



Partnering with communities for health & wellbeing research

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North East and North Cumbria VCSE Research
Partnerships

Plan

- Why communities & research?
- The role of the voluntary, community & social enterprise (VCSE) sector
- Support available from VONNE
- NIHR Community Engagement Toolkit
- Some key learning & reflections

Communities, VCSEs and research

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) defines public involvement in research as research being carried out **‘with’** or **‘by’** members of the public rather than **‘to’**, **‘about’** or **‘for’** them. It is an active partnership between patients, carers and members of the public with researchers that influences and shapes research.

Communities and community based/VCSE organisations can support research in several ways

Involvement / advisory roles - shaping the research

Participation in research – helping reach participants

Engagement with research findings – sharing research knowledge

The VCSE sector & health and care research

VCSE organisations have an important role to play

- Delivering a significant proportion of health and care support and services
- Valuable knowledge of health and care needs and related concerns
- Trusted relationships
- Skills and expertise in engaging with communities








Research and evaluation also offer VCSE organisations opportunities to

- Gather information to inform service developments
- Provide evidence to communicate to funders and others about their services
- Articulate the breadth and relevance of their contribution to key decision-makers

Experiences of VCSE – research partnerships

For researchers	For communities & VCSE organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limitations on time, resources and/or experience in working with communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Researchers ‘dipping in & out’• No feedback – what difference did the research make?• Lack of reciprocity and remuneration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty finding and/or connecting with communities• Reliance on tried and tested connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overwhelmed with research requests or• Not aware of / involved in research

Academic Health Science Centre

Key	
Hosted by:	 NHS
Hosted by:	 NHS
Managed by:	 Newcastle University
Hosted by:	 Newcastle University
Academic Health Science Centre	-----
Approximate funding level is shown by size	
<£1m	£1-5m
	
	>£5m 



Growing VCSE involvement in health & care research in NENC

2018 – 2022 work led by Creating Connections

2018 National NIHR 'Reaching Out' programme

2021 NIHR SPCR funded project:
Developing VCSE/Researcher partnerships
for impact and sustainability

2022 NIHR CED funded work: Developing a
work programme for a new VCSE Research
Partnerships role



**July 2022 – new VCSE
Health & Wellbeing
Research Partnerships
Coordinator role**



- Funded by NIHR infrastructure partners
- Hosted by VONNE
- Supporting connections and sustainable, reciprocal partnerships
- Building capacity for partnerships

Support available: VCSE Research Partnerships support, VONNE

VONNE are providing support to voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and researchers looking to connect and work together for health and wellbeing research.

Support available with

- **Connecting with a VCSE or research partners** – we can share your research opportunities through VONNE’s networks (with representation across the NENC region and communities of interest), and, where interests are aligned, make direct introductions to VCSE partners.
- **Building a VCSE research partnership** by providing advice and/or facilitation to support early partnership discussions based on establishing reciprocal, sustainable partnerships.
- **Opportunities for skill sharing & training** to support a better shared understanding of VCSE/research partners and approaches to working successfully in partnership for research.



Enquiry forms for research and VCSE partners to access support are available [here](#)

Supporting connections

Health & Wellbeing Network
North East & North Cumbria

VONNE HEALTH & WELLBEING

Cumbria CVS

The banner features a teal background with white text and icons. On the right, there is a graphic of several stylized human figures connected by lines, representing a network.

Sharing research opportunities through VONNE's networks

Connect with us [social icons] Your Dashboard

ABOUT US SERVICES PROJECTS JOB FINDER NEWS AND EVENTS

Home > Projects > Health and Wellbeing Hub >

North East and North Cumbria VCSE Research Partnerships

What are VCSE Research Partnerships and how do they work in the North East and North Cumbria? Here we explore the importance of inclusive research and how you can get involved.

Why is research important?

Research plays a key role in developing better care and treatments to address our health and wellbeing needs. Community involvement in research can help identify the most important topics for research and the best ways of researching them. Voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations play an important role in involving communities in research through their knowledge, relationships and skills in engaging with communities.

Why do we need VCSE Research Partnerships?

In 2021, a project involving research and VCSE organisations from across the region looked at how to develop more sustainable VCSE research partnerships to support the involvement of diverse communities in research. One recommendation from this work was the creation of a new role of VCSE Health & Wellbeing Research Partnerships Coordinator to support a more coordinated approach to collaborations.

The role is funded by [National Institute for Health & Care Research \(NIHR\)](#) Infrastructure organisations and hosted by VONNE. [Greta Brunsell](#) is a point of contact for researchers and VCSE organisations, working to help ensure appropriate processes and reimbursement are in place to support community involvement.

In the North East and North Cumbria, VCSE Research Partnerships are bringing together the skills and expertise of VCSE and research partners. In the longer term, the aim is to see greater diversity of communities involved in research through long-lasting, reciprocal partnerships and a growing number of projects driven by community views from the very beginning.



VCSE Research Partnerships webpage – support enquiry forms & useful links

NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research



Building capacity

**Demystifying health and wellbeing research
and evaluation: An introductory workshop**

**Tuesday 30th January 2024
10am – 12.30pm, online**



**What is the VCSE
sector?**

A session for health,
research & other
partners
(coming soon)



VCSE Research Partnerships support

VONNE host a [Health & Wellbeing network](#) which is open to anyone in the North East and North Cumbria region from VCSE organisations and the health and care sector with an interest in health and wellbeing.

Join the network to receive our Health & Wellbeing bulletin containing information about health and care system developments and news, funding and events, including research news and opportunities.



NIHR Community Engagement Toolkit

10 guiding principles for researchers looking to involve communities and work with community organisations.

A great starting place for planning for working with communities for research, and to guide early discussions with potential research / VCSE partners

<https://www.rdsresources.org.uk/ce-toolkit>



Putting Principles Into Practice:

Community Engagement Toolkit project

- Creating Connections network
- Work to raise awareness and encourage adoption of the NIHR Community Engagement Toolkit
- NIHR Centre for Engagement & Dissemination grant to develop a resource kit to support putting principles into practice
- Early stages
- Co-production focus
- For more info about how you can get involved, please get in touch!

Some key learning

- Working with organisations in the VCSE sector is one way to be more inclusive and involve more diverse communities in research
- Relationships with these organisations need to be built and maintained over time, **with reciprocity and valuing everyone's time and input**
- Genuine reciprocal partnerships are based on solid relationships that take investment on both sides to build and sustain
- Research systems and funding processes currently do not often create the conditions to nurture these kinds of partnerships

Some key learning

- **Lots** of potential benefit of greater partnership working for research **and** the communities and the VCSE organisations that support them
 - For research – project ideas, design, delivery, impact
 - For communities & individuals – skills, learning, experience
 - For VCSE organisations – evidencing their impact, access to evidence, influence on policy and practice, skills and learning.....
- Thinking creatively about how to work together is important
 - involving and valuing all kinds of expertise
 - learning together
 - sharing skills & knowledge
 - producing relevant, applied & inclusive outputs

Some key learning

- Sharing **what research is** and **clearly describing the opportunity and why it could be of interest** - the **‘so what’** - is key when involving new communities
- **A growing request: “Can you help us involve more diverse / under-represented groups in our research?”**
 - What groups are under-served within your health or care topic?
 - Have you engaged these groups in your early stage PPIE?
 - Have you considered and given thought to the main barriers to including these groups in your research?

Further resources & support

Resources to support patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in research – collated by the Creating Connections network

A newly developed collection of resources to support PPIE in our region, including links to locally developed and national resources to inform your PPIE planning and activity.

<https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/creatingconnections/>

[Creating Connections](#) is a network of organisations, groups and individuals who all share an interest in patient and public involvement and engagement in health and care research.

The network enables collaboration on PPIE initiatives, sharing knowledge and best practice, develops models for more diverse and sustainable involvement, co-delivers training, offer peer support and more.

Members are largely based in the North East and North Cumbria region. You can [learn more about the network and how to join here.](#)

