

Public Advisor at the Applied Research Collaboration, Kent, Surrey, Sussex

Plain language version

Background

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is the main organisation that funds health and care research in England. It supports people, places and technology to help research happen. Its aim is to improve people's health and care and help the country grow by using research.

The Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey, Sussex (ARC KSS) is one of 10 such regional research partnerships across England. ARC KSS brings together universities, the NHS, local authorities, voluntary organisations and communities to carry out practical research which collectively help to improve health and social care services and reduce inequalities.

About the role

Public Advisors help make sure ARC KSS's research is relevant, fair, and connected to real community needs. Public Advisor roles are part of how our organisation is run (governance). They make sure that lived experience and public voices are included in decisions, helping guide our priorities and shape the work we do.

This is different to a **Public Contributor** role which is where members of the public can get involved or be a participant at project level. For more information on this role please see our website [Getting Involved](#).

Why Public Advisors are important

Public Advisors help to:

1. **Keep research accountable**
Check that decisions are open, fair and based on public needs.
2. **Bring real-life perspectives**
Use their own experience and understanding of communities to improve discussions.
3. **Ensure high quality research framework**

Using their own experience may bring awareness about factors to be included in the design of a research study

4. **Improve decisions**

Their input helps make research more practical, inclusive and useful.

5. **Meet NIHR standards**

NIHR requires genuine public involvement at all levels of research.

6. **Build trust and partnerships**

Their role helps ARC KSS build better relationships with local communities.

How it works

There are **20 Public Advisor roles**, covering:

- 10 Research Themes (2 per theme)
 - Early years and parenting
 - Mental health Innovation and Implementation
 - Health in Places: wider determinants of health
 - Primary and Community Healthcare: responding to complex regional needs and sustainability challenges
 - Data-driven insights into health inequalities.
- 2 Knowledge Mobilisation.
- 2 ORCA - Organisational Research Capacity Development
- 2 Research Inclusion.
- 3 ARC KSS Board (one each from Kent, Surrey, Sussex).
- 1 ARC KSS Executive Group.
- All Advisors also join the Public Involvement Network (PIN).

Further descriptions of these groups are given below.

What we need from candidates

- Be **18+** and live in **Kent, Surrey or Sussex**. (Areas covered by ARC KSS in this region exclude Greater London and the London Boroughs)
- Work well in a team.
- Understand different public viewpoints as well as your own.
- Read meeting papers and provide feedback (with support available).
- Communicate clearly with different people.
- Commit to equality, diversity and confidentiality.
- Use email and attend online meetings (but other means will be considered).
- Take part in training and development.
- Share community insights and networks.
- Represent a range of community experiences.
- Commit for **3–5 years** (but you can leave earlier if needed).

You do not need professional qualifications or research experience. Training and support are provided.

Support & payment

This is a voluntary role, not employment, but you will get:

- Support from the Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) team and a member of your theme /group team.
- Induction, buddy support and regular check-ins.
- Payment for time and expenses.
- Clear information on how to claim (via NHS Trust or university).
- Training offered based on individual learning & developmental needs.

Please be aware that **payments may affect benefits** - If you think this may affect you, we can signpost you for further guidance.

How to apply

- We are holding two, online, drop-in sessions where we can explain in more detail the roles and answer any questions you may have:
Dates: Monday 8 June 2026 12.30pm - 1.30pm and
Tuesday 16 June 2026 6pm - 7pm.
[Sign up for one of these online events.](#)
- [Complete the application form](#) indicating which Public Advisor role you would be interested in. You may hold up to two positions.
- Please return the completed application form by email to: spft.publicinvolvementarckss@nhs.net or by post to *PCIE Team, ARC KSS, Grove House, Southview Road, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 2HB*
- Closing date: **Sunday 21 June 2026**

We value diverse representation and encourage applications from people with lived experience of health and social care services, long term health conditions, disability, parents and carers of people with long term conditions or disability, people from minoritised or underrepresented communities.

To help make sure this process is accessible, we can:

- Help with completion of application forms including one to one conversation (via online Microsoft Teams or telephone).
- Provide application forms in printed format.
- Provide printed forms in large print.
- Potential to provide forms in alternative language on request.

If you would like support with any of the above or wish to discuss anything, please do contact us at spft.publicinvolvementarckss@nhs.net or on 0300 304 1025. We would be delighted to answer any individual questions or speak with you directly.

Pippa Shaw & Louise Lacey
Public Community Involvement & Engagement Team at ARC KSS.

Summary of each group and the Public Advisor role

PIN (Public Involvement Network)

The Public Involvement Network (PIN) is a group where all Public Advisors meet to share updates about their work and help strengthen public involvement across ARC KSS. When you become a Public Advisor, you automatically become part of the PIN.

Your role

- Attend quarterly online meetings (2 hours) including one annual in-person event.
- Share updates and experiences - both within and outside ARC KSS.
- Help build connections across ARC KSS Themes.
- Promote good public involvement practice.
- Share feedback on the impact of public involvement.

Board

The ARC KSS Board, led by an independent Chair, works closely with senior leaders from partner organisations across the region. It helps set the overall direction, makes sure strong governance and management are in place, and agrees how ARC will work with our partners in health, care and the community. It also provides formal assurance to the host Trust and to NIHR that ARC is delivering its work as expected.

Your role

- Attend 3 meetings a year (2 online, 1 in person).
- Review performance and risks.
- Provide public perspective at the highest level.
- Support inclusion and good public involvement practice.

Executive Group

The Executive Group is made up of ARC KSS senior leaders, representative from the host Trust, and senior programme managers. Information from other ARC KSS governance groups and the Programme Management Office (who oversees and tracks all projects) is shared with the group for the purpose of monitoring progress, identifying risks and problems or changing priorities. This helps ARC make good decisions and support both day-to-day work and long-term planning.

Your role

- Attend monthly online meetings (1 hour).
- Bring lived experience to strategic decisions.
- Raise issues from the PIN.
- Support monitoring of progress and impact.

Research Themes

Our 5 research themes with steering groups are:

- Early years and parenting.
- Mental health Innovation and Implementation.
- Health in Places: wider determinants of health.
- Primary and Community Healthcare: responding to complex regional needs and sustainability challenges.
- Data-driven insights into health inequalities.

Each Theme has a Steering Group made up of different people, including the theme leads, Public Advisors with lived experience, NHS and care professionals, commissioners, voluntary organisations, and researchers. This group helps guide the work, make decisions, check that the theme is meeting its goals, ensure the research is well designed, and focus on what local people and services need.

Your role

- Attend 3 meetings per year (predominately online).
- Help set priorities to meet theme goals.
- Ensure public involvement is meaningful.
- Build relationships with theme teams.
- Act as a “critical friend”.
- Help gather and share impact.
- Support co-production, events and recruitment.

ORCA

ORCA - Organisational Research Capacity Group is the strategy group that oversees the work of the Research Capacity Development (RCD) Theme. The RCD theme encompasses academic career development, research methodology hub, research inclusion and public community, involvement and engagement. Its main aim being to help individuals and health and care organisations to do more research, develop new leaders, and support researchers from different backgrounds.

Your role

- Attend three meetings per year (2 online, one in-person meeting).
- Share a public and community perspective to help shape decisions about research capacity, inclusion and workforce development.
- Act as a critical friend by offering constructive challenge
- Support inclusive research and research careers for under-represented communities.
- Use lived experience and networks to strengthen links between research and communities.
- Champion equality, diversity and inclusion, helping to ensure the research workforce reflects the communities it serves.

Knowledge Mobilisation

Knowledge Mobilisation - Knowledge Mobilisation in research is about actively working with people to make sure research is used in real life. It helps to turn research findings into clear, useful information that people can understand and use to improve services, policy and practice. The Knowledge Mobilisation Steering Group provides strategic oversight to ensure the right evidence is prioritised and shared at the right time to meet current health and care system needs.

Your role

- Attend 2 meetings per year - mainly online.
- Help review and prioritise research based on system need.
- Help shape priorities so evidence can be effectively adopted, scaled and shared across services.
- Bring a public perspective on how relevant, accessible and useful the evidence is.
- Act as a critical friend, offering constructive challenge and support.
- Build positive working relationships with the Knowledge Mobilisation team.

Research Inclusion

The Research Inclusion Theme works to make sure ARC KSS research is inclusive, accessible and relevant to all communities, especially those who are under-represented in research. It focuses on identifying and reducing barriers to participation and improving how research is designed, communicated and delivered.

Your role

- Bring lived experience and community perspectives into Research Inclusion discussions.
- Help identify barriers to participation in research (e.g. awareness, access, trust, cultural relevance).
- Advise on ways to improve inclusion and accessibility across ARC KSS.
- Support co-design of approaches to increase participation of under-represented groups.
- Review materials and processes to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.

This helps to:

- Improve equity in research participation and access.
- Ensure research reflects the diversity of local communities.
- Strengthen the relevance and impact of ARC KSS research.