

Event: Life Sciences Inspire organised by Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) Council Upstream Pathway Bond

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Background

Imperial Biomedical Research Centre

The [Imperial Biomedical Research Centre \(BRC\)](#) is a collaboration between Imperial College London (Imperial) and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, which is funded by a five-year infrastructure grant from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) until November 2027. The Imperial BRC supports 14 areas of research focus as well as a number of core facilities.

The Patient Experience Research Centre

The [Patient Experience Research Centre \(PERC\)](#) is a core facility of the Imperial BRC, which undertakes research on involvement in and engagement with translational research and leads on implementing the Imperial BRC Patient, Public, Involvement, Engagement and Participation (PPIEP) in research Strategy.

Public involvement and engagement in research

The NIHR define public involvement in research as "research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public, rather than 'to', 'about', or 'for' them."

The NIHR define public engagement in research as where information and knowledge about research is provided and disseminated.

Public includes patients, carers, people from underserved communities, and individuals with lived experience of health conditions, whether they are current patients or not.¹

H&F Upstream Pathway Bond

The [Upstream Pathway Bond](#) is a pioneering initiative by the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) aimed at connecting young people and parents with opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, Medicine and Media (STEM³) industries. These opportunities include work experience, workplace visits, and mentoring. It also provides a simple way for businesses to inspire the next generation, build a skilled local workforce, and showcase the exciting careers they offer.

Event purpose and development

Members of the Patient Experience Research Centre team (PERC) were invited by Upstream London and the Pathway Bond team to host an employer/organisation stall at their Life Sciences Inspire event. The event was held on Monday, 9th March 2026, at Scale Space, White City, with the aim of introducing students to real-world careers in the life sciences as part of the Pathway Bond Inspire series, connecting local young people with employers to explore education, apprenticeship, and training pathways.

¹ <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/briefing-notes-for-researchers-public-involvement-in-nhs-health-and-social-care-research/27371#definitions-of-involvement-engagement-and-participation>

Prior to the event, the PERC team attended an employer briefing call with an overview of the day's aims, structure, and expectations for employer participants. The briefing outlined the format of the sessions, the student audience, and the types of questions students would be encouraged to ask.

Event Overview

The event took place on 9th March 2026 from 08:45 am to 12:30 pm at Scale Space White City, hosted by the Upstream London team. The PERC team was one of nine employers invited to host a stall and was represented by Marian Adeyemo and Ruchi Wadhwa. A total of 133 students attended the event from two invited secondary schools based in West London – Phoenix Academy (89 students) and Fulham Cross Academy (44 students).

The agenda of the session was as follows:

- 8:45 am – Employer Arrival
- 9:10 am - Employer Welcome & Briefing
- 9:15 am to 9:25 am - School 1 arrival and welcome
- 9:25 am to 10:25 am – Session 1
- 10:30 am – Session 1 Feedback and Wrap Up
- 10:35 am to 10:40 am – Break and Refreshments
- 10:50 am – School 2 arrival and welcome
- 11:00 am to 12:15 pm – Session 2
- 12:15 pm to 12:25 pm – Session 2 Feedback and Wrap Up
- 12:30 pm – Close

The business/employer participants from the Life Sciences sector were:

- Imperial Patient Experience Research Centre
- Polymateria - *Biotechnology / Sustainability*
- Complement Therapeutics - *Therapeutics / Drug Development*
- Novartis - *Global Pharmaceuticals*
- Sequoia Genetics - *Genomics / Drug Discovery*
- Laboratory of Medical Sciences - *Medical Research (MRC/UKRI)*
- Quell Therapeutics - *Cell & Gene Therapy*
- Synthace Bio - *Biotech Software & Automation*
- Purrafinity - *Environmental Science / Biotechnology*

Each session (1 & 2) in the agenda included two keynote presentations from Complement Therapeutics and Polymateria, followed by a Marketplace, where students had the opportunity to rotate around the room in groups, interacting with employers. Each group of students was allocated 7-8 minutes with each employer before moving to the next table. Students were

encouraged to ask their own questions and/or refer to a list of potential questions from a previously provided booklet. The potential questions shared with students before the event are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Each business had its own table with the option of displaying banners and other promotional material.

PERC Activities:

Research prioritisation activity

The PERC team's table featured three jars as part of an interactive example of a research prioritisation activity, in which students were provided with a 'million-pound' token and asked: "If you had a million pounds to invest in research, which area would you choose?" Students could place their full 'million-pound' token on one or split it between two of the following research areas:

- Infections
- Mental Health (e.g., self-harm and mental health support)
- Respiratory Health (e.g., asthma)

During the Marketplace sessions, the PERC team also posed two further questions to students orally with responses recorded by a member of the team on post-it notes. These questions were:

- "What other things interest you outside of school?" and
- "What health or wellbeing topics do you care most about?"

What other things interest you outside of school?"

Students were asked this question in order to better understand the hobbies and wider interests of this age group and demographic, with the aim of informing how the Imperial Biomedical Research Centre might more effectively engage and involve children and young people in research through activities and approaches that resonate naturally with them. Common interests outside of school included sports, particularly basketball and football, and online and social media activity.

What health or wellbeing topics do you care most about?

Students were offered the opportunity to respond in writing, though only one chose to do so. When asked about health and wellbeing topics they cared most about, students most frequently cited Mental Health and Physical Health, with one student specifically raising Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) and endometriosis.

Full responses from the PERC team's interactions during the Marketplace sessions are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Signposting

In addition, the PERC team provided flyers with QR codes signposting students to [STEM Futures](#) and [Makerspace](#) programmes delivered by Imperial College's Schools Outreach team and encouraged students to sign up to the [Generation R Alliance Young People's Advisory Groups](#)

mailing list to learn about opportunities to get involved in health research. The GenerationR Alliance consists of several Young People's Advisory Groups (YPAGs) around the UK that meet regularly and are actively involved in helping to improve the design and delivery of clinical and other health-related research for children, young people and families.

Photos from the event were taken with consent and are included in **Appendix 3**.

Event Outcomes

The event was well received by students, with the H&F Upstream London team's Impact Report, circulated to all participating businesses and employers after the event, identifying 12 positive themes from the student feedback forms. Students responded enthusiastically to the Marketplace format, noting that direct conversations with employers broadened their understanding of career pathways in life sciences and challenged preconceptions about what routes into the sector look like. Excerpts from the Impact Report can be found in **Appendix 4**. The Impact Report is not currently publicly available, however, content relating to the event has been posted on the [Upstream London LinkedIn page](#).

The PERC team's interactive stall provided a meaningful opportunity to engage students in thinking about health research priorities.

Example Research Prioritisation Activity:

Of 79 students who participated in the research prioritisation activity, "Infections" received a slightly higher allocation (39% - 31 tokens), followed closely by "Mental Health" (37% - 29 tokens) and "Respiratory Health" (24% - 19 tokens). The full results are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Students were informed that these represented the three major areas where the Imperial Biomedical Research Centre, is currently conducting research involving children and young people. When asked to explain their choices, those who prioritised "Infections" frequently referenced the COVID-19 pandemic and the perceived "seriousness" of infectious diseases, noting that infections can affect everyone and have global, population-wide consequences. Several students who chose "Mental Health" explained their decision by highlighting that mental health conditions are frequently overlooked or underdiagnosed, describing symptoms as "hidden" or not outwardly visible in the way that physical conditions might be.

This offers a useful snapshot of the health concerns and interests of the young people in West London attending the event, which may help inform future public involvement, engagement and research priority-setting work at the Imperial Biomedical Research Centre, including future Biomedical Research Centre funding applications.

The event demonstrated the value of including higher education and research organisations alongside industry employers, offering students a fuller picture of the life sciences landscape. During the marketplace sessions, students had the opportunity to speak directly with representatives from all nine participating organisations — including the PERC team — learning about each organisation's work, the roles individuals held within them, and the academic and professional journeys that had led them there. Feedback gathered from the printed feedback forms and the wrap-up discussions led by the Pathway Bond team at the end of each session

indicated that students engaged enthusiastically with this breadth of exposure, showing strong interest in the variety of roles available within academic and research settings, which are often less visible to young people than other industry pathways.

Next steps

Following the session, the PERC team expressed willingness to participate in future Pathway Bond events. The engagement activity highlighted a clear appetite among students for further interaction with Imperial College London researchers, particularly around health awareness and public involvement in research opportunities.

The results of the research prioritisation exercise will be part of the public involvement feedback used to shape future research strategy including the next Biomedical Research Centre funding call for 2028 to 2033.

Event Feedback

At the end of the sessions, a printed feedback form was shared with all the students to explore their experience at the event and their interactions with the organisations.

Below is some of the feedback from students, in their own words, as collated by the Upstream London Pathway Bond team:

"Learnt a lot about career pathways."	"It made me improve my understanding of different careers."	"I was able to discover and learn to enrich my knowledge on the pathway I want to pursue."	The market activity to go around and ask questions helped me understand more."
Provided information and backgrounds of how they progressed into their job roles."	I got to see that there are more pathways in work."	"I learnt that you can do a job that you didn't do GCSEs or A-levels for."	"I loved speaking to the employers! They were incredibly knowledgeable and sociable."
"I understood how not everything is concrete and that there are many opportunities available to take."	"Wide range of employable activities and a wide range of companies."	The speakers were so much help and gave really good things and examples on each company."	You don't have to stick to 1 career pathway."
	Multiple people talking about their backgrounds."	Learning about jobs that I haven't heard of which helps the world to be better."	

Appendix 1: Potential questions to be asked by students

The following questions were collated in a booklet provided to the students before attending the event and shared with the employers in attendance:

About the business

- What does your organisation do?
- How does your business make a difference to the community and economy?

About the job

- Did you always want to work in this industry?
- What do you enjoy about your job?
- What does your role involve? What do you do?

Skills and qualifications

- What qualifications or skills are most useful in your industry?
- Are there specific subjects or courses you recommend focusing on in school, college or university?
- How important are internships, apprenticeships, or volunteer experiences when starting in your field?
- What entry-level roles are available, and what do they typically involve?

Your career pathway

- How did you build your career from your studies to where you are today?
- How did you decide which career path to follow?
- What kind of additional training or qualifications have been useful in your career?
- Are there any skills or qualifications you wish you had focused on earlier in your career?
- How do you keep up with changes or advancements in your industry?

Advice

- Where can I look for opportunities within your organisation?
- What would make my application for a role stand out from others?
- What qualities do you think are important for success?
- What advice would you give someone interested in your field?
- What surprised you most when you started working?
- If you were hiring, what would you look for in a candidate?

- What's the best piece of career advice you have received?
- If you could give advice to your school-age self, what would it be?
- What do you wish you had known when you left school?
- Is it difficult to get a job in your sector?

Appendix 2: PERC Engagement Activity Results

Q1. If you had a million pounds to invest in research, which of these 3 areas would you choose?

As part of the PERC stall engagement activity, the team introduced students to 3 major research areas where Imperial is currently working with young people and asked: *"If you had a million pounds to invest in research, which area would you choose?"*

Students could place their full 'million-pound' token on one area or split it between two. A total of 79 students took part, and the choices were:

Infections	Mental Health (e.g., self-harm and mental health support)	Respiratory Health (e.g., asthma)
31	29	19

Two additional questions were also posed to students during the marketplace sessions. Verbal responses were recorded by a member of the PERC team in writing on post-it notes. For the third question, students were also offered the opportunity to record their own responses in writing; one student chose to do so.

Q2. What other things interest you outside of school? Common themes were:

Sports, especially basketball and football
Online/social media (e.g., TikTok, online gaming, streaming, YouTube, and other general online activity)

Q3. What health or well-being topics do you care most about? The most frequent responses were:

Mental Health
Physical Health
One specific mention of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) and endometriosis

Appendix 3: Photos

Photos included below were taken with consent.



Appendix 4: Life Sciences Inspire Impact Report

Below are excerpts from the Impact Report produced and shared with participating organisations by the H&F Upstream London team following the event.

WHY YOUR EFFORT MATTERS

This event introduces students to real-world careers in the life sciences as part of the **Pathway Bond Inspire series**, connecting local young people with employers to explore education, apprenticeship, and training pathways.

THE SESSION AIMED TO:

- Inspire students to consider careers in life sciences as a viable pathway.
- Enhance understanding of career pathways, qualifications and required skills.
- Demonstrate how to use labour market information for career planning.
- Challenge stereotypes about life sciences and related roles.
- Develop communication skills and workplace insight.
- Build confidence through direct employer interactions.

THE UPSTREAM PATHWAY BOND:

- Gives young people clearer career pathways and skills development opportunities.
- Ensures students gain knowledge, skills and confidence for the evolving workplace.
- Supports diverse backgrounds to achieve educational excellence.
- Develops employer-valued skills and qualities key to future success.

TWO SCHOOLS - 133 STUDENTS

Phoenix Academy

Secondary School - Year 10 - 89 Students

Located in White City, one of West London's most economically deprived wards, Phoenix Academy serves a highly diverse community where over 60% of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium. Students here have had limited employer interactions outside their immediate neighbourhood, and the school is actively working to connect young people with the world of work to raise aspirations and broaden their understanding of what a career in life sciences could look like.



Fulham Cross Academy

Secondary School - 44 Students

Situated in Fulham, Fulham Cross Academy draws students from some of the most disadvantaged parts of the borough, with a significant proportion from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and a high proportion of English as an Additional Language learners. The school is committed to broadening employer engagement to boost student aspirations, and events like this play a vital role in giving students direct access to professionals and opening up career routes they may not have previously considered.

THANK YOU

Your time created real opportunity for the next generation

On behalf of **Hammersmith & Fulham Council**, **Upstream London** and the **Pathway Bond** team, a heartfelt thank you to every employer representative who gave their time on 9th March 2026 at Scale Space White City.

In a single afternoon you reached 133 young people at a pivotal moment in their lives. You showed them that a brilliant future in science doesn't require a single fixed path. Genomics, therapeutics, environmental biotech and global pharma are all places where curiosity and ambition are welcomed and rewarded.

Many of these students have had limited employer interactions prior to events like this. Each conversation, however brief, builds the confidence and awareness that shapes the choices they will make about their future.

133

Students from 2 West London Schools

9

Employer Organisations Represented

12

Positive Themes in Student Feedback

