# Research integrity champions, leads and advisers:
# Case study from Cancer Research UK Beatson Institute

## Institutional context

The Beatson is a cancer research institute, situated in Glasgow with approximately 250 researchers split across 30 research groups consisting of Principal Investigators (PIs), postdoctoral scientists, PhD students and scientific officers. It is one of Europe's leading cancer research centres, supporting cutting-edge work into the molecular mechanisms of cancer development. As well as core support from Cancer Research UK, the Institute also receives an additional third of its total income from external grants and industry collaborations. It has an excellent reputation for fundamental cancer research, including world-class metabolism studies and renowned *in vivo* modelling of tumour growth and metastasis. Its research ethos is about excellence, honesty, openness, accountability and integrity.

The Beatson has a Senior Research Adviser who supports research integrity across the Institute. In 2019, it also introduced a network of Research Integrity Champions to help foster research integrity at the grass roots level within individual research groups. These research integrity champions represent a broad spectrum of research staff at the Institute, from technicians to group leaders.

## The role of the champions

- To act as a conduit to aid the implementation of new and existing policies relating to good conduct in research;

- To communicate on matters relating to research integrity in both directions;

- To help foster a collaborative research culture and environment;

- To undertake a first point of contact/gatekeeper role within their research group;

- To support and enable research integrity.

The champions do not play a role in research misconduct matters. Their role is rather to support and enable good research conduct.

As the Institute's research is not primarily clinical, the champions do not have a great deal to do with research integrity relating to human research ethics, although in other settings this could be an element of their role.

## Development and maintenance of the network

Each PI was asked to nominate a champion and there was very good engagement with the concept from across the Institute, boosted by buy-in from the senior management team. Those taking on the role are a mix of senior and more junior staff and include some of the more experienced technicians and laboratory managers. Only one champion is a PhD student, representing one of the smaller research groups.

The role was devised by the Senior Research Adviser and discussed with the research integrity champions at their inaugural meeting. The role is described on the Beatson's website and is a feature of the research integrity toolbox on the internal intranet.

The champions meet with the Senior Research Adviser annually to discuss their experiences, share knowledge, raise any issues and feedback, and hear about the latest research integrity developments. There is also optional research integrity training for the champions, covering current discipline-specific research integrity matters and research-group level activities.

## Features of the system

This is a relatively informal system focused on support and development, and possibly for this reason, there has been a good level of engagement across the Institute.  Staff have been willing to participate, ask questions and raise matters at an early stage, which probably helps prevent them developing into more serious issues.

## Benefits

The Institute has found that having research integrity champions facilitates research integrity being more openly discussed, enhances communication about issues and developments, and helps engage more researchers. Having champions embedded within each research group enables group-specific issues to be raised and discussed.

## Challenges

A challenge of taking on the role of research integrity champion is that researchers need to make time to actively engage in the role. Depending on their role within the Institute, staff turnover also means new champions need to be found.

## One piece of advice for institutions looking to implement a Champion/ Adviser network

Identify approachable, engaged champions with specific knowledge of research and potential issues but don't make the role too onerous.

## Further information is available from:

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