6s9sbw6>

Public Engagement webpages

www.southampton.ac.uk/per/index.page

Project team

PI: Professor Mark Spearing

Public engagement leadership team: Prof David Read, Lisa Then, Prof Janice Griffiths

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Supporting staff in Public Engagement with Research and the STFC National Laboratories

“The project reaffirmed the belief that the National Laboratories staff are absolutely vital to the success of the public engagement programmes. Staff support for, and enjoyment of, PE was well known at the lab sites, but the extent of their willingness to think critically about the development of their own PER skills, in conjunction with the development of PER activity at the laboratories, has been a welcome surprise”.

The challenge addressed by this project was: Enhancing the take up of training and CPD for PER, and the quality of provision: what are the barriers which lead to low uptake of training and CPD in PER, and how might these be addressed?

Through a series of staff consultation exercises, the barriers leading to low uptake of training in PER – and, more broadly, the barriers to participating in PER at all – were investigated. Identified barriers were similar to those reported in the literature: primarily a lack of time to participate, a lack of management support to participate, a lack of reward and recognition for participation, and a lack of staff confidence.

Multiple solutions were proposed, but the one which was investigated most thoroughly was presenting public engagement research not only as a core part of STFC’s role, but also as a key opportunity for professional development. To that end, a new set of PER training activities were developed, as well as an update of existing training. These address the identified outcomes for staff of training, and outcomes for staff of participating in PER activity. Uptake was excellent, with over 550 staff participating.



KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The main lesson learned, in terms of PER training, is that staff input is key: there is no one training method that will be successful. The experience, requirements and situation of the staff member(s) all play a role in defining the most appropriate content, format and style of training – even the words used to describe the training. The trainer must adapt to the needs of the staff member(s) whilst ensuring that the Learning Outcomes of the training – and of the subsequent PER activity – are met. Only by listening carefully to staff input will the training be effective: in terms of the vocabulary used to describe (and advertise) the training, this can be unique to each type of training, and should be agreed and tested with staff before being finalised.

A final recommendation would be to record and report all PER training – no matter what format it’s in, whether it was proactively or reactively arranged – as well as considering the Learning Outcomes both for the training itself, and for the outcomes of the PER activity for the staff member. Funders, as well as the PE teams within institutes, can use this as a way of framing PE as an important part of professional development, addressing two of the most common barriers cited by staff for accessing PER training and activity – a lack of time, and a lack of management support. The SEE-PER project has shown that it is possible to demonstrate the dual purposes of PER – positive outcomes for the audience and development opportunities for the staff member – and obtain management approval to dedicate time to PER.



Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/yxsmffpf>

Public Engagement webpages

stfc.ukri.org/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Dr Neil Geddes

Public Engagement Leadership team: Sophy Palmer

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

UCL – INGRAINED

➤ “Higher Education is increasingly being asked and expected to respond to both global and local contexts and societal priorities. INGRAINED has crystallised that a meaningful response to this challenge requires a willingness to commit to institutional and system-wide transformation rather than just a tweaking of existing systems and structures”.

The Ingrained project (INGRAINED) provided a unique opportunity for UCL to bring together its Public Engagement Unit (PEU), its flagship Grand Challenges (GC) programme and primary research to examine how we can make public engagement (PE) fundamental to the university’s efforts to address global societal issues through cross-disciplinary research. The UCL GC programme was introduced in 2008 to initiate and support cross-disciplinary research activity that addresses global problems. INGRAINED comprised four main objectives:

1. Creating mechanisms to apply PE learning to high-level institutional strategy focusing on cross-disciplinary approaches to addressing global problems.
2. Addressing the gap in culture and practice between professional services staff delivering PE and academics who generate knowledge from publicly-engaged research.
3. Consulting both local communities and researchers on how PE can apply local experience to global questions.
4. Piloting innovative PE approaches prior to embedding them in institutional research strategy.



KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Higher Education is increasingly being asked and expected to respond to both global and local contexts and societal priorities – and there is much evidence that the sector as a whole has a strong commitment and desire to respond in a meaningful way. INGRAINED has crystallised for us what we already suspected; that a meaningful response to this challenge and opportunity requires a willingness to commit to institutional and system-wide transformation rather than just a tweaking of existing systems and structures.

Working through INGRAINED the project team found the following to be some of the key take home messages:

- There is a **large demand for initiatives that involve communities in research**. INGRAINED has highlighted that demand is much greater than previously anticipated and UCL can work harder to provide mechanisms to include community organisations in research where appropriate.
- There are **challenges to encouraging academic researchers to embrace community engagement**. Any mechanisms to increase community engagement also need to meet the needs of researchers.
- **Matching and supporting people takes (a lot of) time**. Through the project, we have created a structure to ensure that each team involved in INGRAINED can work together effectively – and create meaningful relationships – but more can be done to create more systematic mechanisms for engagement.
- **PE requires commitment at the highest level**. For other HEIs, we would recommend that any similar initiatives be undertaken only when there is commitment at the most senior level and only by a team which encompasses key actors drawn from those who lead on global and local engagement from both a professional services and academic perspective.
- **Systematic funding will enable HEIs to put PE at the heart of research**. Consideration of how dedicated funding can be directed to build partnerships between researchers and local communities will help to embed PE into research practice where applicable.

Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2azot6v>

Public Engagement webpages

www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/public-engagement

Project team

PI: Professor David Price

Public Engagement Leadership team: Gemma Moore, Hilary Jackson, Katherine Welch

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

University of Brighton - IGNITE

“Ignite challenges the traditionally accepted view that knowing is held by the university and applying is held by the community... Instead we are all applying, learning and researching together. That’s the essence of what I have been working on for the last thirty years.”

Etienne Wenger-Trayner – internationally renowned social theorist and co-founder of ‘communities of practice’

Ignite was designed and developed by the University of Brighton’s Community University Partnership Programme - CUPP - team. It is an incubator model for finding and fostering new knowledge partnerships and features a framework for supporting community and research partners, including those new to co-production. The 12 month Ignite programme features five steps:

Step 1 Embarking – Establishing a community-university advisory group and an open competition to select new partnerships.

Step 2 Exploring – Encouraging exploration of new partnerships that prioritise mutual benefits for community partners and researchers.

Step 3 Experimenting – Supporting partnerships to experiment with their partnership. For example, offering £4,000 seed funding to support partners co-designing and co-producing community-focused research activities.

Step 4 Exchanging – Prioritising knowledge exchange by capturing and sharing of activity and learning - e.g. films, reports, online guides and ‘social learning spaces’ (Wenger-Trayner 2020).

Step 5 Evaluating – Using mixed research methods to enable the development of rich data -for example, interviews, self-evaluation and participant observation.

The Ignite programme has resulted in seven community-university knowledge partnerships with outcomes that far exceeded expectations.



KEY LEARNING AND ACHIEVEMENTS

We have three broad recommendations, which are supported by the voices of our partners:

1. **Ensure mutual benefits** – from the start partners must clearly state the mutual benefits they are hoping for from the partnerships and regularly evaluate that these are being achieved.

“Joint concerns were central throughout the project. We designed a project which fitted closely with our pre-existing agendas and work patterns.”

2. **Be sensitive to issues of power** – unequal power relations are a major challenge and it is important to have regular learning opportunities where these can be discussed and their consequences addressed.

“The project actively challenges configurations of power in HE by creating and valuing co-devised pedagogy and co-authored research that addresses issues of power and control within the field of co-production (Bell & Phall, 2017).”

3. **Be flexible** – community partners and universities face regular ongoing challenges in their operating environments. Funding for public engagement must allow flexibility, especially for community partners, to adjust partnership activities during the course of the project.

“Be prepared for the unexpected and bend when you need to. Plans will change. Things will take longer than planned. Participants will drop out or not play by your rules. This is the nature of collaborative working, and can lead to valuable lessons/ insights. Equally, be attuned to the unexpected outcomes and benefits that can come from this kind of work, and remember to record them.”

Links

You can access the full project report here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2thcup5>

Explore the seven funded knowledge partnership projects here: www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/ignite

View the Ignite programme films here: www.brighton.ac.uk/cuppfilms

The learning from the programme will be included in a new CUPP 2021 publication on initiating community-university learning partnerships in challenging times.

Public Engagement webpages

www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp

Project team

PI: Professor Tara Dean

Public Engagement Leadership team: Dr Nicolette Fox, Dave Wolff

SEE-PER, culture change and the EDGE tool

Lessons learned linked to the NCCPE EDGE tool

EDGE self-assessment matrix

This tool allows you to assess your institution's support for public engagement. You can access a guide to how to use the tool here: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/edge-tool

You are welcome to use the EDGE tool for non-commercial educational purposes, where credit is given to the NCCPE.

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

The EDGE tool



Focus	EMBRYONIC	DEVELOPING
Purpose	Mission There is little or no reference to public engagement in the organisational mission or in other institution-wide strategies.	Public engagement is referenced sporadically within the institutional mission documents and strategies, but is not considered a priority area.
	Leadership Few (if any) of the most influential leaders in the institution serve as champions for public engagement.	Some of the institution's senior team act as informal champions for public engagement.
	Communication The institution's commitment to public engagement is rarely, if ever, featured in internal or external communications.	Public engagement occasionally features in internal and external communications.
Process	Support There is no attempt to co-ordinate public engagement activity or to network learning and expertise across the institution.	There are some informal attempts being made to co-ordinate public engagement activities, but there is no strategic plan for this work. Some self-forming networks exist, not supported by the institution.
	Learning There is little or no opportunity for staff or students to access professional development to develop their skills and knowledge of public engagement.	There are some opportunities for staff or students to access professional development and training in public engagement, but no formal or systematic support.
	Recognition Staff are not formally rewarded or recognised for their public engagement activities.	Some departments recognise and reward public engagement activity on an ad hoc basis.
People	Staff Few if any opportunities exist for staff to get involved in public engagement, either informally, or as part of their formal duties.	There are opportunities for staff in a handful of faculties or departments to get involved in public engagement, either informally or as part of their formal duties.
	Students Few opportunities exist for students to get involved in public engagement, either informally, through volunteering programmes, or as part of the formal curriculum.	There are opportunities for students to get involved, but there is no coordinated approach to promoting and supporting these opportunities across the institution.
	Public Little or no attempt has been made to assess community need, or to support 'non-traditional' groups in engaging with the institution.	Some attempt has been made to analyse community need and interest; and to begin to tackle access issues to open up the institution and its activities to the public.

The final project reports from the SEE PER programme contain a wealth of insights and evidence about the challenges of embedding support for public engagement.

To help HEIs focus their culture change efforts, the NCCPE has developed the EDGE self-assessment tool to provide a framework for planning culture change projects. The tool identifies 9 focal points for activity, ranging from leadership to public involvement.

The twelve SEE-PER projects have provided useful new learning and resources to support HEIs who are using the NCCPE's EDGE tool to focus their planning and strategy. The final part of this report identifies some highlights and headlines, linked to the nine EDGE tool categories, to help you navigate the final reports and to apply the rich learning they contain.

GRIPPING	EMBEDDING
Public engagement is clearly referenced within the institutional mission and strategies and the institution is developing an institution-wide strategic approach.	Public engagement is prioritised in the institution's official mission and in other key strategies, with success indicators identified. It is a key consideration in strategic developments in the institution.
Some of the institution's senior team act as formal champions for public engagement.	The Vice Chancellor acts as a champion for public engagement and a senior leader takes formal responsibility. All senior leaders have an understanding of the importance and value of public engagement to the institution's agenda.
Public engagement frequently features in internal communications, but rarely as a high-profile item or with an emphasis on its strategic importance.	Public engagement appears prominently in the institution's internal communications; its strategic importance is highlighted, and resources and strategic support have been allocated to sustain this.
Oversight and co-ordination of public engagement has been formally allocated (e.g. to a working group or committee) but there is minimal support and resource to invest in activity.	The institution has a strategic plan to focus its co-ordination, a body / ies with formal responsibility for oversight of this plan, and resources available to assist the embedding of public engagement. There are a number of recognised and supported networks.
There are some formal opportunities for staff or students to access professional development and training in public engagement.	Staff and students are encouraged and supported in accessing professional development, training and informal learning to develop their skills and knowledge of engagement.
The university is working towards an institution-wide policy for recognising and rewarding public engagement activity.	The university has reviewed its processes, and developed a policy to ensure public engagement is rewarded and recognised in formal and informal ways.
There are structured opportunities for many staff members to get involved in public engagement; but not in all faculties or departments. There is a drive to expand opportunities to all.	All staff have the opportunity to get involved in public engagement, either informally or as part of their formal duties, and are encouraged and supported to do so.
Many (but not all) students have the opportunity to get involved in public engagement and are encouraged and supported to do so. There is a drive to expand opportunities to all.	All students have the opportunity to get involved in public engagement, and are encouraged and supported to do so. The institution offers both formal and informal ways to recognize and reward their involvement.
The institution has committed resources to assessing community need and interests, and to using this insight and feedback to inform its strategy and plans.	The institution has assessed need and committed resources to supporting a wide range of groups to access its facilities and activities, and to systematically seek their feedback and involvement.

Links

You can access the NCCPE EDGE tool here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2qubhhh>

PURPOSE MISSION

Have you created a shared understanding of the purpose, value and meaning of engagement and embedded this in your strategy and mission?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

All of the projects sought to gain traction by ensuring PE-R was 'hard wired' into their institutional strategy.

Heriot Watt: the period saw the launch of the HEIs new strategy – a key success was ensuring PE was written into this: *“The influence of SEE-PER on our strategy development went beyond the setting of a strategic target to grow PER, as thinking about the importance of PE and its relevance to the university resulted in our strategy reflecting not only the importance of PE, but our wider role in the places where we have a presence. Our strategy, Shaping Tomorrow Together, states:*

“True to our heritage, through our public engagement we will strengthen mutually-beneficial connections between our staff, students and wider society. We will develop a framework for public engagement that addresses the needs of society, enriched by our international footprint to deliver thoughtful, well-planned initiatives rooted in our specialist expertise”.

Keele: The strategic vision set out in the University’s Our Future plan (May 2019) was informed by the SEE-PER programme and foregrounds public engagement in articulating Keele’s sense of purpose: *“It outlines a commitment to ensuring that our research creates ‘impact through our teaching, public engagement and the partnerships we form’. This positions public engagement as core university business alongside our research, teaching and partnerships; a considerable shift from the previous 2015 strategic plan”.*

Lincoln: This report reflects on how PE-R benefited from the university’s renewed commitment to ‘civic’ engagement. This provided important momentum for the project.

Several projects focused on embedding PE-R into other institutional research priorities

UCL’s INGRAINED project focused on the opportunity of embedding PE-R into the universities Global Grand Challenge strategy and processes.

LSHTM sought to maximise the synergies with Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) and with the trend for PER to become more central in global health research. The produced a guide to PPI as one of their key outputs.

Keele’s project coincided with the development of **three challenge-led research institutes**, intended to function as hubs to stimulate collaboration and debate: *“This intersected with our SEE-PER objectives, particularly around increasing engagement with external partners, providing additional platforms for PER and consolidating a coherent approach. The project team has worked directly with these new institutional agendas (particularly with the Institute for Social Inclusion)”.*

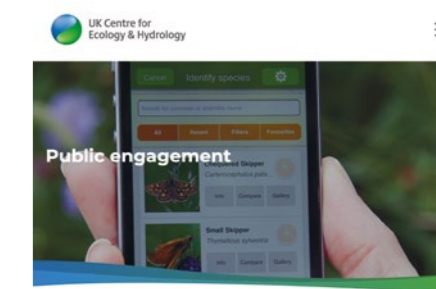
Achieving clarity on the distinctive role of public engagement takes time – but pays dividends in the resulting focus and rigour.

The UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology focused year two of the project on clarifying the strategic purpose of public engagement with research at UKCEH. The report follows this journey – and the resultant significant shift in focus: *“At the outset of the project, we did not have a clear focus for PER at UKCEH. The types of activities we supported centrally were diffuse, ranging from school visits and festival attendance to citizen science and community engagement, and the value of these activities to the organisation and its publics was not clear.*

By articulating UKCEH’s approach to public engagement in a set of Principles of Public Engagement with Research, signed off by our Science Board, we laid a firm foundation for our PER activities that set PER at the heart of the research we do and its impact. The Principles deliberately align our PER with our core science work, so that PER is not seen as an ‘add-on’ activity, but as a key part of the design, delivery and evaluation of projects. Citizen science, community engagement and public dialogue are the areas of public engagement that are critical in carrying out science that is highly relevant to the communities in which we work, and to societies more broadly.

Having a clear and distinctive approach spelt out in our Principles also means that we can now focus the time of the core public engagement team on supporting core PER activities while scaling back the time spent on non-core activities”.

Keele sought to build on the university’s long tradition of co-produced research practice, *“to accelerate creative approaches to co-produced PER, positioning Keele as a leading centre of expertise in these methods”.*



Our commitment to public engagement

We believe that public engagement is essential to ensuring that our research is both relevant and impactful. We are committed to fostering excellent public engagement with our whole research portfolio, in a way that benefits both scientists and publics, in the UK and around the world.



PURPOSE LEADERSHIP

Do you support champions across the organisation who embrace engagement?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

Each of the projects had a PVC Research or similar executive leader acting as Principal Investigator. Their engagement in the projects was a key factor in their success.

Tara Dean, PVC Research & Enterprise at **Brighton** and PI of the Ignite project, reflects in their report on her role as senior champion for PER: “Strategies which prioritise community and public engagement very quickly become ‘strategies put on the shelf – SPOT’ if the staff do not buy into the activity. At Brighton, because of our historic commitment to community engagement, we have many passionate and active staff but with almost a totally new leadership team at the University, this aspect of our strengths was almost overlooked. As a member of the University Executive Board, I very much saw my role as integral to raising the profile of community engagement and the staff involved. This project has been a significant enabler for us to achieve this end”.

The PVC of the **Keele University** project, David Amigoni, took a particularly ‘hands on’ role in delivering their work. Their report provides fascinating insights into the benefits this can bring – but also reveals that it doesn’t, of itself, guarantee success:

“A distinctive feature of our project has been the active involvement of our PI, the PVC R&E, in driving and delivering all of its elements. Particularly given the personnel changes we experienced, he has provided an essential anchor to ensure its stability, and will do so beyond the project’s life cycle. The PVC R&E has persistently championed the project, both its wider ethos and specific activities (including attending all workshops and training sessions), ensuring attention from critical high level stakeholders within and beyond our institution”.

UCL INGRAINED had an ambitious goal – to build a much more embedded approach to PE-R into a long standing institutional programme, their Global Grand Challenges. It became very clear that this kind of goal requires **commitment at the highest level**, and a concerted effort to involve a range of internal influencers into the project. “For other HEIs, we would recommend that any similar initiatives be undertaken only when there is commitment at the most senior level and only by a team which encompasses key actors drawn from those who lead on global and local engagement from both a professional services and academic perspective”.

Each project was led by a senior Public Engagement Professional, who also took responsibility for writing the final reports. All of the reports provide rich insight into the challenges of managing projects of this nature

The **Heriot Watt** report contains useful reflections on the critical role played by project leader, Laura Wicks.

“Many of the steps forward achieved by the project have been people centred, with the burden on the shoulders of the PER lead. To bring about change and ensure PER remained in strategy discussions relied on the PER lead inserting themselves into discussions about the strategy at all levels; from open forums led by the principal, to online surveys and conversation boards, to senior level gatherings – building and maintaining the high profile of PER took a concerted effort by the PE lead that was to the detriment of other initiatives”.

Southampton emphasise the role of the Project Manager in effectively brokering partnerships across the institution and in building a highly effective team:

“The role of the project manager was critical in ensuring that high quality training resources were created, with the commitment of other members of the project team being vital in ensuring excellence in terms of the delivery of the training. This was a real team effort, which broke down barriers between different ‘silos’ in the institution and laid the foundations for ongoing and fruitful partnerships to develop further innovative training opportunities; the learning from this experience will certainly influence the design, delivery and evaluation of other training activities within CHEP for years to come”.

The **St Andrews** report concludes that: “The capacity afforded the University of St Andrews by this award, in terms of PE professional time, is by far the most important aspect of our culture change activity”. It also identifies a significant vulnerability: “In order to effect culture change we absolutely need the long term capacity and senior leadership to drive embedding activity. Public engagement officers at Grades 5 or 6, on one or two year contracts, will have very little possibility of effecting meaningful change, even with the most supportive backing of senior University management figures”



PURPOSE COMMUNICATION

Do you communicate consistent, clear messages to validate, support and celebrate it, and ensure open and two-way communication with internal and external stakeholders?



Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

A perennial challenge is finding ways to promote the work of the Public Engagement team. A number of projects addressed this head on.

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine ran a survey to kick off their project. It revealed that half of all respondents were unaware of the support on offer from the PER team. As a result they developed a much more focused and effective communications strategy, and their report provides a host of helpful tips about how to capture colleague's attention

St Andrews confronted this challenge head on: "A significant challenge which we have both addressed in the context of the aims of this award and still continue to struggle with is one of visibility. Our web presence and our reward and recognition activities (e.g. PER awards, blogs about activity on the main University website, inclusion in internal newsletters, and graduations from our training portfolio) has driven visibility of the support our team can offer, and also brought to our notice activities we were previously unaware of. Despite these gains, however, we still receive regular communications that individuals were unaware of a particular opportunity or activity. This is frustrating as we are using all the channels open to us to communicate our work"

Lincoln's PEARL project (Public Engagement for All at Lincoln) worked particularly hard at addressing issues around visibility. Their project rationale was to create a 'virtuous culture change cycle' in which their efforts to build capacity and recognition depended on the visibility of these efforts – and vice-versa. A key learning was about how to create and sustain a sense of momentum across the year through the development of an annual cycle of PER-related activity which first excites interest in public engagement amongst researchers, then builds capacity for effective delivery, then ensures outcomes are identified, recorded and celebrated, which in turn continues the cycle by stimulating more interest: "This 'PER pipeline' includes a showcase conference; open-door advice; small grants; CPD training; coordination of opportunities in 'portmanteau' festival-type initiatives for difference audiences; support with activity logistics, publicity and evaluation; appraisal and awards systems; and an annual report. This pipeline is enabling researchers to initiate public engagement that would not otherwise be possible, develop their ideas in ways and at scales that work best for them, ensure the outcomes are known and appreciated within and beyond the university, and in turn inspire others".

Keele University's consultation with staff revealed significant issues with terminology – and **language** became a key focus of discussions with staff and partners: "There was a sense that even the invitation to attend the session lacked clarity, that the project's objectives were too dense, and that there may be a need to step back and address some more fundamental aspects of PER in more accessible terms".

The SEE-PER programme also evidenced how important it is to keep listening, gathering feedback and adapting your approach in response to what you hear.

Heriot Watt: "It is all about people; university leaders, public engagement professionals, internal and external communities. Talk to people, understand their values, and explore how PER can align with those values".

Keele sought to make 'co-production' an organising idea for their programme, to provide coherence for the university's distinctive approach to PE-R. But their consultation early in the project revealed that co-production was not universally valued or understood, leading to significant adjustments in their approach. Their baseline survey and responses to workshops confirmed many examples of, and investment in, co-production across the university. But the survey also revealed that this was not universal: "A range of definitions existed, with some colleagues tending towards an emphasis on outreach. This did not change our assumption that co-production was a good thing to do and that this should drive long term goals for our PER culture. But we realised that to achieve this, we needed to do some more basic work to develop a coherent understanding of PER and put in place support, training and mechanisms for achieving this".



PROCESS SUPPORT

How do you co-ordinate your support to maximise efficiency, target support, improve quality, foster innovation, join up thinking and monitor effectiveness?



Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

A key focus for the projects was developing a strategic approach to their PER. All the projects developed a ‘theory of change’ to clarify their rationale, objectives, assumptions, and intended outcomes and impacts. They used these to help structure and evaluate their progress and to develop appropriate evaluation

St Andrews invested in various activities to establish the rationale for their culture change activity: “we gathered institutional context by using the EDGE tool with various groups in the University. This included all members of the Principal’s Office and the Research Excellence Board, all individuals within the University with PER in their job descriptions and a brief internal survey, disseminated through Directors of Impact available to all researchers. We also consulted the 2015 PER survey informing the ‘Factors Affecting PE by UK Researchers’ report, to which St Andrews University directly contributed”.

Heriot Watt invested in the development of an evaluation framework and identified a number of indicators to underpin their evidence-based approach.

“The vast array of evidence collated during the programme allows us to understand what actions we need to take in this culture change journey. Our evaluation framework will allow us to monitor how we have progressed against our benchmark, which we will aim to do annually if possible. The key indicators are detailed in the evaluation framework”

LSHTM: key outputs from their project were a new **Strategic Action Plan 2018-2022**, and an **Evaluation framework**: “The key principles within the 2018-2022 strategic action plan clearly align with the five pillars of the wider LSHTM 2018-2022 strategy”.

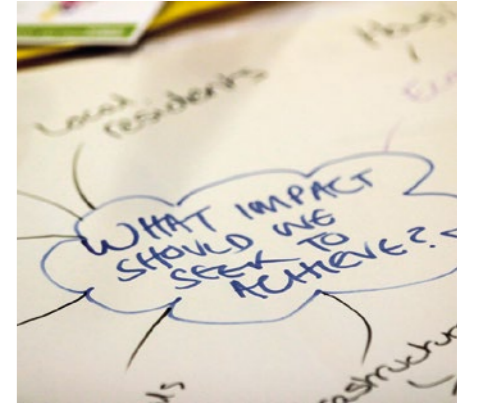
UKCEH developed an implementation plan to complement its Principles for Public Engagement: “We disseminated our Principles both internally and externally, including to our sister institutes within NERC and to UKRI public engagement staff. Building on this success, we created an annual implementation plan which has enabled us to translate our principles into practice. Our implementation plan sets out our objectives, the actions we will take this year towards achieving them, and the KPIs by which we will measure our success. We have also committed to creating, implementing, delivering and evaluating annual implementation plans in the future, which will help us to continually develop for the future”.

All of the projects grappled with challenges of managing demand.

The **St Andrews** report captures this challenge well:

“We started out with an ambitious number of activities to drive embedding or engagement. We achieved, and built on, all of these activities. This however meant we became victims of our own success and highlighted one of our major challenges.

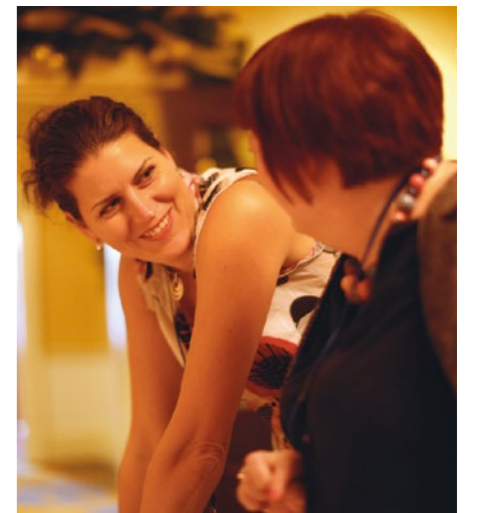
With greater demands for our expertise and resources, and more involvement in our training and delivery events, keeping up excellence and not being distracted into delivering activity not central to our culture change workplan became more of a challenge”



A number of the projects sought to improve the scale, range and quality of PER activities by putting in place more institutional ‘platforms’ for PER – strategic programmes with significant investment and support, which provide researchers with opportunities to practice engagement in a supported environment that works at scale.

Keele: “One of our project’s major successes has been the development of an entirely new platform for PER: a local annual festival of ideas. The first Stoking Curiosity was held in November 2018 within the historic Spode Works factory regeneration area in Stoke-on-Trent. It was led by Keele University and Staffordshire University as a key aspect of our SEE-PER work, co-produced with input from local organisations, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and local residents. The festival, initially funded by SEE-PER, is now established as an annual event. Its second iteration took place in November 2019, with external funding secured to ensure its sustainability. The Partnership and Research Development teams are beginning to see Stoking Curiosity utilised as an opportunity for our researchers’ engagement planning, featuring in pathways to impact statements in funding applications”

Heriot Watt: As well as providing lots of reactive support to researchers the Heriot Watt team also delivered high profile public engagement events that were new to the institution. “These events were hugely successful, primarily because we had the time and resource to plan events based on the audience and with a clear outcome. The success of these activities has allowed us to demonstrate their value to senior management. In a risk-averse sector, such activities which could have a negative reputational impact if done wrong are generally shied away from. We collected evidence of the want for such activities, and piloted them over two years, learning from each activity how to improve latter ones. The aim of the events and activities was two-fold – to provide an opportunity for our researchers and our local communities to start dialogue around their research, but importantly, to get senior management talking about such activities. This was very much a marketing exercise internally, selling a product to an institution which is risk averse and lacking understanding of the value and spectrum of PER”



STOKING CURIOSITY 2019

PROCESS SUPPORT

How do you co-ordinate your support to maximise efficiency, target support, improve quality, foster innovation, join up thinking and monitor effectiveness?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme continued

Lots of the projects developed highly productive relationships with other professional services, which accelerated the ‘embedding’ process. During the lifetime of the programme several universities re-located their PER teams within the Research Office to increase their traction.

LSHTM: the Public Engagement Team engaged across academic and central services to fully embed PER across the School. This included working with the Research Operations Office to include a section about PER in their Grant Application Guidance form highlighting the importance of PER and the help that the Public Engagement Team can supply, and working with the Strategic Research Office to prepare candidates and teams to respond to questions on PE during interviews with funders.

At **Southampton**, “the collaboration between CHEP, an institutional Centre that supports academic professional learning, and our Public Engagement with Research Unit has been instrumental in our success”

Birkbeck struggled initially to fully incorporate PER into the strategic research environment effectively (as opposed to having PER touching on but not fully embedded in a whole raft of institutional strategies): “this understanding drove our decision to move the PER team into the Research Office when it formed”.

The programme is rich with examples of creative and strategic approaches to evaluation, and in developing evidence-based approaches.

Heriot Watt: “A key learning from the SEE-PER programme is that while it is difficult to evidence change robustly, it is useful to take the time to pause and reflect on what works and what does not. Collecting numbers is not always the best indication that an intervention worked. Running a training programme for a few people may not seem like value for money, however if those few people change their engagement approach based on that training, the ripple effect from the change could be immense”.

Southampton: “Collecting robust evaluation data for the project was another significant challenge. Rather than relying on post-training surveys and focus groups, which are notorious for poor engagement, we developed a reflective journal that participants would complete as they progressed through the timeline of the training programme. As well as helping participants to consolidate their learning after each episode, this also allowed us to collect rich data in real time that provided us with unique and valuable insights regarding the evolving thought processes of our participants. Analysis of this body of data helped us to identify the outcomes of the training programme for our participants, and also supported our own ongoing process of reflection and refinement to enhance the training programme throughout the duration of the project”.



Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

Many of the projects developed awards and prizes. They worked really hard to ensure these didn’t stand alone – but fed a wider set of interventions to focus on quality practice.

Birkbeck made reward and recognition as a significant focus of their project: “to enable our researchers and professional staff not just to participate in public engagement but to regard PER as an integral, distinctive and valued aspect of research at Birkbeck, University of London which is incentivised, celebrated and rewarded”.

They began the project knowing that many of their researchers were already undertaking PER: what was needed was a framework that enabled them to understand how to do it better. As well as developing new PER awards (taking great care that the award categories and criteria captured the distinctive qualities of PER at the university), the team also invested in a part time PER evaluation officer “to support researchers to understand PER and to empower them to build PER into their research activities as a conscious activity, and to celebrate their successes”; and they ran an Engaged Practice Symposium, to showcase some of the high quality engagement already underway.

A number of projects focused in embedding PER into their institution’s reward systems and career pathways.

Keele University: “Prior to this project, support for and management of academic career pathways was guided principally by a set of promotions criteria, which made minimal reference to PER. By contrast, the new AREs emphasise Engagement, Knowledge Exchange and Impact at all levels. This includes a more extensive elaboration of examples, including engagement with a broader range of publics, placing greater emphasis on collaboration”.

Birkbeck: “The largest single impact from the SEE PER project was the work undertaken in year 1 and year 2 to have PER recognised in our formal recognition and reward processes – developing revised promotions criteria with completely re-drafted requirements for engagement.”

PROCESS RECOGNITION

How do you recognise and reward staff involvement within recruitment, promotion, workload plans and performance reviews, and how do you celebrate success?



PROCESS LEARNING

What opportunities do you provide for learning and reflection and what support do you provide for CPD?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

Three of the projects focused solely on challenges linked to training and CPD, in particular addressing the barriers which lead to low uptake of training and CPD.

STFC Labs project took place in a different context from previously reported work (a research institute as opposed to a university), and added usefully to the body of knowledge of the Public Engagement with Research community. Their consultation identified two opportunities which they then acted on: by positioning PE-R as a core part of research and researcher's professional development (rather than optional 'outreach'); and by developing two new performance indicators to set targets and measure progress against the STFC Public Engagement strategy. This heightened visibility and accountability led to a step change in uptake.

Southampton's project focused on ensuring that training in PER is routinely encountered by researchers and academics at different stages in their careers. The project revealed that participation in training can drive 'micro' cultural change, i.e. shifts in perception on an individual level, which if extrapolated across an organisation would represent a significant shift in culture.

The University of Bath's project used the opportunity to step back and consider the wider challenges with engaging researchers with CPD and training – and discovered that **the issues associated with professional development for public engagement are not unique to public engagement training** – there is a wider culture of resistance to formal professional development within universities which disadvantages CPD for public engagement. They produced a useful literature review and piloted a variety of new approaches, including creating a new online public engagement knowledge hub, and weaving learning opportunities into all of their activities, from their grants to one-to-one help and guidance:

“Training is more than what you devise and deliver, it's about the learning you help to foster. Think carefully about the opportunities for learning that you create – a chat over a cuppa, an internal news item, a small grant - you are probably doing a lot of training already. Can you reframe any of your activities to “count” as training?”

St Andrews also developed a really successful PE Portfolio of training – not something that had originally been a priority. Again, this reinforces the need for flexible, responsive and collaborative working: *“To set up some kind of portfolio of training was in our original workplan as an important if not a priority activity. Driven however by closer connections to our professional development team gained through our internal networks, it became much more significant than in our original plans, influencing many of our other activities. The University of St Andrews has a culture of training and of hosting passport programmes which are externally accredited. This meant there was a pre-existing framework and culture we could build upon. Guided by our professional development colleagues we set up a programme for PER which included the obvious skill sets gained through engaged practice (e.g. communication skills), but also the less obvious transferrable skills such as grant writing, budget, project, and people management skills. In doing this we created not just a tool for raising skills in PER, but also a way that we could raise understanding of the contribution of PER including all the areas of personal development it contributes to, for example widening participation, equality and diversity, social responsibility, responsible research and innovation, and researcher development”.*



PEOPLE STAFF

Do you ensure that all staff – in academic and support roles – have opportunities to get involved in informal and formal ways?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

The SEE-PER programme saw a variety of sustained and purposeful approaches to actively involving staff in shaping their activity. This work paid dividends.

Keele University dedicated much of the first year of the project to consulting widely internally and externally: “In the first year, we listened to publics, partners, professional services colleagues and researchers to understand their experiences of the barriers and enablers in this area. In the second year, we applied this learning to a range of activities”.

With support from the NCCPE they undertook a **baseline survey of staff** attitudes to PER, which profoundly influenced their subsequent approach: “The survey revealed many passionate members of staff, with knowledge of and a desire to support the institution’s engagement strategy. It found a strong ethos of actively involving the public in the research process, but also found that this understanding of PER - as a two way process for mutual benefit - was not shared across the institution. Responses demonstrated that strategy was not being translated into effective processes that support and recognise engagement. Respondents articulated particular frustration about lack of reward and recognition and an appetite for more coordinated support and opportunities for PER”.

The ‘challenge’ projects demonstrated that staff consultation is vital in steering the most effective strategic response, for instance to why uptake of training for PER is low. The STFC consultation also unlocked real energy that helped drive the project forward: “Staff support for, and enjoyment of, PE was well known at the lab sites, but the extent of their willingness to think critically about the development of their own PER skills, in conjunction with the development of PER activity at the laboratories, has been a welcome surprise”.

LSHTM undertook an extensive ‘scoping exercise’ in the first year of their project – which identified some critical opportunities, including the fact that researchers wanted a lot more support for engagement that wasn’t focused in the local community: “While in hindsight this appears obvious, it was not until we conducted the survey that this was brought home to us.” This focused consultation, “for the first time, allowed for a systematic review of the level of public engagement with research (PER) currently conducted at LSHTM, and has helped the Public Engagement Team to alter how they work to meet the needs of researchers more strategically”.

Developing networks – Much of the work of PE Professionals is ‘behind the scenes’ – connecting and joining up people, and creating environments for collaboration. Nurturing networks was something all of the projects focused on

St Andrews: “Success isn’t always about reaching a high-profile endpoint. Sometimes enabling, undertaking, and sustaining the most seemingly unexciting, routine, or minor activities are a greater measure of success than the big banner headlines. For example, we set up networks with both PE professionals and with professional service units. The units’ networks include units we would not have normally considered approaching, such as alumni development, the sports centre, and our finance and business development teams. Attendees shared delivery opportunities, barriers to activity, and discussed best practice across all facets of engaged practice. The outcomes from these networks included a shared understanding of the value of public engagement in each individual’s field of expertise, and how each of us can support each other. This shared understanding has resulted in greater collaboration in activity, sophisticated and informed strategy in audience development, professional skills development, and in successful funding applications across network members. It’s easy to overlook, and even disregard, the smaller successes, but we would urge you to recognise these, to record them and celebrate them as much as the big headline achievements”



PEOPLE STUDENTS

Do you support champions across the organisation who embrace engagement?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

None of the projects focused on undergraduate students, but a number focused on how to support post graduates and post docs, for instance through continuing professional development and training.

The **St Andrews** team sought wherever possible to utilise existing frameworks and collaborate with Schools and professional service units, for example the public engagement training portfolio created in collaboration with the university's professional skills development team, CAPOD.

“Only a year into implementation of the portfolio, which delegates are given three years to complete, we already have five graduates and 45 further delegates signed up to this scheme. The delegates come from 12 different academic Schools across the arts and sciences, as well as from eight professional service units. This means the portfolio is raising the quality and the inclusivity of our engaged PE-practice across the university. It has also broadened horizons for our postgraduate students, four of whom have now gone onto careers in public engagement or further education in science communication”.



PEOPLE PUBLIC

Do you proactively involve stakeholders / users / publics in shaping the mission and in the delivery of the strategy, and maximise opportunities for their involvement?

Highlights from the SEE-PER programme

Several of the SEE-PER projects invested significantly in consultation with the public and in improving their understanding of different potential 'audiences' for their engagement activity.

St Andrews invested in an audience analysis and segmentation exercise in collaboration with the Byre Theatre: *"This has meant we have a very clear understanding of the current audiences for our researchers' events, their motivations and barriers, and who we are not engaging with. We have been able to use this information to drive audience development for many activities. Learning from this work, including audience motivations and barriers, has led to changes in delivery that have driven an increase in attendance at our flagship festival events of around 40% and a significant change in the demographics attending."*

Heriot Watt invested in external focus groups and interviews in the first year of their project as part of their evidence-based approach: *"Focus groups were undertaken with resident groups to explore attitudes to PER, perceptions of universities in relation to PER, and to identify ways in which universities can deliver effective PER. Following focus groups within the communities, we undertook walking interviews also known as 'go-along' interviews (undertaken individually or as a group), which provide the capacity to access people's attitudes, perceptions and reactions to the surrounding environment as they walk through a setting. Group walk-along interviews were undertaken in this project to capture resident perceptions of the university space (as a place for public engagement), reflections on the built environment as a welcoming setting for the community, perceived barriers and facilitators to access and use, wayfinding around the university, and the purposing and programming of university buildings for PER."*

LSHTM: While many SEE-PER projects were very focused on local partnerships and engagement, the focus of engagement for many LSHTM researchers is outside the UK, given the nature of the research they undertake. Their report explores how this distinctive geographical focus forced them to think differently about the support they offer.

Others focused on the role of collaboration and co-production, and the infrastructure, processes and resources required to do this well.

UCL INGRAINED was focused on embedding PER in the university's extensive programme of global challenge-focused research. The project revealed the potential of this approach – but also the need for dedicated investment in brokerage and partnership development: *"Systematic funding will enable HEIs to put PE at the heart of research. Consideration of how dedicated funding can be directed to build partnerships between researchers and local communities will help to embed PE into research practice where applicable"*.

Brighton's Ignite programme built on the university's 20 year Community-University Partnership Programme (CUPP) to develop an incubator model for finding and fostering new partnerships including £4000 seed funding. Additionally, it has developed a framework for supporting research and community partners in their first year of working together, including those new to co-production.

They identified three essential things to bear in mind in this kind of work: ensure mutual benefits, be sensitive to issues of power and be flexible. The project incubated seven really effective research partnerships, and developed video case studies which vividly capture the dynamics of this approach

Keele's Stoking Curiosity platform: *"This success is a critical example of the importance of aligning culture change activities with institutional aims and the wider local, regional and global engagement contexts in which these operate. A unique, sustainable platform for enhancing PER has been embedded within our institution and within the cultural life of the city. As a test of a festival of ideas to connect local HEIs with the richly divergent communities of Stoke-on-Trent, Stoking Curiosity has been a success, and one that we look forward to delivering and building upon in the future"*.



Final reflections on the culture change process

Keep making the case

The projects confirmed one of the perennial challenges for PE-R culture change: the need to continue to reinforce its importance and for strong internal and external leadership for PE-R from funders, policy makers and university leaders. For many researchers, PE-R remains a ‘nice to do’ but not essential activity, in the context of increasing demands upon their time:

“Culture change in academia is a slow process and PER is most often valued in terms of a good-to-do activity. With numerous priorities ahead of PER, e.g. funding, undergraduate teaching, various excellence frameworks, PER will remain good-to-do, not become need-to-do, unless it is seen to contribute positively to these priorities. These contributions must be evidenced and included in an institutional definition of ‘quality’ public engagement” (St Andrews).

“Many of the challenges addressed during SEE-PER are not unique to PER. There is growing pressure on academics to deliver high-quality research leading to grants and papers, high-quality teaching leading to satisfied students, an ever-increasing administration workload compounded by cost-savings on professional services; add to that PER and impact, and the system is not sustainable. The funders have a key role in supporting universities to change their culture, such that PER is valued. If the funders do not demonstrate value for PER, more than a tick box exercise, then it is difficult for universities to demonstrate the value” (Heriot Watt).

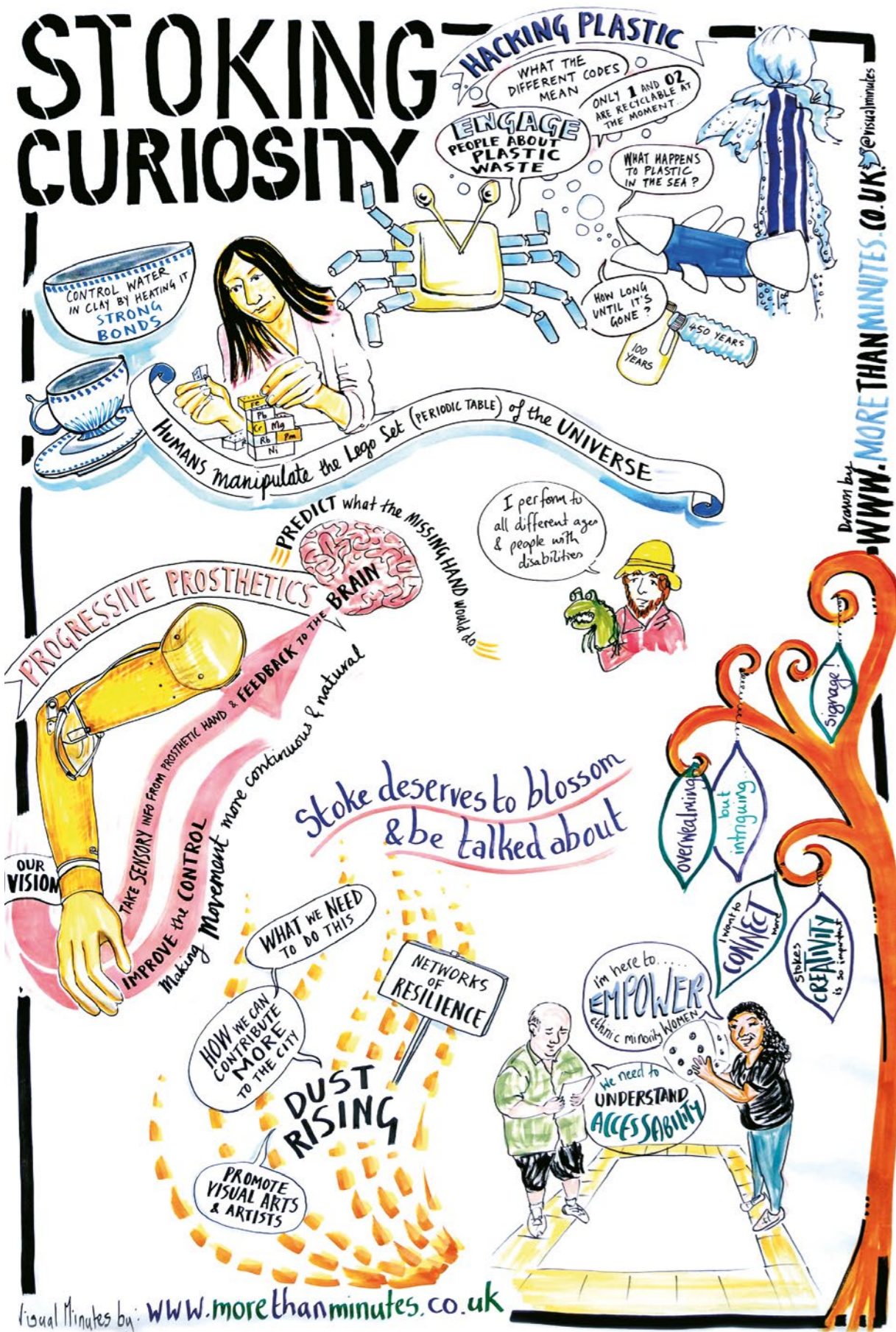
Be flexible – and be prepared to adapt your plans

The project teams all noted how important it is to remain flexible – and to respond to the shifting contexts in which they were working:

“Culture change is a lengthy process. Within the time it takes to make progress, landscapes shift, personnel change and new challenges and opportunities emerge. Taking stock of these shifting facets regularly and having the opportunity to adjust our plans and spend has been critical for our work, allowing us to deliver realistic activities that remain in line with our project objectives and the SEE-PER funding call’s goals” (Keele).



Family Fun day co-developed with local communities at Heriot-Watt University



Short-term funding makes achieving long-term change hard

Many of the projects grappled with the challenges of short-term project funding. While the SEE-PER programme funded two year's work, it was initially funded as a 12 month project, making long term planning difficult for the teams, and leading to significant problems recruiting and retaining staff:

"If UKRI are truly committed to embedding public engagement with research strategically across the sector, creating longer term funding opportunities has to be the way forward". (LSHTM).

"Culture change initiatives undoubtedly require extensive resource and capacity, but attributing responsibility for these changes into isolated, short-term posts puts the embedding process at risk. The need to integrate PER into the roles and remit of existing staff, and provide them with adequate resources and training to act on this remit, has proved a valuable lesson for our SEE-PER project" (Keele)

The projects identified the need for investments like SEE PER to be used to pump prime **longer term strategic investments**, or to inform internal re-alignment of activity to increase its impact and effectiveness:

"We know that to deliver our long term strategic ambitions for public engagement as a route to research impact we need staff in long-term employment. PERu has recently been incorporated within the established and permanent Research and Innovation Services team to provide increased stability and better strategic alignment with our other enterprise and impact activities" (Southampton).

"Unlike many research institutions, UKCEH has attached permanent resource to PER and ongoing financial commitment to PER has been built into our budgets. While limited, this resource is sufficient to ensure that we can continue to embed excellent PER across the organisation through our ongoing annual implementation plans, informed by thoughtful evaluation" (UKCEH).

Reflections



**National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
Public Engagement**

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) is internationally recognised for its work supporting and inspiring universities to engage with the public. We work to change perspectives, promote innovation, and nurture and celebrate excellence. We also champion meaningful engagement that makes a real and valued difference to people's lives.

The NCCPE is supported by UK Research and Innovation, the devolved Higher Education funding bodies, and Wellcome, and has been hosted by the University of Bristol and UWE Bristol since it was established in 2008.



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