



Centre for Medical Engineering King's College London

Public Engagement Strategy 2017-2022



The Centre PE Strategy was initially developed in 2019 by Alice Taylor-Gee and feedback was incorporated from the: PE team, Academic Lead for PE, Centre Academics, PE External Advisory Board, PE Committee of staff & students, and the CDT PE Ambassadors. The strategy was updated in Spring 2021 to incorporate the community engagement aspect following being awarded an Enrichment Grant from Wellcome.

Alice Taylor-Gee, Public Engagement Manager
Centre for Medical Engineering, King's College London
alice.taylor-gee@kcl.ac.uk

Background

The Wellcome/EPSRC Centre for Medical Engineering focuses on the science and engineering of medical imaging. The Centre combines fundamental research in engineering, physics, mathematics, computing, and chemistry with medicine and biomedical research.

The Centre's vision is to bring together teams from multiple scientific disciplines, who work together identifying, solving and translating solutions to complex multi-factorial challenges. It provides the flexibility to develop new technology, dynamically form interdisciplinary groups around new ideas, and the continuity to pursue ambitious solutions to real biomedical and clinical questions.

The Centre's ultimate research aim is to improve the care and outcomes of patients with neurological, cardiovascular and oncological conditions. The Centre will deliver this via four key aims:

1. Provide the enabling infrastructure needed to deliver strong, grant-funded underpinning research, including several transformative initiatives that depend on strategic Centre funding
2. Ensure that research is focused on important clinical and biological questions
3. Facilitate the clinical and commercial translation of successful research and technological developments from each theme
4. Engage public and patients with the research of the Centre and its clinical significance

Definition of Public Engagement

We use the definition by the [National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#):
*"Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a **two-way** process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating **mutual benefit**."*

We use the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#) and the definition used by INVOLVE, the national organisation funded by the NIHR to support public involvement in health and social care research: *"Involvement is where members of the public are actively involved in the design and conduct of research."*

Our Public Engagement vision:

Engaging publics with the Centre's world leading research and highlighting its impact and societal implications will be embedded in the Centre structure. PE informs our research, and enhances our teaching and learning. Every member is strongly encouraged to take part in PE, underpinned by professional support. We will look to refine our engagement, building on our experience of public and patient engagement within the existing Centre, to further improve its quality.

Strategic context:

Our vision feeds into the King's Strategic Vision 2029¹, specifically within the Service strategic framework². Service is the term adopted to describe the University's commitment to society beyond the traditional roles of education and research.

This framework illustrates how the ethos of service stands out at King's: simply put, King's

¹ King's Strategic Vision 2029: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/about/assets/pdf/Kings-strategic-vision-2029.pdf>

² Service Strategy: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/service/about-service>

are trying to make the world a better place above and beyond what is expected or required of a university.

Service is defined as an identifiable experience that is shared between King's staff and students and the community or environment (local, national or global) in which we operate. Service should measurably and positively change an outcome in the present or the future, through a planned intervention.

Our strategic aims for Public Engagement

We have one main overarching aim which is:

To develop a supportive and inclusive culture of public engagement within the Centre

We aim to achieve this by:

1. Enabling publics and patients to inform our research and learning to ensure impact
2. Engaging public and patients about the Centre's research to empower them so that they feel more confident to access, use and respond to health research
3. Working with children and young people in London, to enthuse and inspire young people about science and supports a future diverse research sector
4. Building collaborative, inclusive and equitable relationships with marginalized communities in Lambeth and Southwark, to enable the community to iteratively influence research practice and research priorities, co producing mutual benefits in the local areas and broadening the impact of the Centre.

Why is Public Engagement important?

Public engagement provides new perspectives and enrich the focus, clarity and relevance of research. It can build understanding and appreciation of the research within our Centre, as well as developing transferable skills. It can build trust in emerging research areas, and improve relationships between researchers, universities and local communities.

"Understanding people's hopes and fears and incorporating these into research is why patients' insights are so valuable. Not only do they offer tremendously helpful insights through lived experience, but they can quickly raise issues that could otherwise take us years to recognise." Dr Christos Bergeles, Senior Lecturer, CME

As part of the spectrum of engagement, Community Engagement compliments Public engagement by focussing on community driven research and impact. By connecting with local communities and developing a better understanding of their needs and interests, our research and resources can better relate to and impact a broader range of public groups, including those currently underrepresented in research. Community engagement will have its own action plan that delivers this strategy by core engagement principles and values.

Key audiences

We will focus on certain public groups. The public are not homogenous, and identifying segments through demographics or communities of interest that will most benefit from or contribute to the purpose of research and engagement can substantially improve activities.

While we will encourage our researchers to work with the public most appropriate to the purpose of their engagement activity, Centre-led activity and support will particularly target:

- Patients with conditions relating to brain, heart or cancer and those who care for them. This group is affected by our research so engaging with this group will provide a voice for the end-users of our work, which will lead to better informed researchers, and more relevant, impactful research.

- Underserved children and young people aged under 25, living in London. This group may be interested in finding out about careers available, to inspire the next generation of researchers and encourage STEM careers.
- Local community groups based in Lambeth & Southwark, currently under-represented in our research. These groups are local to where the Centre is based so is part of their community

What support do the Public Engagement team provide?

The dedicated Public Engagement team provides guidance and support for researchers with events and activities, where our key audiences are engaged (i.e., patient groups, young people or community members). The PE team offer training, resources, funding and opportunities to get involved in public engagement. They also offer advice on public engagement sections and lay summaries on research proposals and grant applications. The PE team also provide support to our key audiences, building connections to our Centre, creating links and spaces for reflection.

Making it happen

Aim 1: Enabling publics and patients to inform our research and learning ensuring impact

Working with our partners at NIHR GSTT Biomedical Research Centre, we have established a Centre Public and Patient Involvement Advisory Group to help shape and guide medical engineering research.

We will:

- Provide toolkits and advice for staff and students to engage with patients
- Drawing on our creative practice, trial different approaches to PPI (public and patient involvement)
- Build and diversify our Centre's PPI group, developed in partnership with the NIHR GSTT Biomedical Research Centre

Aim 2: Engaging public and patients about the Centre's research, to empower them so that they feel more confident to access, use and respond to health research

We have partnered with Science Gallery London (SGL), where our researchers collaborated with an artist to create exhibits featured in Spare Parts season. We also participated in SGL's programming, delivering youth engagement workshops, discussion events and maker workshops. Our collaboration with Evelina Children's Heart Organisation (ECHO) has led to numerous activities with their members, building the confidence of children with heart conditions.

We will:

- Engage our target audience of patients with cancer, heart or brain conditions as these are the three clinical challenges of our Centre
- Collaborate with our partner ECHO, whose members are children with heart conditions
- Work with our partner SGL on future seasons
- Reach a wider audience through our involvement with external events such as festivals, which tend to attract families

Aim 3: Working with children and young people in London, to enthuse and inspire young people about science

We have worked with our colleagues at NIHR GSTT BRC to deliver activities for the annual King's Health Partners Summer School, and engaged young girls in the I CAN BE initiative, as well as creating links with the local Girl Guides to develop and deliver events for them.

We will:

- Continue to develop activities for children and young people
- Focus on target audience of children and youth groups around St Thomas' Hospital in Southwark & Lambeth, as well as across London
- Work with our partners the BRC who organise the annual King's Health Partners Summer School, a week-long school for widening participating students in Lambeth & Southwark
- Increase awareness of different careers within engineering, based within a hospital

Aim 4: Building collaborative, inclusive and equitable relationships with marginalized communities in Lambeth and Southwark, to enable the community to iteratively influence research practice, co producing mutual benefits in the local areas and broadening the impact of the Centre.

We will:

- Build a strong productive relationship with Lambeth & Southwark communities that result in co developed activities and programmes
- Bring Centre and community assets together to address societal issues, challenges and improve life opportunities
- Develop the capacity for community-based research in Centre researchers
- Future proof community relationships by building connections to wider King's engagement and resources
- Support the King's Civic and Service agenda in Lambeth and Southwark

Overarching aim: To develop a supportive culture of public engagement with the Centre

We have created a biannual public engagement grant scheme to support researchers with their PE/PPI activities and embed a culture through best practice case studies. We deliver a series of PE and PPI training and have supported our researchers in their grant writing. We have established a Public Engagement Committee, who champion PE within their departments. We celebrate success in our annual School PE Awards and have ensured that public engagement is now part of the annual Performance Development Review of staff

We will:

- Encourage researchers to take part in activities, and showcase either within King's and/or externally organised. This may include science communication competitions, attending Festivals, and hosting Nuffield Research/In2Science Placements for disadvantaged students
- Support applications for further funding (e.g. King's PE Small Grants, Wellcome Trust Enrichment Awards & Royal Academy of Engineering's Ingenious awards)
- Equip researchers with knowledge about PE and how to tailor their message to different target audiences via a series of PE training courses
- Encourage researchers to join our existing internal network (King's Engaged Researcher Network) to share experiences, to encourage sharing of best practice
- Produce an online resources area for researchers to access
- Standardise signposting and connecting people
- Develop a reward and recognition scheme

- Collaborate with other culture and community partners
- Support researchers to adapt to deliver activities in an online environment

Governance

Our Public Engagement Advisory Board meet every 4 months. The Board provides advice to the Centre on public engagement and provide new ideas for programme development. Members of the Public Engagement Advisory Board demonstrate expertise in the strategy, planning, delivery, and evaluation of a range of public engagement programmes. The members of the Board have backgrounds from various disciplines, some having a solid understanding of the public engagement with research landscape. Membership and performance of the board is reviewed annually.

Our Public Engagement Committee, formed of members at various academic career stages, meet every 3 months to help govern PE practice within the Centre. Our Public Engagement Ambassadors champion PE within both the Centre and our aligned the [Centre for Doctoral Training in Smart Medical Imaging](#).

Monitoring & Evaluation

The Public Engagement Team, supported by an external evaluator have developed an overarching monitoring and evaluation framework which sets out both output and outcome indicators tied to the aims of Public Engagement Strategy for the Centre. This framework will help the PE team understand how we are achieving our strategic aims, and sets out clear key indicators to track our progress and demonstrate changes.

Large scale events will be evaluated by our external evaluator while small scale events will either be carried out by the Centre's PE team or the researchers themselves.

The PE team have carried out a Centre-wide survey to get a benchmark and will repeat it towards the end of year 5.

Resources and Budget

Public Engagement Manager, Alice Taylor-Gee (0.8FTE)
Public and Patient Engagement Coordinator, Dr Melissa Bovis (1.0FTE)
Community Engagement Officer, Deanna Naula (1.0FTE – part funded by MITHRAS project)
Public Engagement Officer, Bella Spencer (1.0FTE – fully funded by EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Smart Medical Imaging and GIFT-Surg project)

The Centre was established in April 2017 with a PE budget of £95,000 over the 5 year period (April 2017 – April 2022) for activities, training and events. In 2019 we were successful in being awarded a Wellcome Enrichment grant of a further £266,000 to cover our new community engagement officer post and related activities.

Contact

If you would like to find out more about public engagement or are interested in linking up in any way, we welcome any questions, comments or new ideas. Please get in touch with [Alice Taylor-Gee](#), Public Engagement Manager via alice.taylor-gee@kcl.ac.uk or call 020 7848 9564