

Research Councils UK

Public Engagement with Research

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Research Councils UK (RCUK):

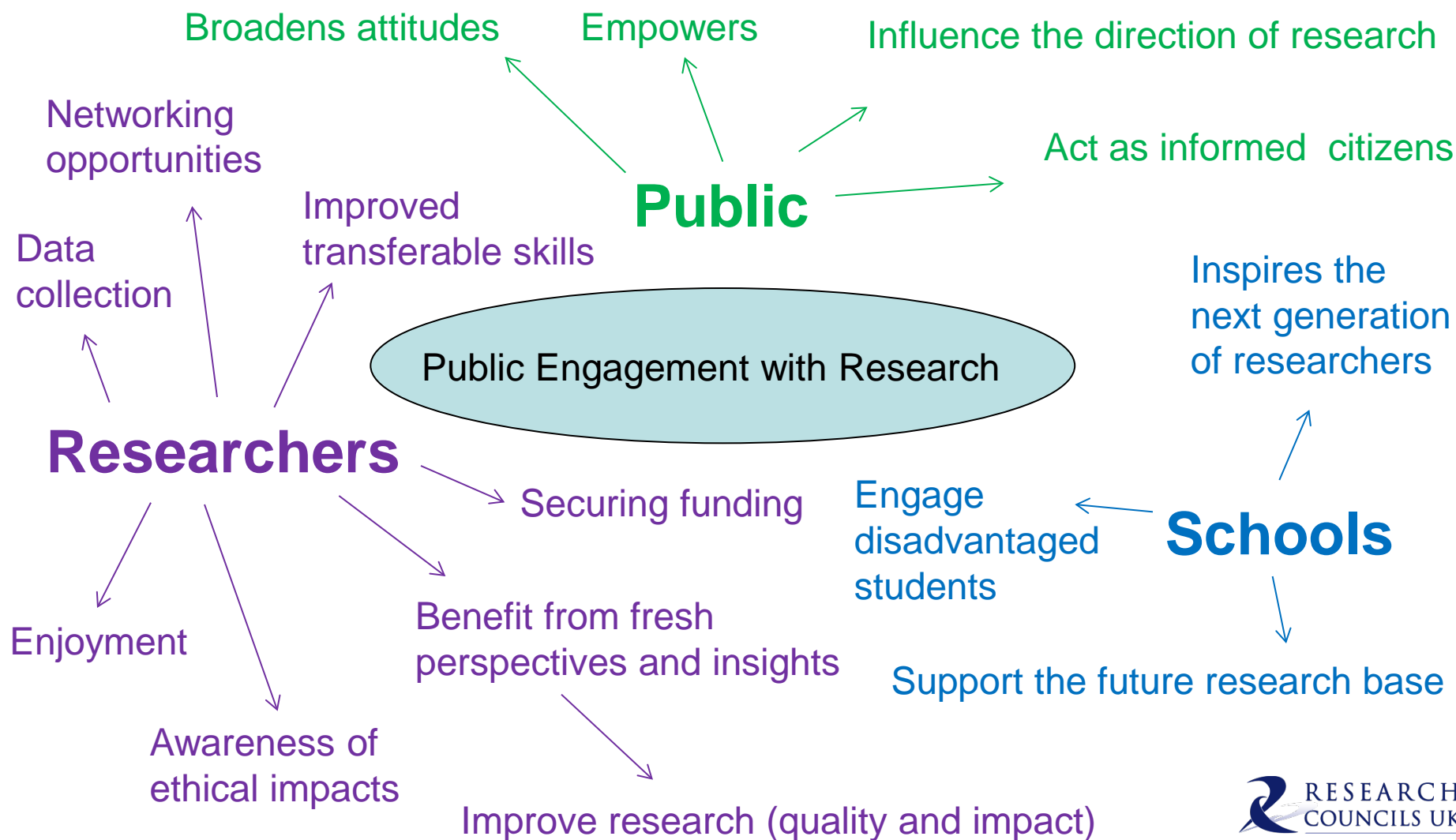


Our focus is on **excellence with impact**; we nurture the highest quality research, as judged by international peer review.

Our research achieves **impact** – the demonstrable contribution to society and the economy.

Public Engagement : “The myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public”. It is a two-way process.

What are the benefits of PER?



RCUK strategic aims:

The **RCUK PER** strategy:

- To encourage the research community to engage with the public
- To help public views to inform policies and research strategies
- To help secure a supply of future researchers and ensure they can act as informed citizens.

We believe that engaging the public with research helps empower people, broadens attitudes and ensures that the work of universities and research institutes is relevant to society and wider social concerns. We also believe that research can be enhanced through dialogue and coproduction.

We are seeking to embed public engagement throughout the research life cycle and Higher Education sector



Public Engagement is included within the **Council's Royal Charters** and in the **Mission and Statement of expectations on Economic and Social Impact**.

Working Collaboratively: Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

In 2010, UK funders of research joined together as signatories of the **Concordat for Public Engagement with Research** to ensure that public engagement is valued, recognised and supported across the research and higher education sectors.



Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

A set of principles drawn up by the Funders of Research in the UK



Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research – three years on

Over 50 signatories and supporters. Progress is regularly reviewed, and celebrated in *Inspiration to Engage*.

We will continue to work with the sector and other research funders to encourage wider adoption and implementation of the Concordat.

We will continue to review our own activities and direction to ensure up to date connectivity to societal and policy landscapes to allow us to best support the embedding of public engagement with research



Embracing structural and cultural change: Embedding and signposting PER across the sector

RCUK aim: Stimulating a reflexive and responsive research community that engages the public within the research process

- The **Beacons** for Public Engagement (2008–2011):
 - 6 university-based centres
 - Building capacity for PE through support, recognition and reward.
- The **Catalysts Initiative** (2012-2015);
 - **Eight universities** (including the University of Exeter) were awarded funding totalling £800,000 per year
 - Embed PER within policies, procedures and practices
 - Build on experience to develop best practice that recognises the two-way nature of PER
 - Secure a step change in the way PER is recognised and rewarded throughout the HE sector
 - Coordination and support was provided by the **National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)**.

Embracing structural and cultural change: The University of Exeter Catalyst

Exeter Catalyst aim: *“To enable communities and external organisations to engage in, and co-create, research with academic staff and students”*

- Engaged research features as a key theme in the new *Research and Innovation Strategy* (2015-20).
- Formal changes to governance; creation of Operational Board for oversight of PER and the Impact and Engaged Research Network.
- > 250 researchers have had one-to-one support.
- Catalyst project team had input into > 50 research bids and provided 26 PER “seed funds”
- PER training opportunities.
- PE valued (e.g. promotion criteria) and created awards.
- Considered financial and administrative changes that might support and facilitate PER.
- Committed to future PER funding.



Embracing structural and cultural change: The University of Exeter Catalyst

“The Exeter Catalyst has been instrumental in facilitating a profound change in culture with respect to public engagement with research across the University of Exeter”.

“The Exeter Catalyst has benefitted from being part of the Catalyst network, and the wider network of institutions seeking to achieve culture change for PER. There is no question that the combination of being part of these networks, and having the endorsement of the RCUK “brand” has helped to make more rapid progress than might otherwise have been able to achieve.”



University of Exeter Catalyst final report

Embracing structural and cultural change: Catalyst Seed Fund and the NCCPE

- **Catalysts Seed Fund** (2015-2016); 10 “seed” Catalysts
- The **National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)**



The screenshot shows the NCCPE website homepage. At the top left is the NCCPE logo with the text 'national co-ordinating centre for public engagement'. To the right is the tagline 'We help universities engage with the public' and a search bar. Below this is a navigation menu with links: HOME, WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?, WHY DOES IT MATTER?, HOW TO DO IT, HOW TO SUPPORT IT, HOW WE CAN HELP, and ABOUT US. The main content area features a large banner image of four people sitting on grass, with the text 'Universities across the UK are signing up to our manifesto for public engagement' and a 'Find out why' button. To the right of the banner are three boxes: 'Are you new to this?' with a link to 'Easy ways to get started with public engagement', 'How to engage' with a link to 'We've created a toolkit for people who want to engage the public', and 'Ways we can help' with links to 'Join our public engagers' network' and 'Ask us for advice'. Below the banner is a section titled 'Universities already signed up include:' featuring the UWE Bristol logo. To the right of this is a section titled 'The NCCPE is part of the Beacons for Public Engagement' with a link to 'We also run vinspired students'. At the bottom right is a 'Sign up for our newsletter' section with an email input field and a 'Sign up' button. The footer includes a 'Latest' section.

- Managing and co-ordinating initiatives
- EDGE tool
- PE training and resources
- Annual Engage conference

Supporting Researchers: Public Engagement in *Pathways to Impact*

- Research funding proposals to the Councils now include a statement on the potential economic and social impact that research will make, via a ***Pathway to Impact*** statement
- Public engagement activities are regarded as pathways to impact
- Researchers can also request resources to fund these PE activities
- PE activities can happen throughout the course of a research grant
- Allows researchers to explore potential benefits of PER from the outset
- This will help embed public engagement with both researchers and their host institutions

Supporting researchers? Public Engagement in Pathways to Impact



Press and Media

Press Briefings

Press briefing: People and Skills

Press briefing: Research and Business

Case studies: Productive economy

Case studies: Healthy society

Case studies: Sustainable world

Case studies: International Activities

Case studies: Pathways to Impact

Policy

Business

Voluntary and Charitable

Public Engagement

Case Studies: Pathways to Impact

Research Councils UK (RCUK) continue to work with our research communities to develop our guidance for Pathways to Impact. We encourage researchers to be actively involved in thinking about how they will achieve excellence with impact and to explore pathways for realising the impact of their research.

The case studies provide personal accounts from RCUK funded researchers in regards to their approaches and experiences of Pathways to Impact. The case studies also provide guidance, top tips and best practice for helping researchers to realise the impact of their research.

A common top tip included in the case studies is avoiding potential pitfalls, such as focusing only on past activities instead of making sure the Pathway to Impact is forward looking and explores the potential impact of the current project. This should include milestones where appropriate (perhaps illustrating this with a GANNT time-line) and explaining the rationale behind activities. For example, if including an event, highlight who it's aimed at and why you have chosen that specific pathway towards impact.

Further information and guidance, including FAQ's and top tips, for Pathways to Impact is available [here](#).



Policy: Case studies which highlight researchers' interactions with government



Business: Case studies which highlight researchers fostering partnerships with business and industry



Voluntary and Charitable: Case studies where researchers have worked with partners in the third sector

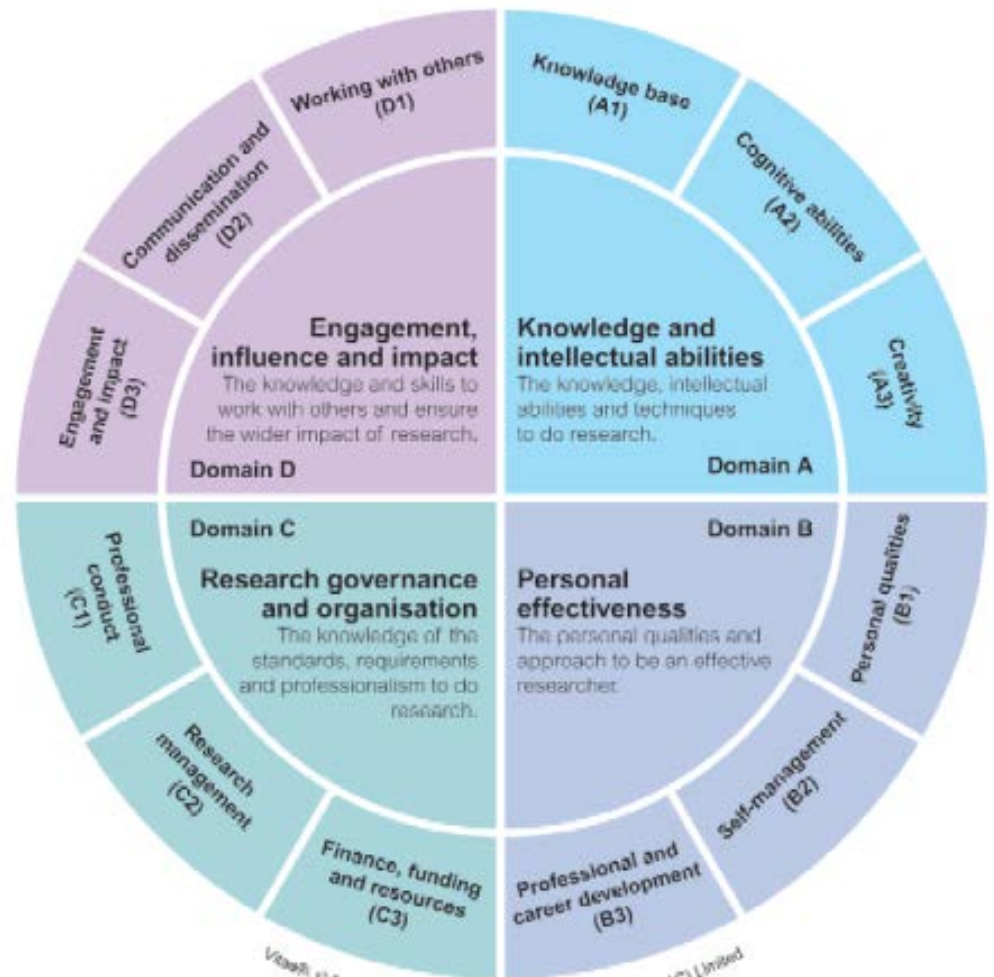


Public Engagement: Case studies which include engaging the public with research

Supporting Researchers: The Researcher Development Framework

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) has been developed by and for researchers working in higher education to enhance professional and career development.

The public engagement lens highlights how PE is part of the professional development of researchers – it provides an overview of the key knowledge, behaviours and attributes that can be acquired through, or used in public engagement activities and can be used to identify areas that you need to develop to become successful in public engagement.



Public Engagement and Exeter's Living Systems

MRC: Public Engagement in Science Activities - Seed Fund

To encourage and support engagement with the public and other stakeholders, funds are available to enable MRC-funded scientists to pilot new activities and develop innovative engagements.

MRC Festival of Medical Research 2016 Award – now closed

All MRC-funded units, centres and institutes participating in the MRC Festival of Medical Research 2016 are entitled to an award of up to £1500 to help cover activity costs.

BBSRC: Public engagement embedded within research grant processes

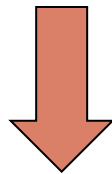
Science & Technology Facilities Council (STFC)

Provides a range of [funding support opens in new window](#) including small, local or 'pilot' projects promoting science in the STFC funded areas. Awards range from £500 to £10,000. Also available are large award grants of up to £100,000 for Public Engagement projects which have strong links with STFC's scientific research community.

RCUK Schools Programmes

RCUK aim: “To secure and sustain a supply of future researchers and enable the next generation to act as informed and involved citizens”

- Improve teaching and enrich students learning experiences
- Inspire young people (from all backgrounds/demographics) to become interest in research/research careers
- Improve the supply of skilled people to the research base



Ensure the prosperity/wellbeing of the UK economy
Ensure the next generation act as informed citizens



RCUK Schools Programmes: School-University Partnership Initiative

- 12 **SUPI partnerships** funded across the UK:
 - Aberystwyth University
 - University of Bristol
 - Cardiff University
 - University of East Anglia
 - **University of Exeter**
 - Imperial College
 - Lancaster University
 - The Open University
 - Queen's University Belfast
 - University of Southampton
 - University of Strathclyde
 - The University of Manchester
- £50K each per annum, with matched funding from the institution. Funding has now been extended to December 2016.
- **Aims:**
 - Create sustainable mechanisms for school-university engagement
 - Inspire the next generation of researchers by enhancing the curriculum
 - Reach students from a diversity of backgrounds and abilities
 - Provide researchers with opportunities and training to engage with school students and develop their skills as outlined in the Researcher

RCUK Schools Programmes: School-University Partnership Initiative

School-University Partnerships Initiative

■ Marieke Royle

School-University Partnerships Initiative introduces Cornish pupils to evolutionary research: a teacher's perspective

Mullion School is a small secondary school with 535 pupils, situated on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall. Its location presents our pupils with many opportunities to study their natural environment; however, being so remote can present challenges to accessing current scientific research.

In 2012, the University of Exeter received a School-University Partnerships Initiative (SUPPI) grant, funded by Research Councils UK (RCUK). The focus of this grant was to further develop links between the University and schools, and to give early career researchers experience in communicating their work by interacting with and inspiring budding scientists. Mullion School was named as the lead school in this grant and we have really appreciated this opportunity to improve our links with the University.

Firstly, we identified areas of overlap between the Key Stage 4 (age 14-16) syllabus and areas of expertise at the

University. Evolutionary biology was identified as one such area of overlap and, consequently, University staff ran workshops on this topic. These workshops have enabled pupils from Mullion and other Cornish schools to visit the University teaching labs for hands-on practical sessions investigating evolution. The study groups have brought evolutionary theory to life for the pupils, through sessions and experiments on comparative anatomy and by providing the opportunity to interact with scientists working in this area. Pupils can see that the theory they study in school can be applied to solving current scientific questions. Moreover, pupils also realise that not all scientists look like Einstein in a lab coat, which has helped to open pupils' minds to the possibility of working in scientific research.

The second aim of the project has been to try to introduce pupils to some of the exciting current research that is not within the remit of the National Curriculum. This takes the form of a biological science-based club, EcoSoc, which has been a great success. Liaison



Photo Credit: Richard Wrook

officers at the University have organised a wide range of sessions led by research scientists from all over the world and currently working at the University. Some of the sessions have included:

- Parental care in burying beetles;
- Evolution of camouflage in nightjar eggs;
- Investigating the effect of light pollution on turtle navigation;
- The albatross conservation project in South America;
- Research into Sudden Ash Die Back;
- The uses of classification for conservation, using shark egg cases found on local beaches;
- Animal behaviour research from the meerkat project in the Kalahari;
- How to set up a research expedition;
- The impact of invasive species on native flora and fauna; and
- The evolution of corvid intelligence.

The pupils really enjoy talking to the scientists and ask some unexpected and interesting questions. Indeed, there is now a list of young researchers who are keen to come out and run a session at EcoSoc, as they have heard that the questions can be particularly stimulating! Perhaps the best example of this was a session on studying the evolution of corvid intelligence by

- Universities operate different models.
- Provide geographically isolated schools with access to current scientific research.
- E.g. University of Exeter and lead school, Mullion School.
- Remote school, Lizard peninsular Cornwall
- Identified areas of overlap between research and curriculum.
- University-based workshops and extra-curricular clubs.



RCUK School programmes: Promoting careers in research



UK-wide Teacher CPD

Bringing Cutting Edge Science into the Classroom

State-of-the-art venues throughout the UK

Deepen teacher knowledge and bring the curriculum to life

CPD delivered to 12,000 teachers last year



Nuffield Research Placements

4-6 wk placements for Year 12 students

Undertake authentic research projects at universities, research institutes or in industry

RCUK help identify researchers



100

RCUK aim: “Enabling public views to inform policies and research strategies across Research Councils and the broader community”

-

Future direction of PER:

- Continued commitment to supporting PER
- Synthesising recent and emerging evidence to inform future policies and provisions
- Anticipate further work to embed public engagement within the research lifecycle and institutional structures, policies and procedures



Factors Affecting Public Engagement by Researchers

Conducted on behalf of a consortium of 15 UK research funders and Universities UK

wellcometrust


Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills


Department for
Employment
and Learning
www.delni.gov.uk

Cyngor Cylidlo Addysg
Uwch Cymru
Higher Education Funding
Council for Wales
hefcw

HIGHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL
hefce
FOR ENGLAND


RESEARCH
COUNCILS UK


Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education

 ROYAL
ACADEMY OF
ENGINEERING


Universities UK

 BRITISH
ACADEMY
for the humanities and social sciences

THE
ROYAL
SOCIETY

 The Academy of
Medical Sciences


The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

 Ymchwil Iechyd
a Gofal Cymru
Health and Care
Research Wales

 ROYAL SOCIETY
OF CHEMISTRY

 **NHS**
National Institute for
Health Research

Key findings/summary (1)

PE is prevalent : eight in ten researchers have done some PE in the last 12 months although activity often infrequent.

AHSS researchers are more active in and place higher value on PE than STEM researchers . Although clinical researchers are a notable exception.

Although little overall change in participation since 2006, there has been a shift in attitudes: PE is now more valued in the context of their role and there is increased appetite to get involved.

Inclination to engage declines when researchers feel their work is highly specialised, lacks wider application or when they are unwilling to take a public stance.

Age, seniority and experience are associated with increased participation and confidence in undertaking PE, though younger researchers are keen to do more.

Three-quarters of researchers perceive that they have a moral duty to engage.

Key findings/summary (2)

Many researchers feel that PE can add value/improve the quality of research although this viewpoint is much more prevalent among AHSS and clinical researchers than STEM.

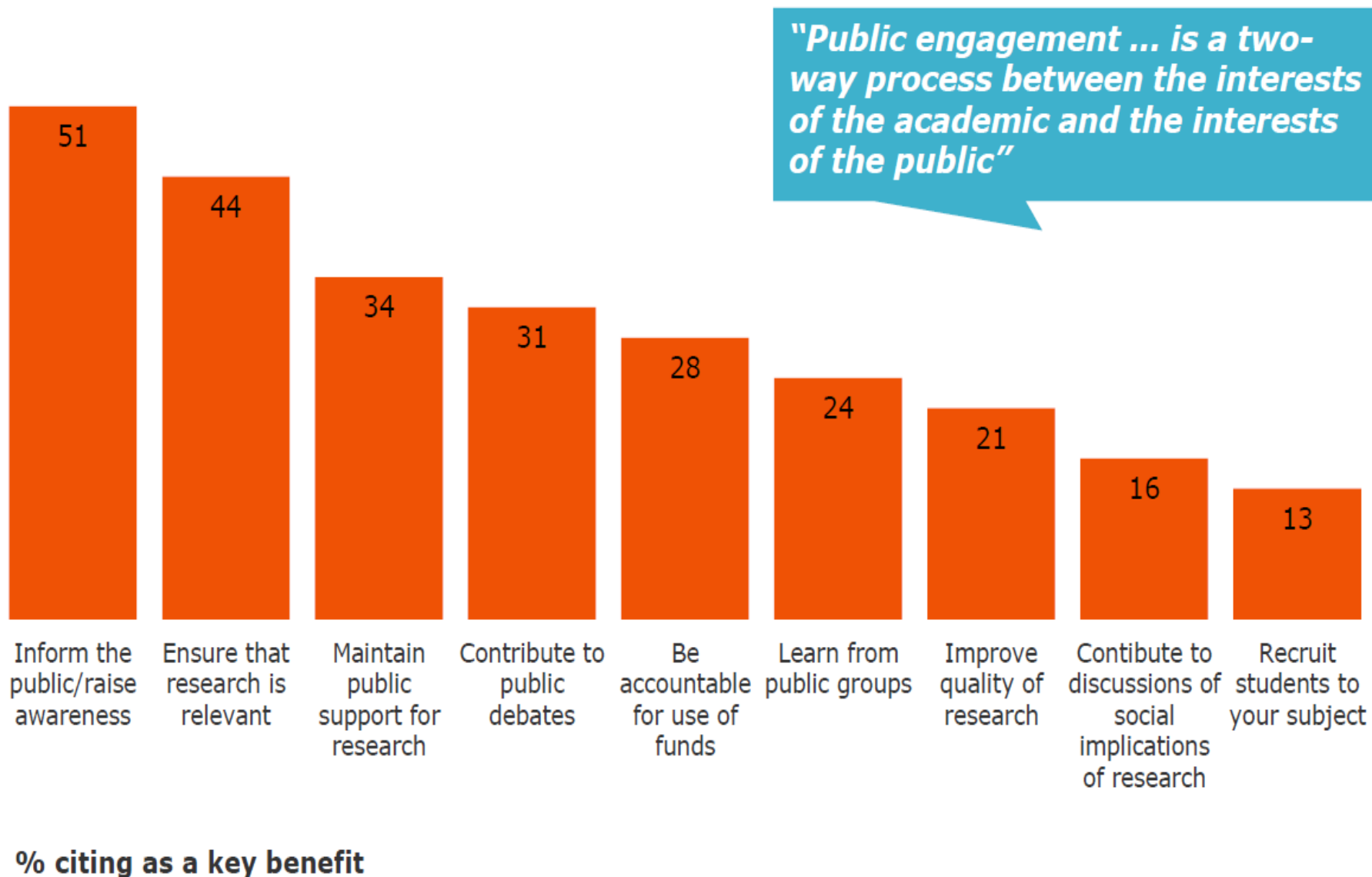
There is evidence of institutional culture change since 2006: researchers now feel better equipped and cite increases in extent and quality of PE over the past decade. STEM researchers are also more likely to feel that their institution and department are supportive. However take-up of training is not yet widespread.

Time is the key barrier – researchers feel they need to be relieved of other work to allow them to get more involved.

Researchers also cite a lack of opportunity to get involved, although enablers often feel they struggle with uptake.

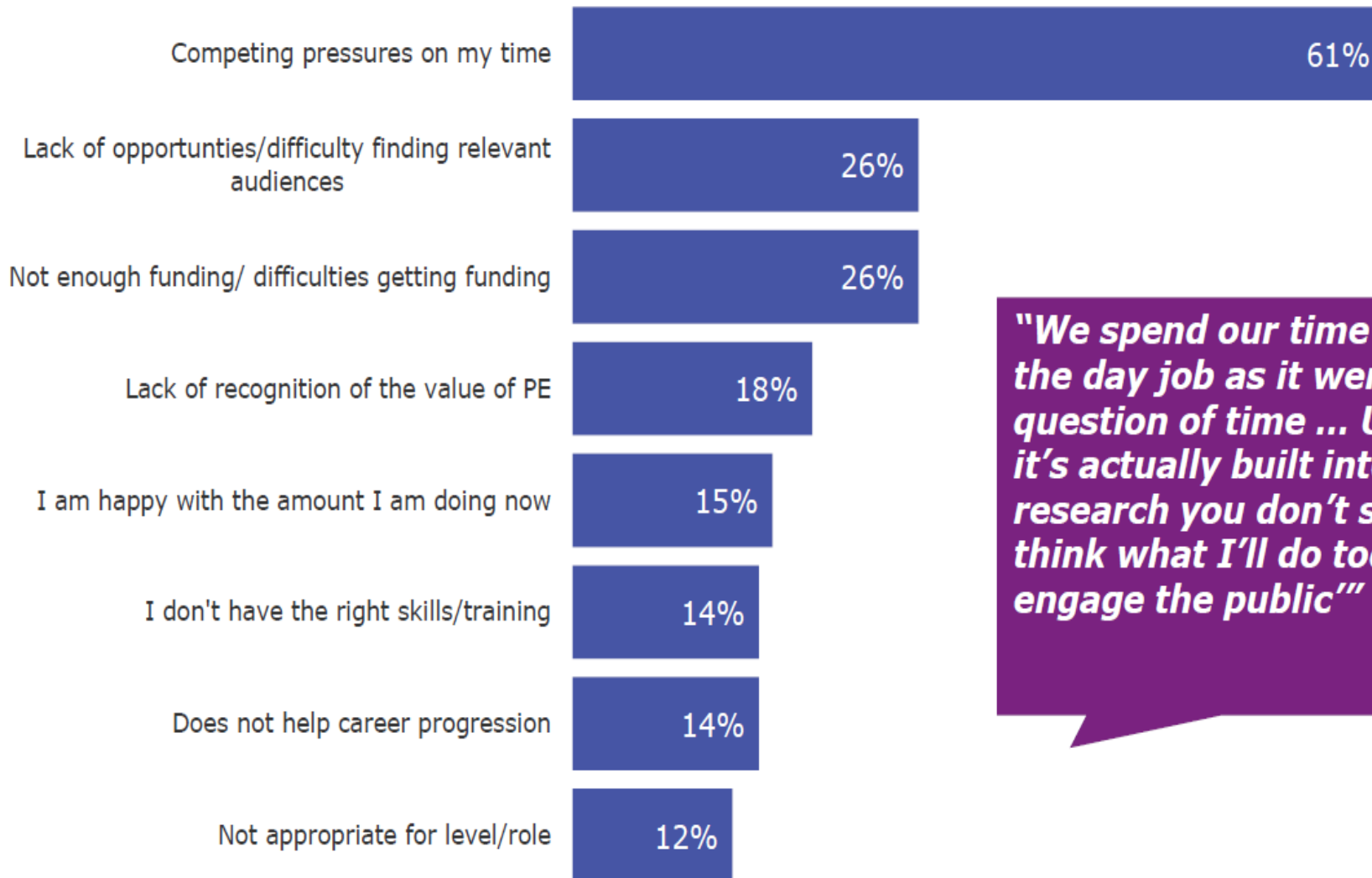
Although there is some evidence of reward structures in place, most researchers do not yet feel that PE is a route to career progression.

Raising awareness and ensuring wider relevance are considered the main benefits of PE in 2015



Key barrier is time, though lack of access to opportunities and funding also relevant

% of researchers citing as a key barrier to PE



"We spend our time doing the day job as it were. It's a question of time ... Unless it's actually built into the research you don't say – 'I think what I'll do today is engage the public'"

To conclude:

- We believe that not only do we have an obligation to engage, doing so can improve the quality of research and benefit both the economy and society
- We recognise not everyone feels this way...yet
- We believe that through
 - offering support to researchers to undertake public engagement
 - guidance and statements of our expectations around engagement to universities
 - funding projects to encourage culture change within institutions
 - and working with other research funders

We will help people recognise the value of public engagement.



Thank you for listening!

Any questions?

- **The RCUK Public Engagement with Research Strategy:**
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/publications/RCUKPERStrategy.pdf>
- **Factors Affecting Public Engagement by researchers survey:**
• <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/pe/persurvey/> and
www.wellcome.ac.uk/PERSurvey
- **The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement:**
<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/>
- **Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research:**
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/policy/perConcordat/>
- **Catalyst Seed Fund:** <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/scisoc/RCUKcatalystseedfundguidance.pdf>
- **Teacher CPD:** <https://www.sciencelearningcentres.org.uk/>

