# Communicating with the Public

# Mentorship Scheme Guidance Notes

#### Aim

Evidence Synthesis Ireland’s (ESI) mission is to make evidence syntheses more usable in every sense of the word – better designed, conducted and reported, and more usable by the public and within healthcare policy and clinical practice decision-making across the island of Ireland and beyond.

**Communicating clearly the findings of evidence syntheses** to patients and the public can be challenging, yet is possible. It is important to translate research to make it understandable for a variety of reasons. Increased health research literacy means a **better informed public**, who are then more empowered to make informed decisions about healthcare. Improved dissemination of systematic reviews means **the public, clinicians and policymakers can make better decisions** based on an overall body of evidence. For researchers, the importance is in being able to communicate research beyond traditional academic audiences, to make it accessible, ensure wide reach and enhance the impact of work that they do.

The ESI *“Communicating with the Public”* Mentorship Programme aims to **build capacity in communicating evidence syntheses** to **public audiences** through a facilitated virtual mentorship programme. Up to three successful applicants will receive team-based and individualised mentorship in communication for public audiences over a six-months period from a team of mentors:

* **Sarah Chapman** (Knowledge Broker at Cochrane UK)
* **Dr Claire O’Connell** (Science Journalist and Communicator)
* **Selena Ryan-Vig** (Knowledge Broker at Cochrane UK)
* **Hon Prof Derek Stewart**, **OBE** (Science Journalist and Communicator, PPI Strategist Evidence Synthesis Ireland)

#### Who should apply?

Applicants must have evidence synthesis experience, ideally with a synthesis they have authored and are interested in disseminating to a public audience. The scheme is also open to those who have an understanding of the methodology of evidence synthesis and are interested in communicating the process or importance of systematic reviews and evidence syntheses to the public. This scheme is open to all health and social care professionals, researchers, research officers/managers, policymakers currently resident on the island of Ireland.

#### What’s in it for mentees?

* Training to develop communication skills, particularly in relation to communicating research to public audiences and engaging with the media
* Mentorship and support for the production of two pieces, one to be a blog, the other to be a written or spoken piece (this could be in print or online, radio, video, including newspaper articles both broadsheet and tabloid style, press releases etc.). Publication is not guaranteed.
* Opportunity to publish a blog on Evidence Synthesis Ireland’s website
* Guidance on involving the public and patients in your writing/communication process
* Guidance on finding the most appropriate outlet for submission

#### What we’d like from you

* Produce and aim to publish two pieces of communication for a public audience over the mentorship period of six months
* Acknowledge the assistance received from the Scheme in any publication associated with or arising from the Scheme
* Be motivated, flexible and open to feedback
* Commit to attending training workshops and virtual meetings with the mentor(s)
* Be reflective, responsive and give feedback to ESI on the scheme

#### The role of the mentors:

* Provide leadership, facilitation and lead training workshops, including virtual meetings
* Each commit to at least one virtual meeting with the mentees
* Mentor(s) will review 2-3 drafts of each mentee project with a 10 working day turnaround for feedback
* Provide information and advice on professional and publishing matters
* Provide guidance and constructive feedback on writing
* Advice selecting avenue for submission of piece(s)

#### What you can expect from ESI:

* ESI will support up to three mentorships in 2024
* We will introduce successful mentees to each other (as this is a team-based model) and then to the mentors via introductory email or meeting prompting the initial meetings between mentor and mentee to discuss topics, targets and focus.
* Request informal updates during the scheme and a formal evaluation/report upon completion of the scheme
* Be a point of contact for any issues arising during the scheme

#### Important dates

* The closing date is **November 21st at 5pm.**
* Successful mentees will be notified mid December.
* The mentorship period is expected to begin in January.

#### How to apply

Complete the **application form**, and send with a 2 page CV as a **single, signed PDF document** to [esi@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:esi@universityofgalway.ie) with ESI Communicating with the Public in the subject line.

[ ] Signed Application Form (PDF)

[ ] 2 Page CV (PDF) listing any previous evidence synthesis, publications, writing experience, awards or recognition, or mentoring experience

**Notes and frequently asked questions**

* The time commitment varies, but includes attending two 2-hour workshops, and working with a mentor(s) over a 6 month period to produce two pieces, and other meetings as required.
* The *Communicating with the Public* Mentorship scheme will be advertised once a year. Up to three successful applicants will be chosen.
* Applicants from Northern Ireland are highly encouraged.
* The selected mentees are requested to complete an agreement form, which must be submitted to ESI before the mentee can commence.
* Following completion of the mentorship, the mentee will be required to complete a formal Report Form to outline the completed project and capture the main experiences and outputs around communication gained from the mentorship.
* The mentorship will end after the 6 month period.
* Publication is not guaranteed.