

### **1) Why is this an EDI project?**

At present, only 5% of entrants to medical school in the UK are from working class backgrounds. Access to medical school is often concentrated among students from a narrow range of select schools and colleges, and relies on more than academic ability alone. For aspiring doctors from less-advantaged backgrounds, the barriers are higher and opportunities fewer.

In response to this, we designed a 2-day interactive Pathology Programme based at Professor Phil Quirke's laboratory at the University of Leeds to help level the playing field for local sixth-form students from less advantaged backgrounds interested in pursuing a career in medicine. In particular, we aimed to inspire them to consider pathology.

The Leeds Pathology Programme is led by Dr Cartlidge, a local Leeds-born doctor who was the first in her family to attend medical school. She is passionate about widening access to pathology and research careers for underrepresented groups.

### **2) How does your project align with the BRC/CRF EDI Strategy and action plan?**

This project aligns closely with the BRC/CRF EDI Strategy and action plan by addressing inequities in access to medical/research careers, through promoting inclusive engagement with underrepresented groups. In particular, this programme is targeted at high-achieving sixth-form students from less advantaged backgrounds who are currently underrepresented in medicine and academia. Through this programme providing early exposure to a career in pathology, laboratory science and academia, barriers for entry are reduced therefore supporting widening participation.

The programme incorporates PPI through the inclusion of patient representatives who are invited to attend and to share their stories with the attendees and lab team. This helps foster teamwork and ensures students are aware of the importance of patients being at the heart of research. Students see the journey of a lab sample and connect this to being from a real patient, with real emotions waiting for the results. This strongly aligns with the BRC priorities.

Furthermore, the programme promotes inclusivity in the workforce by showing diverse role models, including clinicians, scientists and students from a range of backgrounds. This challenges traditional perceptions of who can be a doctor/scientist and provides them with a network of support beyond the 2 day programme.

### **3) What is the value of your EDI project to promote Research Inclusion in the BRC?**

To reap the benefits of a diverse and inclusive medical community reflecting our society, we must promote equal opportunities for success through recognising that talent and potential have no socioeconomic boundaries. We hope that our annual programme will go on to inspire a new generation of pathologists from diverse backgrounds and instil in them the confidence to aim higher, armed with enhanced skills for success.

This is done through providing early exposure to research environments with targeted public engagement aimed at local underrepresented communities to build awareness and interest in biomedical research. The programme boosts research literacy and confidence in environments the students will not have been exposed to previously. Overall, this programme is strongly aligned with the BRC's long-term goals for research inclusion and equity.

**4) What is the expected short-, medium- and long-term impact of your EDI project for the BRC and others?**

Short-term impact:

- Increased awareness of careers in pathology/medicine/biomedical research amongst attendees
- Improved understanding of the role of research in patient care, including exposure to BRC themes
- Overall increased general awareness of the NIHR BRC and its work
- Enhanced confidence and aspiration to aim higher
- Sense of belonging in clinical and academic environments in preparation for a future career
- Collaboration with the sixth form leads to provide valuable often hard to get work experience in medical/research areas.

Medium-term impact:

- Increase in applications, success and uptake of university courses relating to medicine/pathology/biomedical research
- Improved quality of applications for university and preparedness for interviews
- Ongoing engagement through informal mentorship and signposting of opportunities
- Better appreciation of patient and public involvement in research

Long-term impact:

- Contribution towards a more diverse and representative future workforce in pathology, medicine and clinical research
- Increased diversity within future BRC-associated research communities and the benefits this brings through different experiences and ideas.
- Reduction in inequities accessing academic/clinical careers
- Strengthened link between the pathology department and the BRC with local communities.

Quote from a previous attendee who prior to the session had been unsure of his future plans. He went on to get 2 offers for university courses:

*“Pathology centres across the UK should consider running similar programmes, as the one I attended was incredibly well thought-out and showed just how much students can gain when given the chance to step into the lab, ask questions and learn directly from professionals. Even for students who are unsure about their path in healthcare or science, exposure to pathology might just be the spark that they are looking for.”*

**5) What resources do you require?**

A small amount of laboratory consumables e.g. glass slides, stains, disposable pipettes  
This is for practical sessions on basic histology, microscopy, and microbiome sequencing themed on colorectal cancer.

Refreshments – tea/coffee/juice/biscuits.

Lunch x2 days (up to 20 people).

Pre-booked taxi fares for transport between the lab site and main university campus where they will be taken on a tour of the medical/science buildings, campus and facilities by a current medical student. Approximately 3 taxis required.

Printing of poster resources and certificates of attendance for students.

Expenses for patient representative/s to attend to deliver a session.

**6) What is the overall budget for this EDI project?**

~£250

**7) What is the expected start and end date for this EDI project?**

This is an annual programme, running this year on 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> July 2026.