

Conference for Research & Innovation Supporters 14th June 2016

The origins of the conference:

Firstly, a bit of reflection ... Research and Innovation is supported by people from a wide range of backgrounds, occupying very diverse roles and bringing a rich diversity of skills and expertise. We work in different parts of the University – in Research Centres, Academic Departments, Faculties and Professional Services - but share in common a commitment to support and advance the University's research and innovation ambitions articulated in the Strategic Plan: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ourplan/

Our researchers are in the driving seat undertaking excellent research that brings public benefit and their talent and productivity is at the heart of realizing the University's R&I ambitions. As professionals it is our job to continue to strive to meet the needs of researchers, advising, supporting, reducing burdens and supporting the ambitions of research centres, departments, Faculties and the University.

As professionals we bring a lot of experience and expertise and already deliver a professional level of support. A future aim is to work more effectively together and share good practice across the faculties and between academic/professional service departments. A key aim of the *Sheffield Professional* initiative is to improve links between different departments and encourage our professional staff to work across boundaries: www.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffieldprofessionals/index

The seed of an idea ... Back in 2014 some staff within Research and Innovation Services (R&I Services) got together to reflect on possible ways to bring together staff from right across the University who support R&I activities – the goal being to further strengthen relationships and joint working. Of course there are many excellent examples of people demonstrably working across boundaries, well established networks in place, many joint initiatives and brilliant Centre, Department and Faculty-led conferences. However, what we felt was missing was a safe space in which all R&I supporters, junior and senior staff from all parts of our University, could come together to connect, build new networks, exchange ideas and form collaborations across boundaries. A conference seemed the best way of achieving this.

Exploring if it's worth doing ...

In early 2015 Mel Knight & Richard Hudson, from R & I Services, began the job of turning an idea into reality. The first step was to see if there would be any demand and so a simple survey was created. 92 people replied to the survey and a promising 67% indicated they would attend (and 32% said maybe). Respondents included academic staff with an R&I support role as well as research administrators and research managers.

A shared enterprise ...

To be useful for the university it was essential that the design, development and delivery of the conference would be a truly shared enterprise. Real care was taken to ensure that the conference organising team was made up of a cross-section of the community, reflecting its diversity, including representation from all Faculties and from Professional Services.

The conference team has high hopes that the conference on 14th June will mark an important milestone in strengthening our community of R&I supporters – to the benefit of researchers and wider research ambitions. The conference is open to all, welcoming academic staff with a support role as well as those with an interest in a holistic approach.



Mel Knight



Richard Hudson

The University of Sheffield

Supportive statement from Professor Chris Newman:

Director of Research and Innovation for the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health

The expertise of professional support staff across the University is crucial to our R & I endeavours and ambitions. Sharing a common vision with an integrated team approach between academic and professional support colleagues delivers tremendous professional benefits for individuals, teams and the University as a whole. This innovative conference not only covers topics that are vitally important to the delivery of our strategic objectives in R & I but offers a rare opportunity for networking of colleagues from across all our R&I professional support community. I hope you will register to attend and enjoy a highly informative and interactive day.

