NIHR Imperial Biomedical Research Centre Public Involvement in Research Prize 2026

Guidance

The NIHR Imperial Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) wishes to acknowledge the value of public involvement (see definition below) in designing and delivering biomedical/health research projects across Imperial College London (ICL) and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust (ICHT).

To show our support and encouragement, we are pleased to announce that our BRC Public Involvement in Research Prize 2026 is now open.

Eligibility: The competition will consider biomedical/health research projects carried out at ICL or ICHT since the beginning of the current Imperial BRC (November 2022) which relate to early translational research. Examples include:

- First-in-human studies
- Early-phase clinical trials
- Development of new diagnostics
- Novel therapeutics and advanced therapies
- Medical devices and digital health technologies
- Precision medicine approaches
- Research that bridges laboratory discoveries and patient benefit ("bench to bedside")

Project teams will be made up of a researcher/s (staff and/or students who must be affiliated to ICL or ICHT – Imperial applicants) and public contributors (see definition below).

Projects led by Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are particularly encouraged. Researcher/s and public contributors are encouraged to contribute collaboratively to the application as appropriate for each project. The lead Imperial applicant will act as the contact point and will be responsible for submitting the application and liaising with the BRC Office in all application-related queries as well as informing the public contributors of the outcome of the application. We welcome submissions from projects that have entered the Public Involvement in Research Prize competition in previous years.

Prize: One project will win the prize. The nominated researcher and a public contributor from the winning project team will be invited to the NIHR Imperial BRC Annual Meeting on the 20th April 2027 to co-present their project in person where they will also be awarded a prize[1].

The prize will consist of:

- £500 in Imperial-administered grant funding awarded to the lead researcher to undertake further public involvement activities on the winning project or other projects, or towards public dissemination of the winning project results
- up to £500 allocated collectively to the public contributors/community group/ charity/patient group as set out below:

[1] The nominated public contributor for the winning project will be paid for their time in preparing the presentation and participating in the meeting. I.e. receive remuneration for up to three hours to prepare the project presentation and for their time to attend the Annual Event to co-present the project together with travel and other related expenses (e.g. childcare/carer costs) will be paid in accordance with NIHR payment guidance.

- Community group/charity/patient group: Where a community group/charity/patient group was involved in the project, the group will receive £500 payable to a UK bank account held in the name of the group. This is pending financial approval and proper due diligence.
- Individual public contributors: Where public contributors participated in an individual capacity, they may each claim a £50 voucher, with vouchers available for up to 10 public contributors.

Only one of these options may be claimed for the winning project. Public contributors may receive either the community group prize money or individual vouchers, but not both. Public contributors are entitled to decline any financial prize. If they wish to donate their financial prize, this must be done by them after it is received.

Application process: To participate in the competition, project teams should submit the entry form (below) by the 19th January. Instructions about each section of the application form are contained within the entry form. Please be concise and use plain English throughout as the applications will be reviewed by a panel which includes Imperial BRC Community Partners.

Assessment: Applications will be assessed by a panel of three academics from ICL and ICHT (who have a working knowledge of public involvement) and three Imperial BRC Community Partners. To ensure impartiality, applicants' names and any identifying details will remain anonymous throughout the evaluation process.

Applications will be assessed on the extent to which they demonstrate meaningful public involvement. Strong applications will show clear evidence that public contribution influenced the research, articulated the actual or potential benefit to patients, and described this in clear, accessible language supported by inclusive and representative involvement activities. There are six questions on the application form which will be scored from 0 (criteria not met) to 5 (exceeds criteria).

Timelines:

Applications Open	13th November 2026
Applications Deadline	19th January 2027 (5 pm)
Assessment Period	January – March 2027
Outcome is announced to all applicants	By 20th March 2027
Winning team presents work at the BRC Annual event	20th April 2027

Definitions: For the purposes of this prize, we use the definitions set out by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), which funds both the Imperial BRC and this prize.

Public: *includes patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services, as well as people from specific communities and organisations that represent people who use services. Also included are people with lived experience of one or more health conditions, whether they are currently patients or not.*

Public involvement in research: *(previously referred to as Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)): research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. It is an active partnership between patients, carers and members of the public with researchers that influences and shapes research.*