



PPI IGNITE
NETWORK

IMPACT CASE STUDY



Embedding PPI into an Institutional Strategy: Future-Proofing Quality PPI

Who was involved?

- One PPI Ignite Network Site Lead
- One national partner representative
- One research funder representative
- Five PPI contributors
- Representatives from RCSI PPI in Research and Engagement Committees, including academic and professional staff and PhD students

Summary

The latest RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences Institutional Strategy 2023–2027 “Innovating for a Healthier Future” was launched in September 2023. RCSI Senior Management consulted with PPI Ignite Network members, PPI contributors, and other key stakeholders in its development, and as a result, PPI in research is strongly embedded in the strategy, with dedicated actions and milestones. This demonstrates institutional commitment to the expansion of PPI in RCSI research across the institution through an emphasis on education, training dissemination, and recognition. This strategic focus will ensure that PPI in research is regularly discussed and reviewed at the most senior level within the

University, which will in turn support the achievement of RCSI’s ambition to further deepen engagement and involvement with patients and the public.

Our work

The strategy was developed based on RCSI’s core values of respect, collaboration, scholarship and innovation, and the principles of quality, engagement, sustainability, and equality diversity and inclusion. The strategy consists of four primary themes underpinned by these values and principles.

Reflecting the emphasis on collaboration and engagement, two of the four themes, ‘Health and Societal Impact’ and ‘Research and Innovation’ specifically reference PPI in their descriptors, authored by the RCSI President and the Vice Chancellor/Registrar. This is translated to a dedicated action under the Health and Societal Impact theme: *Grow engagement and involvement with patients, the public and our community*, and associated milestones.



Strategy consultative lunch with PPI contributors, patient partners and patient organisations, RCSI staff and students, and a research funder representative

PPI is also cross-referenced in an action under the Research and Innovation theme: *Expand our research capability, capacity, and impact through collaboration*. The prominence of PPI in research in this core university document reflects the institutional commitment to growing PPI in research.

The Strategy's ambition and wording have been carefully considered, and result from an in-depth consultation process. Building on RCSI's longstanding recognition of the value of stakeholder perspectives and endeavor to involve patients and the public more in research and education through PPI, the Office of the Vice Chancellor organized a formal consultation. This included a diverse group of patients and the public, identified by the PPI ignite Network Site Lead and colleagues, who had previously partnered with RCSI staff.

Representatives from the key stakeholder groups such as funders and research charities were also invited to participate, alongside staff responsible for PPI in

research and education and engaged research and learning and senior management team (SMT) representatives.

A draft strategy was circulated to the group in advance of a working lunch held at RCSI where feedback on the draft was sought and participants' perspectives on how RCSI could enhance patient and public involvement and engagement were openly shared and discussed. Participants' insight during the consultation, including through email follow-up, were incorporated into the final strategy, which emphasizes the important role of representative organisations, charities, patients and the public across the University's research, education and service activities.



Our impact

Critical reflection on positioning of PPI in research within the University structure

RCSI's previous strategy (2018–2023) had outlined the University's intent to *Deepen Patient Engagement* (Action 13) across research and education at RCSI, leading initially to the establishment of a single Patient Engagement Working Group that incorporated education, research and outreach. During the strategy lifetime, RCSI joined the PPI Ignite Network, led by the Site lead, and a new Director of International Engagement and External Relations was also appointed, who assumed responsibility for Engagement activities at RCSI.

Through the new strategy consultation process, all stakeholders had the opportunity to critically reflect on the governance and operational structures that had developed and identify areas for synergy and streamlining. The potential to improve alignment between PPI and Engaged Research was recognized as a key opportunity. Consequently, the PPI Ignite Network Site Lead was invited to chair the RCSI Engaged Research Committee. This appointment empowered the Network's Site Lead to shape and take ownership of all strategy milestones concerning PPI and Engaged Research – an influential role which further reflects the determination to embed PPI within the University's activities.

Reinforced institutional commitment to involving patients and the public

The strategy development process demonstrates RCSI's commitment to not only PPI in research, but also to involving patients, the public, and representative organisations in strategic decision-making about PPI. With PPI highlighted so clearly in the new strategy, RCSI's recognition of the critical importance of growing involvement and engagement with patients for research and society is evident.

This in-depth review, consultation and development process, leading to strong commitments to PPI in the strategy, has significantly increased visibility and renewed awareness of and commitment to PPI in research at the most senior levels of the institution, even before the strategy was officially launched. This is reflected in the support provided by the senior management team for the PPI Ignite Network for key events and initiatives, such as the Public Advisory Board (PAB) meeting hosted at RCSI in October 2023, where the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research & Innovation attended to welcome attendees. Support has been provided for several other activities such as expanding the PPI and Engaged Research Awards, the inaugural Public/Patient Partner in Research Excellence award and expanding the inclusion of PPI at the annual RCSI Research Day. All serve to promote quality and participation in PPI by researchers at all levels.

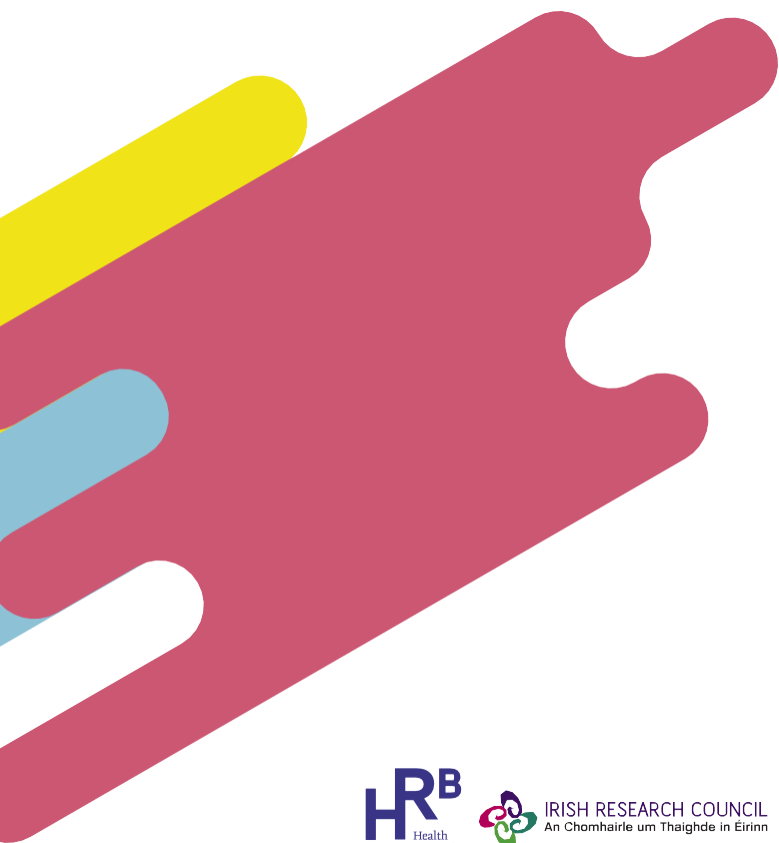
Quarterly milestone reporting to senior management via the Office of the Vice Chancellor, and an annual presentation and formal report ensure that progress with PPI is regularly shared and showcased with institutional leadership and can inform decision making. Having PPI front and centre in the University's plans for the next five years highlights the genuine commitment at the highest level to further embedding and expanding the role of PPI in research across the institution

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“The RCSI strategy has been thoughtfully crafted to set the tone and the agenda for the organisation in the years ahead. What shines out from it is the strong focus on engaging and involving patients, service users and the wider public to accomplish its aims. It's evident that the strategy wasn't formulated solely to communicate with stakeholders, but rather involved direct input from patients and the public in shaping its vision. Today is an embodiment of putting that strategy into action.”

Dr Avril Kennan, HRCI, to the RCSI Strategy development, speaking at the RCSI PPI knowledge Exchange event, March 2024



IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
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