**Supporting Synthesis and Self-Assembly: Dial-a-Molecule/Directed Assembly Joint Early Career Researcher Meeting**

The Foresight Centre, Liverpool, Mon 19th and Tues 20th June 2017

Approximately 50 early career researchers (ECRs) attended an excellent research and networking event at the Foresight Centre in Liverpool, hosted and organised by Dr Anna Slater (University of Liverpool), Dr Gill Smith (Dial-a-Molecule coordinator) and Dr Julian Rose (Directed Assembly coordinator). Attendees were from a number of institutions across the U.K. Once the discussions of who had suffered the earliest train were over – with Cardiff appearing to emerge as the ‘winners’ – a packed two-day programme began.

The event comprised a range of sessions focussed on supporting early career researchers within the scientific areas addressed by the *Dial-a-Molecule* and *Directed Assembly* grand challenges. During the first session, each attendee delivered a brief flash presentation on their research interests; many took this key opportunity to seek collaborations with researchers who had complementary expertise to their own. A later ‘speed networking’ session gave people the chance to meet with other attendees, and understand the truly exciting breadth of research areas being represented. Breakout sessions on collaboration building, leadership, and funding allowed for lively discussion and the sharing of important information.

We (as early career academics) are grateful to a number of established researchers for sharing their expertise and experience about both scientific and non-scientific aspects of a successful and enjoyable career in research. Andrew Cooper (Liverpool), Rebecca Goss (St Andrews), and Michael Ward (Sheffield) delivered insightful, engaging, and entertaining talks. Additionally, representatives from industry, funding agencies, and publishing companies shared their insights; Elena Corbos (Johnson-Matthey) and Samuel Winthrop (Springer Nature) delivered presentations, with flash presentations from Ed Pyzer-Knapp (IBM), Jon Conti-Ramsden (KCMC), Lucy Hawarden (Bristol-Myers Squibb), and Tim Jenkins (Waters). Lucy Williams discussed the support that the EPSRC offers early career researchers. Panel discussions on each day of the event enabled lively and constructive discussions between the audience and our speakers.

We are sincerely thankful to the conference organisers for coordinating an excellent event that was well-placed to address the needs of the audience. We hope that this event can continue to serve the needs of the ECR community within the scope of these important Grand Challenges, and we look forward to hosting the next event at the University of Strathclyde on Monday 18th and Tuesday 19th June 2018.

Dr David Nelson, *Chancellor’s Fellow and Lecturer, University of Strathclyde*

Dr Marc Reid, *GlaxoSmithKline/Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellow, University of Strathclyde*