

The Kent Youth Research Network

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Network**



The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) funded three organisations that provide support for young people - up to the age of 25 - to engage in, get involved with, co-produce and co-design health and care research in relation to children and young people's mental health.

These Youth Research Partnerships include a range of research projects from a host of different organisations working together to improve the way children and young people's mental health services are delivered and run, across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

Project summary

The Kent Youth Research Network (KYRN), hosted by [Kent County Council](https://www.kent.gov.uk), is a network where children, young people and their families can use their lived experience to influence future policy and service developments.

As part of this project, groups of young people aged between 11 and 17 years were trained to get involved, develop, and carry out their own research around health and social care topics that are important to them.

These young researchers were supported throughout their projects across Kent. The initiative also focused on building a wider youth research network—connecting organisations and professionals with an interest in youth-led research and linking them with young people to collaborate on meaningful research efforts.

What did the project involve?

Young researchers were empowered to lead their own research projects and took part in a wide range of activities. These included organising celebration events, advising professional researchers, and engaging in various research opportunities.

To support their efforts, the project delivered 52 sessions and workshops focused on developing research skills. These covered important topics such as ADHD, anti-bullying, autism, domestic abuse, mental health, sexual health, and more. Research opportunities were shared with young people and their parents or carers through professionals and partner organisations within the Kent Youth Research Network (KYRN).

The project collaborated with several key partners, including the University of Kent and Kent County Council. It also supported the [ELSA Diabetes](#) study team in recruiting 44 schools across Kent and contributed to shaping health campaigns and educational materials.

Dissemination

To share the impact of their work, the project produced a series of videos highlighting the experiences and findings of the Young Researchers, which were published on platforms like YouTube. Plans are in place to distribute a dissemination pack containing these findings, videos, and supporting resources, along with launching future cohorts of young researchers.

A celebration event was organised by the young researchers to present their work through reports and posters. Attendees included parents, carers, researchers, and key stakeholders from Kent County Council, the Integrated Care Board, and the University of Kent. The young people took the lead in planning every aspect of the event—from the agenda and script to the menu and decorations—creating a memorable and meaningful experience.

To find out more about the *Kent Youth Research Network* [click here](#).

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