Our strategy for engaging with society

2020–2021
SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT AT IMPERIAL

As a university we are keen to make our work accessible, relevant and responsive to the needs and insights of society. I am delighted to be sharing our latest strategy document, which lays out how we aim to achieve this.

As a College champion for Societal Engagement, it has been truly fantastic to see our students, staff and alumni taking great strides to evolve the way we work by starting new conversations, involving diverse voices, and seeking fresh ideas.

Imperial’s mission is to achieve enduring excellence in education and research in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society. Today we work with society more than ever before and research in science, engineering, medicine and business for the benefit of society.

Our doors are always open, and we are keen to be engaged. Experiment and create change in exciting and meaningful ways.

We hope that this strategy inspires you afresh and provides an overview of the impact of our work as well as the great things that have been achieved so far.

Why do we do it?

As a university focused on science and its impact in the world, we want to share our passions with other inquiring minds. And we want to make sure that we can be a trusted source of expertise in uncertain times. We engage because we want to be a responsible force for good in society – globally and locally. It’s about being a good neighbour and a good citizen.

And it’s about seeking not only to inspire people, but to collaborate, partner, share our passions and common challenges – and find solutions together.

What is engagement?

Societal engagement is about inspiring and nurturing a sense of curiosity, whether with our own natural world or with the far corners of the universe. It is about creating accessible and meaningful experiences and opportunities to share ideas, insights and skills. Through engagement we hope that we can bring tangible benefits to society, such as improved health through more relevant medical research, or cleaner fuels that reduce carbon emissions.

What does that mean in practice?

We work in partnership with school teachers and pupils, local community groups and residents and patients as well as the public more widely. This brochure outlines our motivations, audiences and objectives, providing examples of our flagship engagement initiatives and sharing the stories of our inspiring partners and participants. I thank everybody who gets involved in this work – from volunteers and mentors to researchers and external partners – without you, none of this would be possible.

We hope that this strategy inspires you afresh and provides an overview of the impact of our work as well as the great things that we aspire to achieve next. Please do get in touch if you would like to explore how you can get involved or collaborate with us to innovate, experiment and create change in exciting and meaningful ways.

Our doors are always open, and we are keen to be engaged.

Professor Maggie Dallman
Associate Provost (Academic Partnerships)
Imperial College London

What have we achieved so far?

A huge amount of societal engagement takes place in all corners of Imperial. Here are some of the highlights from the work of our central teams:

- 60,000 members of the public took part in the Great Exhibition Road Festival 2019
- 8,500 local people engaged with science and making at 33 events at the Invention Rooms in the last three years
- 1,100+ researchers took part in our 2018–19 public engagement programme
- 650+ local young people supported through 18,000+ hours of coding, homework clubs, prototyping and making at the Invention Rooms in the last three years
- 42 members of staff as school governors and part of the School Governors’ Network
- 250+ attendees to our staff engagement masterclasses – 98% said it had increased their understanding
- 39 community, public, and patient engagement and involvement projects supported through six rounds of seed funding
- 300+ attendees to three People’s Research Café patient involvement events
- 24,000+ unique visitors to Reach Out Reporter online topical science resource since 2016
- 200+ PhD students took part in engagement training through the Graduate School in 2018–19

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What does that mean in practice?

We work in partnership with school teachers and pupils, local community groups and residents, patients and the public more widely – and we support our staff and students to do so too.

It means involving and engaging members of the public in our research, through discussions and dialogue, festivals and data collection. It means widening participation in our academic programmes so that we are a diverse community that represents the society we are a part of. It means being an anchor within our local areas, providing the support that people need to improve their own skills and to engage with a scientific world. And, ultimately, it means trying to listen as much as we try to inform.
IMPERIAL’S SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Vision

Empowering people through engagement with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)

Motivations

To be engaging, inspiring and accessible to young people of all backgrounds
To foster scientific confidence, knowledge and understanding in society
To enrich our research and enhance our impact, by being more responsive to society
To build respectful collaborations that enable the public to be involved and valued in our work
To enrich our student, staff and alumni experience and enhance their skills development

Audiences

Primary and secondary schools, young people and their networks
Everyone interested in or affected by our research
Communities living and working near our campuses
Patients, carers and their networks
Our students, staff and alumni

Objectives

1. To support schools in their mission of raising pupils’ ambitions and attainment in STEM
2. To increase diversity in our student body
3. To nurture a strong sense of social responsibility within our students
4. To be a trusted source of STEM expertise – locally, nationally and globally
5. To create innovative opportunities for more people to develop STEM skills and ideas
6. To embed public engagement in research projects and research culture at Imperial
7. To develop accessible and inspiring programmes and platforms that empower people in topical science issues
8. To develop the resources, infrastructure and governance to enable our staff and students to deliver effective public engagement
9. To foster an ethos of working in partnership with community and public groups to tackle shared societal challenges
**CASE STUDY**

**Kyrillos Sidarous, summer school alumnus and team member**

“I’ve been involved in Imperial’s outreach programme for over ten years now. I was thirteen when I first took part in the Robotics Summer School – our team won the competition two years in a row and we were asked if we wanted to come back as mentors the following year. That was brilliant – we were helping students older than us! The only summer school I’ve missed was in 2012 – when I was working at the Olympics.

Ever since then I’ve become a member of the team really – from a Senior Residential Assistant for the summer schools, to a Duty Manager at the Invention Rooms. I helped Kate set up the Makerspace, everything from putting together safety documents to setting up my own day of activities for the students, including aspects from my Master’s at the Business School. I wanted to help young people to think through the business aspects of their ideas and prototypes, including costs and sustainability plans. I feel I’ve been able to bring something to the table at the Invention Rooms, and it’s been great seeing it grow from an empty shell.

The trips that we take kids on during these summer schools could change their lives – whether it’s their first time to the theatre, or a visit to a lab here at Imperial. It is so rewarding seeing them go from being really shy to interacting with one another and sharing their projects so proudly. These programmes have such an impact in a short timeframe.

The experience I’ve had with the Outreach team has definitely helped me to get my new job. I am so thankful to have been part of these programmes and to be able to contribute to them. I’ve taken away so much – I’m always learning, whether that’s becoming a bit more creative or practical tips about management. I now know what people mean when they say they love their job and I definitely see myself working in outreach in the future.”

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**STEM Potential**

STEM Potential is a STEM-focused cohort programme that has been running since autumn 2014. The programme provides curriculum support for participants in Years 10–13, helping them study for their GCSEs and A-levels, and prepare for university. Each year more than 30 events take place on campus for participants enrolled in the STEM Potential programme, reaching approximately 360 school pupils.

The value of STEM Potential to the participants doesn’t just come from the curriculum support – each session a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate students provide guidance in navigating their university and school journeys. Through workshops, taster days and summer schools, young people get experience of university life as well as subject-specific skills and insights.

Nabeeha, who took part in STEM Potential over the last two years and is now studying Medicine, said: “STEM potential has been one of the greatest experiences I have ever had. It has given me the much needed support in A-levels, and university applications, and without them, I believe I would be nowhere. Coming in on a weekend to be supported by an array of academics and mentors, to support my journey, is invaluable. The mentors are willing to give you help every step of the way – having them there to advise, guide and be by your side is amazing.”

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**PROGRAMMES AND PROGRESS**

**STEM potential has been one of the greatest experiences I have ever had**

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**SCHOOLS OUTREACH**

**SCHOOLS, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR NETWORKS**

Young people tell us that they face many challenges in understanding their options for progressing beyond school.

This is why our strategy for outreach and schools engagement is all about support. We want to engage young people multiple times — our research and experience has shown us that this is the most effective way of empowering them to make informed decisions about their futures. We work with schools and young people, focusing on curriculum support and subject-based cohort programmes, to create a network of STEM enthusiasts who have the understanding, skills, networks and resources they need.

We have partnered with a tech company to develop Reach Out CPD, an online primary science professional development programme for teachers, helping us to support pupils across the country from an early age.

We use the pioneering Wohl Reach Out Lab at South Kensington as a hub to bring school pupils together with our passionate staff and students from Imperial, to get involved in hands-on experiments and engaging STEM activities.

And the Dangoor Reach Out Makerspace at White City similarly aims to inspire young people from the local community to think creatively and to see that there are no limits to using their entrepreneurial skills when they start making!
Primary Science Hampers

The Outreach Primary Hampers are an in-school resource developed by Imperial staff and students to provide equipment and consumables for schools to borrow, across a range of different science topics. The aim of the Hampers is to engage and inspire participants to have a greater understanding of the world around them, and to support teachers and ambassadors in delivering hands-on experiments in school, particularly those who may not have access to such equipment.

The activities in each Hamper have been designed to fit within an hour, and can be delivered to a full class or smaller groups. The Primary Science Hampers have led to further primary-level engagement, including in-school Science Clubs led by Imperial postgraduate students. These philanthropically funded clubs take place over an eight-week period during term-time. Hampers currently available for use are:

- Looking at Light
- Making Molecules
- Microscopic World
- Rocks

The Hampers have been used to deliver over 50 sessions across 18 primary school groups within London and the south east. Many of these sessions have been part of the Science Club initiative, and were organised by individual Imperial students and staff.

CASE STUDY

Shanaj Salahuddin, Sutton Scholars parent

“I cannot express in words how grateful we are for the Imperial Sutton Scholars programme. It’s had such a huge impact on our whole family! My daughter Samiyah joined the programme when it launched in Autumn 2017 and she was in Year 7. Over two and a bit years, she and her best friend took part in sessions about coding, computer science and digital technology at Imperial six times a year, including a weekend residential. They graduated this summer as part of the first cohort of 60 students. It’s been fantastic – it has blown us away!

The experience has been life-changing for Samiyah. She’s now taking Computer Science GCSE when she goes into Year 10 this year. It has opened up so many doors for her in terms of interest in STEM subjects and computing, and the possibilities for her future career. I watched her really blossom as she went through the programme – from being quite shy and timid, to interacting with others, growing in confidence, and to how important coding is in our everyday life and how useful these skills can be. Parents like us have been exposed to things we never would have come across before, and the amazing opportunities science and technology can offer.

Since starting the programme, Samiyah founded the first ever coding club at her school, and even the Head Teacher agrees that her enthusiasm contributed to the appointment of a Head of Computing at her school. So, both within our family and beyond, we have a lot to thank the programme and Imperial team for!”

EVERYONE INTERESTED IN OR AFFECTED BY OUR RESEARCH

We believe that by working together researchers and members of the public can overcome the challenges that affect us all, whether it’s fighting disease or tackling climate change. It’s vital that our researchers share their work, and that members of the public have the opportunity to get involved and influence it. While new research and ground breaking innovations are exciting and inspiring to hear about, they can be further strengthened by diverse ideas, experiences and questions.

In uncertain times, it’s more important than ever that there are accessible sources of authentic information that members of the public can trust. Beyond this, we should empower the public to engage critically with the information they encounter, building their confidence. In an increasingly connected world, making sure that people can be part of a dialogue on topical issues is a must for our democracy.

We aspire to facilitate inclusive discussions between researchers from all backgrounds, because access to STEM is a key part of a fair and democratic society. That’s where a university and its engagement activities can make a real difference.

We aim to connect with a broad range of audiences, from those already interested in our research and ready to get involved through to those not yet confident in the sciences. Our engagement with new audiences often starts with providing enjoyable experiences that stimulate curiosity and build trust.

That’s why we’re creating a range of platforms and programmes to bring together the public and our College community in a way that is appropriate to participants’ confidence levels and needs. Programmes such as our annual festival, attended by over 60,000 people of all ages and involving creative collaborations. Discussion events and citizen science activities. Our Lates events, in which around 15 research groups per event debate, workshop and explore areas of their work with adult audiences. Hands-on family discovery days at the Invention Rooms exploring themes such as robots or making.

And it’s why we’re supporting our researchers in developing, delivering and evaluating their own engagement activities to maximise the impacts they have in society.
Great Exhibition Road Festival

The Great Exhibition Road Festival is our flagship societal engagement event, a three-day celebration of the arts and sciences in South Kensington that attracts around 60,000 visitors. It launched in 2019 as the successor to the annual Imperial Festival, which started in 2012. Over 20 local institutions – including the V&A, Royal Albert Hall, Natural History Museum and Science Museum – collaborate to create a free programme of unique and creative workshops, talks, exhibitions and performances, all in the spirit of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Imperial leads on this large-scale event in order to engage new audiences with our research through a variety of creative methods and approaches.

Exhibition Road is closed for the weekend and the Festival partners spill out onto the Road to create an accessible and lively range of activities for all ages. In 2019, about half of our visitors were visiting in family groups and the other half in adult groups. As well as the hundreds of exhibits and performances, we put on 68 different talks that were attended by 6,000 people, and several hands-on workshops that engaged well over 8,000 people. This new festival tripled the number of visitors to the Imperial Festival, and 68% of those visitors were new to Imperial Festival.

Community engagement was a key objective and we worked hard to reach out to audiences who wouldn’t typically engage with us. As a result, several areas of the Festival were co-created with young people from our local communities. We learnt a lot from this community engagement and we hope to build on it significantly for 2020 and beyond.

CASE STUDY

Charlotte Kestner, Admissions Tutor, Mathematics

“My role includes championing outreach and engagement wherever possible. This is important to me as I would like to see a more diverse and inclusive cohort and I think outreach is one of the best ways to encourage students to think about doing a maths degree.

The Public Engagement team approached me and a few colleagues with the idea of a maths-themed event as part of their Imperial Lates programme, which are after-hours public celebrations of science and engineering. At first, we thought they meant contributing a single stand to a larger event, not pulling together a whole evening dedicated to maths! I think a few of us were quite sceptical that we would get enough staff from the department involved, or have enough activities.

However, I was amazed at how popular the event was, both in terms of the number of academics who took the time to come up with demos and talks, and how many members of the public we reached. I think everyone really enjoyed it, and it’s probably fair to say it was the biggest maths-only event most of our staff had ever been involved in. It certainly was for me.

Personally, I had lots of fun developing my own workshop making platonic solid chocolate truffles, which seemed to be very popular with the public. I was also pleased that the Lates gave many of our staff their first experience of outreach. I think it has given the department more confidence that it can deliver large outreach events in future.”

Mrs X: Theatre of Debate on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

In 2017 we initiated a project in collaboration with Theatre of Debate, who specialise in producing entertaining and thought-provoking performances exploring ethical and social issues in science. This project bought together imperial researchers, clinicians and GPs with members of the public, patients, a playwright and theatre director, in order to co-create a play inspired and informed by Imperial’s research in AMR.

The collaborative process that generated the script was a core part of this project. Our Imperial team and members of the public engaged with each other through a series of interactive workshops facilitated by Theatre of Debate. These sparked rich dialogue as they shared ideas, personal perspectives and experiences about AMR.

The final product of this engagement was a play about AMR aimed at an audience of adults and children aged 12 and above, followed by an audience discussion.

The play has become an exciting part of our public programme and was performed at the Imperial Festival 2018 and the Great Exhibition Road Festival 2019. It will also be performed as part of our ‘Infectious’ Late, during World Antibiotic Awareness Week in November 2019. The live reading and audience discussion will be recorded and released as a podcast to give the project a lasting legacy and help it reach a wider audience, such as teachers of secondary school children.
COMMUNITIES LIVING AND WORKING NEAR OUR CAMPUSES

We believe that the best way to find solutions to society’s challenges – from knife crime to climate change – is by working in collaboration. We’re therefore extremely proud of our connections with hard-to-reach communities in London, where we are working in partnership with people and organisations to make a positive social impact.

Our local focus is White City, where we are building a major new campus. It’s a diverse part of London, with a rich history and strong sense of community. But it is also affected by wider social trends, such as rising inequality, sharp contrasts in life expectancy, social isolation and climate change. Parts of the area are among the 10% most deprived in the UK.

As a major institution in London, we take our responsibility to support and empower our local communities very seriously. And, as a world-leading science university, we feel passionately about making our science and technology accessible to all by listening and learning, and by working collaboratively to improve connectedness, confidence, wellbeing and skills.

Our holistic approach has developed in response to local needs and in line with our strengths as a university. Over the past two years, we have formed a dedicated team and established a pioneering community innovation space called The Invention Rooms. Our aim is to be a long-term friend and partner in the community.

Agents of Change

Agents of Change is a pioneering place-based community leadership network for women who have an active interest in driving social change in the north of Hammersmith and Fulham. It was established in 2018 by a group of local partners, including Imperial College London, Hammersmith United Charities, the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

The aim of the network is to support, empower and connect female community leaders of all ages, sectors and backgrounds to drive positive social change. It has more than 120 members, and brings together grassroots community leaders, local businesses and organisations who want to make a difference.

Network meetings take place several times a year, featuring different guest speakers and creative networking activities. Members of the network can apply to join the Women’s Community Leadership Programme, a free six-month leadership programme, accredited by Imperial, aimed at building the skills of female community leaders operating in the third sector.

Agents of Change is unique as a locally based women’s leadership initiative in the UK, and we’re proud to be a key partner in bringing the programme and network to life.
CASE STUDY

**The Invention Rooms**

The Invention Rooms is a unique community space at the heart of our White City Campus. Inside, you can find accessible workshops, design studios, a community café and interactive spaces for innovation and collaboration between the College, the local community and our partners.

Located in a diverse part of west London, The Invention Rooms offers an inclusive environment where people of all ages and backgrounds can learn new skills in science and technology, and get directly involved in research and innovation to address both local and global challenges.

Programmes at The Invention Rooms include a digital literacy programme called What the Tech?! for elderly residents living nearby, and the innovative Maker Challenge programme where local young people aged 14–18 can turn their creative ideas into reality, from trainers that play music to a bedside lamp that turns itself off automatically when you fall asleep.

The space has also hosted workshops and activities designed to bring researchers and residents together to tackle societal challenges. These have included a ‘hackathon’ to develop solutions for elderly patients with partial hearing loss, and LOL-Lab where local people and researchers together try their hand at stand-up comedy under the guidance of a professional comedian.

The Invention Rooms is a new model for community innovation which has relevance across the UK. It has engaged more than 20,000 local people since it opened in 2017 and has been shortlisted for national awards including the Guardian University Awards 2019.

**Michael Wool, Local resident and What the Tech?! participant**

“I’ve lived just round the corner in Shepherd’s Bush for the last 40 years, and before coming to What the Tech?! I didn’t know anything about Imperial at all, except seeing all these new buildings going up.

I knew I needed help to start using a mobile phone for more than just making a phone call – I wanted to start sending text messages but just couldn’t work out how. I was so far behind, I really felt like I needed to learn, because everything is going online now. Staff at the library showed me the flyer for What the Tech?! which looked really inviting, so I got up the courage to come down to the Invention Rooms.

The help has been fantastic because it’s given me hope now that I can start using my phone, which I didn’t have before. I am still nervous about it – it will take a while for me to learn something strange that’s all new to me – but I am learning which I am really pleased about.

It’s a really good place. The volunteers and staff are really fantastic. I can genuinely say that, through the help that I have had and the way they have treated me, they’ve been very good.

Recently, I was able to make some text messages to my friend who hadn’t been in touch for a long while, for me to learn something strange that’s all new to me – but I am learning which I am really pleased about. I’ve lived just round the corner in Shepherd’s Bush for the last 40 years, and before coming to What the Tech?! I didn’t know anything about Imperial at all, except seeing all these new buildings going up.

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Recently, I was able to make some text messages to my friend who hadn’t been in touch for a long while, for me to learn something strange that’s all new to me – but I am learning which I am really pleased about. We are so grateful to everyone that has been involved so far – people around the world could be receiving better care because of their input.

We are always looking to involve more people. We run events such as our People’s Research Cafés to facilitate discussions around health and medicine, and share opportunities online through the VOICE platform. And we support researchers to embed public and patient involvement within their own projects through our Imperial Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) grants scheme and training sessions. Through involvement and engagement, patients, carers and their networks can make an impact on research at Imperial, learn something and meet people along the way.

**Dr Helen Skirrow, MatImms Research Team, International Centre Child Health, Paediatrics, School of Medicine**

“In the MatImms project, our multidisciplinary research team of midwives, doctors and scientists investigates vaccination in pregnancy to protect newborn babies from preventable infections. We developed the MatImms Smartphone App to improve vaccine information available, enabling pregnant women and their support networks to make informed choices. We received an Imperial BRC Public Involvement grant to run activities to connect with pregnant women, their friends and family. We wanted to provide an opportunity for women to ask about vaccines in pregnancy, and gain insights to inform both our research and local services.

We created informal drop-in ‘Vaccine Conversation’ events for local women. These involved free baby massage workshops and lunch, alongside opportunities to discuss pregnancy vaccines with our team.

We partnered with the local Mosaic Community Trust after meeting their Director at a workshop run by the Patient Experience Research Centre. By partnering with a community organisation we were able to hold informal events at local venues accessible to local women. As the Mosaic women became partners in hosting the events, the atmosphere was relaxed and the food provided delicious! Thanks to their support each event was well attended by over 20 local women and we continue to collaborate with the Mosaic Trust.

I think all of us who took part feel enthused about public involvement – and most importantly, the feedback provided by the local women attending was overwhelmingly positive. Our experience certainly increased our understanding of local women’s concerns about maternal vaccines, their use of local services, and what information is important to them. Professor Kampmann who leads the project said: “I sometimes feel less connected to the groundwork these days and the public involvement event made me feel very happy that I had not lost any enthusiasm for the project. On the contrary, I found it really empowering and it showed me how important this part of our research is and where the next steps should be.” Professor Kampmann also leads IMPRINT, a growing international maternal immunisation network. These and other projects have highlighted the critical importance of patient involvement to success in this rapidly developing field of healthcare.”

**Dr Helen Skirrow, MatImms Research Team, International Centre Child Health, Paediatrics, School of Medicine**
**VOICE**

VOICE is an online platform that allows Imperial researchers to post opportunities for public involvement, connect with new communities and build ongoing relationships. In January 2019, Imperial became a collaborator of VOICE, established at Newcastle University. We believe that the public should have a say in the research that may ultimately affect their lives, and value the insight that only lived experience and public perspectives can bring.

We know that there can be barriers to public and patient involvement, and while it’s extremely important, it can be hard to do well when time and resources are limited. Through VOICE we hope to make it easier for researchers to engage diverse audiences. We want members’ lived experiences and perspectives to improve our research at all its stages. We hope that the platform will both encourage new researchers to involve the public in what they do, and also inspire more diverse audiences within the public to become involved in our work.

VOICE enables researchers to:
- Access a large and diverse community, quickly and easily
- Use flexible methods of involvement, from polls and surveys to discussion forums and public panels
- Gain insight from the general public, as well as patients and carers with condition-specific experience
- Strengthen funding applications with innovative digital approaches that complement traditional public involvement methods

In contributing their experience, ideas, insights and vision, VOICE members become partners in research, and we are excited to see what it makes possible.

Find out more and sign up as a member at www.voice-global.org

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**People’s Research Café**

We tried out the People’s Research Café for the first time at Imperial Festival 2018. A hybrid between a science café and a more typical public involvement workshop, it was designed by five Imperial research centres in partnership with patients and members of the public.

Our aim was simple: to give the public a flavour of public involvement by giving them the chance to contribute to real-life research projects. As well as getting fresh public input into the projects, we wanted to try something a bit different and have some fun.

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**CASE STUDY**

Lillie Pakzad-Shahabi
Clinical Trial Coordinator, Neuro-oncology, Department of Medicine

“I received an Imperial BRC Public Involvement award to run a project with students in Years 9 and 10. We ran practical workshops in a secondary school all about brain tumour awareness, hoping to inspire some of the students to consider working in the field. It was great – students even presented their work from our activities at the Imperial Festival and a national brain tumour conference.

Through this grant, I stumbled across Public Involvement training sessions offered through the Patient Experience Research Centre at Imperial. These workshops helped me to understand the importance of public involvement as early as possible in the design of clinical trials.

I decided it would be useful to involve patients from our clinic to review and inform our plans for the design of two clinical trials around brain tumours. I coordinated a session with clinicians, patients and family members to share our ideas. We discussed the proposed outcome measures, which of those were most important to the patients and carers, how best to provide information about the trial, which quality of life measures should be reported, and when certain feedback should be collected from patients.

It was great to hear one person say after the workshop: “I have gained the feeling that I could really make a difference”.

Initially, I found the idea of chairing the patient and carer meeting quite daunting, but I felt more confident after attending the training where we discussed how to deal with behaviour in groups and other things to consider. Don’t be afraid to do public involvement as patients and carers are very interested in research and keen to know what is going on. They will motivate the whole team as they come up with ideas that you may never have thought of”.

We set up a welcoming environment so that people would feel able to discuss research openly. Cafés have a degree of universality, meaning that the concept can be applied across different sites and audiences. The cafés are developed and facilitated by both researchers and public partners, meaning that they maintain an accessible, informal and equal environment.

Researchers provide a summary of their work and three key questions they would like input on to get the conversation started. Visitors join tables to discuss a research project and share their insights – over a coffee or tea, of course! Coffee jars are filled with thoughts and suggestions, providing input on everything across the research cycle, from study design to implementation. Based on the comments they receive, the researchers involved have already made changes to their projects.

Over 300 people have visited the four cafés we have run so far, including at the Great Exhibition Road Festival this summer and two cafés in White City, which involved members of the community in planning and running the event. With all the new ideas and insights they received, 100% of the researchers who fed back after the last café said they would recommend getting involved in the People’s Research Café to their colleagues.
We want engagement to be part of the culture at Imperial, and our Societal Engagement team are here to support our people to develop their engagement practice, share their passion, tap into new funding streams, and collaborate with others from within and outside Imperial. We know how hard everyone at Imperial works, and we want to make it that little bit easier to make engagement a reality.

That’s why we deliver programmes for staff and students to develop new skills in engagement, to refine ideas and activities, and to keep raising the quality of our public engagement. Our training and support ranges from online courses, masterclasses, our annual Engagement Day, and our Engagement Academy. We run awards and seed funds, coordinate networks, and are always on hand to provide engagement advice to staff and students.

We work with our wider Imperial community to develop, embed and guide our Societal Engagement strategy. Bringing together senior stakeholders from across Imperial, our Engagement Strategy Group lead the vision and future priorities for this area of work. Our Societal Engagement Champions network and Engagement Practitioners network facilitate a dialogue with staff in academic departments. By working in an open and connected way, we try to make sure that centrally based programmes meet the needs, concerns and interests of those across the whole College.

Finally, we use thoughtful and robust evaluation to monitor the effectiveness of our initiatives, identify ways to improve, and understand the impacts of our work. You can see the changes we hope to make and the ways we measure them in our Outcomes Table (see page 22). Through a reflective approach we can understand and demonstrate the progress we are making in empowering people through engagement with science, technology, engineering and maths.

Engagement Academy

We run a suite of training and skills development opportunities around engagement at Imperial. The most in-depth of these is our Engagement Academy, an innovative seven-day course which takes place over six months, and involves seminars, practical workshops and panel discussions. The programme is delivered in collaboration between Imperial’s Public Engagement team and Science Communication Unit.

The Academy focuses on discussion and building community rather than imparting knowledge. It is about supporting individuals to develop their identities as public engagement practitioners, and to grow their skills, ideas and confidence. It is also an important way for us to listen to our colleagues across the institution. Sessions cover themes from the role of science within culture, to inclusivity and diversity in science, writing and news media, exhibition creation, podcasting, and evaluation. As a group we visit other engagement spaces, hear from internal and external experts, and workshop ideas.

Thirty-one members of staff have completed the Academy so far across the first two cohorts, including researchers, teaching fellows, centre managers, research technicians and coordinators from a range of departments. Participants are supported to work on an engagement project of their own between the sessions. It has been rewarding to see these ideas come to life – whether a schools workshop, festival activity, competition, game, online video or comedy set. We continue to be inspired by what participants come up with and look forward to meeting the next cohort!

Ananda Gopalan, Principal Teaching Fellow, Computing

“It is humbling to have won a President’s Award for Excellence in Societal Engagement – there are some amazing people on the list of winners and I feel this level of recognition at the College is truly special to be part of. Public engagement is very important to me – I see it as just a small way to give back to the community. As scientists, it is a moral duty to explain our research and involve the public since most of our research is publicly funded. This is especially important in the current times when there seems to be an increasing distrust of ‘experts’, and perceptions of scientists in their ‘ivory towers’.

I run computing activities with many community organisations and schools. One of my latest projects was Discover Computing, which was designed to give students (and families) from under-represented minorities an insight into computing to pique their interest towards pursuing it for their studies. The sessions were very well attended – we couldn’t actually fit everyone in who wanted to take part – so we are planning more for the new year. Imperial provided some seed funding for this, which has been extremely helpful.

I’ve been involved in engagement for a long time but over the last year or so we’ve had some real successes – running these workshops being one of them! Working with Jackie Bell, our Senior Teaching Fellow for Public Engagement, and Ben Glöcker, our academic champion for public engagement, we are hoping to get more staff and students involved. I’ve given talks about what I do, including at the School Governors’ Network lunch, and have had some great discussions with colleagues.

I also took part in the Engagement Academy this year, which was an excellent experience. It helped me flesh out my ideas and think along different lines. It also helped me think of other potential activities in the future. Most importantly, it showed me there is a big community in the college and put me in touch with others as passionate about this as I am!”
Academia exists within and for the benefit of society, and the general public are therefore crucial stakeholders in the scientific process. I think engaging with the public helps us scientists understand this better, helps our work to meet societal expectations and needs, and helps the public feel more involved and aware of science. So it is a win-win situation for all!

I was awarded Societal Engagement Seed Funding for my project, Translating TB, where we created animations about latent TB and the importance of testing. Our film has now been translated into eight languages and is displayed in GP waiting rooms across London. Experiencing how people from ten different parts of the world connected over health, well-being and science was very rewarding. I also learnt that the traditional definition of hard-to-reach communities might be more about how our approach to things makes it hard for us to reach them, and not the attitudes of the communities themselves who are often eager to reach out.

In 2018 I was awarded a President’s Award for Excellence in Societal Engagement. I suddenly saw my picture on the screen and the next thing I knew, I was with Alice Gast and she was looking for a photographer! I felt very happy, very appreciated, and so pleased that Imperial is giving societal engagement the recognition it deserves.

I’ll definitely be doing more public engagement – I’d like to build on collaborations I’ve established and apply for more funding. With support from our lovely Public Engagement team, I did make it to the final interview stages for the prestigious Wellcome Engagement Fellowship Scheme earlier this year.

As a result of my public engagement, I’ve become a more aware person and a more conscientious scientist. I’ve also made friends and connections that will last the rest of my life. So it has influenced not only my work, but my life.”

Ishita Marwah, PhD student, National Heart and Lung Institute
MEASURING PROGRESS AGAINST OUR STRATEGY

OBJECTIVE 1: To support schools in their mission of raising pupils’ ambition and attainment in STEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What changes are we hoping to make?</th>
<th>Key outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved teacher confidence in STEM. especially at primary schools.</td>
<td>Examples include increased professional development, mentorship opportunities, and enhanced collaboration between schools and universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive outcomes for participating pupils around increased attainment, ambition and awareness of STEM subjects and careers.</td>
<td>Example measures include increases in pupil STEM participation, attendance in STEM clubs, and improved attitudes towards STEM careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and carers become more familiar with decision-making around subject choices and careers.</td>
<td>Measures such as parent involvement workshops, career awareness sessions, and support for career planning.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

OBJECTIVE 2: To increase diversity in our student body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What changes are we hoping to make?</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase number of students from disadvantaged and underrepresented communities engaging with and accessing Imperial.</td>
<td>Examples may include increased outreach and support for underrepresented groups, enhanced recruitment efforts, and targeted support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater national diversity in student body (e.g. from White City communities and across the UK).</td>
<td>Measures may include diversifying recruitment strategies, offering scholarships and support to underrepresented groups, and enhancing support for students from diverse backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater international diversity in student body (e.g. from a wider range of countries).</td>
<td>Measures may include international partnerships, opportunities for study abroad, and support for international students.</td>
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</table>

OBJECTIVE 3: To nurture a strong sense of social responsibility within our students

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Current and graduating students: show awareness of the evolving relationship between science and society.</td>
<td>Example measures include awareness-raising events, community engagement projects, and integrated social responsibility into the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the role of universities and research in tackling societal challenges.</td>
<td>Measures may include student feedback on engagement opportunities, and engagement with community and public stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value public engagement within their field of study and are motivated to get involved</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation in community engagement activities, and feedback from students on the value of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciate that societal engagement can help them to understand different perspectives, experiences and inequalities.</td>
<td>Measures may include feedback from students on the impact of engagement activities, and engagement with diverse communities.</td>
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</table>

OBJECTIVE 4: To be a trusted source of STEM expertise – locally, nationally and globally

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varyed and successful collaborations locally, nationally and internationally.</td>
<td>Examples may include increased collaboration with local schools, universities, and community partners, and engagement with national and international organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public visitors, school teachers, community members and patients see Imperial as an accessible and trustworthy institution.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased engagement with community and public partners, and feedback from partners on the value of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial has a positive public media profile.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased media coverage of engagement activities, and feedback from partners on the impact of media coverage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our societal engagement work is shared and recognised by our funders and peers.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased recognition of engagement activities, and feedback from funders and peers on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
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OBJECTIVE 5: To create innovative opportunities for more people to develop STEM skills and ideas

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Increased skills in developing ideas, physical and digital making, amongst public participants, including from local communities.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation in making programmes, and feedback from participants on the benefits of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in our technical or making programmes explore other qualifications or awards, or access further education, apprenticeships or employment.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation in making programmes, and feedback from participants on the benefits of engagement.</td>
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</table>

OBJECTIVE 6: To embed public engagement in research projects and culture at Imperial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What changes are we hoping to make?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and students:</td>
<td>Examples include increased public engagement by staff and students, and enhanced opportunities for public engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage relevant public stakeholders as early as possible in research design.</td>
<td>Measures may include early involvement of public stakeholders in research design, and feedback from public stakeholders on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value the importance of engagement to their field of work.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased engagement with public stakeholders, and feedback from staff and students on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in genuine two-way engagement where possible and have a positive experience.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased engagement with public stakeholders, and feedback from staff and students on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report impacts of engagement on their research or work, including new perspectives, directions and collaborations.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased engagement with public stakeholders, and feedback from staff and students on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel that the culture at Imperial is supportive of and conducive to participation in societal engagement.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased engagement with public stakeholders, and feedback from staff and students on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

OBJECTIVE 7: To develop accessible and inspiring programmes and platforms that empower people in top science issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What changes are we hoping to make?</th>
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<tr>
<td>An increasingly diverse audience participate in our public programmes and research.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public, staff and student participants:</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a positive and empowering experience and are motivated to participate in other events.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel that they have had the opportunity to contribute to conversations about issues that matter to them.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have lasting positive outcomes (e.g. increased interest in STEM, new skills, understanding of the scientific process, awareness of Imperial’s research).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
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OBJECTIVE 8: To develop the resources, infrastructure and governance to enable our staff and students to deliver effective public engagement

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Staff and students:</td>
<td>Examples include increased resources for public engagement, and enhanced opportunities for public engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel equipped and motivated to get involved in engagement activities.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased resources for public engagement, and enhanced support for public engagement activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hold positive attitudes towards engagement (e.g. value the importance of engagement to their field of research/study, and as an opportunity to gain insight from a diverse range of views).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased resources for public engagement, and enhanced support for public engagement activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel supported to carry out engagement as part of their work through the provision of support, resources and training.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased resources for public engagement, and enhanced support for public engagement activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OBJECTIVE 9: To foster an ethos of working in partnership with community and public groups to tackle shared societal challenges

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and students seek out relevant and appropriate community and public collaboration for their engagement work and see the value in working in partnership.</td>
<td>Examples may include increased partnerships with community and public groups, and feedback from partners on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs are enhanced by the involvement of community and public groups (e.g. in the development of activities).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased partnerships with community and public groups, and feedback from partners on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and public groups have a positive and empowering experience through partnering with our staff and students (e.g. in the development of new skills, understanding and connections).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased partnerships with community and public groups, and feedback from partners on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships are meaningful and sustained for both Imperial and public/community groups.</td>
<td>Measures may include increased partnerships with community and public groups, and feedback from partners on the impact of engagement.</td>
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</table>

OBJECTIVE 10: To influence and shape the future of social science research and delivery

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information about participants (e.g. numbers attending, age, gender, level of previous education) in programmes (e.g. Festival, White City events, Peoples’ Research Cafés).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from public and staff/student contributors about the programme including about the experience itself and resulting outcomes (e.g. evaluation of Festival and Lates).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers and diversity of staff/students involved in committees and advisory groups (e.g. Young People’s Advisory Network for health research).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilisation of VOICE online platform by members of the public and Imperial researchers to share and access engagement and involvement opportunities (e.g. user figures and online engagement).</td>
<td>Measures may include increased participation of diverse audiences, and feedback from participants on the impact of engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Imperial would like to thank the many organisations and individuals whose support and advice have helped to shape and deliver our societal engagement activities, including:

- Mr Humphrey W Battcock
- Berkeley Foundation
- The Elsevier Foundation
- The Exilarch’s Foundation
- The Goldsmiths’ Company
- The Lujenna Educational Trust
- The Mohn Westlake Foundation
- YOOX Net-A-Porter Group
- Ms Marianne Odfjell
- Stanhope Plc
- Mr Kevin J Walters
- Mr Richard Weber
- The Worshipful Company of Coachmakers & Coach Harness Makers

And with thanks to all those who wish to remain anonymous.

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www.imperial.ac.uk/be-inspired/societal-engagement