



Saba Raza, a public member at the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) tells us about herself and her role at the ARC.



Name: Saba Raza

Occupation: Director

What region do you live in (Kent, Surrey or Sussex)? Surrey

Tell us a little bit about yourself

I am the founder of a community interest company, Strategic Health and Wellbeing Services. My goal is to improve health and wellbeing of local communities by encouraging, empowering and supporting people to engage in physical activities. I love helping people combat sedentary lifestyles and alleviate social isolation. I am particularly keen to bring the benefits of 'Moving More' to the elderly and those from ethnic minority communities.

I am a physical activity champion at Active Surrey and 'We Can Be Active' champion at Energise Me, Hampshire and a proud recipient of Surrey Heath Borough Council Community Champion Award 2023. I am an IT graduate from South Bank University, London. I also have Level 3 Pilates qualification and Otago Strength and Balance certification. In my spare time, I love spending time with my family and friends, travelling and enjoying the great outdoors.

How would you describe yourself?

An individual who is committed to making a difference in their community, I possess a positive outlook and a can-do attitude that drives me to overcome challenges and achieve success. As a community leader, I embody determination and resilience in all aspects of my work. Over the past year, I have honed my skills through self-taught project planning, bid writing, governance and bookkeeping. I excel in effectively communicating with partners, stakeholders and service users to ensure successful completion of our health and wellbeing projects. I am a mum to three grown up children. If I had the time, I would love to work with and help animals. I have lived in Surrey for over 20 years and appreciate the beautiful countryside.



What inspired you to join ARC KSS as a public member? What interests you about this role?

I am inspired by the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded individuals to address health disparities and create lasting change in the community. I am passionate about promoting health and wellbeing within communities, particularly for underserved populations. I believe everyone deserves access to quality healthcare and a healthy environment. Joining ARC KSS was the perfect opportunity for me to make a positive impact. I am also driven by the opportunity to develop and implement interventions that promote good health. This role provides an opportunity for me to carry out fulfilling and rewarding work that makes a lasting, positive impact on people's lives. By joining ARC KSS, I hope to represent the common public and shape the outcomes which meet the needs of the public.

How long have you been a public member? I have been a public member since March 2023.

Tell us about how your role?

I am honoured to represent the black and minority ethnic communities regionally and nationally. I am keen to address health disparities amongst the underserved communities and help people reach their full potential by leading an active lifestyle. I love being part of our community where we support and inspire each other to overcome challenges. Over the last few months, I have attended five public involvement network (PIN) meetings.. I found these very useful and I am inspired and impressed by the work being done by ARC KSS. It is humbling to be part of a team where we are all making a collective effort to improve public health in the UK.

What does the term 'public and community involvement and engagement' mean to you?

To me, it means involving members of the public in decision-making. It means working together to achieve a common goal.

What skills and knowledge have you developed during your time as a public member?

I have discovered the brilliant work carried out by ARC KSS and the Public Health Theme team. I am now familiar with our partners, stakeholders and individuals and the wealth of knowledge that is available. I now understand ARC KSS structure and the various roles.

Could you give us an example of a project that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of?

I am very proud of my Health and Wellbeing project at Shah Jahan Mosque, Woking. Our ladies only exercise classes have been going on since September 2023, it was initially difficult to engage these ladies as there were barriers such as language, cost, some cultural aspects and clothing. We needed to educate and empower these ladies and our message was to 'look after yourself in order to look after your family'. I am so pleased to see that the ladies have now seen/felt the benefits and are keen to continue to exercise in their own time as well as joining our weekly class.