

Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

NCCPE briefing for researchers

About this series

This is one of several briefing documents developed by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) for stakeholders with a role to play in the implementation of the principles in the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research. It should be read in conjunction with the Concordat itself, which constitutes the set of principles officially agreed to by signatories and supporters (www.rcuk.ac.uk/per). The series draws on the learning from the Beacons for Public Engagement project initiative to provide guidance and practical tips which we hope will prove useful as your institution works to implement the principles. Of course, how the Concordat is implemented is the responsibility of individual organisations, but we hope that you find this briefing helpful.

The NCCPE's website hosts a wealth of additional resources to support managers and research staff to develop their public engagement activities and institutional strategies, complementing and deepening the advice offered here. In particular, we would draw your attention to our Manifesto for Public Engagement, which was launched in December 2010. By signing up to the manifesto, institutions can declare their strategic commitment to public engagement, and access additional support and guidance from the NCCPE: www.publicengagement.ac.uk

The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research is a joint statement from Research Councils UK (RCUK), the Funding Councils, academies and research charities. It describes the expectations and responsibilities of research funders with respect to public engagement. Its goal is to increase the quality of public engagement by reducing barriers and rewarding the efforts of researchers. It seeks to avoid compulsion or the creation of additional burden.

The Concordat outlines four key principles:

- UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement.
- Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.
- Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.
- The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

This briefing takes each of the Concordat's principles in turn, suggesting areas for consideration and providing a simple set of prompts to help you consider the implications for your work. Parallel briefings are provided for senior managers, managers of researchers and for supporters of researchers. It provides links to the NCCPE's site, where much more in depth guidance, support and advice can be found, as well as information about events and networking opportunities.

Strategic Commitment

UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement

The concordat requires institutions to demonstrate a strategic commitment to public engagement. Researchers will benefit from this in a number of ways – most particularly around the support their institution will show towards their engagement activity. Public engagement thrives when there is strategic commitment ‘from the top’ of the institution. Equally important is that everyone with a stake in that strategy feels able to contribute their perspectives and ideas – and that they have thought through the implications of the strategy for their own practice.

Your challenge

- Being informed about your institution’s strategy for engaging with the public, and ensuring that you have thought through how and why public engagement is relevant to your area of research, and the benefits it can bring.
- Where support is lacking, making a case for the engagement activity that you are involved in, and gaining recognition for it.

Areas to consider

The NCCPE site contains much more information and support, including resources to support researchers to develop their public engagement activity, a self assessment tool and a range of case studies and exemplars showing how different institutions have tackled the key areas identified below.

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
Contributing to a shared understanding of public engagement and its value	Research organisations should hold an understanding and definition of public engagement, appropriate to their context, which is shared and used consistently across the organisation.	<p>Although it is impossible to expect to achieve a completely uniform understanding of public engagement, it is important that your institution opens up the debate: to develop a definition for public engagement and its value which can be used consistently, and which is based on a robust rationale for your engagement activity. It’s worth taking time to get to grips with the topic – to work out how it impacts on your area of research - and to contribute to the debate!</p> <p>The NCCPE site includes a section dedicated to answering the question ‘What is public engagement?’: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what</p> <p>Another explores ‘Why Public Engagement Matters’: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter</p>
Being a champion for public engagement	It is recognised that senior public engagement champions are essential in fostering public engagement throughout all researcher levels, and these individuals should be encouraged and supported by their research organisations.	<p>Formal policies and statements of intent are important – but equally so are individuals who act as advocates and champions, and in the process positively influence the culture or the institution. Ideally, there will be engagement champions across the institution, including the Vice-Chancellor / Principal; research managers and supporters of research; researchers; postgraduates; and support staff. Your role is critical, encouraging and inspiring your colleagues. There may be support in your institution (e.g. secondments, fellowships or small bursaries) that you can draw on. The NCCPE also runs a public engagement ambassadors scheme to support champions through a national network which we encourage you to join: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-can-help</p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
Communicating about your public engagement	<p>The Concordat states that your public engagement strategy should be: communicated effectively (internally and externally).</p> <p>It also recommends that: research organisations are encouraged to celebrate and communicate their researchers' successes in public engagement</p>	<p>You can play an important role in ensuring that activity is shared widely, for instance through generating case studies about your work, supporting active networking and seizing opportunities to promote the work you are doing and the benefits of involving the public. The NCCPE is always actively looking for case studies and news about interesting developments in the sector, so do get in touch: nccpe.enquiries@uwe.ac.uk</p>

The strategic importance of public engagement

Many universities now have a commitment to engagement embedded in their corporate strategies. University College London (UCL), for instance, prides itself on being 'a modern, outward-looking institution, committed to engaging with the major issues of our times'. The University is currently developing a public engagement strategy, involving senior academics from across the institution.

"Universities are very different places than they were even ten years ago, and their focus is much more outward-looking. The focus on dialogue, on exchange rather than simple knowledge transfer, which is the heart of true public engagement, is one of the greatest challenges for the modern university. It is also a significant opportunity for universities to reinvent themselves as a public good for the 21st century."

**Professor Michael Worton,
Vice-provost, UCL**

The University of Bristol has made its commitment to engagement explicit in its corporate plan. It has developed an 'Engaged University' strategy, and established a high level steering group to oversee the delivery of this.

"Engagement with our publics is vital to modern researchers - it informs us about society and its hopes and fears for the work we do, and challenges us to improve the quality and impact of our research. To articulate the

reasons why we do research and be reminded of the expectations that society has for us is both directly refreshing and beneficial - and for many is a very enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding experience."

**Professor Guy Orpen,
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research),
University of Bristol**

Find out more here:

**[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/
support/planning-change/mission](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/mission)**

There are also lots of engaged researchers across the UK – and you can find out about some of them on the NCCPE website

**[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/
how/people](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/people)**.

"The motivation to work more closely with the public emerged from a belief that, as academic researchers, we can engage in ways which are purposeful and rewarding for people, through the co-production of research findings or through the development of a research product where they feel a sense of joint-ownership. Undertaking research with local residents can also be an enriching experience for the researcher, through the development of specific skills (listening and reflection) and in illuminating unexpected aspects of the research."

**Ryan Woolrych, Research
Associate, Manchester University**

Reward and Recognition

Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.

Recognition and reward are key ways in which universities can demonstrate to staff and students that their institution genuinely values public engagement. In many HEIs, staff and students feel they get little or no acknowledgment for the work they do around public engagement, evidenced for instance in the Royal Society's 2006 report 'Factors Affecting Science Communication: A Survey of Scientists and Engineers'. If people feel that their career prospects are not improved (or even sometimes jeopardised) by engaging with the public then many of them will choose not to. Small steps can make a big difference in terms of encouraging engagement enthusiasts and convincing novices to give public engagement a try.

Your challenge

- Making constructive use of appraisal and developmental reviews to reflect on your engagement activity.
- Seeking opportunities to disseminate the outcomes of your activity with others, and to support colleagues' work in this area.

Areas to consider

The NCCPE site contains a section offering practical guidance to this topic. You will find a self assessment tool, several case studies and exemplar policies / job descriptions etc. at www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
Support for public engagement embedded in your institution's staff policies and processes	<p>Research organisations should consider whether public engagement is appropriately represented in staff policies and processes (such as for inductions, performance review, promotions criteria or workload planning) to allow researchers to be involved in public engagement activities without impairing their career.</p> <p>Those responsible for the implementation of such processes, including research managers and relevant supporters of researchers, should receive appropriate briefing and support.</p>	<p>You can actively encourage recognition of your public engagement by your department, whether it is a formal institutional requirement or not. For example you can use performance reviews to reflect on your engagement activity and the transferable skills you are developing through it, and to seek appropriate support, training and development to extend your skills.</p>
Public engagement is actively promoted and celebrated	<p>The benefits of public engagement to researchers should be clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career, including its valuable role in developing transferable skills.</p> <p>Research organisations are encouraged to celebrate and communicate their researchers' successes in public engagement.</p>	<p>Your university may also celebrate public engagement with high profile awards, and you may wish to apply for such an award, or even instigate something similar within your department as a way of supporting colleagues' work in this area.</p> <p>You can also put yourself forward for national awards, such as the Royal Society's Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science: http://royalsociety.org/Kohn-Award/</p>

University of East Anglia (UEA) engagement awards

UEA and the Norwich Research Park have launched an Individual Engagement Award to acknowledge the remarkable contribution that staff and students at UEA have made to university public engagement, and to raise the profile of this area of work. The Awards are presented at UEA Congregation ceremonies and take the form of an ex-gratia payment. Whilst it was acknowledged that a financial reward is not the key incentive to getting involved in public engagement, this scheme formed part of an overall incentives package at the University which now includes staff promotions criteria.

One of the first winners was Dr Stephen Ashworth who has been actively involved with public engagement for the past ten years and is the Schools Liaison Officer for

the local section of the Royal Society of Chemistry. He has worked with hundreds of local pupils of all ages; run regular workshops for Women's Institute Groups on forensic and food science themes; developed a workshop for blind and partially sighted participants called 'Looking Glass Laboratory'.

"The news of the award was a lovely surprise and I am honoured to be a recipient of one of the first individual engagement awards."

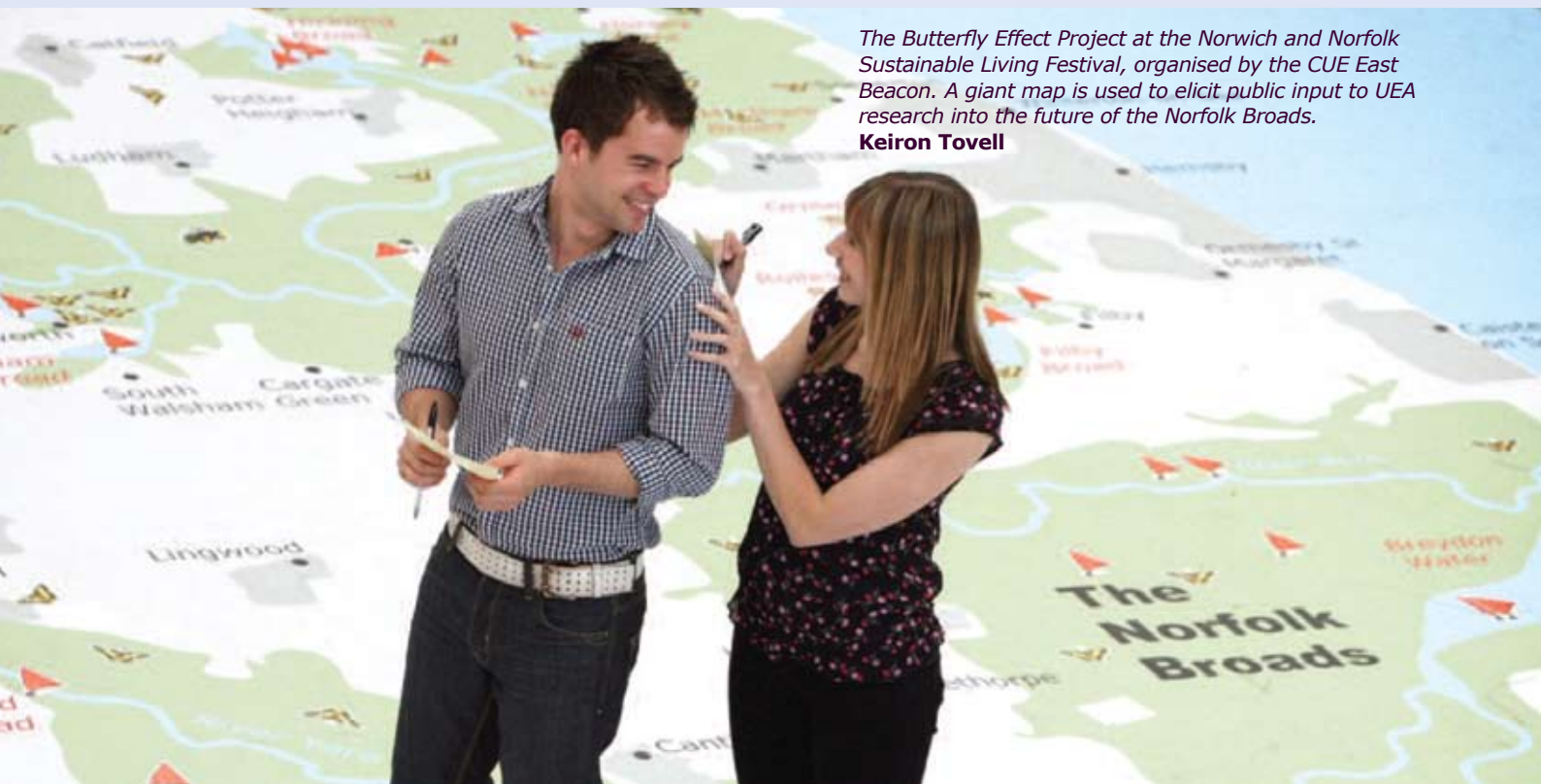
Dr Stephen Ashworth

Find out more about the award and about UEA's approach here:

www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition

"We developed an engagement process over seven months, first setting up groups of participants including three panels of residents from the community... The benefit to our research came from harnessing this local knowledge to generate a distinctive research agenda for urban sustainability. Issues had emerged on crime, safety and community cohesion which we had not expected."

Professor Malcolm Eames, Research Chair with the Low Carbon Institute, based at the Welsh School of Architecture



The Butterfly Effect Project at the Norwich and Norfolk Sustainable Living Festival, organised by the CUE East Beacon. A giant map is used to elicit public input to UEA research into the future of the Norfolk Broads.

Keiron Tovell

Skills, Support and Opportunities

Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.

Public engagement can bring great rewards – both for the university and for the public that its staff and students engage with. But this mutual benefit can't be taken for granted: it relies on researchers developing new skills, understandings and expertise. Recently, this has been recognised by the launch of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), “a tool for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education” (Vitae, 2010). One of the four domains within the RDF is ‘Engagement, Influence and Impact’, recognising the critical role that engagement plays within a researcher’s career.

There are also strong synergies with the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers. Supporting staff to engage effectively with the public is a key way in which institutions can increase the attractiveness of research careers, and contribute to the development of transferable skills and lifelong learning.

Your challenge

- Being proactive in seeking out opportunities to engage with the public, and in securing informal and formal training and development to develop your skills and understanding.

Areas to consider

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p>Making the most of the expert support on offer, and actively contributing to networks across your organisation</p>	<p>Research organisations are encouraged to consider how public engagement is co-ordinated across the institution to enable the sharing of good practice and help ensure activities are consistent with the institution’s policy.</p> <p>Research organisations should seek to provide practical support for researchers to engage with the public, whether delivered at a departmental, institutional or regional level (e.g. through deployment of staff (supporters of research)). This could include administrative support, expertise, advice, access to information on financial assistance and/or signposts to examples of good practice and potential partners.</p> <p>Research organisations should actively assess and manage potential institutional and personal risks associated with public engagement.</p>	<p>You need to be proactive in making the most of the resources available from your institution and research funder such as advice, training and support. You can also join (or initiate) networks and share your own experiences and learning.</p> <p>The NCCPE run a national network called the Public Engagement Ambassadors Scheme which you could join, or you could participate in the Public Engagement Network. Find out how: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-can-help</p> <p>‘Engagement, influence and impact’ is one of the four key domains in the new Researcher Development Framework. Exploring this framework, and reflecting on your own current level of skills and experience would be a good starting point for conversations with your managers or support staff: www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html</p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p>Seizing the public engagement opportunities on offer and taking informal development seriously</p>	<p>Research managers should support and encourage the development of their teams' public engagement practice (e.g. through professional development and appropriate participation in public engagement activities).</p> <p>Researchers share the responsibility for developing their engagement practice and are encouraged pro-actively to engage in appropriate professional development.</p> <p>Research organisations should facilitate opportunities for researchers to engage with the public.</p>	<p>For many researchers a big barrier to engaging with the public is knowing how to get started. Your institution or department may be able to provide you with guidance on how to get started, and a variety of opportunities to dip your toe in the water or to take on more sustained engagement projects, but you can also look to external support. The NCCPE site provides both resources and links to useful organisations relevant to different discipline areas, from the British Science Association to the British Academy.</p> <p>In addition the NCCPE joined forces with Vitae to publish the Engaging Researcher booklet - a beginner's guide to public engagement: www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/The_engaging_researcher_2010.pdf</p> <p>National schemes like Researchers in Residence provide an excellent place to get started. The NCCPE website contains a wealth of practical advice and support – including a beginner's guide: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how</p>
<p>Investing in your own continuing professional development</p>	<p>Research organisations are conscious of the attributes required for public engagement, recognising that such attributes are a subset of the skills, behaviours and personal qualities that researchers should be aspiring towards in their professional development (as outlined in the Researcher Development Statement and relevant professional qualifications).</p> <p>Research organisations recognise the importance of professional development in public engagement for researchers and provide access to relevant training and development opportunities (for example by integrating public engagement attributes into institutional professional development plans), ensuring that a lack of skills is not a barrier to engagement.</p>	<p>Public engagement helps you to develop transferable skills that will help with your career – as is evidenced in the Researcher Development Framework. It's likely that your institution may already run many relevant courses. Make the most of expert support in your institution – or use the NCCPE site – to review the skills and aptitudes you want to develop and then make sure that you make the time to book into the relevant courses or training.</p> <p>The NCCPE site contains a section dedicated to developing your expertise in engagement – as well as an aptitudes framework that details the various skills needed: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how</p> <p>The NCCPE site also lists current external training courses: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/training</p>

Supporting early career researchers to develop their public engagement skills

The Manchester Beacon and the Vitae North West Hub are working together on a programme of public engagement support for early career researchers across the North West. This was kicked off with a mini conference at Manchester Metropolitan University. At the workshop, experts shared their knowledge and experience whilst delegates attended practical workshops based on three levels of public engagement experience – beginners, developers and advanced. As part of the programme, the Manchester Beacon launched and awarded Early Career Researcher Awards to five pilot projects to create opportunities for early career researchers to communicate their research and develop supportive partnerships with experienced public engagement providers. To foster these new partnerships, a public engagement Opportunities Zone was hosted at the

conference. A showcase event was held during the Manchester Beacon Summit Week in November 2010 to celebrate and share the learning from these projects.

"I met inspiring people that inspired me to broaden my public engagement activities."

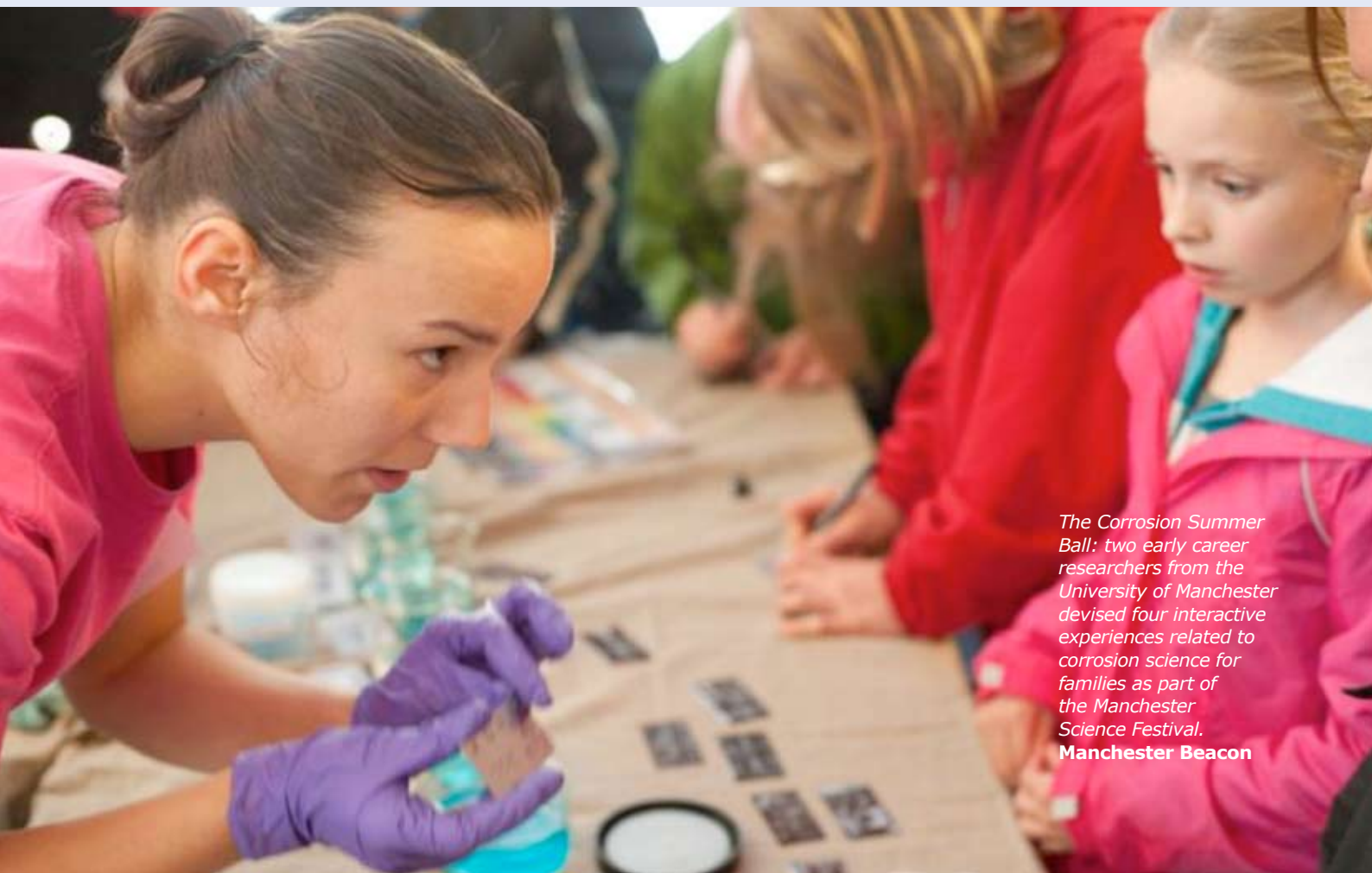
Conference delegate

"I felt it gave me renewed vigour and passion for my PhD particularly in relation to my dedication to working with members of the community on research projects."

Conference delegate

You can find out more about similar projects here:

www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning



The Corrosion Summer Ball: two early career researchers from the University of Manchester devised four interactive experiences related to corrosion science for families as part of the Manchester Science Festival.
Manchester Beacon

Implementation and Impact

The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

Public engagement is an increasingly important dimension to how research is conducted and communicated in the UK. Making sure that everyone with a stake in research is involved in reviewing progress is a key consideration in the Concordat.

Your challenge

Getting involved proactively in any institutional or departmental reviews of engagement activity, and seeking opportunities to provide constructive feedback; evaluating your own engagement activities as a matter of course.

Areas to consider

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
Making sure that you evaluate your own engagement activities	Research organisations should themselves monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the public engagement they support in addressing their strategic aims and the extent to which they are meeting the expectations outlined in this Concordat. This could include seeking feedback from staff, students and the public.	Engaging with the public brings many benefits for researchers and for the public, but these can't be taken for granted. It is important that you develop your expertise in evaluating your public engagement activity, and using the findings to inform your own practice, and to help your research group, department and institution as a whole to improve the quality and impact of your engagement work. The NCCPE site contains links to a variety of practical evaluation guides, including RCUK's Practical Guidelines to Evaluation: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/introduction-evaluation
Sharing effective practice in public engagement with other research organisations	Research organisations should work together to develop and share good practice in public engagement and in the implementation of the Concordat.	The NCCPE provides several mechanisms to encourage sharing of expertise across the sector. You can join the NCCPE national network or ambassadors' scheme – and we would welcome your active involvement with our work. We are also very keen to publish case studies from different institutions. You can find out more here: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-help



Geographer Jason Dittmer speaks at Bright Club, UCL's variety night, where researchers perform stand-up comedy about their work.

Hilary Jackson

Other briefings to support the Concordat for engaging the public with research

You can also access the following individual briefings and guidance on implementing the Concordat from the NCCPE site:

- An introduction and overview
- Senior manager briefing
- Researcher briefing
- Managers of researchers briefing

You can download these briefings at: www.publicengagement.ac.uk/concordat

Beacons for Public Engagement

Funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust, the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative aims to inspire a culture change in how universities and research institutes engage with the public.

It consists of:

- the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), which co-ordinates, captures and shares learning between the Beacons and across UK higher education institutions and research institutes;
- six Beacons, university-based collaborative centres that help support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement work. The six Beacons are based in Newcastle and Durham; Manchester; CUE East UEA; UCL; Wales; and Edinburgh.

Other NCCPE Resources

The NCCPE provides a 'one stop shop' for anyone in the university and research sector with an interest in public engagement. Set up in 2008 as part of the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative, our focus is on supporting university staff and researchers to develop their skills in engagement, and to assist senior managers to develop strategic approaches to supporting public engagement.

Our website provides:

- Advice on public engagement practice: an extensive collection of guides and case studies www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how
- Context: exploring what public engagement involves and why it matters www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what and www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter
- Resources for managers: an extensive collection of resources to help institutions assess their own strategic and practical support for engagement, and a rich array of case studies and tools developed from the work of the Beacons and other institutions www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support
- The Manifesto for Public Engagement: by signing up to the manifesto, institutions can declare their strategic commitment to the Concordat principles, and access additional support and guidance from the NCCPE www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto

Other Useful Links

- Research Councils UK: Public Engagement with Research www.rcuk.ac.uk/per
- Researcher Development Framework www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html
- The Engaging Researcher booklet www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/The_engaging_researcher_2010.pdf