

NIHR Health Protection Research Unit for Emerging and Zoonotic Infections

Knowledge Mobilisation Strategy

Background

The NIHR Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU) in Emerging and Zoonotic infections (EZI) was established in 2014 as a collaboration between the University of Liverpool, Public Health England (PHE) and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. In 2020, HPRU EZI received funding for a further five years work and welcomed the University of Oxford as a partner. The HPRU EZI supports PHE in its role in protecting the UK from emerging and zoonotic infections, and increasing research capacity within this area.

Knowledge mobilisation will be embedded in the work of the Unit, with a cross-cutting knowledge mobilisation and public and patient involvement and engagement theme strengthening the work of HPRU EZI projects and maximising impact by working with each of the four HPRU EZI research themes:

1. Patient research for public health
2. Diagnostics and host response
3. Pathogen and vector biology
4. Epidemiology and risk analysis

The aim of this strategy is to outline how the theory-informed approach to knowledge mobilisation agreed by all NIHR HPRUs will be used by the HPRU EZI to support researchers within the Unit to conduct knowledge mobilisation activities to maximise the impact of their work. This strategy addresses how to mobilise knowledge generated by the HPRU EZI, and to develop expertise and establish a culture in partner organisations to improve their capacity to draw on research evidence.

Evidence and theory informed approaches to knowledge mobilisation within HPRUs

Knowledge mobilisation definition

Knowledge mobilisation is about bringing together different communities to share knowledge to catalyse change. Knowledge mobilisation is a two-way process which enables advances in health protection research to create benefits for patients and the public; supporting research informed decision-making by policy makers, public health practitioners, the public, and other stakeholders.

Effective knowledge mobilisation involves:

- researchers who engage with the policy, practice, research and public communities where their research can make a difference, as part of devising their research questions, to ensure that they address important questions in a useful way.
- researchers influencing decision-making processes in policy, practice and elsewhere through having a 'seat at the table' alongside other approaches to dissemination.
- increasing understanding of the value of research, including limitations, among those who can use research findings.

Theory and evidence informed approaches

In line with the pan HPRU knowledge mobilisation strategy, HPRU EZI aims to apply evidence or theory-based approaches to knowledge mobilisation, building this evidence in the process.

One framework within which evidence-based approaches to knowledge mobilisation is presented is [Using Evidence: What Works](#). This “discussion document” summarises a project called The Science of Using Science, funded by the Wellcome Trust and the What Works Centre for Wellbeing (Breckon and Dodson, 2016; Langer et al, 2016). The aim of The Science of Using Science project was to review which interventions are most effective at increasing decision-makers’ use of research evidence in various decision arenas. The project involved two “review of reviews”:

1. A systematic review of systematic reviews of the evidence-informed decision making literature, which included 36 reviews of 91 interventions;
2. A scoping review of other social science interventions that might be relevant to knowledge mobilisation which identified more than 100 interventions.

Identified interventions were grouped within six underlying mechanisms of enabling research-informed decision-making. These are:

1. Awareness: building awareness and positive attitudes towards evidence use
2. Agree: building mutual understanding and agreement on policy-relevant questions and the kind of evidence needed to answer them
3. Access and communication: providing communication of and access to evidence
4. Interact: facilitating interactions between decision-makers and researchers
5. Skills: supporting decision-makers to develop skills in accessing and making sense of evidence
6. Structures and processes: influencing decision-making structures and their processes.

We will identify evidence-based approaches within this and other frameworks to promote knowledge mobilisation of the findings of our HPRUs.

Evaluating knowledge mobilisation and improving the evidence base for it

As an expanding area of practice, knowledge mobilisation needs to develop an underpinning evidence base. Knowledge mobilisation in health protection may also have some specific aspects. The HPRU EZI will therefore evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge mobilisation approaches used. This includes evaluation of the changes in the culture and expertise in mobilising knowledge across researchers and other partners, prospective studies of approaches employed and their effects, and observational studies including case studies.

Capacity building and training

Within HPRU EZI

The HPRU EZI knowledge mobilisation team will work with theme leads and/or designated researchers within each theme to support the effective planning, implementation and documentation of knowledge mobilisation activities. Specific knowledge mobilisation objectives will be agreed for each theme (process described below).

As part of induction all new staff members will have individual or group discussions with the HPRU EZI knowledge mobilisation team, as appropriate to introduce the concept, aims and activities relating to knowledge mobilisation within the Unit.

Continued capacity building will include the sharing of case studies of activities conducted by researchers within the HPRU EZI with other Unit members to highlight success stories, discuss lessons learnt and foster further engagement in knowledge mobilisation by researchers. Training needs will be identified through discussions at each theme group meeting.

Across HPRUs

Online-training resources in knowledge mobilisation will be developed and curated in partnership with other HPRUs and will be accessible across the HPRU network.

We will maintain a network that will iteratively develop a knowledge mobilisation framework for health protection incorporating learning across the area.

Knowledge mobilisation in Public Health England (National Institute of Health Protection) and across HPRUs

As the principal user of research evidence generated by HPRU EZI, knowledge mobilisation partnership among wider Public Health England staff and structures and HPRU EZI researchers is critical. This will include: development of relationships to support joint working in the area; engaging PHE stakeholders/end users in framing the research questions addressed so that results will fit to policy and practice needs; and researcher input into policy and practice innovation and planning informed by research findings and expertise. PHE Knowledge and Evidence teams have committed to collaboration with HPRUs to mobilise HPRU generated knowledge across PHE and a similar relationship is planned with these functions evolving in the National Institute of Health Protection.

Opportunities for cross-cutting activities with other HPRU's will be identified and agreed by the HPRU EZI steering committee. Effectiveness in this area of strategy will be evidenced by overall collaborative structures and processes as well as the role of these in case study examples.

Engagement with wider policy-makers, professionals, industry and the public to increase impact

Researchers will be supported to develop relationships to allow their expertise in and engagement with the research from planning to dissemination. We will also work with our HPRU EZI Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) lead when considering knowledge mobilisation with the public, and engage with the PPIE working group where appropriate. The HPRU EZI has an external knowledge mobilisation advisor on the Unit steering committee who will provide further insight on the research questions and context. Additional advisors will be sought to represent a range of interests relevant to HPRU EZI.

The HPRU EZI will identify end users and other stakeholders for and on whom the research of the HPRU EZI has the potential to impact. All end users are considered stakeholders, not all stakeholders are end users. The [Fast Track Impact](#) stakeholder analysis template will assist researchers when identifying stakeholders and considers:

- level of stakeholders' interest in the project
- aspects of the research they are interested in
- level of influence to generate impact.

Stakeholder mapping will be conducted to steer knowledge mobilisation activities. By identifying end-users and other stakeholders at the project and theme level, the HPRU EZI will be able to map them to provide a visual representation of the people/organisations that will both benefit from and influence our research and how they are connected. This will enable knowledge mobilisation activities to be effectively planned and allow for cross-project/theme activities where appropriate.

A [Theory of Change](#) depicts long-term goals and the conditions required to achieve them (Taplin and Clark, 2012). A Theory of Change has been drafted to illustrate how the projects will contribute to the impact the HPRU EZI aims to achieve, and will be used to identify interim outputs (results) needed at the project and theme level. Outcomes that are expected to be achieved as a result of project outputs will be collated at the theme level to highlight the pathway to impact (see Appendix 1). By identifying outputs and outcomes during project planning, knowledge mobilisation activities can be planned throughout the lifetime of the project.

Identification of stakeholders and the development of a Theory of Change framework will help to steer research directions, using approaches such as setting out assumptions, preconditions, interim steps and outcomes needed to reach the impact. These will also increase appreciation of differences of understanding across groups and individuals, as well as varying organisational cultures, to guide effective communication.

Planning, implementing and reflections on this activity will provide a record for reporting and material to allow improvement in these approaches.

Technologies for knowledge mobilisation

The knowledge mobilisation partnerships within and across HPRUs will use the full range of relevant technologies to support knowledge mobilisation. As noted above, collaborative relationships across research, practice and policy process are at the centre of this. However more specific tools including accessible data sets, data visualisation interfaces, easily usable software implementations of methods, policy papers, and briefing documents including lay summaries, and social media communication will be co-produced in support of mobilising knowledge generated by the HPRUs.

Measuring impacts and the role of knowledge mobilisation

Setting project level objectives

As part of capacity building activities with each theme, knowledge mobilisation objectives will be agreed for each theme and reviewed regularly. Objectives will be set considering the planned project outputs and outcomes to determine how knowledge mobilisation activities contribute to impact, and recorded using the HPRU EZI knowledge mobilisation data collection tool. Horizon scanning for additional opportunities will ensure maximum impact is achieved.

Data collection in the HPRU EZI

Knowledge mobilisation outcomes in the HPRU EZI are continuously reported systematically in the HPRU EZI outputs document. Researchers are required to report all knowledge engagement and mobilisation activities undertaken. Where available, supporting evidence will be submitted by researchers to strengthen case studies and to enable follow-up actions where required. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Use of research to inform national guidelines
- membership of and contribution to Government advisory groups (e.g. SAGE, MHRA) or local Government advisory groups (e.g. outbreak management group)
- submissions to Parliamentary Select Committees (written or oral), POST notes or other parliamentary knowledge exchange activities
- advising organisations or governing bodies on Covid-19 strategies (e.g. national governing bodies, sports teams, businesses).

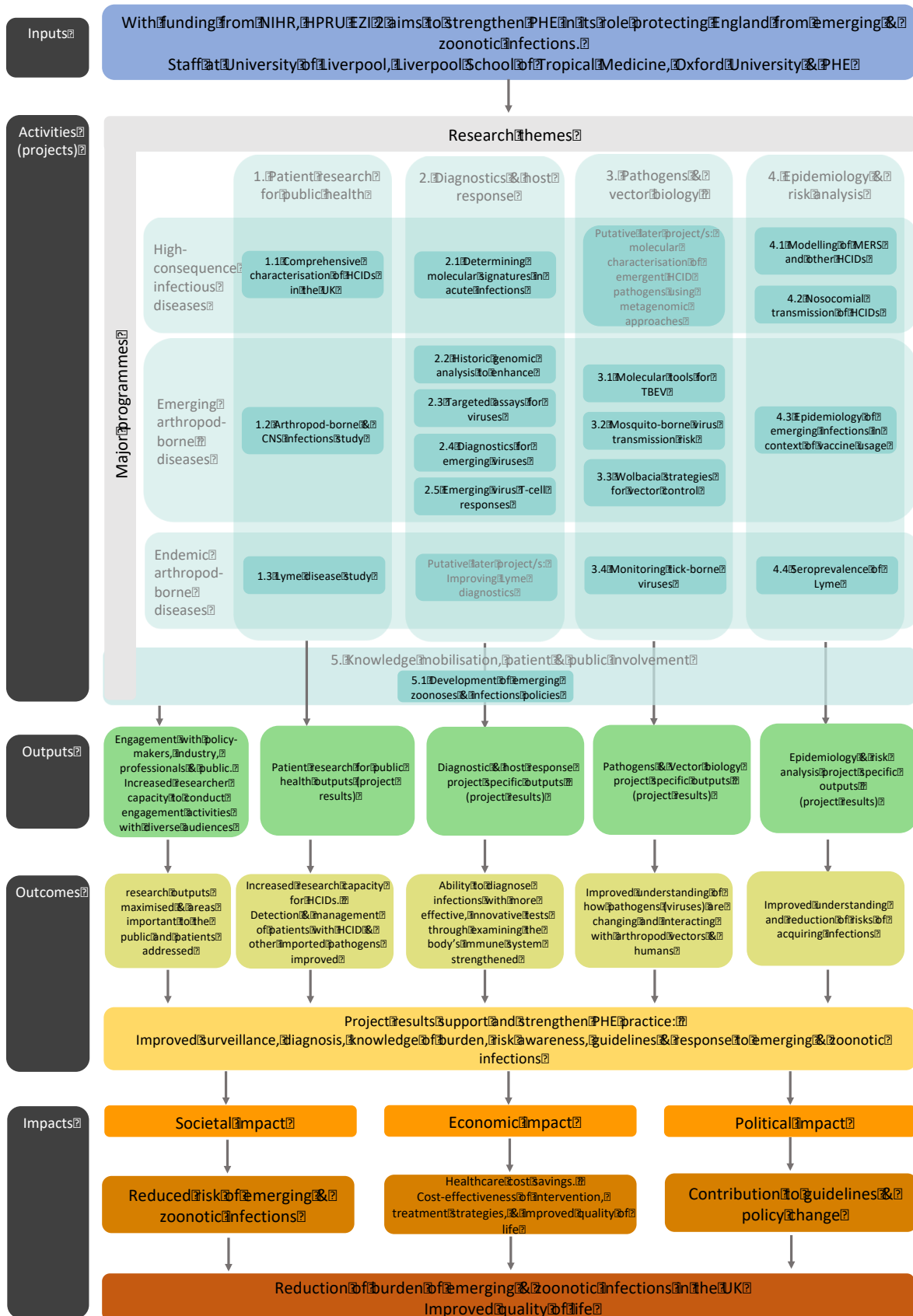
All data will be collated annually to report to NIHR and a case study selected to highlight substantial added value or impact within the Unit. Reporting will include following areas:

- Reflections on knowledge mobilisation and monitoring of activity
- Collaboration with PHE/NIHP
- Engagement with stakeholders
- Dissemination and communication of research activity
- Capacity building and training on knowledge mobilisation.

NIHR Reporting requirements

HPRUs will evaluate their knowledge mobilisation activity annually, reporting within two domains a) capturing the breadth of knowledge mobilisation activities and impact, b) an in-depth case study. One case study per year within each HPRU, or where appropriate jointly across more than one HPRU, will consider the approaches to knowledge mobilisation for a piece of work that offers substantial added value or impact.

Appendix 1: Initial HPRU EZI Theory of Change model



Appendix 2: References and resources

Breckon and Dodson (2016) Using evidence – what works? *Alliance for Useful Evidence*
<https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/Alliance-Policy-Using-evidence-v4.pdf>

Fast Track Impact: how to do stakeholder analysis
<https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/post/2019/03/11/how-to-do-stakeholder-analysis>

Langer, Tripney and Gough (2016). The science of using science: researching the use of research evidence in decision-making. *The EPPI centre*
<https://www.alliance4usefulevidence.org/assets/Science-of-Using-Science-Final-Report-2016.pdf>

Taplin and Clark (2012). Theory of Change basics: a primer on Theory of Change. *Act Knowledge: theory to results*
https://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToCBasics.pdf

HPRU EZI output reporting document
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xKqL6fcPtCTD1Dc3UI2UTxWeInagc7EqZofY6wITXYM/edit#gid=1748803069>

HPRU EZI knowledge mobilisation data collection tool (attached)

Version 1.2 4.3.21