

# HSC R&D Division Final Report

## ***PPI in Research Small Grant Scheme***

***Updated March 2026***

*Reports should be submitted via electronic copy to HSC R&D Division within 6 weeks of the request. The report should be completed on the attached form in Arial 11. Please extend boxes as required. Please adhere to any word limits. These reports may be subject to external peer review. Details from the Report may be placed on the HSC R&D Division website and shared with appropriate key stakeholders or members of the public.*

## HSC R&D Division Award Details

<b>HSC R&amp;D File Reference</b>	STL/5562/19
<b>HSC R&amp;D Funding Scheme</b>	PPI in Research Support - Small Grant Scheme
<b>Project Title</b>	Making Science Accessible: Supporting Patient and Public Involvement in Research and Research Communication
<b>Award Holder Name (Employer)</b>	Dr Lauren McKenna (Queen's University Belfast)
<b>Host Organisation</b>	Queen's University Belfast
<b>Award Duration</b>	
<b>Award Start Date</b>	25.02.26
<b>Award End Date</b>	30.04.26

## Signature

<b>Award Holder Signature:</b>	
	<b>Date: 25/06/2026</b>

# Evidence Brief for PPI in Research Small Grant Scheme

(2 pages: which may be used for dissemination by HSC R&D Division)

<p><b>Why did we start?</b></p> <p>(The purpose and need for the PPI initiative)</p>	<p>The purpose of this initiative was to bring together cancer researchers and people affected by cancer at the All-Ireland 2026 Annual Meeting of the Irish Association for Cancer Research (IACR) in Galway, providing an opportunity for researchers and PPI members to meet, exchange perspectives, and foster relationships that support future research collaboration. Within the cancer research community, and particularly among early-career and basic biomedical researchers, who make up the majority of IACR attendees, there is often limited opportunity or confidence to engage meaningfully with patients and the public. This initiative aimed to address that gap by embedding PPI activity throughout the conference programme.</p>
<p><b>What did we do?</b></p> <p>(Please comment on how the <a href="#">UK Standards for Public Involvement</a> guided your plans and what you did)</p>	<p>We funded PPI representatives from Northern Ireland to travel to Galway and take part across the three-day conference, supplemented by additional PPI representatives recruited through the IACR PPI Council and partner organisations. PPI involvement spanned multiple strands of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A panel discussion and workshop on the drivers and outcomes of public and stakeholder engagement, including round-table discussions where PPI members helped attendees appraise media coverage of health and cancer research</li> <li>• Judging of the Patrick Johnston Lay Posters</li> <li>• Judging of the Patrick Johnston Lay Presentations finalists, chaired by a PPI member with a Q&amp;A session</li> <li>• Lay summary judging of scientific posters throughout the conference</li> <li>• A PPI stand, staffed on a rotating basis</li> <li>• A networking session bringing together junior and senior researchers with PPI partners</li> </ul> <p>This reflected the UK Standards for Public Involvement, particularly around <i>Inclusive Opportunities</i> (removing financial and practical barriers to travel and participation), <i>Working Together</i> (embedding PPI partners as co-judges, panel members, and table facilitators).</p>
<p><b>What did we achieve?</b></p> <p>(Please describe any outputs and the short and longer-term impacts of this initiative)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of new, and strengthening of existing, partnerships between cancer researchers and PPI representatives</li> <li>• Feedback from both PPI representatives following the meeting to guide future PPI activities.</li> <li>• A dedicated section on the PPI experiences, reflections, and impact of the conference, within the conference publication that is written after the conference and published in <i>Cancers</i>.</li> <li>• Improved alignment between patient needs and the research priorities of conference attendees</li> <li>• Increased accessibility of conference talks and sessions, given the growing attendance and involvement of PPI members</li> <li>• A strengthened sense of ownership among PPI members within the annual conference, leading to enhanced collaboration, and sustained involvement</li> <li>• Improved communication of research findings for lay audiences, particularly among early career researchers</li> <li>• Greater awareness and understanding of the importance and value of PPI among both new and returning conference attendees</li> </ul>

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<p><b>What should be done now?</b></p> <p>(Practice/Policy Implications and/or Recommendations for PPI in HSC Research)</p>	<p>Based on this initiative, we would recommend embedding PPI involvement across the full duration of a conference rather than a single session, to allow more organic and sustained interaction between researchers and PPI partners. Additionally, ensuring sufficient PPI capacity so representatives are not overstretched across concurrent activities. Lastly, continuing to fund travel and accommodation costs, as removing this financial barrier was central to enabling participation from PPI members from NI who would not otherwise have been able to attend.</p>
<p>What do you feel has been the <b>most significant impact</b> of being awarded the PPI in Research Small Grant?</p>	<p>The most significant impact has been that, because of this grant we had enough PPI representatives to take on substantive roles within the conference, including judging scientific and lay posters, judging presentations, and chairing sessions. Without this funding, we would not have had sufficient PPI member capacity to fill these roles, which should always include the PPI member voice.</p>
<p>Do you have any <b>'lessons learned'</b> from your PPI experiences during your award that would serve as useful learning for others in the future?</p>	<p>Clear communication is essential, particularly given how busy conferences can be for everyone involved. Planning and confirming arrangements with PPI representatives with as much notice as possible helps ensure information is shared in a timely manner and reduces stress, and last-minute coordination issues.</p>