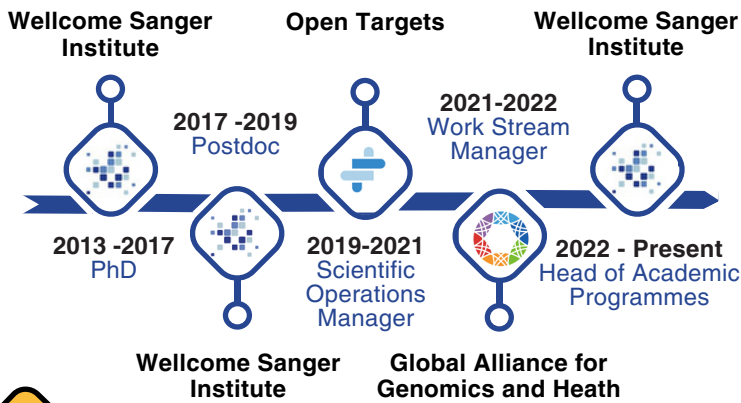


Sanger to Success

Insights from Our Early Career Researcher (ECR) Alumni

Alice Mann



My Current Role

I lead the development of a shared strategy and collaborative approach for the Faculty, PhD and Postdoc programmes, taking a holistic view of the whole academic pathway. My mission is to enable and empower the next generation of genomics researchers and leaders, by overseeing the end-to-end academic process and heading up the team that leads programmes. I also interface with partner organisations and international initiatives to increase collaboration and knowledge sharing in the field.

How did you find the transition into your first role after your Postdoc?

Moving beyond a purely research-focused role initially felt uncertain. However, with encouragement from my supervisor and peers, I recognised that my strengths lay in understanding complex systems, connecting people, and thinking strategically. I realised that what I most enjoyed during my PhD was not just the research itself, but synthesising evidence into a coherent narrative - I was one of the few who genuinely enjoyed writing my thesis. Those same skills, bringing clarity to complexity, aligning stakeholders, and shaping strategy, now underpin my work in portfolio and programme leadership.

What has been your biggest professional challenge?

One of my biggest challenges was understanding my own strengths and motivations. Seeking honest feedback from peers and supervisors was invaluable and I'd encourage others to actively gather external perspectives as they can provide clarity you may not see yourself.

How did your time as a Sanger ECR influence your career path?

The scale and ambition of the science I experienced as a PhD student at Sanger profoundly shaped my career. As a Postdoc, working with diverse stakeholders, from academics to the NHS strengthened my ability to navigate complexity. That environment built the collaborative and strategic skills that continue to define my career.

My Advice to ECRs:

There isn't a single "right" career path and it's rarely linear. Focus on your strengths, develop new skills, and explore different directions. Sideways moves can be just as powerful as promotions as every experience adds value. Stay open to trying new things, and allow your path to evolve.