

Public engagement at the ICR

2023/24



Progress towards our strategy

Introduction

Public engagement is a key pillar in ensuring that here at The Institute of Cancer Research, London, we achieve our mission of making the discoveries that defeat cancer. We are doing this through our four strategic aims of the 'Be part of it' (2021-24) public engagement strategy by working with our local communities, inspiring future diversity in science, establishing and maintaining partnerships, and embedding a culture of public engagement across The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR).

Harnessing two-way dialogue through our public engagement offers more than just a way to connect with communities. It brings fresh and diverse perspectives to our research and opens the doors of opportunity to our future talent. With our staff and students involved in our engagement and outreach work we are providing them with vital skills and experiences to enhance their careers and future pathways. Our public engagement work intertwines with our advocacy, press and fundraising work to help in raising awareness of the ICR and bringing the public along with our journey.

As a publicly-funded higher education institution and charity, at the ICR we are committed to sharing our discoveries and research benefits with the public.

We believe in accountability, trustworthiness, relevance and the social responsibility of our research.



“Engaging with the public on the world-leading research taking place here at the ICR is a very important part of the research cycle and ensures that our science remains relevant to societal needs. Science thrives when done in collaboration and it’s important for scientists to have open dialogue with the public to foster curiosity, build trust and break down barriers. At the ICR we’re proud of the commitment shown by our staff and students to get out there and interact with our local communities in Chelsea and Sutton and beyond, and to help build a more diverse and inclusive future for science.”

Professor Kristian Helin, Chief Executive of the ICR

Reflecting on 2023-2024

In 2023-2024, our staff and scientists participated in at least 30 public engagement events. These include our Careers in Research open evenings, Pint of Science events, *'I'm a Scientist...'* STEM enrichment programme, and continued involvement in Great Exhibition Road Festival and Sutton S.T.E.A.M Fair. We have reached more than 5,000 people in the last year.

Close to 180 staff and students – 14 per cent of the ICR community – have contributed to our public engagement activity. Together, they have contributed more than 500 hours to our public engagement work.

In 2023-24:



30

public engagement
events involving
the ICR

5,000+

members of the
public have been
involved in public
engagement

500+

hours of staff and
student time spent
on public
engagement

180

staff members and
students took part
in public
engagement



ICR The Institute of
Cancer Research

One of our strategic priorities is to establish and maintain productive partnerships to support us in engaging with our target audiences in schools and the local communities and reaching new audiences.

A highlight within this strategic area has been the sponsorship and involvement within *'I'm a Scientist...'*, a STEM enrichment programme. There have been more than 60 interactions with the researchers registered on the platform. This has allowed us to engage new audiences that we wouldn't normally reach, helping to increase students' science capital which includes a person's science-related knowledge, attitudes, experiences and resources, which could help open up new options for the future.

Following the success of the Sutton STEAMs Ahead programme, work has continued in our local community to celebrate science, our researchers, and inspire the next generation of cancer researchers. This has been amplified by our continued partnership working as part of The London Cancer Hub.

We were pleased to see a snapshot evaluation of our public engagement led events, which suggests that more than 90 per cent of the young people interacting with our staff and students have a better understanding of the skills required for a career in science.

Looking forward

In the upcoming year, we will begin building towards creating a new strategic plan as this one concludes. We will continue developing the public engagement function to support the strategic aims of the ICR, enhance research taking place across the organisation, and work to inspire the next generation of cancer researchers. It will also align with the aims and objectives of the Directorate of Development and Communications as we enter a period as a newly formed team.

Vital to ensuring our strategic aims is working as One ICR, continuing to embed a culture of public engagement across all divisions, this will help us in our world-class cancer research, inspiring tomorrow's leaders, and growing our impact for patients.

We will continue to evaluate our activities and use the data to explore external funding opportunities.

Actively engaging with our local community

A key priority of our public engagement strategy is engaging our local communities in Sutton and Chelsea. We are always striving for innovative ways to do this through both in-person and digital interactions. With the continued development of The London Cancer Hub this work will become even more important as our footprint increases in Sutton.

Love where you live

In partnering with the South London Careers Hub, a series of videos were created which focused on highlighting career opportunities within south London, including the Borough of Sutton. It showcased key local employers from the area, including the ICR. Through the video, we learn of different roles in both research and professional services, and heard from our staff and students about why they enjoy working within cancer research. For the audience it included top tips in selecting a career and provided insights into the day-to-day working lives.

The videos have been disseminated to 100 local schools and colleges within the South London Partnership network and also featured at their end of year conference which had around 100 attendees. It will also be shared more widely through social media in the upcoming academic year.



As well as featuring the ICR, the video interviewed people working at the new coworking, leisure and destination space within Sutton town centre, Oru Space. It is a key tool to showcase the opportunities for young people within Sutton and the surrounding area and provides aspiration and inspiration for our local community.

Staff from across the ICR contributed to the film, including Hira Ale, Berni Ebbs, Dr Mariana Campos and Maryam Khan.

Meeting our local communities

Our local communities have engaged with our researchers through several different events, festivals and opportunities. During the summer, a team of researchers took part in the Great Exhibition Road Festival in partnership with the Cancer Research UK Convergence Science Centre hosted at Imperial. Visitors of all ages were invited to try out the 'Cancer Evolution' board game trying to defeat the tumour using a combination of treatment and genetic change cards. It prompted conversations about why its important to understand cancer evolution and how we might use this knowledge to find more treatments in the future or make those that we have better. More than 600 people came to the stall and talked with our researchers.



ICR staff and students engaging members of the public at the Great Exhibition Road Festival and Sutton STEAM Fair.

"This was my favourite thing to do all day, I have brought my cousins over so they can have a go too! I feel like a real scientist."

Child at the Sutton STEAM Fair

The following weekend, we could be found at Sutton STEAM Fair where we were based in a new community space, Throwley Yard. Families were invited to try their hand at using pipettes with more than 120 visitors stopping by to try and become 'Pipette Pros'. We even had some repeat customers over the day!

Visiting local schools and opening the doors of opportunity

In addition to our flagship engagement events and expanding our digital offer, our researchers engaged with our local communities, attending careers events and delivering workshops at schools including Hammersmith Academy, Cheam High School, Reigate College as well as visiting a local scout group.

Our scientists also adventured further afield revisiting their old schools and in the wider areas around London and surrounding counties including Tanbridge House School, Biddenham International School and Sports College, and Collyer's Sixth Form College.

Inspiring future diversity in science

A strong focus of our public engagement work is inspiring the next generation of researchers and ensuring that underserved communities are provided with opportunities that may encourage them to pursue a career in science.

Our staff and students delivered 14 events working with schools throughout the year. In addition to these in-person events, a variety of digital outreach was engaged with including the creation of careers videos for use with local schools.

Local students experience life as a cancer researcher

The Careers in Research open evenings hosted at both of our Sutton and Chelsea sites have gone from strength to strength this year and have continued to work with schools in the local area to promote future diversity in science.



Sixth form students visit our laboratories in Chelsea and Sutton

Across the two open evenings 118 local sixth form students visited our laboratories, the majority of whom identified themselves as being from global majority or mixed heritage backgrounds. With the support of 80 ICR staff and students both events provided access to our facilities and students gained insight into working at a research facility. It provided an opportunity for the students to meet current cancer researchers and ask questions to find out more about pathways into a career at the ICR, within cancer research, and science more generally. In addition to this they tried out hands-on activities which included DNA extraction from strawberries, pipetting and games to help better understand the scientific concepts that underpin the research taking place across the organisation.

“It was a superb event that gave a hugely valuable insight into research careers and the ICR. I would highly recommend this event to all my colleagues, and I hope we get the opportunity to bring pupils again soon. The laboratory tours were particularly a highlight.”

Teacher at the Careers in Research event

The event was a great success, with 91 per cent of the students feeling more confident in their ability to pursue a career in science after visiting our labs and 96 per cent feeling they had a better understanding of the skills needed for a career in science. Our staff and students who helped run the event described it as "inspiring", "exciting", and "fantastic". All of them would encourage their colleagues to participate in the future.

“The lab tour contains the things that you don't usually see. You're never shown these types of things in school. You're never told this is something you can do with your life.”

Student at the Careers in Research event

Piloting work experience

Students from schools in the Sutton area gained work experience this July, thanks to teams in the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery and the Centre for Cancer Imaging. The Divisions of Cancer Therapeutics and Radiotherapy and Imaging independently arranged to host students for a full week's work experience. This included lab demonstrations, talks from senior staff, postdocs, PhD students, summer students and our new apprentices.

This year, the team from Cancer Therapeutics implemented a new approach to actively recruit potential students to take part in the work experience placement here at the ICR with a formal application process to build equity into the work experience process. 16 students participated in the work experience week, and they highlighted Professor Udai Banerji's talk and the practical work that they completed in the labs as

key experiences gained from the programme. 100 per cent of the students who attended agreed that their learning objectives for the programme were met with 93 per cent agreeing that they were going to study a science related qualification post school.



Sixth form students taking part in the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery work experience week.

Establish and maintain productive partnerships

Public engagement cannot be done alone and establishing and maintaining productive partnerships is crucial in us achieving our strategy and strategies to come. A key partnership example has been our work across The London Cancer Hub working with colleagues across the London Borough of Sutton at the beginning of the capital project. In collaboration with our Corporate Partnerships Manager a productive relationship has bloomed with Socius and Aviva who are the selected developer and investor for The London Cancer Hub.

This has resulted in new careers resources to be produced in the upcoming academic year, to help inspire the cancer researchers and life scientists of the future, some of whom will hopefully work at The London Cancer Hub in the future.

“I’m a Scientist...” digital outreach and sponsorship

This year we entered a new partnership with *“I’m a Scientist...”*, an online, student-led STEM enrichment initiative. It connects school students across all ages with scientists from a range of subjects and areas through energetic, real-time text-based chats.

We have ten scientists registered on the platform who have engaged in 59 conversations so far in 2024. The participation runs until December 2024 and has already enabled us to reach new audiences including in Aberdeenshire, Scotland and Nantes, France. 46 per cent of the schools that engaged with our researchers, who had data available, had a higher percentage of the pupil population receiving free school meals than the English national average (>26.92 per cent).

The topics that students learn about in the classroom become more than just things to remember for a test or an exam: they’re shown to have relevance to real life, now and in the future. Our researchers have been involved in conversations around the topics of health, artificial intelligence, STEM careers, genetics, and cancer.

Participation allows connections to form between the students and our researchers, increasing science capital and giving them access to information relating to scientific spaces. It is available anywhere, easy to

get involved with and encourages participation from those that may find face-to-face interaction more difficult.

wake520vast @Stephanie F what kind of treatments are developing for said cancer?

Stephanie F @wake520vast: There is a lot of interest in Immunotherapies these days, trying to get the body's own immune system to kill the cancer cells. We also do a lot of radiotherapy clinical trials as it actually still works quite well but we want to see if we can reduce the doses etc. but still be effective

Example of an interaction with an ICR scientist within the 'I'm a Scientist' online platform.

"It was easy to get online and start talking with young people from across the country. I was able to fit it around my schedule as I could choose when to take part and set how many I would be interested in being involved with over the month. Students asked some interesting questions both about our research but also about my career."

**Steph Foster, Clinical Trials Data
Management Specialist, Clinical Trials and Statistics Unit**

Connecting and collaborating with partners

To maintain and build on our strategic partnerships through The London Cancer Hub and the Cancer Research UK Convergence Science Centre, as well as with The Royal Marsden hospital, the Public Engagement Manager has attended relevant forums, committee meetings and ensured strong stakeholder engagement.

These partnerships have already seen benefits through our involvement in the Great Exhibition Road Festival with the CRUK Convergence Science Centre and funding to enhance our careers resources to inspire the next generation of cancer researchers through The London Cancer Hub. It is vital to strengthen and enhance these opportunities moving forwards.

Embedding engagement in the culture of the ICR

Public engagement succeeds with the involvement, enthusiasm and motivation of those working across the ICR across a range of roles, departments and backgrounds. It is important that it is seen as an equally beneficial way to use their time as time in their labs, conducting data analysis or writing up findings.

A strategic focus of our work is showcasing the range of opportunities that pursuing an educational pathway linked with cancer research can lead to. It should be seen as somewhere that is open to all, no matter your background, and to ensure this happens it is important to involve a diverse range of people within our public engagement work.

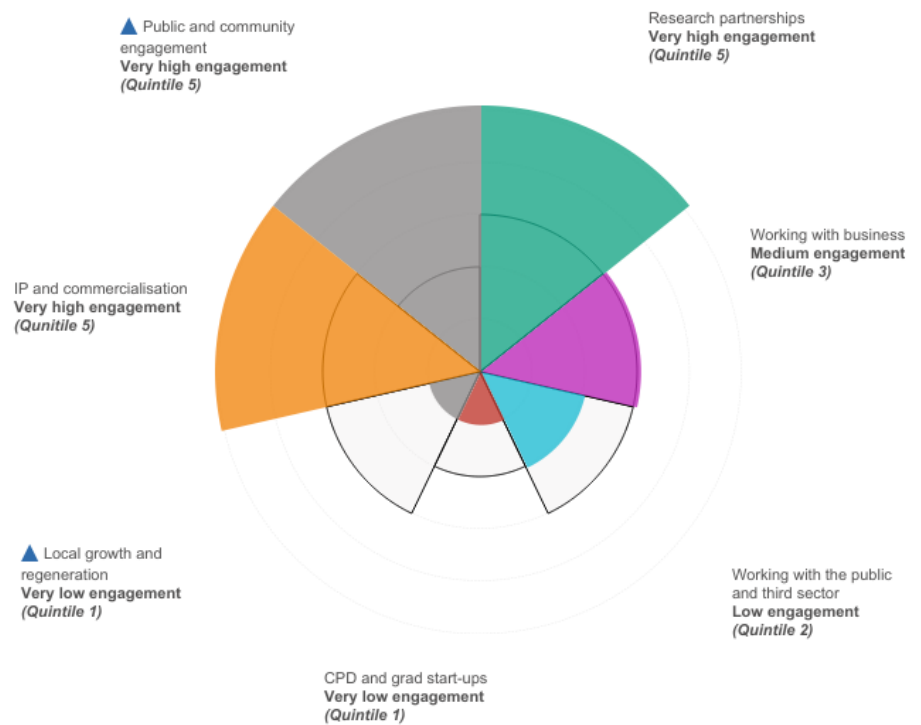
Celebrating success

With the pausing of the Public Engager of the Year awards it was discussed with the Public Engagement Forum how we should celebrate success. Following these conversations, over the past year there has been a real focus on celebrating involvement in public engagement of the staff and students at the ICR through our internal and external communications channels.

There have been twelve internal news stories shared through our internal newsletter and intranet spotlighting and celebrating the public engagement activity that has been taking place. Through this we can also tag individuals who have been involved and showcase the excellent work that is taking place and have advertised signing up to the Inspire newsletter to be the first to hear about upcoming opportunities. The readership has increased by 10 per cent over the year.

All this activity was then rewarded and highlighted through our repeated success within the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) which gained external recognition and saw us gain the top mark available within public and community engagement, situating us within the top fifth of comparable organisations. This is due to the continued efforts of our staff and students, proving the embedded culture.

We will look to build on celebrating success for 2024/25 and are exploring bringing in volunteer celebration events to reward the efforts of those staff and students who give up their time to engage with the local community, patients and the public.



Infographic captured from the ICR provider profile found at: kef.ac.uk/dashboard.

The Knowledge Exchange Framework segments showing the relative strength of the ICR for each KEF perspective displayed using quintiles.

Increasing visibility amongst the ICR community

In addition to the communications work through internal and external news stories, there has been work continued by the Public Engagement Manager to increase the visibility and prominence of our programme. This included presentations at the ICR Technical conference and Postdoc Away Day, hosting a stall at the ICR annual conference, and attending the Student Association, Postdoc Association, and Scientific Officer Association committee meetings.

This is continuing work to build and foster connections across the research and professional services community to diversify those taking part and gaining the benefits that participating in public engagement offers

Appendix 1 – 2023/24 public engagement activity

This appendix comprises a list of events that occurred in 2023-24 according to the public engagement log, categorised based on the strategic priority they fulfil. While some events may fulfil more than one objective, we have listed them under the priority that best fits their purpose.

Actively engage with our local community:

- Dr Charlotte Walden ran a science session for a local scouts group.
- Berni Ebbs, Hira Ale and Maryam Ahsan Khan featured in a series of videos organised by South London Careers Hub on the theme of 'Love Where You Live'.
- Debarati Sethi and Matthew Tyler featured in a series of videos for Sutton STEAMs ahead STEAM Hub.
- Dr Chloe Colson and Dr Erica Oliveira created a set of activities on cancer evolution biology and volunteered alongside Sarah Bruestl, Dr Soham Mandal, Dr Pebs Edwards, Julia Rezende da Silva, Chirine Sakr, Lixuan Sim at the Great Exhibition Road Festival.
- Dr Aline Tabib-Salazar and Samantha Howard hosted a stall as part of the Sutton STEAM Fair.

Inspire future diversity in science:

- Rachel Talbot, Dr Amin Mirza, Aiden Doyle, Dr Tatiana McHardy hosted a lab tour and careers discussion for the Black Women's Project society from the University of Southampton.
- Rachel Talbot delivered workshops to Year 9 students at Tanbridge House School.
- Dr Karen Swales, Alex McClarron, Dr Aline Tabib-Salazar, Alisa Crisp, Dr Amin Mirza, Dr Caitlin Davies, Dr Carol Box, Chirine Sakr, Dr Clementine Lesbats, Declan Bolster, Denzil James, Ellen O'Sullivan, Estina Madamombe, Dr Grace Mak, Hannah Bargh-Dawson, Hira Ale, Kate Liodaki, Dr Katharine Webb, Lisa O'Fee, Dr Lisa Patterson, Dr Maira Tariq, Dr Natalie Bevan, Neil Walford, Penny Flohr, Ricardo Sainz, Dr Samantha Squire, Dr Sara Silva, Sharon Gowan, Dr Shruti Mittal, Sophie Barrett, Suhana Yasmin, Dr Swee Sharp, Dr Tatiana McHardy, Dr Teresa Guerreiro Machado, Liliana Bowler, Dr Joo-Hee Sir, Ben Kolbington, Berni Ebbs, Martina Brayley, Priya Parameswaran, Lara Stitcher, Joanna Wilk, Dr Chiara Da Pieve, Dr Selvakumar

Anbalagan, Gitanjali Sharma volunteered within our flagship Careers in Cancer Research evening at Sutton welcoming local sixth form students to the site.

- Dr Tatiana McHardy gave a talk about her career to Y12 students from Biddenham International School and Sports College in Bedfordshire.
- Dr Mariana Campos gave an assembly talk about her career path and an overview of our research.
- Dr Katharine Webb and Mathew Tyler attended the annual Higher Education Next Steps evening at Cheam High School.
- Dr Matt Jessop, Dr Csaba Kibedi, Ruth Knight, Dr Oviya Inian, Dr Stephen Hearnshaw, Katy Miller, Giacomo Casale, Victoria Cushing, Lucy Dan, Dr Mariola Zaleska, Saira Sakalas supported a lab tour of the Division of Structural Biology with coordination from Lynn Winsor for JFS School.
- Sosheila Ernestine, Mark Jones, Caroline Porter, Myra Browne, Gaby Richter, Sally Williams, Dr Matthew Jessop, Dr Oviya Inian, Alberto Paraspuro, Claudia Cabanillas, Dr Dalia Rosano, Debjani Saha, Hannah Dewhurst, Dr Heena Dhiman, Lorenzo Alonso Requena, Professor Luca Magnani, Professor Chris Bakal, Dr Carmen Murano, Amarin Wongariyapak, Jim Gkantalis, Dr Nitya Mohan, Hradini Konthalapalli, Lixuan Sim, Annie Edwards, Dr Michael Gruet, Shefali Thakur, Elizabeth Torley, Andriani Hadjiconstanti, Jingqi Hong, Joshua Killilea, Kevin Michalewicz, Liliana Bowler, Alexia Martin, Nafisa Sayani-Bromley, Maggy Boatman, Sam Khatun volunteered within our flagship Careers in Cancer Research evening at Chelsea welcoming local sixth form students to the site.
- Dr Karen Swales, Brian Taku, Uma Ramachandra, Kathy Tomlin, Lauren Knightley, Brian Cunningham, Penny Flohr, Dr Miquel Angel Galmes, Lisa O'Fee, Dr Natalia Serrano Aparicio, Dr Martina Palomba, Mateus Crespo, Sharon Gowan, Dr Mark Stubbs, Dr Amin Mirza, Ellie Dixon, Dr Jimmy Maillard, Dr Lisa Pickard, Dr Annette Self, Alex McClarron, Professor Udai Banerji, Ana Ferreira, Andrew Dick, Chloe Bradshaw, Rachel Cooley, Selene Manning, Beth Jago, Dr Tatiana McHardy, Ruth Ruddle, Dr Sara Silva, Angela Hayes, Ekta Paranjape hosted sixteen Y12 students within the Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery for a week of work experience with chemistry and biology streams.
- Dr Carol Box and Lisa Patterson coordinated and hosted three Y11 students for work experience in the Centre for Cancer Imaging.
- Dr Benjamin Bellenie took part in a science fair hosted at Collyer's Sixth Form College.
- Elizabeth Torley gave a talk and hosted a Q&A at her old school about her career in science so far.
- Holly Tovey spoke at a Women in STEM applicants evening held at Reigate College.

- Dr Clare Turnball leads on a medical mentoring programme for Y13 students applying for medical school, I_AM Medical Mentoring, with a team of volunteers including Dr Anna Minchom, Dr Angela George, Dr Lizzie Appleton and Sophie Allen.

Establish and maintain productive partnerships:

- Ben Kolbington ran a lunch and learn event which gave an overview of our research to staff at Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB).
- Dr Rose Hall and Dr Eva McGrowder ran a lunch and learn event on International Men's Day about prostate cancer research and the PROFILE study for staff at Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB).
- Emily Alger presented as part of a Pint of Science event organised by the Alan Turing Institute.
- Dr Katie Begg, Dr Amber Emmerson, Claudia Cabanillas, Diana David, Dr Vijaya Priyadarshini, Sophie Cooke, Dr Hanna Braun, Samantha Howard, Anh Nguyen Phuong, Bhagyashree Satam, Emilia Chen, Aina Mas, Alejandro Allo Anido and Gaby Richter organised two Pint of Science events in which Dr Stephen-John Sammut, Dr Bora Gurel, Hannah Bargh-Dawson, Dr Karen Lane and Dr Dalia Rosano presented about their research.
- Dr Erica Oliveira, Anna Schlag, Paula Proszek, Stephanie Foster, Li Xuan Sim, Dr Soham Mandal, Hradini Konthalapalli and Dr Katharine Webb take part in online conversations as part of 'I'm a Scientist' with school classes across the country.
- Dr Ann-Britt Jones, Dr Rose Hall, Dr Elizabeth Bancroft, Dr Emma Hainsworth and Dr Eva McGrowder hosted an information stall as part of the Prostate Cancer UK March for Men 2024.
- Jennifer Hodgson was a judge as for TeenTech, a national innovators competition, assessing entries within the wearable tech category.

Embed a culture of public engagement:

- Professor Mel Greaves, Dr Marcela Mansur, Professor Trevor Graham, Erica Oliveira, Jon Wilkinson, Karen Poole met with the artist in residence, Julie Light, as part of Sutton STEAMs Ahead.
- Laura Pickles coordinated the Chelsea Family Day for ICR staff and their families which demonstrates activities used with public engagement.