

Public engagement at the ICR 2022/23



Progress against our strategy

Introduction

At The Institute of Cancer Research, London, we believe that public engagement is crucial to our mission of making the discoveries that defeat cancer. By engaging with the public, we can better understand the research that matters most to them and build meaningful connections with our local communities.

But public engagement offers more than just a way to connect with communities. It also provides a unique opportunity to attract the best and brightest scientific minds to join our team and generate support for our research. By involving the public in conversations about science and medical research, we can increase support for science and influence policy.

As a publicly funded higher education institution and charity, at The Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) we are committed to sharing our discoveries and research benefits with the public.

We believe in openness, accountability, and effective communication of our research.

Our latest public engagement strategy, 'Be part of it' (2021-24), aims to promote shared ownership of our research and strengthen our efforts to reach young people from underrepresented backgrounds in science.

We also recognise that public engagement offers an excellent opportunity for professional development and enjoyment for our existing staff members and students.

Our strategic priorities

'Be part of it' identifies four priority areas. We aim to:

- **Actively engage with our local community:** The ICR has two sites, Chelsea and Sutton, where we are partners with the London Borough of Sutton (LBS) in The London Cancer Hub. We connect with local communities, encouraging understanding of our research.

- **Inspire future diversity in science:** We focus our schools' outreach work on students from backgrounds under-represented in science, identifying schools through analysis of national datasets and by local liaison.
- **Establish and maintain productive partnerships:** We work with carefully selected partners to engage our target audiences and extend our reach. We have long-standing relationships with organisations, including the LBS, The Royal Marsden, the Science Museum, funding partners and schools.
- **Embed engagement in the culture of the ICR:** We create an environment where public engagement thrives by providing training and resources, facilitating engagement opportunities, and recognising and rewarding this work.



“Science doesn’t happen in isolation and it’s important for scientists to engage with the public about their research. At the ICR we’re proud of the enthusiasm shown by our staff and students to get out there and interact with our local communities in Chelsea and Sutton, and to help inspire more young people to take up a career in science. It’s exciting to think that some of the A-Level students who visit our labs each year might one day return to help us make the discoveries that defeat cancer.”

Professor Kristian Helin, Chief Executive of the ICR

An overview of the year

Reflecting on 2022-2023

In 2022-2023, our staff and scientists participated in more than 50 engagement events. These include the Great Exhibition Road Festival, the Sutton STEAM Fair, lab tours and school visits. We have reached more than 3,600 people in the last year.

More than 130 staff and students – 12 per cent of the ICR community – have contributed to our public engagement activity. Together, they have contributed 550 hours to our public engagement work.

In 2022-23:



50

public engagement events involving the ICR

3,600

members of the public have been involved in public engagement

550

hours of staff and student time spent on public engagement

130

staff members and students took part in public engagement



ICR The Institute of
Cancer Research

One of our strategic priorities is to inspire the next generation of researchers by sharing our passion for science with young people from diverse backgrounds and encouraging them to consider research as a career.

This year's highlight has been the return of our Careers in Research evening, an event where we welcomed 50 young people from under-represented backgrounds to our laboratories in Chelsea. Our guests learned practical science skills and discussed their future careers with our researchers.

Throughout the year, we also engaged the public, particularly our local communities in Sutton and Chelsea, through events such as Sutton STEAMs Ahead, a year-long calendar of cultural activities supported by a Cultural Impact Award from the Mayor of London. As part of this, more than 25 of our researchers were involved in 'We Dance for Life', an internationally acclaimed creative film that celebrates scientists from the ICR and The London Cancer Hub. The film – which won the Best Dance Experimental award at the Experimental, Dance & Music Film Festival in the USA and Canada – has been watched more than 4,000 times.

We were pleased to see a snapshot evaluation of our events, which suggests that more than 90 per cent of the young people interacting with our staff and students are more likely to consider a career in science.

Looking forward

In the upcoming year, one of our main objectives is to work with local students from backgrounds currently underrepresented in science. To achieve this, we aim to collaborate with the Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage (REACH) Forum, which will serve as an advisory board, and representatives of these communities. Our Careers in Research open evenings have proven to be of great value to these students, and we will continue to host these events on both of our sites.

We have identified the importance of providing opportunities for students to interact with our researchers in school and at the ICR. We plan to explore more ways to enable our staff and students to visit local schools as part of career fairs and other relevant events. Moreover, we are exploring other methods for these students to access the ICR. We are actively working with the Learning & Development team within HR to offer these students scientific apprenticeship opportunities at the ICR.

We are also collaborating with our Cancer Therapeutics Unit to formalise a work experience programme, which will be offered to local students.

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

Actively engage with our local community

A key priority of our public engagement strategy is engaging our local communities in Sutton and Chelsea. As part of this commitment, we have worked closely with the London Borough of Sutton on the Sutton STEAMs Ahead programme – a year-long calendar of cultural activities with Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) at its core, supported by a Cultural Impact Award from The Mayor of London.

A creative film celebrating research

One of the highlights of this programme is 'We Dance for Life' – a creative film that celebrates scientists from the ICR and The London Cancer Hub. The award-winning film showcases choreographed dance sequences and creative yet recognisable interpretations of scientific concepts. Throughout the film, beautiful images and videos kindly shared by colleagues across the ICR intermix with shots of community groups.



We Dance for Life is acclaimed at national and international film festivals.

Community involvement is a highlight of the film, which features residents of the borough and people affected by cancer. It was filmed in locations across Sutton.

The internationally acclaimed film has now been seen more than 4,000 times to date.

Researchers from across the ICR contributed to the film, including Hira Ale, Professor Chris Bakal, Aiden Doyle, Sharon Gowan, Valeria Molinari, Dr Farideh Miraki-Moud, Dr Amin Mirza, Dr Olivier Pierrat, Pallavi Ramsahye, Sumana Shrestha, Kathy Tomlin, and Rachel Talbot.

The reaction to the film has been very positive, with people describing the film as "enlightened", "powerful", and "touching". A snapshot survey of the launch event shows that 97 per cent of people watching felt hopeful and inspired. Their comments included, "It shines a light on an important subject" and "It is overall very powerful; you understand the motivation behind it".

"The production was incredible. From the choreography to music, to filming and editing – I'm totally in awe. Beautiful, inspiring, gives hope, and I love how science and art mix to create something that communicates to everyone."

Feedback at the launch of We Dance for Life

Inspiring our local communities

Our local communities have engaged with the ICR throughout the year through multiple events and opportunities.



Families and students take part in hands-on science demonstrations.

During the summer, a team of researchers took part in the Sutton STEAM Fair at Sutton Grammar School and on Sutton High Street as part of the Sutton STEAMs Ahead cultural festival. Visitors created scientific art while practising their pipetting skills.

ICR staff and students explained how pipetting is an essential and widespread skill in research and how they use it in their daily work in the lab. Visitors also engaged in a targeted therapy game where they helped to treat Maxie, a pretend cancer patient, by eliminating cancer cells while keeping healthy cells unaffected.

"Thank you for bringing science to our high street. Our children got the chance to meet scientists working in their area, which was an amazing experience."

Parent at the Sutton STEAM Fair

Welcoming local students to our labs

We welcomed the local community to our research labs. Dr Tatiana McHardy and Questa Karlsson hosted a tour for students from the Biology Society of Sutton Grammar School. We also visited nearby schools and participated in interactive career fairs, such as the STEAM Fair at Hammersmith Academy.

Inspiring future diversity in science

Inspiring the next generation of researchers is a top priority within our strategy. Our staff and students delivered more than 30 school events throughout the year. An evaluation of these events suggests more than 90 per cent of the students we are reaching feel more inspired to follow a career in research after meeting our researchers.

Inviting students into our labs

A key priority within this goal is to inspire future diversity in science. There have been some challenges in achieving this objective due to the lack of an active REACH Forum. Despite that, we were pleased to welcome 50 sixth form students, all from ethnic minority backgrounds to our Chelsea laboratories during our flagship event, Careers in Research. The event was an opportunity for students and their teachers to learn about cancer research and careers in science.



Sixth form students visit our laboratories in Chelsea and Sutton

More than 50 staff and students delivered the event, which gave the opportunity for young people from backgrounds under-represented in science to meet our researchers in their labs, discuss their future careers, and practise their science skills in working labs.

The event was a great success, with 92 per cent of the students feeling more confident in their ability to pursue a career in science after visiting our labs and 94 per cent feeling more inspired about a career in science. Our staff and students who helped run the event described it as

"inspiring", "engaging", and "fantastic". All of them would encourage their colleagues to participate in the future.

"It was an invaluable experience for the students, and they were able to take away a lot of useful skills and information. It was also a great networking opportunity."

Teacher at the Careers in Research event

"Interesting to see how research actually happens and see how techniques we are taught at school are developed at a higher level."

Student at the Careers in Research event

Offering mentoring opportunities

Beyond opening our doors, we also participate in the [TeamUp project](#), which aims to tackle educational disadvantages in the UK. Our Public Engagement Manager mentored one of the students responsible for delivering affordable and effective tuition to pupils from low-income backgrounds.

One of our researchers, Professor Clare Turnbull, also runs a mentorship programme supporting year 13 students from London state secondary schools applying for medicine. The programme is delivered by 16 doctors who run weekly sessions with small groups of students in the lead-up to interviews for medical school. The team has worked with more than 150 students from 18 state schools across central London.

Establish and maintain productive partnerships

Establishing and maintaining productive partnerships is a crucial factor in the successful delivery of our public engagement strategy. A key partnership example has been our work with colleagues at the Cancer Research UK Convergence Science Centre which led to the development of brand new, hands-on science demos for the Great Exhibition Road Festival.

The interactive activities engaged more than 700 visitors on the potential for artificial intelligence in treating cancer and unlocked conversations about the importance of diverse and inclusive data. Our stand was also an opportunity to highlight the importance of partnership and convergence science, bringing the perspective of different types of researchers and an inclusive audience to the discussion.

A year of science in Sutton

We have also strengthened our partnership with the London Borough of Sutton, working closely with them throughout the year to deliver various activities and events linked to the Sutton STEAMs Ahead festival. This partnership has allowed us to engage the local community in events such as the Sutton Science Fair, where we engaged local families on Sutton High Street, and the creative film, We Dance for Life.

Our partnership with Harris Academy, our local school within the London Cancer Hub, has been strengthened as well. We have worked with their Sixth Form Lead to plan science lessons to be delivered by our scientists, giving students the opportunity to meet the researchers working next door and learn about their career paths.

Expanding our networks

Our Public Engagement Manager has also been an active partner in relevant forums. She has participated in both the Patient and Public Involvement & Engagement and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Patient & Public Contributors Group at The Royal Marsden, as well as the Culture and Science Advisory Board for the Sutton STEAMs Ahead project. Additionally, she has become a member of the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement to ensure the ICR shares learnings with other public engagement professionals and keeps up to date with best practices in the field.

To increase our reach and impact with limited resources, we are exploring ways to strengthen our relationships with organisations that already reach some of our key target audiences. Examples of that include early work with MySTEMM Future, Access Aspiration and In2ScienceUK.

Our partnership work also involves working with our funders and supporters and key decision makers.

Embedding public engagement

Delivering our public engagement strategy depends on the involvement and commitment of staff and colleagues at the ICR. It is crucial that they feel there is a benefit from spending time away from their labs or desks and that they have the necessary resources to do so.

Our public engagement priorities focus on showcasing the breadth of STEM careers and engaging students from underrepresented backgrounds. To achieve this goal, it is essential to involve a diverse group of researchers in our public engagement work regarding career paths and ethnic backgrounds.

Diversifying who delivers public engagement

Resources for public engagement at the ICR are limited, and we depend on our brilliant Public Engagement Forum to help us engage with the community at the institute.

This year, we have focused on diversifying the representation of our Public Engagement Forum to ensure it represents our research community, the different stages of careers, and as many research divisions as possible.

We have set out to increase the number of represented divisions successfully. We have recruited nine staff members and now have representation from four of the ICR's research divisions – Cancer Therapeutics, Molecular Pathology, Radiotherapy and Imaging, and Cancer Biology (previously, only Cancer Therapeutics, Molecular Pathology, and Radiotherapy and Imaging were represented) – and Core Research Facilities. We also needed representation from senior members of staff. Last year, we recruited Professor Chris Bakal, Dr Amin Mirza, and Hira Ale, as well as representatives of the scientific officer, postdoc, and student committees.

One challenge has been increasing diversity in terms of ethnic background, given the lack of an active REACH Forum. To ensure we can inspire a diverse group of young people into science, we must be able to demonstrate the diversity of people working in science already.

We will continue working with our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Manager to highlight the importance of inviting REACH Forum members to join our Public Engagement Forum and participate in public engagement activities.

Providing training and resources

To ensure our staff have the necessary skills, we ran engagement training opportunities across both sites and disseminated opportunities for external training. The feedback for the on-site training sessions was highly positive, with 100 per cent of those attending feeling the workshop encouraged them to participate in future public engagement events.

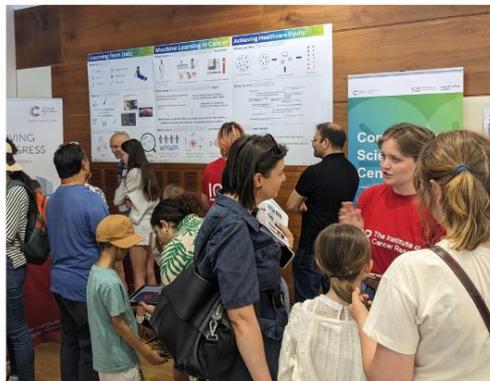
We have worked with researchers to develop hands-on demos aligned with our strategy, which we hope to make available for everyone at the ICR.

Additionally, to increase the visibility of Public Engagement at the ICR, our Public Engagement Manager hosted a stand at the annual conference where she showcased public engagement opportunities for our scientific staff. She also attended the Technical Conference, where she engaged the scientific officer community and presented to the PhD student and postdoc associations.

Due to reduced capacity and in discussion with our Public Engagement Forum, we have decided not to run an award programme this year. We have decided instead to celebrate our public engagers via our internal public engagement newsletter, our organisational newsletter, and our intranet.

This year's priorities were ensuring a reliable method to evaluate events. To maximise the likelihood our volunteers complete it, we need this to be simple so we can ask consistently at most events we attend.

We have piloted a simple questionnaire at a handful of events and were pleased to see that more than 90 per cent of the students we reached feel more inspired to follow a research career. We aim to implement this evaluation at more of our events to ensure we continue to excel in inspiring the next generation of researchers.



Students who attended our event feel more inspired to follow a career in research

Appendix 1

This appendix comprises a list of events that occurred in 2021-22, 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:

- Professor Chris Bakal, Valeria Molinari and Sumana Shrestha helped shape the dance routines of We Dance for Life, a creative film inspired by science
- Hira Ale, Rachel Talbot, Dr Amin Mirza, Kathy Tomlin, Pallavi Ramsahye and Olivier Pierrat featured in the lab scenes of We Dance for Life
- Dr Jason Yeung, Chloe Harris, Alexia Martin, Sumana Shrestha, Valeria Molinari, Professor Chris Bakal, Sharon Gowan, Dr Bora Gurel, Daniella Hares, Alisa Crisp, Julia Perea Paizal, and Dr Farideh Miraki-Moud contributed scientific images for We Dance for Life
- Dr Mariana Campos hosted a stand at the launch of We Dance for Life
- Professor Chris Bakal joined the panel discussion at the launch of We Dance for Life
- Debarati Sethi and Matthew Tyler featured in a "Meet the Professionals" career video as part of Sutton STEAMs Ahead
- Maryam Khan, Hradini Konthalapalli, Sarah Mearns, Dr Mariana Campos, Dr Laura Boothman and Dr Abi Bloy, in collaboration with researchers from CRUK Convergence Science Centre, delivered interactive activities at the Great Exhibition Road Festival
- Rita Pereira, Dr Mariana Campos, Dr Laura Boothman, Alisa Crisp and Dr Alexander Cowley delivered interactive activities at the Sutton STEAM Fair at Sutton High Street

Inspire future diversity in science:

- Dr Amin Mirza, Beth Jago, and Dr Maggie Liu hosted sixth form and undergraduate students for a work experience opportunity
- Denisa Bogdan was featured on the website for the Science Museum permanent exhibit Technicians: We Make the Difference
- Saira Sakalas hosted a stand at the St George's Biomedical Science Careers Fair

- Dr Laura Boothman, Anju Kaimal, Dr Maira Tariq, and Dr Anand Rankumar joined the careers evening at Ark Elvin Academy
- Professor Chris Lord gave a talk at St Olave's Grammar School
- Dr Questa Karlsson, Dr Tatiana McHardy, and Sue Merson hosted a tour for the Biology Society from Sutton Grammar School
- Dr Abigail Bloy gave a talk at the STEM Careers Week at Longhill High School, Brighton
- Dr Taleen Shakouri, Hannah Badham, Dr Erica Oliveira, and Reda Stankunaite hosted a stand at the Career fair for Norbury School for Girls on International Women's Day
- Dr Mariola Zaleska, Dr Oviya Inian, Dr Matthew Jessop, Dr Carmen Murano, Amy Burley, Rose Foster, Dr Nitya Mohan, Dr Negar Afshar, Professor Chris Bakal, Dr George Pouligiannis, Dr Thanasis Tsalikis, Dr Aurelien Tripp, Jessica Lopez Munoz, Mollie Virgo, Alex Carroll, Meg Morris, Miki Yoneyama, Dr Evi Karali, Emine Kazanc, Patricia Barnes, Renuka Nair, Ricardo Sainz, Dr Lauren Yeomans, Dr Mahmoud Ahmed, Matt De Vries, Alexia Martin, Chloe Harris, Dr Surhi Kabuga, Dr Renee Flaherty, Emily Durie, Dr Valentina Gifford, Dr Luisa Robbez-Masson, Rachel Cooley, Alisa Crisp, Dr Becky Cook, Pat Scott, Chloe Bennett, Dr Laura Boothman, Dr Ichha Khanal, Graham Shaw, Dr Abigail Bloy, Julia Bakker, Professor Sebastian Guettler, Dr Stephen Hearnshaw, Lynn Winsor, Laura-Maria Horga and Miki Yoneyama took part in our Careers in Research event in Chelsea
- Dr Elena Lopez Knowles gave a talk during science week at Churchfields Primary School
- Lisa O'Fee, Isaac Wade, and Lauren Knightley joined the Careers Fair at the Ashcombe School
- Dr Carol Box hosted an interactive stand at the St Chads Primary School Diversity Day.
- Alice Hill joined a careers fair for students and their parents and Rosebery School
- Dr Lizzie Tucker, Dr Laura Boothman, Alisa Crisp, Dr Shruti Mittal, Dr Jaymini Patel, Dr Aline Tabib-Salazar and Dr Mariana Campos delivered interactive activities at the Sutton STEAM Fair at Sutton Grammar School
- Lucy Kilburn and Dr Anna Zachariou talked about their careers in a Making Maths Real event as part of Maths Week in Stanley Park Junior School
- Imogen Thrussell and Dr Matthew Blackledge hosted sixth form students for a work experience programme
- Dr Karen Swales gave a talk at the Halstead Girls' Junior School
- Chloe Harris joined a networking event as part of an Access Aspiration programme of events for underrepresented students
- Hira Ale, Bhagyashree Satam, Sitara Ballal, Yuliya Semochkina and Dr Shruti Daga hosted several students as part of a work experience programme

- Reiss Clifford, Dr Abigail Shea, Matthew Tyler and Dr Mariana Campos hosted a stand at the Hammersmith Academy STEAM careers fair
- Dr Lauren Yeomans, Dr Taleen Shakouri, and Hannah Badham hosted a stand at the Careers Fair at the Wallington County Grammar School
- Monica Hamill gave a talk at Uxbridge College for Health and Social Care students on nursing careers
- Monica Hamill gave a talk at De Salis College talk for year 10 students on nursing careers
- Sharon Gowan joined the STEM careers event at Tolworth Girls School
- Prof Emma Hall, Dr Lisa Fox and Szeyi Ng hosted an interactive stand at the Careers evening at The Ashcombe School in Dorking

Establish and maintain productive partnerships:

- Kerry Evans, Sally Swift, David Vicente, George Skiadidas, Dr Dragomir Krastev, Prithika Sriharan, Sarah Hrebien, Kate Tourna and Katarzyna Tomczyk delivered a Breast Cancer now Fundraising tour
- Dr Eva McGrowder and Elizabeth Bancroft gave a webinar on Men's Health & Research with the NIHR CRN Yorkshire & Humber Ethnic Minority Research Inclusion (EMRI) group
- Dr Abigail Bloy spoke at the Imperial College Science Communications Careers Information Sessions
- Dr Eva McGrowder spoke at the NIHR Clinical Research Network-South London Annual Research Forum in St Thomas Hospital
- Kerry Evans and over 20 members of staff from the Division of Breast Cancer Research delivered the Breast Cancer Now Challengers Wall event for supporters
- Dr Mariana Campos and Dr George Seed hosted an interactive stand on genomics at The Royal Institution's For Your Inspiration event
- Alexia Martin, Dr Mariana Campos, Alisa Crisp, Henry French, Chloe Bennett, Dr Laura Boothman, Dr Becky Cook, Dr Jon Wilkinson, Richard Hoey, Saira Sakalas, Dr Matthew Jessop, Prof Nick James, Alex Carroll, Hira Ale, Dr Ross Scrimgeour, Dr Valentina Gifford and Hannah Joyce joined an open evening for parliamentarians
- Breast Cancer labs ran monthly tours for supporter

Appendix 2

Reflecting on 2021-2022

The Public Engagement team aims to provide a yearly report on their public engagement activities. However, due to challenging circumstances, such as staff turnover, we were unable to complete the annual report for 2021-2022. Here is a brief overview of some of the activities during that period.

In 2021-2022, the team organised 40 public engagement events, which were attended by a total of 2,700 members of the public. Around 70 staff and students contributed their time to these events, totalling 300 hours.

Some of the highlights of the year included:

- The ICR research was showcased in the "Cancer Revolution: science, innovation and Hope" exhibition at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester and the Science Museum in London. The exhibition featured a range of ICR research, from breakthroughs of the last few decades that have already transformed cancer treatment to the cutting-edge research of today seeking to understand and overcome cancer evolution.
- Adapting to the new normal, the team organised a series of online career events for local students, where our researchers shared their research and career journeys with around 60 sixth formers. The interactive sessions aimed to inspire students to pursue careers in cancer research and included quiz elements and an extended Q&A to give the students a chance to engage with the researchers. A video lab tour was also provided, allowing students to step inside our labs virtually and see where we work.
- Our researchers also participated in several events at local schools, including delivering presentations on their journey into cancer research, producing videos showcasing their day-to-day experiments in the lab, speaking about their experience as women in STEM, and joining speed networking sessions where students interviewed them about their roles.
- Lastly, in Chelsea, our researchers joined The Great Exhibition Road, where they discussed the different models used in cancer research, including tumour organoids, which are mini replicas of

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- a patient's tumours. In Sutton, staff and students joined the Sutton Science Fair, where they extracted DNA from strawberries with more than 200 young local people.

While not comprehensive, we hope this overview gives a sense of the public engagement efforts from 2021-2022.