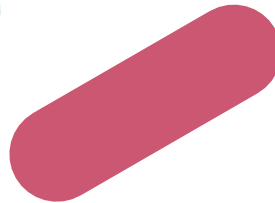




**PPI** IGNITE  
NETWORK

# IMPACT CASE STUDY



## PPI Shared Learning Groups - Sharing knowledge, enhancing practice

### Who was involved?

- Three PPI Ignite Network Lead Sites

#### Attendees from

- Staff and postgraduate students from Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in Ireland, the UK, the EU, the US and South America
- PPI Ignite Network national and local partners
- Staff and members of patient and community organisations
- PPI contributors, patients and members of the public
- Staff from the health services and government departments

### Summary

Three well-established Network Shared Learning Groups (SLGs) bring together people from different backgrounds, with different perspectives, levels of knowledge and PPI experience to share PPI knowledge, skills and expertise. The SLGs are open spaces where all attendees can engage in informal learning and reflect on the challenges and complexities of good quality PPI approaches. The regular online meetings create a supportive working environment, where no one form of

knowledge is privileged above others and people facing similar challenges can ask questions in a safe space. To date, the SLGs have provided an effective forum for knowledge exchange, impacting the quality of PPI approaches across the national research ecosystem and beyond. The SLGs have provided a unique opportunity to develop meaningful collaborations between researchers across different, and often divergent, disciplines, and between researchers and PPI contributors. The SLGs have also inspired a variety of novel events and similar initiatives within academia and in wider circles.

### Our work

The well-established Network Shared Learning Groups (SLGs) are facilitated online, typically monthly. Each SLG is organized and facilitated by a Lead Site programme manager. These Shared Learning Groups are free, open to all, and additionally, provide an excellent opportunity to make connections with people with similar interests.



Attendees at the workshop in Barretstown share their knowledge and experience about the ethical involvement of children and young people.

Each SLG has a different focus:

- PPI with Children and Young People SLG, led by the PPI Ignite Network @ DCU
- PPI Facilitation Skills, led by the PPI Ignite Network @ University of Galway
- PhD research, led by PPI Ignite Network @ UCC

Researchers and academics, PhD scholars, PPI contributors, patients and members of the public, as well as representatives from national and local partners, research funders and public sector agencies attend. Although most members are from across Ireland, there is a significant interest from the UK, Belgium, Finland, Spain and other EU countries, as well as some individuals from the US and South America. The SLG email distribution lists reach 350 people, there have been 40 sessions to date, with attendance ranging from mid-teens to over 70 at individual SLG meetings.

These groups facilitate debate, discussion and reflection on best practice to improve the quality of PPI in research. Knowledge, tips, advice, resources and solutions to challenges are shared. The SLGs are conducted in a relaxed format, with comments and questions from all attendees welcomed, contributing to the development of a knowledge-sharing culture.

## Our impact

### Brokering knowledge exchange

The SLGs each bring together people with different forms of knowledge, derived from their academic, professional and/or lived experience of health conditions, as well as PhD scholars, early career researchers and members of the public new to PPI, who come together to listen to each other and to learn from each other. In this bottom-up, peer learning process, the knowledge and experience shared inform diversity of PPI



“I’m starting to use PPI in my research practice and much of what I know about it comes from the Shared Learning Group. I’m taking note from other people’s experience with ethics, participant acknowledgement, debriefing when project ends and a lot of bits and pieces.”

**Member of the Children and Young People SLG**

approaches, often sparking innovation and inspiring creativity among attendees. The SLGs complement the Network’s Online Hub by sharing links to valuable resources.

New collaborations are also evolving from the SLGs, arising from such knowledge exchange. For example, arising from the SLG focused on PPI with Children and Young People, two lead sites (DCU and UCD), national partner Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, and DCU’s local partner Barretstown collaborated to organize a sold-out workshop attended by a diverse group, including practitioners working in the social care system, care givers, young PPI contributors, senior academics and the Ombudsman for Children. Work is underway to co-design a resource for ethical practice in children and young people’s involvement in research, drawing on the wide, varied and valuable expertise and knowledge shared by workshop attendees through a series of roundtable discussions.

**Creating a supportive environment & strengthening relationships**

The SLGs bring together people who face similar challenges, where simple and advanced questions are equally welcomed, creating non-judgmental learning communities where titles are left at the

door. The SLGs are equally helpful for PhD scholars and early career researchers, as for more experienced researchers, new to the practice of PPI who can learn quickly from the expertise of those around them. For example, information is shared on the different administrative processes used across HEIs and patient organisations to address some of the barriers to meaningful involvement. Attendees can also tease out the benefits and challenges of different PPI approaches, with the perspectives of all stakeholders heard and considered. In each SLG, a growing network of people has been cultivated, keen to improve the quality of their own PPI work and happy to share their expertise to help others improve also.

**Inspiring new outputs and events**

Inspired by the existing SLGs as inclusive communities of practice and research, the PPI Ignite Network @ UL, working with the Network’s international partner, the International Collaboration for Participatory Research (ICPHR), established a virtual international learning network aimed at supporting researchers and community groups conducting Participatory Health Research (PHR) with refugees and migrants. This SLG is now incorporated into the national PPI suite of SLGs, promoted through the national PPI Network, and open to all who register to attend.

During the National PPI Festival 2023, a seminar series, titled ‘Ignite Insight’, was led by PhD students, for PhD students, exploring PPI topics of interest to them. The idea for this series was sparked at the PhD SLG and the series reached many PhD scholars new to PPI, encouraging more knowledge brokerage and facilitating new collaborations. Close to 200 people joined the 8 Ignite Insight events, 4 new PPI resources were created, and to date, approximately 130 people viewed recordings of the three events.

Such progress highlights the impact of the Network’s Shared Learning Groups, and points to the potential for long-term impact across Ireland’s research community going forward.



“The Shared Learning Group is invaluable in showing patients that “Your voice matters”. For many who attend there is a plan to be proactive in the engagement and it is exciting to meet others. As someone who was in the healthcare system, this evaluation to include everyone is a wonderful development. Technology can be used to reach groups that may have been excluded previously. Online meetings are very useful.”

**Lorraine Lally, member of the Facilitation Skills SLG**

“The PhD SLG meetings have significantly enriched my experience of learning to conduct PPI in my PhD research and give me important networking opportunities. It’s a space where knowledge exchange thrives, every question is valued, and support is abundant, encouraging us all to learn from each other. This supportive atmosphere has not only propelled my personal development but also guided my academic and future professional trajectory.”

**Paula Leocadio, UCC, member of the PhD SLG**