

## **Call for expressions of interest from early career researchers to join an Action Learning Set in support of the Health@Durham Strategy**

During the academic year 2021-22 the Wolfson Research Institute for Health and Wellbeing is delighted to be piloting a new initiative focused on developing external engagement experience, networking and peer support among a small cohort of early career researchers (ECRs) working in the broad area of health and wellbeing. We are inviting expressions of interest from ECRs to join an Action Learning Set, which will meet five times over the academic year. An Action Learning Set is a group of 6-8 people who meet regularly to help each other to learn from their experiences. A facilitator helps manage the process. The set is not a team as its focus is on the actions of the individuals within it rather than on a shared set of work objectives.

Through being involved, researchers will form a facilitated supportive peer group in which they will have the opportunity to connect with others from different academic disciplines to share ideas and develop plans for engaging with relevant stakeholder groups or individuals. The group will also include more experienced academic colleagues and relevant professional support staff, who will offer mentorship and practical guidance on developing connections and initiating and engaging in research related conversation with external partners. Involvement in the group is also an opportunity to act as an advocate for Durham's Health Strategy and raise the profile of Durham's broad base of health related research to external audiences.

We are looking for ECRs who may be undertaking research with current or future potential for knowledge exchange, involvement of stakeholders or impact, but who may benefit from support to develop their skills and awareness and understand different ways to engage in these activities. If successful, we would seek to expand this approach as a wider developmental offer in future years. The first cohort therefore has the opportunity to help shape what could become an exciting innovation in improving research culture going forwards.

The programme of facilitated discussions will be structured enough to ensure continuity between sessions, while giving sufficient flexibility for participants to shape agendas in response to stakeholder discussions as they progress. A small amount of budget has been secured from the ESRC IAA for the group to access to help accelerate any potential collaborative activities with stakeholders that emerge as a result of discussions.

In applying, candidates will commit to these general principles:

- To form an inclusive, diverse, interdisciplinary group who are willing to learn together and share experience and expertise
- Focus on individual, group and institutional development – participants will agree to represent Health@Durham as well as individual aims and interests in external interactions
- Commitment to participation and completion of agreed actions
- Creating a safe space for open and honest discussion
- Willingness to collaborate and offer support to others in the group

Criteria:

- Candidates will hold a PhD

- Candidates will have research interests in the broad area of health from any of the four faculties and will be able to demonstrate a link between their research interests/ambitions and the Health@Durham strategy.
- Candidates should self-identify as 'Early Career Researchers'. While we are not rigidly defining 'early career', this programme is aimed at people who are at an early stage in their research careers, who see the potential for increasing their external awareness and engagement skills. The programme is open to Postdoctoral Researchers working on discrete projects, or permanent members of academic staff.
- Candidates must be employed by Durham University for the period of the programme (October 2021 – June 2022)
- In applying to the programme candidates will commit to the principles outlined above.
- In applying to the programme candidates will commit to attending all of the meetings with the proviso that every effort will be made to schedule meetings around participants' other commitments of meetings.

Expressions of interest can be made via [this short form](#)