

INSPIRE Portsmouth for the MRC

Integrating Support for Public Involvement in Research at Portsmouth for the Medical Research Council

Drahota, A., Exell, T., Knight, S., Machuca Vargas, C. University of Portsmouth
Ash, J., Burnett, A., Cooper, G., Patel, M., Seymour, C. Tobias, J. Public Partners

Introduction

Research can address health inequalities, for example faced by people living in rural and coastal communities. However, to do this well, researchers need to work with people from underserved communities from the outset, to establish the issues that most concern them, how to make research inclusive, and how to plan research in the most effective way.

Researchers can face barriers when attempting to work with people and communities in a meaningful way at the proposal-writing stage of research development, especially when they have limited resources to invest in these activities.

The 'INSPIRE Portsmouth for the MRC' funding scheme seeks to address this problem by resourcing public involvement activities at the proposal-development stage of funding applications to be submitted to the Medical Research Council.

Objectives

Our funding scheme has four objectives:

- 1) To support the development of 6-10 MRC grant applications aligned with discovery and translational research priorities by facilitating researchers to develop, plan, and deliver activities with public contributors.
- 2) To enhance our research culture by further embedding the UK Standards for Public Involvement across our research activities.
- 3) To support ongoing improvement in our public involvement activities and infrastructure, through training, review, and feedback.
- 4) Increase opportunities for community members to be involved in research.

Impact – What if it works?

This scheme has the potential to support Wessex-based research, which:

- Asks meaningful research questions that tackle the most pressing issues facing our coastal and rural communities.
- Provides meaningful opportunities for public partners to contribute to research, in ways that values their time and contributions.
- Enhances the personal development of researchers to support them in working with people and communities in meaningful ways.
- Boosts research funding to the region for Medical Research Council projects in discovery and translational research.
- Covers various topics, depending on who applies for the funds and their areas of interest, including research that leads to earlier diagnosis, or development of new therapies, for example.
- Benefits society, industry, and future research directions by addressing the most impactful questions and closing the gaps in health inequalities.

Acknowledgements

This scheme is funded by the Medical Research Council (UKRI3199). We thank Wessex Health Partners for helping to promote this scheme, and the Wessex SPIRE network of public involvement leads, and INSPIRE Portsmouth public network for helping to shape the scheme support files.

Methods

This is an open funding scheme, and we are welcoming applications (submitted via an online form)!

There will be *up to* three application rounds:

- The first deadline is: **1st May 2026**.
- All applications require a University of Portsmouth collaborator, with Wessex-wide collaborative bids encouraged.
- Apply for up to £800 to fund public involvement.

Apply early to maximise the amount of time you will have to use the funds and increase your chances of success.

Applications will be assessed by a panel of **public involvement members**, who are supporting the scheme and making funding decisions. Successful applicants will be invited to attend at least one panel meeting and the end-of-programme celebration event.

A seminar series is also available to all.

How to get involved

We are at the beginning of our journey. To get involved please visit our scheme web pages available here:

<https://sites.google.com/port.ac.uk/inspireportsmouth>



Medical
Research
Council



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH