

Annual Report Summary

April 2023-March 2024





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“Thanks to Stephen and all the staff at the ARC KSS for another successful year. Preparation for applying for funding from 2026 provides us with the opportunity to review past achievements and ensure that the ARC continues to be oriented to the needs and priorities of those living in Kent, Surrey & Sussex whilst contributing to the future plans for health and social care in the region. Under Stephen’s leadership, we look forward working closely with the Integrated Care Boards in achieving those aims.”

Professor Sir Nick Black
Chair, ARC KSS Board



Foreword

By Professor Stephen Peckham

I am delighted to present our latest report that covers the wide range of activity that we have been involved in, across our region, in the year to March 2024.

We have been working with our partners and collaborators to increase applied health and care research activity and capacity. In particular, by supporting the successful application of Surrey County Council to host a **Health Determinants Research Collaboration**, joining Medway Council, to boost research capacity and capability within local government.

Funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has allowed us to support more individuals, working in, or with strong links to, the social care sector to develop projects and activities that will benefit people using adult social care services. This builds on the excellent work of the **Kent Research Partnership** – a collaboration between the University of Kent and Kent County Council - to support the delivery of high quality social care research on topics that matter most in our region.

Some of our social care research has been highlighted in the national and local press and adopted by national regulators and local authorities, including our work on: **improving the treatment and outbreak management of scabies in care homes and other institutions** and **creating inclusive residential care for LGBTQ+ elders**. The region also successfully bid for funding from the NIHR to support up to 90 health and care professionals from nursing, allied health, public health and social care/social work to undertake research methods training, delivered by Brighton, Chichester and Kent universities.

Our work with young people has developed rapidly. We have supported and funded several projects around younger people's mental health, including: three **youth research partnerships** and the **launch of a digital platform** to support mental health in schools and colleges nationally, which has been widely accessed. We have collaborated with three research engagement networks, one in each Integrated Care System (ICS) area, which have been working to widen community engagement in research, and have established a **responsive research group** to provide ICSs with evidence synthesis on key topics identified by system leaders.

Although much has been achieved, it is the future that we are now focused on. At the time of writing, we received the NIHR's call for applications for a second round of ARC funding from April 2026. We want to build on our strengths and successes, so, since before the summer, we have been consulting with partners across the region and asking them what they want to see the ARC focus on and what kind of activities we should support. This will help us to make sure that we continue to focus on the most important needs of our region in the future.

Professor Stephen Peckham
Director, ARC KSS



Message from Dr MaryAnn Ferreux

Chief Medical Officer for Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex, Non-Executive Director for Kent and Medway NHS Partnership Trust and Implementation Lead at ARC KSS.

Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex (Health Innovation KSS) has a close working relationship with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS). We are uniquely placed to lead implementation and focus on translating ARC KSS research into clinical practice.

Importantly, we are committed to promoting health equity and creating a more inclusive health and care system, by ensuring socially excluded groups have a voice. Therefore, we prioritise work that promotes equity, amplifies diverse voices, and tailors research to meet the needs of various populations affected by certain health issues. We believe that collaboration with stakeholders who share this vision is vital for driving transformative and inclusive change, and we actively bring together NHS trusts, local authorities, universities, communities and other partners to develop and implement innovative translational research to improve health and social care for patients and families in the southeast. We are passionate about tackling health inequalities and ensure that our work focuses on addressing disparities in outcomes, experience and access to health and care.

In 2023-2024, we supported the ARC KSS to implement and disseminate

over 30 impactful projects across our priority themes, including: evaluating and upskilling services on how best to discharge patients using the **Discharge to Assess pathway** (funded as part of the NHS Insights Prioritisation Programme); measuring the impact of a **whole school and college approach to mental health** (a project that has influenced national policy); and evaluating and implementing the mental health practitioner role in Kent and Medway.

Involving patients, carers, and communities is integral to our work at Health Innovation KSS, with ARC KSS Implementation Leads specialising in facilitating co-design processes. Co-design promotes patient-centred care, reduces health disparities, and fosters an inclusive system where individuals can shape services impacting their lives. We focus on involving patients and the public, especially marginalised or seldom-heard groups, in designing health and care interventions that will positively impact their lives.

Our approach over the coming year will ensure that our interventions continue to address system challenges and unmet population health needs by incorporating the perspectives and experiences of those directly affected and focusing on delivering impactful change.

Funding our research

Throughout 2023-2024, we were able to directly fund additional projects, due to successful grant applications and co-funding from our member organisations.

We continued to see an increase in National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funding and grant income.

Through our collaboration with Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex (Health Innovation KSS), universities, local authorities, health and care providers, over £3.5m of external funding was secured from research councils, charities, NIHR grants, non-commercial organisations and industry.

£3.5 million
*in external funding in
2023-2024*

This year, we secured around £642,000 in co-funding from our region's universities, and health, care and voluntary sector providers to support Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) partnerships and projects. This helped to support research that is relevant, implementable and has impact on the needs of the wider system.

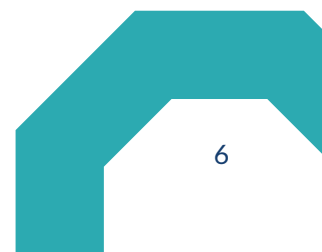
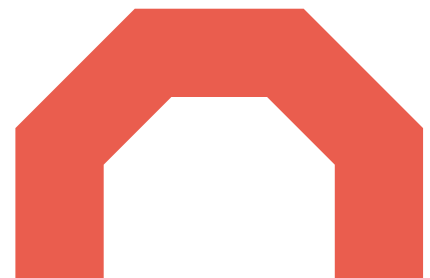
We also co-funded eight more PhDs, enabling projects to begin in the under-researched areas of children and young people's mental health, dementia, and social care.

Capacity building

Capacity building is a term used in research to define the enhancement of abilities of individuals, organisations and systems to undertake and disseminate high quality research efficiently and effectively - this has been central to our work.

During 2023-2024 we funded:

- Seven clinicians, researchers and a leader within the voluntary sector, to undertake Springboard awards. These facilitate early career researchers to take forward their research ideas within health and care settings and undertake relevant training.
- Three, new **youth research partnerships** that provide support for young people to engage in, get involved with, co-produce and co-design health and care research.
- We also continued to recruit to the NIHR-funded dementia fellowship programme developing skills in leadership on isolation and loneliness, and integrated dementia care including support for those people in crisis.





Youth Research Partnerships

Further funding to help build the next generation of mental health researchers.

In 2023, we funded three Youth Research Partnership projects, from across Kent, Surrey and Sussex, to build research capacity, identify children and young people's mental health research priorities, and to offer training to researchers and young people on engagement in research and research skills.

Kent Participation Network for Youth Research



Kent County Council received funding from us to set up a **Kent Youth Research Network** training groups of young people (aged 11 to 17 years) to be young researchers and undertake their research projects, with support from the University of Kent.

The aim is to have a connected network focused on involving children, young people and their families in research that affects them and making sure that their thoughts and opinions are used to influence policy and service developments.

A young team of researchers are currently working with the University of Kent to research two projects on social media and how this affects self-esteem and political attitudes and behaviour.

The findings for the research project will be published once the projects have finished. **Watch young people's experiences of the Kent Youth Research Network.**

In Our Own Words: Youth Researchers

In Our Own Words is a peer-led research programme, coordinated by Surrey County Council, for neurodivergent young people and young carers, recognising their importance and influence as experts by lived experience.

The six-month project trains young people to become researchers to understand other young people's experiences of mental health and wellbeing, as well as mental health services. It is a peer-led programme, where young people are supported to design and lead an independent social research project, investigating the questions that are most important to them, often motivated by their own experiences of neurodivergence and

challenges faced with accessing support. The topics include: school-based support during diagnosis; support for neurodivergent young people out of education because of mental health challenges; teachers' training on neurodivergence; and understanding the mental health experiences of LGBTQ+ neurodivergent young people.

Youth researchers have collected data and insight from young people, parents / carers and educators throughout Surrey and will present their findings and recommendations to key stakeholders and decision makers in the Council and partner organisations, to influence positive change to services and support for neurodivergent young people.



A Pan-Sussex Youth Research Partnership:

Young people's experiences of the impact of mental health and wellbeing.

Hosted by **YMCA Downslink**, this project aims to put in place an infrastructure to run, facilitate and network the creation of a Youth Research programme at YMCA Downs Link Group.

The **e-wellbeing research project** is youth voice focused, which puts young people as experts by experience in the

driving seat of designing, creating and running mental health research.

It involves: two, youth-led, research pilots; a training programme creation for youth researchers; co-produced training for researchers on how to engage young people in research; and the creation of a research hub to link children and young people to research opportunities.

Youth Ambassador Training: Make Good Trouble

Make (Good) Trouble, a social impact company driving positive change for young people and families, has been working in partnership with YMCA Downslink to facilitate youth-led mental health research and train up to 20 youth ambassadors (16-24-year-old) in best practice, peer-to-peer interview techniques.

Training included: organising interviews, safeguarding, icebreakers, managing nerves, active listening, clean language, time management, how to ask engaging questions and following up. During the training, the youth researchers heard examples of best practice, using audio

clips from young people taken from Make (Good) Trouble's BBC radio series 'Raising Teens'. The youth ambassadors were also given a 'Top Tips' hand out to use when conducting interviews as part of their research projects.





Training, development and support

Investing in our region's researchers.

Since opening our doors in October 2019, we have been supporting and funding students from across Kent, Surrey and Sussex, to undertake their full or part time PhD studentships, in line with our key priority **areas**.

In 2023-2024, eight more students were co-funded to undertake their PhDs in applied health and social care research, bringing the total number of PhD students that we are supporting to 43. All students are based at seven higher education institutions across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

Our PhD graduates

Congratulations to our first three PhD student graduates:

- **Dr Rachel Lawrence (University of Surrey)**
- **Dr Alice Tunks (Brighton and Sussex Medical School)**
- **Dr Brontë McDonald-Harper (University of Sussex).**

Read about Rachel's PhD journey and her research project, that explored social prescribing and voluntary/ community support for older adults during and after COVID-19 and the impact and future considerations of both staff and older adults.

Read about Alice's PhD journey and her research project, Increasing access to psychological interventions through primary care for those experiencing perinatal obsessive-compulsive symptoms: a co-produced project.



My PhD journey so far



Salmaan Ansari is a Public Health PhD student at the University of Kent. He is currently working on a project that investigates the utilisation of health and social care services among people with clusters of long-term conditions, with a focus on coastal towns.

Find out what inspired Salmaan to become a researcher and his journey so far [here](#).

PhD journal publications

How is young people's mental health related to their sexual health and substance use?

Damla Harmanci, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health.

'She didn't know how to go back': school attendance problems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic - a multiple stakeholder qualitative study with parents and professionals

Brontë MacDonald, University of Sussex, British Journal of Educational Psychology.

Intervention for school anxiety and absenteeism in children: Co-designing a brief parent-focused intervention for emotionally based school avoidance.

Brontë MacDonald, University of Sussex, Sage Journals: Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry.

Determinants of hospital readmissions in older people with dementia: a narrative review.

Bria Browne, Brighton and Sussex Medical School, BMC Geriatrics.

Cost Effectiveness of Non-pharmacological interventions for mild cognitive impairment and dementia: A systematic review of economic evaluations and a review of reviews.

Gill Eaglestone, University of Greenwich, PharmacoEconomics.

Child, family and professional views on valued communication outcomes for non-verbal children with neurodisability: a qualitative meta-synthesis.

Katherine Buckeridge, University of Kent, International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders.

Individual Development Awards

We support individuals who are at the early stage of their research journey, particularly those who struggle to find the time to develop their ideas because of time constraint, by offering them a bespoke programme of support and a mentor.

To date, we have funded 57 individuals, from our **member organisations**, to develop their research leadership skills by conducting a small scale applied health or social care research project, through Individual Development Awards (IDAs).

To date we have funded:

37

Springboard Awards

20

Future Leader Awards

Springboard researchers



Gemma Peterson

[Read Blog](#)

Gemma Peterson is a health, wellness and mindset coach, based in West Sussex. The Springboard IDA she received from ARC KSS helped her to **trial wellness activities**. She is now planning on running further sessions for families and run a pilot within a local school.



Ruby Porter

[Read Story](#)

Ruby Porter is a counsellor at Faversham Counselling Services in Kent. She was awarded a Springboard IDA to help her develop her research skills in children and young people's mental health. This award enabled Ruby to undertake a study to find out how young people (14-16 years) want to be consulted when it comes to their mental health.



Chloé Smith

[Find out more](#)

Chloé Smith an art therapist at Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust. This Springboard IDA enabled Chloé to undertake research on how film could be used in psychotherapy to help foster a therapeutic alliance for patients who have experience of trauma.



[Read Interview](#)



[Read Interview](#)



[Read Interview](#)



[Find out more](#)

Emilia Robinson

Emilia Robinson, Research Assistant at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust received a Springboard IDA to undertake four short courses on research methodologies. Following her training, she was able to conduct a scoping review on the current evidence of early interventions for children and young people who display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acute stress disorder, following a single traumatic event.

Dr Jennifer Eeles

Dr Jennifer Eeles, Lead Clinician Urgent Assessment and Home Treatment/ Lead Clinician Urgent Assessment and Home Treatment, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, received a Springboard IDA to help her adapt dialectal behaviour therapy (talking therapy) for young people presenting in crisis. By running events and getting feedback from young people, she was able to develop new materials and approaches in interventions.

Amanda Ferrell

Amanda Ferrell, Research Assistant at the University of Sussex and ARC KSS Starting Well theme, undertook a Springboard IDA, that allowed her to begin a scoping review on the mental health and wellbeing outcomes following personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education for secondary school pupils in the UK and develop the necessary skills to do this.

Lizzie Lowrey-Crouch

Lizzie Lowrey-Crouch, Head of Partnerships and Innovation at Involve Kent, received a Springboard IDA to help her to carry out research to find out what social prescribing schemes are available to support the mental health of pregnant or postpartum women. Her study draws attention to the topic and argues for further research and funding plans to test the model.

Future Leader researchers



[Find out more](#)

Dr Afrodita Marcu

Dr Afrodita Marcu, is a Research Fellow at the University of Surrey. Her Future Leader IDA helped develop an intervention toolkit to raise awareness of breast cancer among Black women in the UK.



[Find out more](#)

Dr Todd Leckie

Dr Todd Leckie, is an anaesthetics and intensive care medicine doctor at University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust. Through his Future Leader IDA, Todd was able to undertake a study to assess the effectiveness of a digital resource - using smartwatches and a website - developed to support cancer patients be more active before surgery and to assist with the rehabilitation process.



[Find out more](#)

Dr Neesha Gunowa

Dr Neesha Gunowa, is a senior lecturer at the University of Surrey. Through her Future Leader IDA, Neesha was able to undertake a research project that examined the personal experiences of people with dark skin tones, and why they are more likely to get more severe higher stage pressure ulcers.



[Find out more](#)

Lisa Richardson

Lisa Richardson, Research Associate at the University of Kent in collaboration with **bemix** (a social enterprise supporting people with learning difficulties and/or autism to achieve equality) undertook a pilot evaluation of the 'be a leader' leadership training programme for people with Learning Disabilities.

Training & development

Retreat for our region's researchers

Researchers and supporters from across Kent, Surrey and Sussex came together for a three-day residential grant-writing and development retreat to help them progress and develop their NIHR funding applications while receiving support and advice from specialist advisors in areas of co-production, costings, health economics, statistics and public and community involvement and engagement.



[Read More](#)

"I hope that you will carry on providing this opportunity to inspiring researchers in the future."

Panagiota Flevotomou, Research Nurse, East Kent Cancer Research Centre, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.

Building the next generation of dementia researchers

Following funding from the **National Institute for Health and Care Research** (NIHR), in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Society, to strengthen capacity and capability in dementia health and care research, we were able to fund five postdoctoral positions, from across the region, to undertake research in under-researched areas of wellbeing in dementia and dementia care pathways.

In addition, Dr Rasa Mikelyte secured over £350K to fund the project: 'Personalising Domiciliary Dementia Care: Co-Design of an App Matching Care Preferences of Care Workers and People Living with Dementia' (Alzheimer's Society) and 'Co-designing and Co-delivering Resources for Palliative Dementia Care Delivered by Social Care Workers' (NIHR).

Dementia Research Projects

Ecology of integrated dementia crisis care explores what effective crisis care in dementia is, by looking at integrated support ecosystems and how integration and coordination between services contributes to experiences of crisis care.

Dr Rasa Mikelyte, Research Fellow, University of Kent.

Seamless journey for people living with dementia is a project that focuses on the dementia care coordinator service in Kent and Medway. It aims to understand how we can improve integration of health and adult social care dementia services including dementia care coordinators, to better support people with dementia and their family and friends.

Dr Barbora Silarova, Research Fellow, University of Kent.

Emergency dementia crisis care: Exploring health care staff views on crisis care optimisation across emergency services in England is a study that aims to explore ways to improve access and quality of care to emergency crisis care for people living with dementia, from the perspective of healthcare staff providing this type of support.

Dr Alessandro Bosco, Research Fellow, Brighton and Sussex Medical School.

Detecting depression in dementia is a study that aims to design and assess the feasibility of a brief training programme for professional carers to increase awareness and support the detection of depression in people living with dementia.

Dr Georgia Bell, Research Fellow, Centre for Dementia Studies, Brighton and Sussex Medical School.

Support for people with dementia who live alone is a project that aims to identify how to better support people living alone with dementia by understanding their experiences, needs, gaps and priorities and how these are being considered in service provision.

Dr Sarah Polack, Research Fellow, Centre for Dementia Studies, Brighton and Sussex Medical School.



Enabling positive change for our health and social care services

We have been funding projects to help bring about positive change to health and social care services for the benefit of the public, patients, service users and providers across the region.

The **Towards Changing Practice** projects involved an intervention, or a new way of providing care, that has already showed potential benefits, and that were ready to be tested in the real world or needed to be scaled up.

Reducing medication-related harm in older people



Medication-related harm is common in older patients following hospital discharge.

Dr Khalid Ali from the University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust undertook a study to address health priorities of older people in relation to their medicine management.

[Read More](#)

Supporting people with Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral palsy is a complex neurological condition that affects one in 400 children in the UK. It alters muscle control and movement, and difficulties may occur in the development of walking, speech and hand function.

Diane Sellers from Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust has been working on a research project, to identify and evaluate the implementation processes for the Eating and Drinking Classification System (EDACS) to shape health and social care practitioner's interaction with adults with cerebral palsy and family care givers, to improve eating, drinking and swallowing outcomes.



[Read More](#)

Optimising and supporting end-of-life care



Giving people a choice about where they receive their care, at the end of life, is central to UK policy and the numbers of people wishing to die at home is increasing.

Hospice at Home services in England provide care for people with serious or terminal illnesses in their homes. The goal is to improve quality of life for patients, while also supporting their families and carers by providing them with medical, emotional, social, practical, psychological and spiritual care.

Following the findings of a national evaluation of **Hospices at Home in England study**, researchers from the Centre for Health Services Studies (CHSS) at the University of Kent together with Pilgrims Hospice and Medway Community Healthcare developed, piloted and launched a free, online, resource to better support

patients that prefer to die at home, and their families.

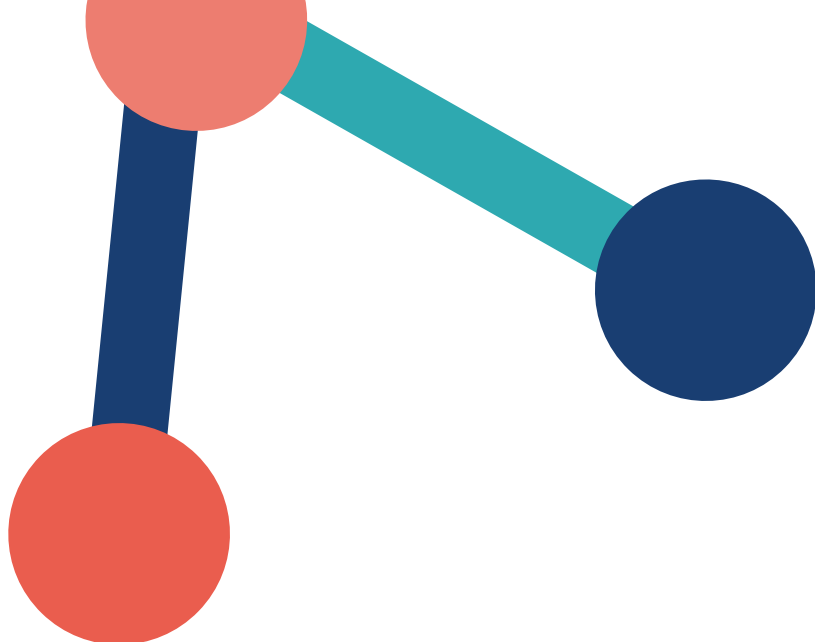
Funded by ARC KSS, **the Hospice at Home (HAH) toolkit**, is aimed at hospice at home services, members of the public (including people at the end of their life and their family/friend carers), health and social care commissioners and wider palliative care workers and specifically designed to support existing services across England.

The toolkit website provides a range of tools and resources including: a service assessment, one-page summaries of research evidence from different audiences and videos on a variety of different topics. It has been piloted and tested with 10 Hospice at Home teams in England and one in Canada, where most people (90%) told us it gave them ideas on how to further optimise their service.”

“For many people, dying at home is an important priority and our toolkit has been specifically designed for support their choice. It has been co-produced by researchers, service providers, commissioners and members of the public working together from start to finish.”

Dr Rasa Mikelyte
Research Fellow, University of Kent.

[Read More](#)



Virtual consultations for people with learning disabilities

People with learning disabilities often experience a greater number of health problems than people without and encounter more barriers to accessing health services, which may impact their health.

Dr Freda Mold from the University of Surrey has been working on a project around virtual consultations for people with learning disabilities, families and healthcare staff.

This study explored the potential of virtual consultations to enable people with learning disabilities, their families and support workers to use them in a way that best meets their needs.

It looked at how a range of healthcare staff could best deliver care to meet these needs virtually, to complement face-to-face care.



[Read More](#)

Supporting health and care practitioners to develop their research skills

To help researchers, in clinical practice, to develop and strengthen their skills and support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, we were able to fund health and care practitioners who work with children and young people's services to undertake a research project within their own organisation.



Hannah Griffiths

Hannah Griffiths is a Clinical Scientist (Rehabilitation Engineering) based at Chailey Clinical Services, part of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust). **In her story** she explains how she developed interview questions with children and young people with communication difficulties, their parents and their speech and language therapist or teacher.



Stella Parkinson

Stella Parkinson, Paediatric Occupational Therapist at East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, talks about **her research** to improve primary school teacher's knowledge and understanding of handwriting readiness in their training.



Matt Bushell

Matt Bushell a Social Work Manager at Kent County Council, undertook a **research project** to look at whether occupational therapy interventions could assist care leavers in better meeting their health, wellbeing and personal outcomes, by improving functional skills and emotional regulation.



Sophie McGrevey

Sophie McGrevey, a Research Assistant at Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, undertook **a study** that looked at existing models of autism diagnostic service delivery to help inform NHS England about solutions for autism service delivery.

Working in collaboration

ARCs and local authorities come together at research capacity workshop

Academic Career Development Leads from the 15 Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs) across the country and Local Authority Leads, came together, in April 2023, to explore how ARCs can support research in local government.

The event included presentations on how some of the Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) plan to build their partnerships across the region.

This was followed by discussions on how ARCs can best support the local authority workforce to be research practice.



[Download Summary](#)

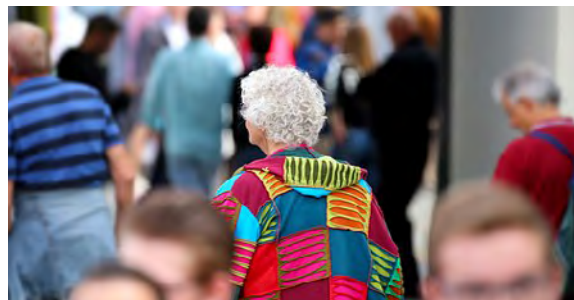
Building and using research evidence to enable health improvement

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is investing millions of pounds in research to help tackle health inequalities and improve health outcomes in local areas across the UK.

Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs) are being set up over the next five years, with local government partnerships, to boost research capacity and capability in some of the UK's most deprived areas.

Two councils were successful in our region: Medway Council and Surrey County Council.

Professor Lindsay Forbes, Academic Lead for NIHR HDRC Medway and ARC KSS Public Health Lead, explains what progress they have been making in Medway.



[Read More](#)

Wider collaboration and exploring new possibilities in applied health research

Our annual, week-long event to support the learning and development of applied health and social care researchers from across the region, attracted more than 400 registrations to take part in a line-up of online learning and development events, research insight talks and presentations, as part of Research Week.

More than 400

Registrations for Research Week events.

[Read More](#)

Working with Integrated Care Boards to support decision-making across health and social care

Together with colleagues at the Universities of Kent and Greenwich, we can provide Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) with rapid evidence synthesis reports that identify, evaluate and combine data from multiple sources, from existing research studies, to provide an overall summary of current knowledge to help support decision-making across health and social care.



[Read More](#)

Supporting and advancing research culture in local government

Our Public Health Research Network was set up to advance research culture, capacity and participation in public health in the region. It is a key activity of the Public Health theme at ARC KSS, as it is instrumental in building and supporting research capacity in

local government and to promote identification and implementation of research that matters to the local population.

[Read More](#)

Addressing Health Inequalities

Developing sustainable community-based mental health support for migrants

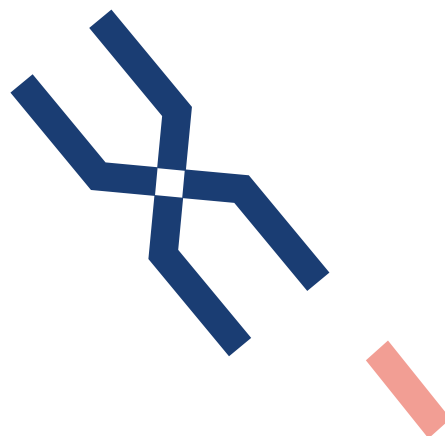


Refugees and asylum seekers experience higher rates of mental illness and poorer wellbeing compared to non-migrants. Several studies have explored the accessibility and acceptability of different mental health services for migrants, identifying potential barriers to, and facilitators of, engagement with related care pathways.

The growing international success of the **Friendship Bench** initiative highlights the value of community empowerment to mental health care provision, through the implementation of a peer support model. This community-based approach responds to shortfalls in mental health primary care resources by building capacity within communities.

Central to the Friendship Bench initiative is the training of community (lay) health workers to provide one-to-one problem-solving based talking therapy from a bench located in a safe space within the community it hopes to support. With funding from the **Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex** (ARC KSS), a team of researchers at Brighton and Sussex Medical School are working with a Sussex-based non-profit social enterprise supporting local migrant communities to establish a community research partnership, who together will implement a Friendship Bench feasibility study.

If the study demonstrates acceptability of this model of community-led mental health support for local migrants, next steps will involve scaling up the intervention across the region to extend reach, further developing regional networks to effectively embed the model, enhancing its sustainability.



Core intercultural concept and principles toolkit

The **Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre**, Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex and NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex have published a new intercultural awareness toolkit to support those working with asylum seekers and migrants.

The toolkit covers core intercultural principles including cultural competence, intersectionality and micro-incivilities. It also provides employers with practical tools to implement intercultural awareness within organisations.

[Download Toolkit](#)

Talk in Equality

With support from the NIHR's Research Design Service South East and Clinical Research Network Kent, Surrey and Sussex, we funded a podcast series that explored the role of research in addressing health inequalities experienced by minoritized ethnic groups.

[Download Podcast](#)



Tackling the needs of female migrants in research

In the UK, female migrants face challenges, with one in five females seeking asylum having experienced gender-based abuse. Disclosure of violence, victimisation and mental health concerns in this group remains a challenge due to factors such as lack of awareness, threats, shame, guilt, fears of being deported, as well as unsafe housing and overall instability in their socio-economic lives.

Evidence suggests that females, in newcomer populations, are at higher risk of diagnosable mental health-related illnesses due to trauma, social isolation, discrimination, and financial hardship, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and perinatal depression. Yet, migration research and the mainstream media largely focus on men and have led to services being designed with male migrants in mind, with little input from

and consideration for female migrant populations.

Patrick Nyikavaranda, Doctoral Candidate, at Brighton and Sussex Medical School and ARC KSS, has been working on a project, through a feminism lens, to identify the barriers and facilitators, faced by women and girls, from newcomer populations, when looking for and accessing mental health services, and outlines the important gaps.

The research highlights how, as part of this research, it was important to set up a group of female migrants and professionals who support them to discuss the issues they faced.

[Read Blog](#)



Spreading the word

Our researchers are regularly invited to present their work at local, national and international events.

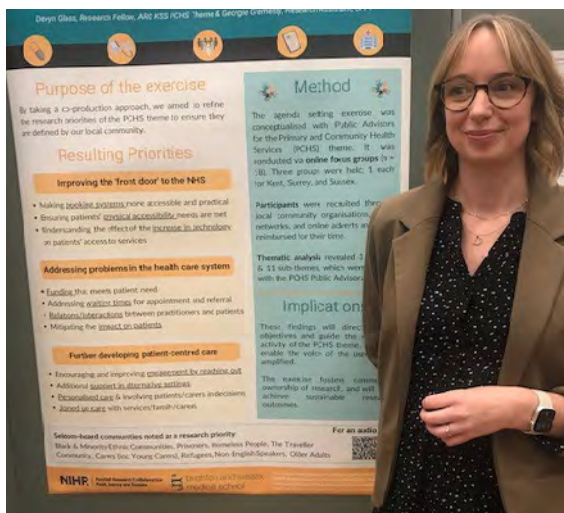
Public health conference: Eastbourne

Three researchers from the **ARC KSS** were invited to present their research project posters, at the **Southeast Public Health Conference 2023** in Eastbourne.

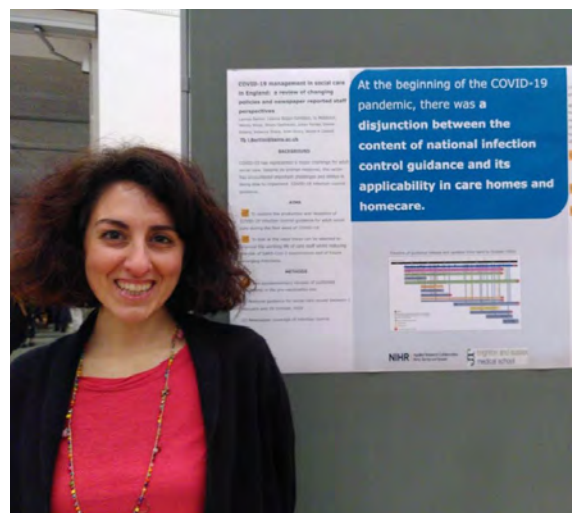
Hosted by East Sussex County Council, in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Public Health Southeast Network, the Local Government Association, NHS England and Health

Education England, this two-day event, brought together 400 colleagues and partners from across the south-east region to reflect and share learning on opportunities and challenges from public health practice in 2023 and beyond.

[Read Blog](#)



Devyn Glass, ARC KSS Post-Doctoral Research Fellow



Lavinia Bertini, ARC KSS Post-Doctoral Research Fellow



International Early Intervention in Mental Health Conference: Switzerland

Researchers from ARC KSS attended the **International Early Intervention in Mental Health Conference Lausanne, Switzerland**, to talk about some of our children and young people’s mental health research projects.

Tom Grice-Jackson, Research Fellow in Health Service Research at Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) and researcher on the ARC KSS funded

project, **CATALYST**, that seeks to co-design community mental health strategies and interventions with and for young people, their parents, carers, healthcare workers and local communities, gives an overview of his time at the event.

[Read Blog](#)

Reaching out in numbers

We continue to support our researchers with the dissemination of their work through a range of communication channels.

Since opening our doors in October 2019, we have published 110 articles in **academic journals** and, this year alone, we published 22, as well as 49 news stories and 15 blogs.

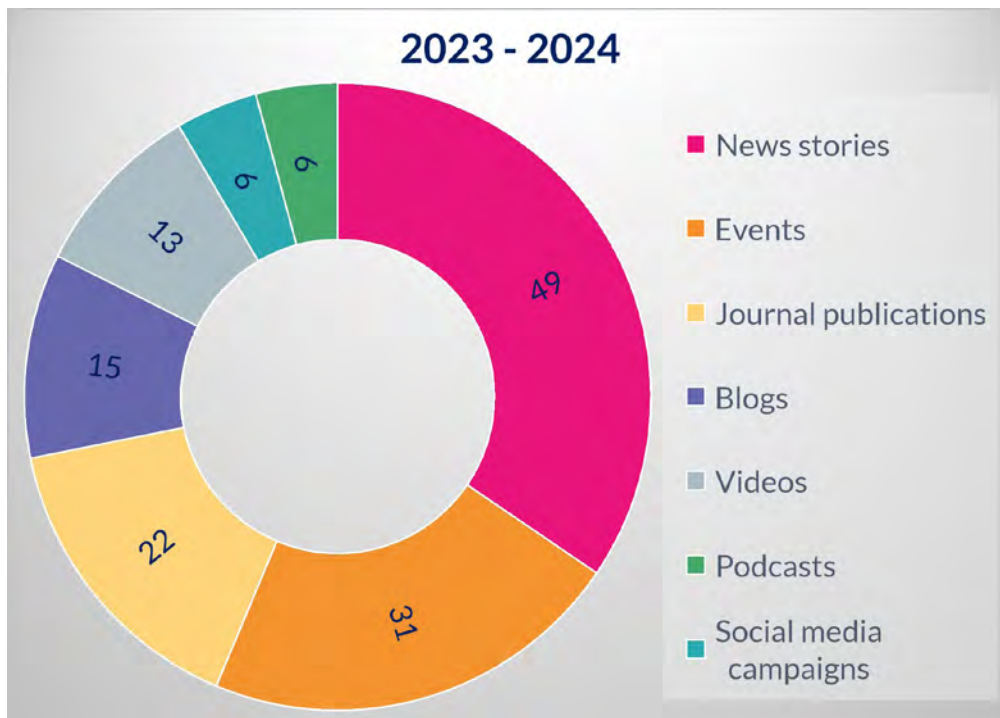
In 2023-2024 we held more than 30 events, published 13 videos on our YouTube channel and six Podcasts on Spotify, and took part in six national social media campaigns.

We now have almost 500 people signed up to our regular newsletter and have had more than 48,000 website visits

since they were set up just over four years ago. This year alone, we had 17,000 visits to our website.

Our LinkedIn social media channel gained more than 150 new followers in the last 12 months. We now have more than 360 followers since it was set up in January 2022. Our X (formerly Twitter) social media channel gained 120 new followers in 2023-2024, with a total number of followers of 1,161, since it was set up in September 2019.

During 2023-2024, we held 49 events, including four research symposiums, theme events and learning and development opportunities as part of Research Week.





Involving members of the public

Our **public members** continue to be at the core of our work. Their views and opinions are very important, as they offer a point of view that academics or service providers may not have.

We work with a diverse community of people from different backgrounds and of all ages, from across the region, regardless of experience or education. With no minimum or maximum commitment, our **public contributors** can decide if, and when, they would like to be involved in a locally based project.

Our **public theme advisors**, take on additional roles. They work with researchers within one of our themes and support our work, to make sure that any research undertaken is relevant and meets the needs of our local communities.

Involving members of the public

Throughout 2023-2024, we recruited seven new public theme advisors to work with the themes.

This includes a new public member working within our digital innovation theme.

In 2023 - 2024 we had:

3

Board Members

14

Theme Public Advisors

32

Public Contributors



Graphic designs created with our public members and Juli Dosad.



Developing more robust schemes & a supportive culture

This year, in collaboration with our public advisors, we:

- Developed a **welcome guidance brochure**, to support all new public members.
- Launched a 'Buddy Scheme', to help our public advisors to support one another, and published a **'Buddy Scheme' handbook**.
- Worked with the themes and the Public Involvement Network (PIN) to make sure our public members were supported right from the start.
- Provided ongoing support through regular email updates and offering of involvement opportunities; arranging voluntary drop-in sessions; providing the use of a shared workspace for public members; and inviting public members to ARC events and information sessions.



Enhanced Involvement

A review of our Governance processes has given our public members a greater role in the decision-making including public advisor representation on strategic and governance groups, for example: ARC KSS's Board, Executive Group and Organisational and Research Capacity group (ORCA) meetings.

Our Public Involvement Network has been busy this year working with themes on projects; reviewing the Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) objectives; review and input into the ARC KSS annual report; fed into the ARC KSS extension business plan; supported the theme advisor recruitment channels; and the creation of a buddy scheme.



Public members attend first face-to-face collaboration day

The **Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE)** team hosted their very first Public Involvement Network (PIN) away day last Summer. The day included discussions around governance, business plan feedback, the scope towards strengthening community engagement, as well as the future recruitment of additional public advisors and how they can be supported.

This was followed by a creative session from one of our public members.

[Read Blog](#)



"We can all benefit from being together, it widens and strengthens the bond of inclusion".

Keith Turner,
ARC KSS Public Advisor



Meet two of our public members



Saba Raza: Public Health Theme Advisor

Saba joined the public health theme as a public advisor in March 2023. She lives in Surrey and is the founder of a community interest group.

Saba's goal is to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities by encouraging empowering and supporting people to engage in physical activities.

[Read Interview](#)



Les Gunbie: Public Contributor

Primary School worker, Les is a father of twins and lives in Brighton with his partner. He joined ARC KSS as a public contributor in May 2022.

Les was originally an aid worker in South India and East Africa but has retained his involvement in community work.

[Read Interview](#)

Involving and working with patients and the public to produce relevant research



Using co-production as a way of working

Alice and Kat are both PhD researchers. Alice recently completed her PhD at Brighton and Sussex Medical School focusing on increasing access to support for perinatal obsessive-compulsive disorder and Kat is a second year PhD researcher at the University of Kent focusing on improving health literacy around menopause in disadvantaged populations.

Both share their **top tips for using co-production as a way of working**.

Watch the **Incorporating co-production in the PhD process** video.

Thinking about co-production through community participatory action research

Community Participation Action Research (CPAR) is a collaborative approach to research that involves all stakeholders throughout the research process, from identifying the question to developing data collection tools and analysis and dissemination of findings.

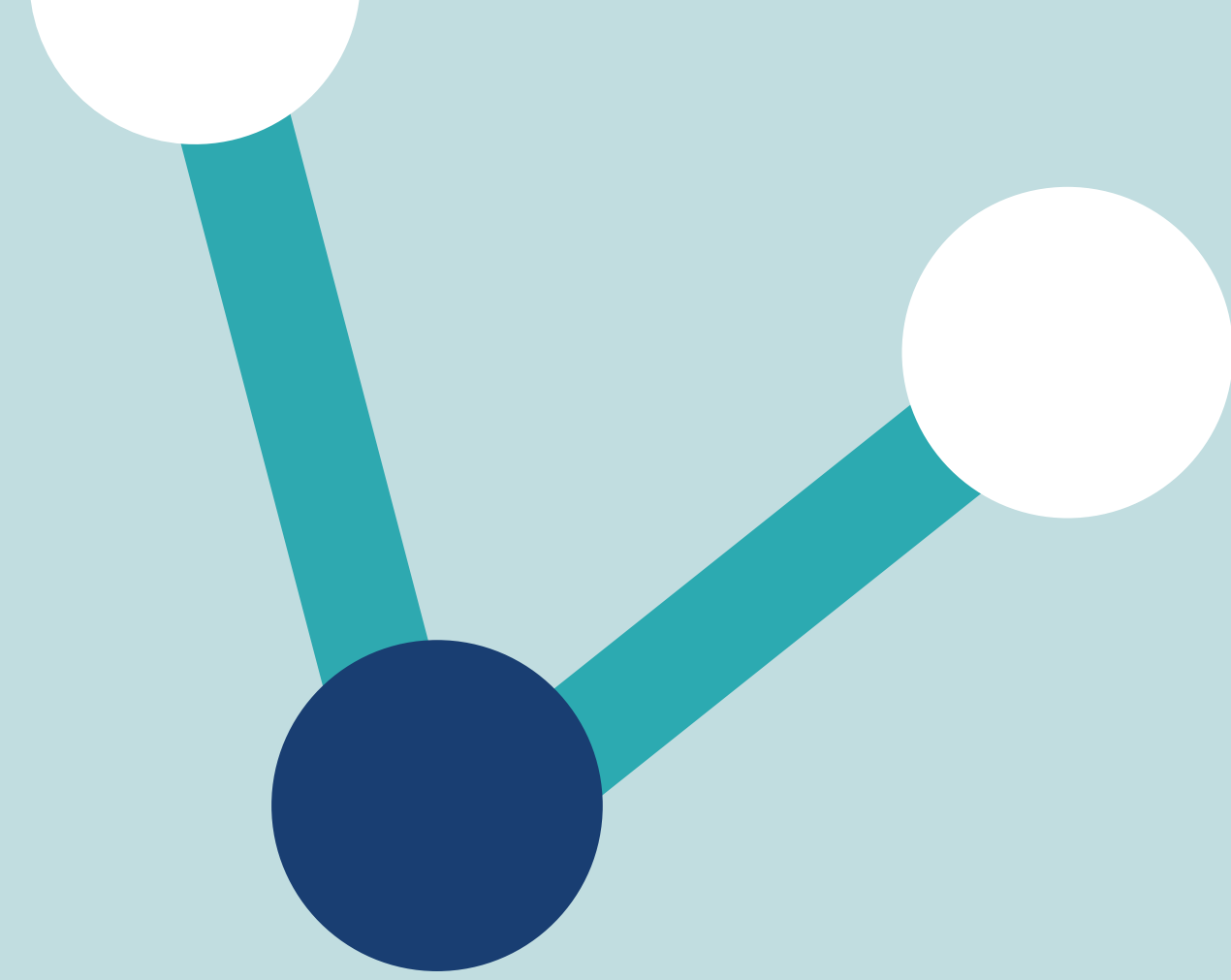
It is based on the needs, issues and concerns of communities and the community-based organisations that work within them. It engages communities and community knowledge in the research process and supports and enhances actions that lead to community transformation and social change.

Co-production theme lead, Dr Nadia Brookes explains what CPAR involves, how it can be used and provides examples where this has been working well in Kent.

[Read Blog](#)

Top tips on engagement and co-design with people living with dementia.

Involving people with lived experience in research is essential if we are to find answers and solutions that meet their needs. Kath Sykes, Living Well with Dementia Implementation Lead at the ARC KSS, shares some **top tips** on best practice.



Impact, implementation and research

As set out by the **National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)**, we have a responsibility to make sure that we are making the best use of our funding and have a duty to demonstrate progress in the difference we are making to the wider society.

Case study: Helping people living with dementia to make informed choices



More than **67,500 people are living with dementia** in Kent, Surrey and Sussex and this is estimated to rise over the next decade. A common complaint, following a dementia diagnosis is people not receiving the information they need to help them adapt and live well.

To address this problem, the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) and Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex (Health Innovation KSS), alongside people with lived experience of dementia, and experts in various areas of dementia care, have designed a new information resource to help people, who have just been diagnosed with dementia, with the information they need.

[Download My Choice](#)

More than 3,300

MyChoice downloads since being launched.

My Choice was developed and designed in response to **feedback** from system partners and people with lived experience that:

- There is little time to discuss the impact of a dementia diagnosis, or how to live well with dementia at memory assessment.
- Support and advice after a dementia diagnosis are inconsistent and far too often limited or absent.
- This can lead to people living with dementia not having the information they need to live well or knowing where to find trusted information.
- Having the right information will enable people to self-manage their condition in a way that is relevant to them, improve their and their loved ones' experiences and outcomes and reduce demand on the health and care system.

The booklet is a free, accessible, evidence-based information resource that gives people the information and the confidence they need to make informed decisions about how to live well and plan for the future.

Initial feedback has been very positive, and plans are in place to continue to evaluate and develop this resource.

Case study: Providing schools and colleges with the right tools to measure and self-assess student's emotional wellbeing and mental health

In England, one in eight, **5 to 19-year-olds have some form of mental health problem** and the focus on mental health and wellbeing on the national curriculum in England is changing.

A mentally healthy school is one that adopts a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. **The whole-school approach** involves all parts of the school working together and being committed.

A review and evaluation of the whole-school approach to mental health in schools and colleges by Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex, University of Sussex, Charlie Waller Trust and West Sussex County Council, identified concerns about the lack of measures that were in place to evaluate the impact this work was having.

10k Downloads

of the Best Practice Review and Evaluation

Working with staff and pupils, and in consultation with mental health support team leads and colleagues from the Department for Education and NHS England, the researchers developed a new self-assessment for schools,

colleges and educational establishments to assess and track the outcomes that could be linked to their work on mental health and wellbeing.

Pilots of the toolkit took place in 26 schools in the South East, East and North East England. The feedback suggested there was a need for a digital platform to make it easier to complete and more efficient in handling the data.

436 Downloads

of the Toolkit by schools in the first six months

Following a pilot with 26 schools in the South East, East and North East England, the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex supported the development and design of an online, digital tool.

The Whole School and College Approach Measurement Toolkit was launched nationally, to help schools and colleges to self-assess, track their data over time, develop their work, and make any adjustments where needed based on their progress.

[Download Toolkit](#)

Case study: Improving treatment and outbreak management of scabies in care homes and other institutions



Scabies is a contagious skin infestation which causes itch and distress and can lead to serious secondary infections with long-term health impacts.

Outbreaks are a public health problem in semi-closed institutions such as residential settings for elderly people, children and those with learning disabilities; migrant hostels and other settings for displaced persons; prisons; schools; hospitals.

Why was this work needed?

Before this work was carried out, there were two major barriers to improving patient care and controlling outbreaks:

- There was no UK national evidence-based guidance for outbreak management, which often resulted in inconsistent and ineffective management, with outbreaks in care homes especially, sometimes lasting over a year.
- **Oral ivermectin** for scabies treatment was unlicensed in the UK. The only treatments available were topical creams that had limited efficacy and were logistically challenging. For example, in a care home outbreak

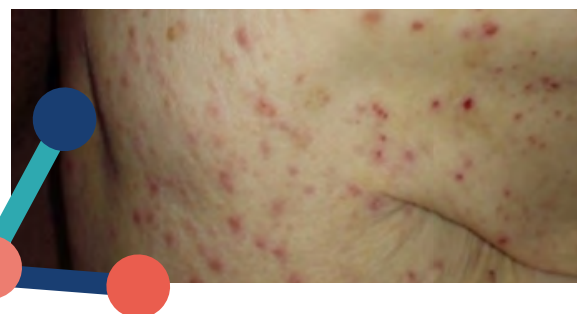
all residents would need to be simultaneously stripped and covered in cream left on for 8-10 hours, all bedding and clothes had to be washed, and staff needed to self-treat. This was distressing, particularly for vulnerable groups requiring personal care such as those with dementia and needed to be repeated seven days later.

In 2023, as a result of this work:

- The UK Health Security Agency published the first ever **national scabies outbreak guidelines**, including the use of ivermectin for scabies outbreak control.
- The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency then **licensed ivermectin for scabies** and in March 2024, oral ivermectin became available in the UK for scabies.

The introduction of evidence-based outbreak guidance and oral treatment is now helping institutions to manage outbreaks more effectively and improving patient experience - particularly for vulnerable groups such as those with dementia.

[Download Impact Case Study](#)



Case study: Improving maternity care and experience for parents with learning disabilities



Parents with learning disabilities are often disadvantaged and their needs are not always identified or met in maternity services.

And, although they may flourish as parents when support services are personalised to meet their needs, midwives have expressed a need for support in the delivery of good care to this population of parents.

The Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS), initially funded the **Together Project** to explore the perceived impact of co-produced resources to support respectful, accessible and personalized maternity care.

200 Downloads of the resource

The four NHS Trusts in the South of England used the Together Project resources, so that we could find out if they were acceptable and whether they were perceived to make a difference to maternity care. While resources were positively received by both midwives and parents with learning disabilities, our findings suggest that greater support is needed for reasonable adjustment within maternity services, in line with legislation and policy.

Further funding from the ARC KSS, allowed the Principal Investigator, Dr Anna Cox from the University of Surrey, to disseminate the project resources more broadly and support improvements to maternity care for parents with learning disabilities.

The Together Project resources will be disseminated electronically to all Local Maternity and Neonatal Systems and in hard copy to all maternity units

[Download Resources](#)

"I have shared this resource with other colleagues who have found the content and format really informative and easy to use and follow".

Anonymous

Case study: Supporting residents' wellbeing in older adult care homes

Around 361,000 people aged 65 and older are living in care homes in England, and more than half (56%) of these residents are aged 85 years and over.

Care homes are responsible for carrying out an assessment of a person's needs before they can move in to determine the level of care and support the resident will need.

A team of researchers from Centre for Health Services Studies at the University of Kent, set out on a national project, funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) as part of the **National Priorities for Adult Social Care and Social Work**, led by the Applied Research Collaboration, Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS), to find out what care planning approaches were available across England and what people thought of them.

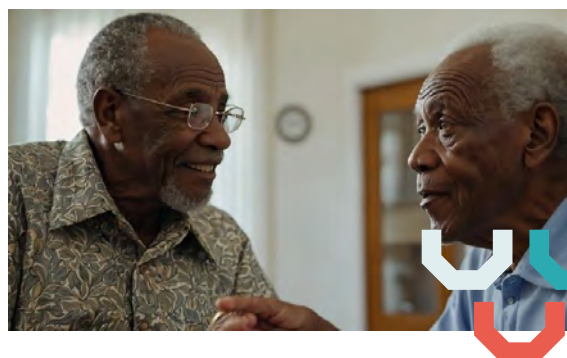
The findings of an initial review '**Wellbeing in Care Homes**' set out to identify and classify existing care home planning approaches. This was followed by interviews with staff working in older adult care homes across England, in collaboration with **ARC North Thames, ARC North West Coast, ARC Oxford and Thames Valley** and **ARC West** to find out what was important them and

in what ways care planning could be improved.

The staff working in those homes told us how they valued adopting a person-centred approach to care, and to adopt this, staff needed to make sure that they: have an excellent understanding of the resident; involve residents in decision-making, as much as possible; and get to know the resident to promote caring relationships.

The project team is currently in the process of developing a national blueprint document that will set out the principles of care planning, as well as testing out two tools in four adult care homes across England, that will measure the quality of life of people using social care.

[Read More](#)



"The adult care home staff we spoke to suggested a number of things care homes can do to improve person-centred care planning and improve wellbeing for residents".

Nick Smith, Research Fellow, Centre for Health Services Studies, University of Kent

Case study: Supporting researchers to analyse routinely collected health and social care data



A team of researchers at Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) are aiming to increase the ability for researchers in Kent, Surrey and Sussex to analyse our routinely collected health and care data and help answer important questions about the health of our population.

Dr Liz Ford, ARC KSS Data Science Lead, explains:

We have been working with the NHS in Sussex and Kent for four years to support growing data ‘infrastructure’ – that means creating ways for our health and care data to be safely extracted from healthcare providers, anonymised, and kept in safe computing environments. In addition, to make this data usable for research, we need to link together data from different places in the healthcare system, check data quality, and start to understand how patients with different conditions are labelled. NHS England has supported the region to create a ‘Secure Data Environment’ (SDE), which is a secure space for the data to be hosted, and which will let researchers with approved projects log in and analyse the data to get research results. This SDE will launch for all researchers in January 2025.

What is the ARC KSS data hub?

As well as this infrastructure, the data hub, a project funded by the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex, helps researchers learn how to analyse routinely collected data sets. The team has written lots of resources for researchers to use on their health data analysis journey. These are available on the bespoke **data hub website**. The team always welcomes enquiries from researchers from across the region and are happy to help and advise anyone who wants to start working with NHS data.

What type of research does the data hub carry out?

As well as supporting others, hub team members carry out research themselves. For the last two years, they have been researching who is at risk of a late diagnosis of lung or ovarian cancer. Using anonymised, linked data, from GP practices, hospitals and the cancer registry, they have shown that patients who already have a long-term condition, with similar symptoms to their cancer, are at risk of a later diagnosis, even if we consider their other medical conditions, where they live, their age and other important risk factors.

The team are also looking at how long-term care for patients with illnesses, like dementia and cancer, might differ based on factors like the deprivation of the area they live in, their ethnicity, their level of frailty, and the different medications they take.

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The views expressed are the outputs from the ARC KSS research and their authors and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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