Head of Public Involvement and Participatory Research (Involvement@York)

Department: Research Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Directorate (RIKE)
Hours of work: Full Time | 37 hours a week | 1 FTE
Contract type: Fixed Term (to 31 July 2025)
Salary: £56,021 - £64,914 a year | Grade 8
Introduction

Established in 2018, Involvement@York is a research capacity building initiative that was initially conceived to strengthen the University of York’s public involvement in research capabilities across its portfolio of health and social care research. It has since grown to support and champion public involvement and wider participatory approaches to research across all research disciplines.

The success and organic, bottom-up growth and development of Involvement@York over the past five years has mirrored the research funding community’s increasing prioritisation of research that is carried out with or by members of the public, not to, about or for them. We are now seeking to appoint the first Head of Public Involvement and Participatory Research to lead Involvement@York’s next phase of development, as it becomes a standalone cross-faculty resource and support service within the Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Directorate.

The ultimate vision is to expand Involvement@York’s remit and to establish it as a highly visible ‘core facility’ for public involvement in research and wider participatory approaches to research at the heart of the University of York, working in partnership with researchers, public contributors to research, strategic partners, and other external stakeholders to meaningfully involve the public in our research, whoever and wherever they may be. It is envisaged that Involvement@York will be enriched over time by collective investments from the University itself and researchers through external grant income; with this co-funding model supporting longevity, sustainability, efficiencies in service delivery, and the growth of a community of practice that shares expertise in support of individual and collective goals.

In doing so, Involvement@York will service priority 2.4 within the University’s 2023-2030 Research Strategy:

● Making it easier for members of the public and researchers from all academic disciplines to work together.
● Providing a highly visible, single point of access for advice, guidance, resources, and support, connecting one with the other to improve the reach, relevance, quality, and impact of our research.
● Developing the University’s involvement and participatory research expertise to support inclusive, ethical, compassionate, and reciprocal participatory interactions with communities and the public in a far broader context.

More information about the public involvement and participatory research remit of Involvement@York can be found here.

Main purpose of the role

The Involvement@York team is based within the Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Directorate at the University of York. The Head of Public Involvement and Participatory Research will report to the Associate Director (Development) and will work under the guidance of the Involvement@York Academic Director and Advisory Group. They will manage the wider Involvement@York team, as well as working closely with the Pro-Vice Chancellors, Faculty Associate Deans (Research), senior RIKE colleagues and colleagues within academic departments and professional service directorates.

The Head of Public Involvement and Participatory Research will champion, strengthen capacity and develop a new policy framework for public involvement and wider participatory approaches to research across the University. With an understanding of the University of York research landscape, the role holder will identify, plan and deploy resources to achieve deliverables and milestones co-designed with the Involvement@York Academic
Director and Advisory Group. The post holder will be expected to work with and across existing teams, to raise the profile of the University’s public involvement and participatory research expertise, to develop new institutional policies and processes in support of public involvement in research and wider participatory research methods, to build joint programmes of mutually beneficial activity for researchers, communities and public contributors to research, and to oversee multiple funding streams, including the generation of income to support sustainability.

This will include: building the Involvement@York brand, offering a distinctive ‘front door’ to the University for researchers and members of the public wanting to work together; developing a new Involvement@York service offer and costing model for researchers; integrating Involvement@York activities with ongoing knowledge exchange, policy engagement and public engagement initiatives across the three University of York faculties; forming and supporting specialist networks, both within the institution and with other public involvement and engagement professionals across the sector; acting swiftly on behalf of the University’s research community with respect to emergent opportunities; and acting as an advisor to senior managers on strategic issues.

The role will require someone with considerable experience of public involvement in research and/or wider participatory research methods. They will need to bring vision, energy, and enthusiasm to shape this next phase of Involvement@York’s development, alongside a keen understanding of the added ‘public good’ value of public involvement and participatory research with respect to policy and society, research culture and outcomes, as well as researchers and public contributors to research.

Key responsibilities

The role holder will be required to undertake some or all of the duties below:

1. Role Specific Responsibilities

   Expert Advisory Function

   • Cultivate professional contacts, interest and knowledge in public involvement and participatory research, enabling the role holder to act as a trusted advisor to the PVCs, ADRs, within RIKE, and to other senior leaders.
   • Act as a representative and ambassador for Involvement@York and the University in relationships with external partners, high-profile stakeholders, regulatory bodies and internal departments, building mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships, e.g., acting as the primary point of contact for the University’s membership of the UK Shared Commitment to Public Involvement.
   • Systematically horizon scan across the external research funding and public involvement and engagement environment with a view to identifying areas for future focus, recommending changes in the overall strategy as appropriate, ensuring a strategic fit with existing research priorities, and benchmarking against competitors.

   Involvement@York Strategic Development

   • Lead the Involvement@York team, providing vision and strategic direction, coordinating and consulting with public contributors and academic expertise across the University to refine the Involvement@York service offer, ensuring all receive appropriate support from Involvement@York and that maximum external benefit is derived from co-branding initiatives where applicable.
• Be a key enabler for change, translating public involvement and participatory research capacity building plans into action through the creation of a new Involvement@York strategy, implementation plan and resourcing model.
• Generate new ideas for projects as part of the overall vision for Involvement@York, preparing project briefs/plans, obtaining appropriate support.
• Ensure Involvement@York strategic plans seamlessly integrate into, and contribute to the delivery of, University strategic ambitions.

Involvement@York Operational Management

● Design, implement and evaluate the operational and project support sub-strands of Involvement@York activities, to achieve stated deliverables and milestones.
● Manage the Involvement@York budget and associated issues/risks, including the development of new funding routes to sustain Involvement@York activity directly.
● Provide effective management reporting on Involvement@York activities and outcomes for the Involvement@York Advisory Group and other relevant University governance bodies e.g., the University Research Committee (URC).
● Develop and maintain the Involvement@York implementation plan, defining criteria for control, management, and assessment of risk.
● Oversee the creation of branding, marketing, and communications plans, including the Involvement@York website and other internal and external facing materials, working in partnership with other professional service colleagues to co-create these where appropriate.
● Create an inclusive and respectful team environment, respecting diversity and fostering the unique talents of all individuals.

2. University of York Responsibilities for Grade 8

Service and Operational Delivery

● Through effective leadership, establish a clear vision and set of goals for the service delivery team.
● Ensure that appropriate management systems are in place to support the team and enable them to effectively deliver current and future service requirements.
● Lead delivery of a substantive and/or complex range of services.
● Engage with key stakeholders to influence opinion, delivery and reputation of services.
● Monitor, evaluate and provide feedback on the performance of the operational area and take necessary action to improve the service, including identifying training needs for the team.
● Horizon scan to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of service operation.
● Provide support and encouragement for members of the team through effective leadership; demonstrate compassion and give advice on commonly occurring wellbeing issues.

Continuous Improvement

● Lead on the design, implementation and monitoring of policy and quality standards, procedures and systems ensuring effective working and continuous improvement.
● Engage in external networks or partnerships to identify and influence potential opportunities for service or operational delivery improvements.
● Apply leadership and expertise to identify, understand and resolve significant, longer term or complex problems.
● Lead continuous development of self and team to ensure ongoing and future breadth and strength of capability and knowledge, organising bespoke training or development opportunities for the team.
Specialist Contribution

- Act as a recognised practitioner within own specialist area or discipline, shaping activities, processes and systems.
- Design and deliver training sessions in relation to own subject area to the broader team and/or the University.
- Provide expertise to maintain and/or develop the systems and processes to support compliance with legislation, statutory duties and to facilitate the delivery of effective services.
- Provide expert professional subject knowledge and problem-solving skills, sharing knowledge with the team or wider University population as needed.
- Apply technical expertise/analysis to high-level problem resolution, provide technical judgement to guide decision making.
- Act as a specialist point of contact for dealing with complex data and information sources, providing interpretation and analysis.

Collaboration and Communication

- Lead internal meetings, working groups and sub-committees at an operational service level to influence governance, organisational policy and standards for the service.
- Develop long term relationships with senior stakeholders to ensure effective and valued outcomes.
- Develop and encourage mutually beneficial internal/external working relationships.
- Identify and develop opportunities for communities of practice and knowledge sharing.

Governance and Oversight

- Promote and develop a deep understanding of organisational policy and regulations.
- Manage quality and regulatory audit process.
- Provide advice to stakeholders regarding compliance and regulations where there is significant complexity and/or appropriate assessment of risk required.
- Horizon scan to understand emerging legislation and regulation and propose the University’s response to these changes.
- Accountable for ensuring procedures and policy meet all required legislative or regulatory standards.
- Ensure a safe and secure work environment; take responsibility for health and safety considerations through the completion and implementation of risk assessments.

Planning and Organisation

- Responsible for the operational and strategic planning for their area that is likely to involve coordination and integration with broader directorate planning.
- Significant input to long term strategic planning.
- Lead project scoping, initiation, planning and implementation for large scale/University wide initiatives.

Health and Safety

- All staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves, others, and the environment and to prevent harm by their acts or omissions. All staff are therefore required to adhere to the University’s Health, Safety & Emergency Procedures.
- Where you are responsible for line managing people you will have a key role in implementing Faculty/Department local health and safety management arrangements and monitor and check the effectiveness of them.

The above list of duties is not exhaustive and is subject to change. The post holder may be required to undertake other duties within the scope and grading of the post.
# Person specification

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<th>Role Specific</th>
<th>Essential/Desirable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Experience of working with the public and communities in a research environment, bringing researchers, public contributors to research and/or communities together for mutual benefit</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>An understanding of the importance and added value of public involvement in research and wider participatory approaches to research, including knowledge and understanding of the key principles and standards underpinning good practice, incorporating the importance of diversity and inclusion, and strategies to engage seldom heard groups</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness of a range of compliance issues in relation to public involvement and participatory research, including ethics, data protection, reward and recognition, due diligence, and safeguarding</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Experience of strategic planning and funding generation, including managing budgets</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Thorough understanding of the principles of people management, able to line manage a team, providing leadership, support, motivation, and direction</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Experience of project management, change management and process improvement implementation, including the ability to review strategic and operational procedures and processes, ensuring feasibility and efficiency, making recommendations for identified improvements and implement agreed change</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the higher education research funding environment, including an understanding of research funders’ requirements for public involvement and participatory research</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate qualification with a public involvement or participatory research and/or practice focus or equivalent professional experience in a public involvement and engagement setting</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
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## University of York Person Specification for Grade 8

### Qualifications:

Level 6 qualification. (Qualifications at this level include a degree. Please [view the full list](#). We also welcome applicants with equivalent non-UK qualifications or equivalent professional experience.

### Skills - demonstrates the ability to:

* Lead people - providing vision, motivation, inspiration, and direction
* Lead large-scale projects
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<th>Essential Competency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use digital technologies including Google applications and/or Microsoft Office</td>
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<td>Communicate to engage and influence others</td>
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<td><strong>Behaviours:</strong></td>
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<td>Works collaboratively with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivers a quality service</td>
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<td>Develops self and others</td>
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<td>Actively champions respect, inclusivity, equality, and diversity</td>
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<td>Identifies and implements continuous improvement</td>
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