

# **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

**June 2020**

## **OUR VISION**

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Engaging with partners outside Durham University and academia is crucial to achieving the overarching aspirations of the Institute for Medical Humanities. We believe that engagement is not an add-on or afterthought, but a means to doing the best possible research, with the greatest real-world impact.

We aspire to be the world-leaders in the study of human experience that is variously marginalised, difficult, unspeakable, unacknowledged, invisible and hidden. The people whose experience we seek to uncover are not just the subjects of our research. Along with those who support, care for, treat and advocate for them, they are partners in our research.

We are also committed to sharing the experiences which underpin these hidden health problems, bringing them into clearer focus and influencing the wider conversation, public perceptions, policy and practice which surround them.

Our overarching vision for engagement in IMH is that within 10 years:

- As far as possible, all research conducted within IMH includes genuine engagement with external stakeholders throughout the research cycle
- Engagement is valued by researchers, both as a tool for improving and enriching their research, and as a means to develop themselves and their careers
- Research generated within IMH is known and used by people who can benefit from it, particularly people with lived experience of the conditions studied, and healthcare and allied professionals
- Medical humanities perspectives are increasingly respected by and incorporated into health and disease research methodologies, funding calls, policy and practice

## **OUR OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-2024**

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Achieving our vision will take time. In the short to medium term we will focus on the following:

- Supporting researchers to develop their skills and to embed engagement in their research plans
- Building external partnerships at Institute level, and facilitating the development of collaborative partnerships at project and individual levels
- Learning from our partners to ensure that our work is genuinely collaborative, ethically grounded, and mutually beneficial
- Consulting with stakeholders to ensure that our contributions to debates on contemporary health and inclusion issues are well-informed and not tokenistic

## WHAT WE WILL DO

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- Improve co-ordination of engagement activities across the Institute by appointing a specialist Research and Engagement Manager and investing in her professional development
- Build engagement capacity and skills amongst our staff and postgraduate students by creating a training and development programme and funding an external placement scheme
- Help our researchers carry out engagement activities through tailored support and mentoring by the Research and Engagement Manager, co-ordination of opportunities and seedcorn funding
- Learn from our non-academic partners, welcoming their input and constructive criticism, by establishing a Consultation Group and funding a series of residencies
- Increase the use of our research outside academia by identifying and building relationships with key partners influential in health research policy and practice
- Reflect on and learn from our experiences by evaluating all activities and carrying out an annual self-assessment
- Champion our engagement activities by sharing good practice, encouraging learning, celebrating success, and contributing pro-actively to the wider dialogue around engagement both within Durham University and beyond

## HOW WE WILL KNOW IF WE'VE DONE THESE THINGS

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We will continually monitor our activities, collecting key metrics and evidence such as case studies, evaluation reports, outputs and feedback. We embrace reflective practice and welcome questions, comments, criticisms and (re)commendations from our staff, partners and colleagues. Where appropriate we will employ specialist evaluators to enhance and challenge our processes and assumptions.

Once a year we will carry out a more thorough self-assessment, reflection and planning exercise with an emphasis on progress and continuing improvement. As part of this we will evaluate our progress as an Institute using the NCCPE EDGE Tool. We will monitor staff progress using the relevant sections of the Vitae Researcher development framework (Domain D: Engagement, Influence and Impact).

### Contact

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