

Reflections of previous Engagement Excellence Fellows

The main step change with this project for me as a person with a mechanical engineering background was to develop my people skills, social media skills and to communicate about clinical research with local communities. This was achieved by learning to communicate science to lay audiences during the EES meetings, gaining confidence in delivering message by participating in PE and PPI events, and using social media throughout.

My experience of being an EES Fellow was very positive. The bespoke training sessions on social media were particularly helpful for supporting public engagement. I found it very inspiring and supportive to work within the scheme with such great people

Daniel Skrzypiec, EES 14-15

I hope I will continue develop my research ideas from inception to dissemination with the participation of those I undertake research with. I hope that the school of dentistry will utilise my skills so that I can support others to work in partnership with the wider community.

Julia Csikar, EES 14-15

Their feedback and encouragement has been very helpful indeed as has sharing ideas and experiences with the other fellows. The different people, projects and skills we were introduced to in our meetings also gave me lots of food for thought.

The scheme has helped my project by giving me the confidence to test new methods of delivery. I knew that PD is usually quite popular but had no idea if it would work online and am very pleased that it did. The scheme also gave my project legitimacy which definitely helped when asking charities and organisations to help promote it.

During the course of the scheme I have definitely become more aware of the distinctions between PPI and PE, and the opportunities and limitations they bring. The importance of evaluating activities has also been brought home to me and how we should measure not just numbers taking part in engagement but also their level of engagement.

Louise Sorensen, EES 14-15

I do believe that I achieved the change I expected from involvement with the programme. It has been a very enjoyable experience and I plan to continue embedding PE activities into my work. I will continue to work closely with St Gemma's Hospice to explore innovative ways of reaching the public and will also look for opportunities to incorporate PE activities into research grant applications.

Matthew Allsop, EES 14-15

The Engagement Excellence Scheme was very beneficial as it allowed me to dedicate time to the project, as it set deadlines and varying tasks each month, the only difficulty was fitting it round my actual job. It also brought together a group of like-minded individuals and was a good place to sound of ideas and get feedback.

I have recently become a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics ambassador; my training is in October and from this I would hope to go into schools in the area to showcase what happens here at St James's University Campus.

I do believe I achieved a step change, as public engagement has now been put into my job description. I will be running a similar event with Co-op academy next year, date to be arranged, once Mr Ali is back in school. I also hope to expand this event out by arranging lab tours for GCSE students who are interested in continuing their scientific studies into 6th form.

Overall I have thoroughly enjoyed this scheme, as working with the students and staff from Co-op academy has been rewarding and humbling at the same time. It was also great fun to get the PhD students involved, as they all had a very positive experience as well. I think my enjoyment and enthusiasm for public engagement is evident as I have now had public engagement incorporated into my job description; so I will hopefully become the “go to” person for the institutes here on site for public engagement.

Marie Parker, EES 14-15

I think that for my own development, my colleagues are now much more aware of the PE work I do and also that we have an active PE team at the university. Especially with regards to Leeds University having signed up to the manifesto of public engagement my colleagues have now a local contact (myself) to talk to about PE activities and my work has inspired especially the PhD students in the department to think about PE-related projects.

I believe that I have found out more about myself in this process. I have learnt that I can do activities outside research/science and am, I think, quite good at it. I thoroughly enjoy the interaction with the public and to be able to tell people about what I do in an understandable way. This interaction is reciprocal, in that I hear from the public (patients, relatives, school children etc.) what their views and priorities are. This will feed back into my research. I have applied to two national PE award schemes. I am also liaising with Kathy Oliver of the International Brain Tumour Alliance to produce an article about the PE work I do and have already an activity in mind which will also be mentioned in this article for further participation of the public with my PE activities.

Anke Brüning-Richardson, EES 15-16

Being part of the University Engagement Excellence Scheme this year has been a great experience. Having peer support, structured meetings and useful information about different approaches to science communication and public engagement was a major motivator throughout the project. I found the sessions on infographics, assessing impact and communication through performance to be particularly stimulating. I enjoyed hearing about the progress of the other EES member's projects and the scope of the different approaches being used. I found their journeys to be inspiring. I would have liked a final session where we gave visual presentations to each other about the journey each of us have been on. This would have brought us full circle from the first session's presentations, when we all shared our aspirations for our projects, and been another valuable peer learning experience.

I have certainly achieved the personal step-change I aspired to in applying for the Engagement Excellence Scheme. It has inspired me to take my interest further by doing a part-time PGCert in science communication this academic year at UWE in Bristol. I am not yet sure where this will take me – whether I will use these skills from within academia or full-time in a science communication role, but the possibilities of either direction are exciting.

Clare Gee, EES15-16

Having additional time to dedicate to the project this year will allow me to make contact with colleagues who are engaged in PPI across our department. With the number of participants significantly increasing next year, our School of English students will be offered the opportunity to write to an older Yorkshire resident from the very moment that they start their degree. Whilst I had some understanding of Public Engagement prior to this Fellowship, I had little knowledge of Public/Patient Involvement. The scheme introduced me to the intricacies of Applied Health research, with this being an area that I hope to explore further in the future. Attending the Theatre of Debate event was a particular highlight, given its focus on interdisciplinary and cross-departmental research.

Georgina Binnie, EES 15-16

The scheme has helped me with my project by offering timely advice and expert directions for resources, further skills development and things to consider during the different stages of my project development with: 2nd & 3rd party presentations e.g. Infographics and examples of completed projects around the University of Leeds, as well as a few choice training sessions e.g. 'Social Media' awareness!). The scheme has also helped via providing an opportunity to learn from fellow scheme members' experiences, throughout the year, from peer advice and from outcomes of their various project activities.

Public Engagement is now recognised as being an important element of our groups' research activities. Senior researchers are now on the lookout for other potential activities

Kathleen Wright, EES 15-16