

West Yorkshire REN

Working with VCSE research champions across West Yorkshire

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Why does research not reflect all communities?

We set out to understand why people from underserved communities haven't typically participated in research and to build understanding of research in these communities, exploring what researchers need to do differently to reach and be relevant to these populations

Community conversations

Research Engagement Network (REN): NHS England funding enabled ICB and VCSE partners to collaborate on REN. In West Yorkshire training was provided to research champions who held conversations with underserved communities about research, engaging with over 600 people.

The Power of Communities

West Yorkshire has developed strong links with the voluntary sector (14,000 organisations and growing!) through an ICB coordinated Power of Communities board. This links together grassroots organisations as well as infrastructure organisations in each place.

What did we find?

We have learned a lot about people's knowledge of and willingness to participate in research. Links have been established between VCSE research champions and local academics; some champions are now named in funding bids for new studies. Many people have indicated that, after speaking with their local champion, they would consider taking part in research. We have been funded to continue the work in 2024/25.

RESEARCH CHAMPIONS

Making sure that people in our communities are fully informed and aware of research, the benefits and the opportunities to get involved and influence change!

We currently have 4 research champions covering North and South Kirklees, they have received specialist training on research with the aim of getting out into their communities and having meaningful conversations with people about research.

They are using their links and champion skills to start those conversations and get people talking and thinking, they use their established activity such as ESOL classes, support groups etc to raise awareness and gain insight from people such as the barriers to taking part in research. We are learning so much already in a very short space of time!

"I didn't know that there was certain research that you could take part in online - that would be much easier for me!"

"We are so pleased to be able to work on such an important piece of work, so far, our champions have been able to speak to people across a number of health inclusion groups about research, we never expected to hear from so many people who knew nothing about research. Knowing that we are making inroads into getting those key messages about research out there and signposting people to research opportunities is real progress!" Steffi - champion lead

"I never thought about how taking part in research could benefit me, my family & where I live, I thought it was only for certain people - I'd love to get involved!"

For a full list of partners and more information visit: <https://www.westyorksrd.nhs.uk/research-champions>