

PGR Tips on engaging the public in your research

You may have noticed your funder or your institution encouraging you to spend time talking to the general public about your research. Doing this can be very rewarding. We list the opportunities and potential benefits of public engagement on the Vitae website at www.vitae.ac.uk/1238/Public-engagement.html. These include:

- Honing your presentation skills
- Thinking about your project's place in the bigger picture
- Increasing the visibility of your subject
- Building your own profile
- Having some fun and realising how much of an expert you really are.

It also contains a short "how to" list, which is expanded on here:

Consider your audience

This is even more important than for a presentation to your peers. Consider the age, interests and prior knowledge of your audience. Don't assume that your audience is stupid but avoid jargon and specialised language.

What sort of activity?

Lots of ideas and organisations that run activities are listed on the Vitae website. But for example consider writing for a non-specialist magazine, talking to school children, taking part in science or other festivals, taking part in an exhibition or any other opportunities that arise or that you can create. Talking to family or friends that work in different areas is all good practice, and also an opportunity to also get different perspectives on what you are doing, which could be useful.

Consider the purpose of your activity

You may want to debunk some myths research and researchers. More usually your aim will be to engage your audience in the wider field of your research. In the time you will have available it may not be possible to touch on your specific contribution to that field- but does it matter? Focus on one key message at a time

Delivery

What props or visual aids could you use to enliven your presentation? (check health and safety requirements!). What illustrations would add to your article? Try and relate your topic to your audience's situation and interests and think about the possible application of your research.

Seek advice when you are dealing with the media

Most institutions will have an office that can advise on how to deal with publicity.

Most of all- have fun!

Have you had experience of presenting your research to the general public? If so please leave a comment on the PGR Tips part of the Vitae website explaining what you did. Have you got any tips to share?