

## ARC KSS – Year 1 research mapping exercise - summary

### Contents

1. Introduction	Page 2
2. Learning how the ARC KSS academy can best contribute to supporting researchers regionally.	Page 2
3. Researcher Survey	Pages 3 - 7
• Who responded to the survey?	
• Respondent research experience	
• Research activity undertaken regionally	
• Areas of research interest	
• Organisation support for researchers	
• Researcher learning and development needs	
• Interest in ARC KSS activities	
• Feedback on the survey	
4. Organisational mapping of research capacity	Page 7
• Organisational strategy, expertise and visibility of research	
• Research funding and awards	
• Organisational research support schemes	
5. Twitter chat - #GrowResearch	Page 8
6. Further Information	Page 9
7. Acknowledgements	Page 9

## ARC KSS – Year 1 research mapping exercise - summary

This document provides a summary of the results of our regional research mapping exercise.

### 1. Introduction

The [National Institute for Health Research \(NIHR\)](#) is the nation's largest funder of health and care research and provides the people, facilities and technology that enables research to thrive. [NIHR Applied Research Collaborations \(ARCs\)](#) support applied health and care research that responds to, and meets, the needs of local populations and local health and care systems. The NIHR ARC Kent, Surrey and Sussex is one of 15 ARCs across England, part of a £135 million investment by the NIHR to improve the health and care of patients and the public. To find out more about ARC KSS, visit the [ARC KSS website](#).

**About ARCs:** Each NIHR ARC is made up of local providers of NHS services, local providers of care services, NHS commissioners, local authorities, universities, private companies and charities. These collaborations work together to conduct high quality, generalisable, applied health and care research that addresses the specific health or care issues in their region. NIHR ARCs focus on implementing research findings into practice. The 15 ARCs work collaboratively to address national research priorities, with individual ARCs providing national leadership in their areas of expertise.

Between September 2020 and early January 2021, the research capacity building support scheme of ARC KSS, the ARC KSS academy, conducted a survey targeting health and social care researchers across Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS). This document summarises the results of this survey and how ARC KSS will use this information to develop activities to support applied researchers across the Region.

This information is designed for researchers, member organisations of the ARC KSS and the public to share the results of our applied researcher survey and mapping activities, to inform what the ARC does to support researchers regionally and to share best practice and support our members to develop research within their own organisation.

### 2. Learning how the ARC KSS academy can best contribute to supporting researchers regionally.

The ARC KSS academy undertook a mapping exercise to understand current research capacity and capability across Kent, Surrey and Sussex and the member organisations. The information collected included:

1. Researcher survey – an open online survey sent out to all our member organisations
2. Organisational mapping – collecting information freely available online or through information requests to member organisations about their research priorities, strategies and activity
3. Research activity mapping – summarising accessible information available through the NIHR to create a baseline of research activity to see how ARC can add to this
4. Twitter chat – a discussion held on Twitter to consult about how best to #GrowResearch in our region

### 3. Researcher survey

As part of the ARC KSS Academic Career Development plan, we committed to conducting a researcher survey across Kent, Surrey and Sussex. The purpose of this survey element was to learn how the ARC KSS academy can best contribute to supporting researchers regionally by identifying gaps in research support or signposting where good practice is already in place. The survey itself aimed to understand:

1. What were the common interest areas for researchers and what sort of research activities were being done
2. Current capacity in the region for health and social care research and support available
3. Understand what learning and development interests and needs researchers currently had
4. Identify researchers interested in engaging with the ARC and in what ways

#### Who responded to the survey?

The total number of people who responded to our survey was 275 on the closing date of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Of these, 5 people did not start completing the survey after reading the introductory information. A total of 179 people completed the survey in full and a further 86 partially completed the survey to different extents. We included all those who partially or fully completed the survey in this presentation as all information gathered is valuable for informing ARC activities moving forward. A limitation to this survey is that it is not known how many applied health and social care researchers there are across KSS. Therefore, we do not know how accurately this survey reflects the opinions of the total applied research workforce in the Region.

The spread of respondents across the counties in the region showed that just under half of those completing the survey worked in Sussex and one-third working in Kent. Responses from those who worked in Surrey was 15% and just over 10% had dual roles across academia and health or social care, across multiple health providers or cross-regional roles (13%). This indicates that ARC KSS could engage more with health and social care providers in Surrey, although data presented in the next slide shows that engagement at the University of Surrey is high as the highest number of respondents from any one academic organisation in KSS came from the University of Surrey.

The highest responding academic institution was the University of Surrey with 21 responses (9%). It should be noted that this number is only those who entered an organisation or county they were employed in, which was an optional answer to complete. This was followed by the University of Sussex (7%), University of Kent (6%), University of Brighton (5%) and Brighton and Sussex Medical School (3%). Less than 5 responses were received from other universities in the Region including Canterbury Christ Church University, University of Greenwich and the University of Chichester. This data shows that ARC KSS requires better communications channels and engagement with some Universities in the Region to increase collaborative potential.

Of those responding with purely academic research roles, 10% were lecturers, 9% postdoctoral research associates or fellows, 15% senior research staff (senior research associates, fellows or lecturers) and 6% research leaders (Readers or Professors). Three percent of responses were from PhD students or masters students who were full-time and had no other role.

The highest responding health and social care organisations were Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (10%, and is also the NHS host of the ARC KSS), East Kent Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (7%), Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (6%), Kent Community NHS

Foundation Trust (4%) and Medway NHS Foundation Trust (3%). This mirrors the research activity of the organisation in general. Note that this does not include responders who only specified a county and not their employing organisation nor those not completing this question, those with roles in multiple organisations or cross-regional organisations.

Looking at the breakdown of responders by professional roles, the one-third of people responding to the survey were academics (31%) and just under two-thirds health and social care professionals (64%). Of health care professionals responding, the majority were non-medical health care professions, for examples allied health care professionals or other health or social care professions where their role does not include formal registration.

One quarter of health and social care professionals had an academic post alongside their practice role – clinical or social care academics. Just over 10% of health and social care professionals completing the survey were currently undertaking postgraduate research training, doing either a masters or PhD.

Around one-third of health and social care professionals responding to the survey were non-registered professionals, one-third qualified for more than 20 years and one-third qualified for between 6-20 years.

#### Respondent research experience

The research experience of health and social care professionals is shown in the top bar charts on this slide. On the left is the non-NHS health and social care professionals and shows the experience of each professional as a percentage of the discipline responding. On the right shows the same for health care professionals. In non-NHS organisations, although it is difficult to draw any conclusions due to the much smaller responder numbers, research experience was generally higher. In health care professionals, there was a good mixture of experience in research across the professional groups responding. This included some 20% who had no research experience and were clearly responding due to an interest in research and its relation to their role.

The heat map at the bottom gives a visual representation of the tendency for each professional listed to have completed research training. The data indicates highest research training obtained. Of the healthcare professionals, although many had no postgraduate training, the most common types of training included masters and doctorate courses. Doctors and nurses were more likely to have a PhD. For social care professionals the low numbers of responders make it hard to make any clear conclusions but there is a suggestion of a similar pattern.

#### Research activity undertaken regionally

This information shows what types of research activity responders were involved in. It is arranged from left to right in stage of research career, from no research activity or just research awareness on the left through to supervising and conducting independent research on the right. The two most common research activities conducted were delivering research studies to patients and the public (NIHR portfolio clinical trial delivery work or other) and conducting independent research. To note here is that less than 50% of those completing the survey were actively engaging patients and the public in research including in planning and design despite high levels of independent research. This gap is echoed in support and training needs of researchers with respect to involving and engaging the public in their research.

This concludes the descriptive elements of the researcher survey. We now move on to looking at what responders told us about their research interests, what support is available to them and their perceived needs in terms of support, learning and development.

### Areas of research interest

We asked respondents to tell us what areas of research their work involved or that they were interested in. The top 10 most frequently cited researcher areas of interest were:

1. Health services research
2. Adult mental health
3. Co-production of health and social care research
4. Ageing
5. Children and young people's health and care services
6. Public health/prevention and cancer
7. Community care and workforce
8. Primary care
9. Dementias and neurodegeneration, self-management
10. Social care and social work research

Many of the top areas of interest align well to ARC KSS research themes and particular needs of the region in terms of patient need or evidence need to inform care. However, this could be because those interested in the ARC and our research themes were more likely to complete the survey.

### Organisation support for researchers

The majority of researchers completing the survey had used organisational support in their research. This information may also indirectly reflect what support is available and what not within organisations across KSS. The most used organisational support was access to journals and research findings, attending conferences and mento/peer support. The least used support from within organisations were around practical support for applications and methods such as statistics and research leadership programmes. Those cited as least used and possible least available may be good areas for ARC KSS to provide additional activities to support researchers.

We also wanted to understand about the support available to researchers within or outside of their organisation to enable public and community involvement and engagement (PCIE) in research. This pie chart shows whether researchers had access to PCIE support or groups for public involvement in their research. Nearly half (41%) of responders had no access or support for this type of activity showing a particular area of need to increase the co-production and inclusion of the public in research. One-third of respondents had access to support for PCIE within their own organisation (34%) and around one-quarter had support either within and outside their organisation or outside of their organisation alone.

We then asked those completing the survey to tick 5 areas of support that would help them in their research career. The top 5 areas in which researchers would be interested in getting more support are listed here:

1. Access to research funding
2. Access to research supervision or support from experienced researchers
3. Protected time to do research – particularly for those in practice
4. Information about research funds available
5. Supportive research culture – we could assume this is both within and outside of an organisation

Although the elements on the list are not surprising, additional activities by ARC KSS e.g. fellowship funding will help contribute to these needs.

Respondents were then asked to tell us their top 3 barriers to doing research from their perspective in free text answers. This word cloud highlights common words and phrases used by respondents.

Words like 'funding', 'lack', 'confidence', 'time', 'support', 'senior support', 'research culture' all came out strongly.

Some of these words highlight barriers that will not be a surprise, however, there are some clear areas where ARC KSS can contribute to supporting researchers through learning and development. For example, with confidence building support, mentorship and personal development. Also, additional funding for researchers and signposted to opportunities through the ARC KSS activities will support research regionally.

### Researcher learning and development needs

The final element of the survey involved finding out about respondents learning and development needs. The list in this slide gives the top 10 areas of learning and development interest for researchers completing the survey. Areas included:

- creating research impact and influencing policy
- Co-production/design of research with the public and/or stakeholders and involving patients, service users and the public in research
- Understanding and implementing research findings
- Applying for research funding and disseminating research through knowledge transfer and writing an article
- development opportunities
- particular methods training like statistical analysis or literature review/evidence synthesis

This will directly inform ARC KSS activities both this year and into future years.

For those who were interested in PCIE learning and development, we asked respondents to also indicated which PCIE learning and development opportunities would be of interest. There was good interest across the board for all the learning and development areas presented and this will inform some co-production webinars we hope to plan for later in the summer 2021. Areas included:

- support available for PCIE regionally
- National guidelines for PCIE
- monitoring impact of PCIE
- differences between the different types of PCIE and co-production

In the summer 2021, ARC KSS are planning a series of learning and development opportunities through the ARC KSS academy, working closely with our PCIE team and co-production theme.

### Interest in ARC KSS activities

To gain an understanding of people's interests in ARC KSS activities and how they wanted to hear about the work of the ARC, we asked those completing the survey to tell us what ARC KSS themes or activities they might like to hear about by email. Across our themes there was most interest in Implementation and Co-production. We also had a good response from people wanting to sign up to our communications, communities of practice, mentorship and peer review opportunities.

### Feedback on the survey

Finally, here are some of the free text comments from respondents at the end of the survey. Some nice comments were received about completing the survey and it being a worthwhile endeavour. We now hope to share the results as widely as possible and do some further analysis to understand

differences in interests or learning and development needs depending on professional group. This will help us to see what types of professionals are already involved in research and where there might be professional groups who need more active support to build research in their settings.

This concludes the researcher survey element of the mapping exercise and we will now move on to the organisational research mapping conducted.

We would like to thank all those who responded to the survey which has given us a fantastic wealth of information to inform the activities of the ARC KSS.

*"Primary care has real barriers for creating research and how this is overcome needs to be considered [across infrastructure] for a coordinated sustainable approach"*

*"It has been helpful to complete this survey and give time and thought to the issues identified."*

*"I would really love some support to get into research as a carer progression route."*

*"Providing guarded time for NHS and University staff is becoming more and more vital"*

*"A very helpful survey!"*

#### 4. Organisational mapping of research capacity

Over the same period, we undertook an exercise to gather all freely available information about research activity and capacity across the ARC KSS member organisations which total over 40 organisations across Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Organisations include higher education institutions, NHS trusts, local authorities and many other health and social care provider organisations or regional research organisations.

##### Organisational strategy, expertise and visibility of research

Over half of the ARC KSS member organisations had a dedicated research department or support office function. Less organisations freely published their research strategy to show their activity. All Universities published their strategies online highlighting the importance of research in higher education. Only 3 of the remaining organisations freely published a research strategy, all of which being NHS trusts. In addition, most universities and 4 NHS trusts published their annual research activity performance or a review document.

All the organisational information collected through the mapping exercise has been compiled into a repository and is freely available to view on our website or our online collaboration hub.

Areas of academic expertise have also been mapped and collated by listing research centres, departments and groups within all our regional universities. By compiling this information into a single source, we hope this will support researchers to explore and access regional academic expertise in fields of interest to promote collaboration.

In addition, we have created a list of other research infrastructure available. This includes links to all the open repositories across our universities so researchers can access full text outputs direct from the university websites. It includes links to other infrastructure such as clinical trials units, living labs, specialist support areas for things like economics.

## Research funding and awards

In order to understand the baseline research activity that was present in the region and how we may see this grow with the additional resource brought by the ARC to support home grown research, we have summarised NIHR data for research funding, NIHR related awards and personal awards. There are obvious pockets of high number of awards and income in the localities of our universities but to note that not all of this activity comes from universities but there are some research active NHS trusts in particular with successful track record of winning grants from national NIHR streams. However, in general, the volume of activity and funding in the region is low compared to other regions in England.

This information also only considers funding for homegrown research. Within our repository, we have also collated data on research activity where health and social care organisations are highly active in delivering clinical trials to patients through the NIHR CRN portfolio. We have recorded numbers of patients taking part in clinical trials across organisations and the number of studies available for patients to take part. This too is important activity and a good basis for health and social care professionals to get started on a research career pathway.

## Organisational research support schemes

The final element of our mapping exercise involved a request to all ARC KSS member organisations to provide information about any in house research support schemes. We received many examples from around half of our member organisations. A huge thank you to those who did share this information. There was clearly a lots of novel and innovative ways research and a research culture is currently being supported within our member organisations and we look forward to working with you to continue to develop these mechanisms and to innovate further.

This information and where organisations have generously provided supporting documentation is available in our repository in order to share best practice regionally and encourage organisations to reflect on what they provide to their workforce to encourage and support research.

## 5. Twitter chat - #GrowResearch

In early March, to supplement the information gathered in our mapping exercise, we held an online Twitter chat to explore how we can help #GrowResearch in our region. We had a fantastic response and lots of tweeting went on. Some additional areas and ideas for growing research were collated and we continue to analyse the information collected during this event.

- Importance of mentors and supportive managers and systems
- Need to all work together to ensure research follows the patient's journey
- Support students early on in their journey and showing how research impacts their clinical practice and learning
- Work with education providers when students undertake research modules
- For more experienced researchers/research teams to actively promote opportunities for ECRs to join them.
- Many staff not eligible for better known research development opportunities and the need to support a wide variety of professions is key.

- To give 'out of hospital care' clinical staff early research opportunities to grow 'out of hospital care' connections
- The need to increase understanding and opportunities to Grow Research in General Practice.

Data from our Twitter chat:

- 1661 impressions - the number of times users saw the Tweet on Twitter.
- 201 engagements - the total number of times a user has interacted with the Tweet.
- 44 retweets - the number of times that tweet has been retweeted
- 51 likes - the number of times that people like that tweet.
- Top tweet for the month for @ARC\_KSS and earned 3374 impressions

## 6. Further information

All the information discussed will be freely available on our website or through our ARC KSS Academy collaboration hub. Details below:

- Visit the [ARC KSS website](#)
- Sign up to our ARC KSS academy collaboration hub by completing our [registration form](#)
- View the [resources](#) and [repository](#) on the ARC KSS academy collaboration hub

## 7. Acknowledgements

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