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**Abstract**

Public engagement plays an important role in the contemporary UK academy, and is promoted through initiatives such as Beacons of Public Engagement and research grant 'Pathways to Impact'. Relatively little is known, however, about academic experiences of such engagement activities. This study focuses on one staff group, contract researchers, to explore the perceived challenges and opportunities of public engagement. Qualitative and quantitative data from a web-based survey and three focus groups are used to show that, while engagement activities are often seen as rewarding, the challenges involved in participating in them are profound. While researchers report practical needs, such as for logistical support or communication training, key barriers relate to the conditions of contract research more generally, and specifically to job insecurity, transiency, and lack of autonomy. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Davies, Sarah R., E-Mail: dxq327@hum.ku.dk