

## The Initiative

The UEA Engage initiative aims to promote and support public engagement activities at the University of East Anglia (UEA), with the aim of



creating a culture where the research sector and the researchers themselves, place a great value on public engagement activity. The UEA 2012-2016 Corporate Plan outlined the need for ‘vigorous public engagement’ and this initiative takes a significant step towards the achievement of this goal.

## Benefits

Further to the UEA 2012-2016 Corporate Plan that outlined the need for public engagement, the University’s 2016-2020 Corporate Plan states a need to support the “...key challenges that our research is addressing.” In this regard, UEA Engage addresses the following areas:

**Strategy 3** – “...Explore how we can extend our influence in our communities.”

**Strategy 5** – “Develop and ...promote our research strengths...”

UEA is proud of its strong research base, which has grown as a cohort by 27% over the past four years, and is predicted to grow even further over subsequent years. This continual growth is set to further increase in subsequent years and this will strengthen the impact of its research outcomes and activities in many areas, inclusive of public engagement.

## Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

**Principle 3: Clause 3** – “Researchers need support to develop the communication and other skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter.”

**Principle 3: Clause 9** – “...increasing the skill and effectiveness of researchers in key areas such as writing for publication or communicating with a wider audience.”

### Impacts

In 2016, the Centre for Research on Children & Family (CRCF); situated within the Faculty of the Social Sciences at UEA, was approached directly by both Boys2Men, a charity for dads and sons who had heard about the Faculty’s excellent reputation as well as the 4Women Resource Centre in Norwich, which was the first women’s services Centre of its kind in Norfolk.

Both charities needed the advice and guidance of researchers from UEA to help them to best evidence and present the important outcomes of their work. Researcher support included; how to effectively design



and analyse user satisfaction, as well as outlining other methods of providing evidence that can be used in the submission of future bids for funding opportunities. The 4Women Resource Centre, an organisation based in Norwich provides holistic services for vulnerable women, such as those who have been abused or homeless. Representatives from this Centre met in 2016 with researchers Dr Birgit Larsson, Dr Georgia Philip and Julie Young, who are themselves, already working in similar areas of study in the Faculty. Staff from the small Boys2Men charity for dads and liaised with Professor Marian

Brandon and Dr Georgia Philip, in order to ascertain ways that they could evaluate their newly expanded project.

Rowena Hagger-Utting, development coordinator of the 4Women Resource Centre (2011), described the varied services that are on offer for women who face social exclusion for a range of reasons including abuse, mental health, drug and alcohol problems, financial troubles, employment and offending. The 4Women Resource Centre also offers advice to women on housing, skills development and how they can access training and further education. For past female offenders, the Centre offers them support with the aim of helping them to avoid re-offending.



## Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers played a central role in the formation of the UEA Engage initiative. The initiative embraces the key principles outlined within the Concordat, including “UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement”. Both the 2012-2014 and 2014-2016 Action Plan recognise and value the involvement of researchers with regards to public engagement activities. The signatories and supporters of this Concordat have agreed the 2016-2020 Action Plan which also place a strong value on encouraging and facilitating public engagement on both a local and national level.