

How to win a prize for your public contribution

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Introduction, scope and definitions

Employees who provide NHS services have access to a wide range of prizes and awards that recognise their efforts. Similar opportunities should be offered to Public Contributors in recognition of their exemplary leadership, commitment and selfless service to the sector. The following paragraphs list some of the awards that are currently available and compare what is on offer to Public Contributors with those offered to staff who facilitate the activities of Public Contributors.

This document refers to Public Contributors who elsewhere might be called Patients and the Public, consumers, Experts by Experience or Patient and Public Voice representatives. The focus is on health research, with a few references to coproduction of other activities.

Who is eligible?

Taking coproduction seriously would mean that special awards would be made available to Public Contributors and, in addition, Public Contributors would be routinely eligible to compete for many other awards alongside their salaried colleagues. Some awards are currently restricted to employees, so experts by experience who are employed in the service are eligible, while Public Contributors who are not employed are not. In each case, the eligibility criteria should be designed with a specific purpose in mind and with the presumption that Public Contributors are valued members of the team, so should be included, unless there is a clearly articulated reason to exclude them. Eligibility rules should explain this, rather than blithely exclude Public Contributors without acknowledgement.

Many awards given by a university, healthcare organisation or research funding body are confined to applicants who have a clear connection with that organisation, while a few welcome applications from anywhere. The connection may require being on the payroll of the organisation, receiving a grant from them or being registered with them as a student or formal volunteer.

Some competitions require an application form to be completed by the contender, while others rely on nominations from others.

Who is on the judging panel?

While this Guide is focused mainly on the awards that Public Contributors might win, it is important to note that the tables can be turned, so that Public Contributors form the judging panel and award-making body. Some of the examples listed below, such as the National Service User Awards, already do this, so creating an entirely co-produced awards process.

Others, not generally listed here, choose to make the awards to external organisations. A striking example is the [Mind Media Awards](#), in which people with lived experience of mental health issues review representations of mental distress in the mass media and production companies that have done well.

Which activities are being judged?

Coproduction demands that Public Contributors have real influence at every decision point in the journey from the scientist's bench to the patient's bedside. Few of the prizes listed below aspire to such a grand vision, and some awards are made to people who have merely presented the outputs of scientific endeavour in an accessible format – they are prizes for science communicators, rather than science coproducers. Nevertheless, they are included here on the basis that an informed reader can set aside unsuitable material more easily than find it in the first place.

What is the prize?

In the last twenty years, the rise of managerialist approaches in healthcare and research has meant that resource allocation is often achieved by competitive application, and so many commissioning decisions are now considered to be awards. This is not the subject of this paper, which focuses on the public recognition of exemplary practice. In this paper, judges generally take a retrospective look at the prize-winner's previous actions, rather than tasking them with a job to do in the future.

Many prizes consist of attendance at a prizegiving event, applause, a trophy and publicity. Occasionally, they include prize money. The amount of money is perhaps an indication of the value placed on the success criteria by the awarding organisation. So, for example, if the prize money for doctors is greater than the prizes for nurses, it is reasonable to conclude that the institution granting the award values doctors more highly. There are several awards listed here for staff that include a cash prize, while none of the awards found so far for Public Contributors do so.

Despite the foregoing, there are occasions when the prize money must be used in a particular way, often to advance Public Contribution in the winning organisation. Sometimes it is a gift and may be used for any purpose by the winning individual or organisation, so the winner has no obligation to give an account of what they have done with the money. The main purposes of the prize are to give kudos to the winner, draw attention to their activities and stimulate others to emulate them.

Awards available to Public Contributors and communities

The following list is arranged in alphabetical order. Note that each example appears only once, so may include aspects which overlap into other categories. Some headings provide more of a category title such as an NHS Trust or university, so readers may wish to search out details of the relevant

organisation in their own locality. As a result of all these factors, readers should review the whole document and follow links rather than relying too heavily on a single paragraph.

Audit Heroes

The Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership runs an annual Clinical Audit Awareness Week and during this time they confer five awards to [Audit Heroes](#), including a Volunteer of the Year for each local area and a national winner too. This could be an individual volunteer or a group of volunteers who regularly volunteer together for a service or on a project. It includes charity volunteers, community groups and youth groups. There are no restrictions on the age of the volunteer or volunteers. Judges will be looking for evidence of (i) making a significant contribution to the improvement efforts of the audit team, department or organisation they support; (ii) Providing invaluable support to a clinical audit and/or quality improvement process, programme or project; and (iii) using their own insight and experience, or supporting other patients and users of services to give feedback that influences decision making.

Expert by Experience author award

The Institute of Mental Health offers six [awards](#) with cash prizes for publications in the previous year that were authored by staff or Public Contributors involved with the Institute. Two of the award categories are

- Best publication co-authored with a person with lived experience of mental distress or a current or former user of mental health services
- Best publication by a member of the Institute of Mental Health who is a person with lived experience of mental distress or a current or former user of mental health services

Helpforce Champions

The [Helpforce Champions](#) Awards are sponsored by Deloitte and supported by NHS England. There are eight awards, two of which are for staff, with the others open to NHS volunteers.

Josh Award

The [Josh Award](#) is an annual award given at the Manchester Science Festival that recognises excellence and innovation in science engagement. The award is open to anyone involved in science engagement.

Mental Health Fringe Award

The Mental Health Foundation makes this annual [award](#) for the most compelling presentation relating to mental health at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

National Service User Awards

These [annual awards](#) have been organised by Cygnet since 2012 and are open to people using mental health or learning disability services in the UK. People using services are eligible, plan the black-tie awards event, run the judging panel and provide entertainment at the ceremony. Winners receive a trophy and a certificate.

NHS Trust awards

Individual NHS Trusts sometimes run their own inhouse awards scheme that includes Public Contributors, such as [Avon and Wiltshire](#) which offer a:

- Behind the Scenes award for teams or individual staff members, volunteers and involvees
- Recovery and Hope award for individuals, or groups of, volunteers and involvees

Other Trusts, such as [South Tees](#) appear to confine these awards to staff. The award at [Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust](#) recognises the way in which patients and the public have been involved in specific projects at the hospital, and where this involvement has brought about change, improvement or a new way of working that benefits patients.

Patient Champion award

Eyeforpharma is a UK-based organisation that provides a place for senior-level pharmaceutical executives, patient groups and other health stakeholders to exchange ideas. A judging panel made up of patients and staff make 16 awards, one of which is the [Patient Champion Award](#). The finalists are individuals who have provided the patient with a voice that has influenced governments, customers or other patients to provide better results for society. Good advocates challenge the status quo, ensure that patients are heard and empowered, and motivate others to account for those in need.

Patient Safety Learning award

This is a charity based in London that offers a [Patient Engagement Award](#).

PENNA awards

The [Patient Experience Network](#) offered [22 national awards](#) in 2019, two of which were open to patient groups, including an Award for Support for Caregivers, Friends, and Family which is open to support groups and an award for Engaging and Championing the Public which is open to patient associations and consumer groups. Individual Public Contributors are not eligible for any of the awards, while staff working in patient engagement and experience are eligible for many categories.

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Any group of two or more volunteers can be nominated for the [Queen's award](#). The majority of the group must be volunteers, and more than half the volunteers must have the right to live in the UK. To be nominated they should do work that: (i) provides a service and meets a need for people living in the local community; (ii) is supported, recognised and respected by the local community and the people who benefit from it; (iii) is run locally; and (iv) have been operating for at least three years.

School for Primary Care Research awards

SPCR is part of the National Institute for Health Research and awards prizes to the winners of two competitions:

- [Impactful Contribution in Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement](#)
- [Exceptional Contribution to Patient and Public Involvement](#).

University awards

Some universities offer awards for excellence in societal engagement, especially where university staff have joined with patients and community organisations to advance innovation and the public understanding of science. Examples include [range of awards](#) offered by Imperial College London, the [Provost's award](#) at University College London, the [Principal's](#)

[Prize](#) at the University of Aberdeen and the [Brian Cox Prize](#) for Excellence in Public Engagement with Research at the University of Dundee.

Unsung Hero awards

The [Unsung Hero](#) Awards shine a light onto the hard work that non-medical and non-clinical staff and volunteers of the NHS provide on a daily basis.

Awards available to staff, teams and organisations

Best Patient-Centric Approach

The British Healthcare Business Intelligence Association offers a suite of awards under the heading Best of Business Intelligence (BOBI). One of these is an award for the [Best Patient-Centric Approach](#) that has helped a company to put patients at the heart of decision-making.

Champion of Diversity, Inclusion and Widening Participation

HEAT awards are given by Health Education England, NHS Improvement and The Department of Health and Social Care on an annual basis, starting in 2019. There are 12 categories, with one being particularly relevant to staff who facilitate patient participation - Champion of Diversity, Inclusion and Widening Participation. Nominations must be submitted by the end of March. Finalists attend an award ceremony and winners receive an A4 certificate, trophy and a branded electronic badge to add to their email signature.

Early Career Award for Public Engagement with Science

This [award](#) is made by the American Association for the Advancement of Science to early career researchers who promote meaningful dialogue between science and society. The winner receives a monetary prize of \$5,000, a commemorative plaque, complimentary registration to the AAAS Annual Meeting, and reimbursement for reasonable hotel and travel expenses to attend the AAAS Annual Meeting to receive the prize.

Inspiring Leadership in Research Engagement Prize

The charity Cancer Research UK offers This prize honours an individual and team members who have demonstrated significant commitment to public engagement with science and have embedded a culture of engagement within their institution or research group.

Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science

The Royal Society offers the [Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science](#) is for UK-based early-career scientists or science communicators who have undertaken high-quality public engagement activities which has had (or will have) a strategic impact on institutions, organisations and cultures, and whose career and future public engagement activities will benefit from the award.

Mani L. Bhaumik Award for Public Engagement with Science

This [international prize](#) is offered by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and recognises scientists and engineers who demonstrate excellence in their contribution to public engagement with science. The winner receives a monetary prize of \$5,000, a commemorative plaque, complimentary registration, and reimbursement for reasonable travel and hotel expenses to attend the AAAS Annual Meeting to receive the prize.

Max Perutz Science Writing award

This [Max Perutz Science Writing](#) Award is given by the Medical Research Council to a PhD student who is exceptional in communicating science to a wider audience.

Michael Faraday prize for science communication

The Royal Society [Michael Faraday](#) Prize for science communication is awarded annually for excellence in communicating science to UK audiences. The Royal Society also offers an [Insight Investment Science Book](#) prize.

Outreach and Engagement Award

This [award](#) is offered by the Royal Society of Biology and offers two prizes – one for new researchers worth £750 and one for established researchers worth £1500. The winner will bring ‘good quality science to non-academic audiences in engaging ways that are likely to foster a lasting interest in the biosciences. Judges will be marking specifically on scientific content, influence, leadership and recognition, innovation, evaluation and feedback, impact on society and working with underserved sectors.’ Little mention here of the public shaping the science.

Outstanding Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement

The Clinical Research Network in Kent, Surrey and Sussex (and perhaps others) offers an award for Outstanding Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) activity.

Patient Experience Award

[CHKS](#) is a private organisation that sells consultancy services and data management expertise to NHS providers. It runs a series of annual Top Hospitals awards that include a Patient Experience Award. This award focuses on what patients think of their experience of visiting a hospital. It is based on a range of patient experience indicators including inpatient surveys, the most recent surveys from A&E, outpatient or maternity, friends and family tests, and PLACE scores.

Patient Experience and Quality Improvement Awards

NHS Elect is a non-profit club of 70 NHS organisations who each pay £28,000 to participate. They run annual [Patient Experience & Quality Improvement Awards](#) that are open to member organisations.

Paediatric Involvement and Engagement in Research prize

The RCPCH-NIHR PIER Prize is offered by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in partnership with the National Institute of Health Research. This award recognises significant contributions to excellent patient engagement for NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio studies.

Public Engagement with Research award

The European Research Council gives an annual award for [Public Engagement with Research](#) to one of a team which has received ERC funding and demonstrated excellence in public engagement and outreach. The prize for each winner includes a trophy, complimentary registration to the EuroScience Open Forum, reimbursement for reasonable travel and hotel expenses for attending the award ceremony and visibility at the award ceremony. In addition,

winning projects will be featured prominently in the ERC communication channels, expanding the visibility of the project for several months after the award.

Richard Driscoll Memorial Award

The [Richard Driscoll Memorial Award](#) is run by the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership and is given to a team that has coproduced an audit with Public Contributors in an exemplary fashion.

Sherman Award for Excellence in Patient Engagement

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement takes a worldwide perspective in making the John Q. Sherman [Award for Excellence in Patient Engagement](#). The focus is on patient and family engagement. It is an annual award with nominations closing in March.

Status of this document

This is one of a suite of more than 30 *How To* guides that explore practical ways to coproduce healthcare research, delivery, teaching and evaluation. They can all be downloaded from [here](#). Each has been co-authored¹ in public, is available online from the very first draft and each version is amended as soon as anyone suggests an improvement to the text². They are therefore never finished and always open to capturing tacit knowledge and proven expertise from new sources.

¹ Requests for help and comment sent to Charlotte Gredal, Paul Manners, Arundi Venkayya. **The following people** have kindly responded to an inquiry with comments and challenges to this discussion: Matthew Gray, Toni James, Kim Rezel,. The conversation started with me uploading the first draft on 20 March 2020.

² Most of the documents we read are finished pieces of work, carefully crafted and edited in private before being shared with anyone else. This is a different kind of paper – it was shared online from the first day, when the initial handful of ideas were incomplete, poorly phrased and tactless. The work has been edited many times, and, on each occasion, a revised version has replaced the earlier material online. This process is still under way, and so this paper may still be lacking crucial concepts, evidence, structure and grammar. As readers continue to provide feedback, further insights will be used to update it, so please contact peter.bates@ndti.org.uk with your contributions. This way of writing is risky, as it opens opportunities to those who may misunderstand, mistake the stopping points on the journey for the destination, and misuse or distort the material. This way of writing requires courage, as an early version can damage the reputation of the author or any of its contributors. Or rather, it can harm those who insist on showing only their ‘best side’ to the camera, who want others to believe that their insights appear fully formed, complete and beautiful in their simplicity. It can harm those who are gagged by their employer or the workplace culture, silenced lest they say something in a discussion that is not the agreed party line. It can harm those who want to profit from their writing, either financially or by having their material accepted by academic journals. In contrast, this way of writing can engage people who are not chosen to attend the meeting or asked for their view until the power holders have agreed on the ‘right message’. It can draw in unexpected perspectives, harvest tacit knowledge, stimulate debate and crowdsource wisdom. It can provide free, leading edge resources.