
Community Participatory Action Research Training and Mentoring Cohort 3

Training and Mentoring Programme

A South East programme to develop
community researchers



Introduction

NHS England South East is delighted to launch Cohort 3 of the Community Participatory Action Researcher (**CPAR**) training and mentoring programme. The programme will support voluntary sector organisations working with communities adversely affected by health inequalities to recruit, train and mentor their workforce on CPAR. This programme will equip organisations to undertake research in **their own** communities. The key findings of the research will be presented to system leaders with the aim of informing decisions locally or regionally.

CPAR Cohort 3 will focus on the health inequalities experienced by marginalised communities.

Programme Background

The South East CPAR programme was developed in response to the Beyond the Data Public Health England report [COVID-19: understanding the impact on BAME communities](#) by addressing recommendation 2: *Support community participatory research, in which researchers and community stakeholders engage as equal partners of the COVID-19.*

This shaped the development of a CPAR programme for the South East which included the below previous CPAR programmes:

CPAR Cohort 1 trained 34 Community Researchers who focused on the effects of the pandemic on ethnic minority communities. You can learn more about this cohort [here](#).

CPAR Cohort 2 trained 29 Community Researchers who focused on the cost-of-living crisis and its effects on the health inequalities of marginalised communities. You can learn more about this cohort [here](#).

The programme provided opportunities to develop community researchers, and to fill gaps and strengthen knowledge for previously excluded or not fully engaged communities. A total of 27 voluntary sector organisations have supported the Community Researchers.

“I am now connected to new research jobs/roles, research bodies recognising the value of CPAR work to make a realistic community development planning.” (Community researcher Cohort 1)

“We are such a small organisation, yet this training has put us on the map!” (Community Researcher Cohort 2)

Programme Outline

This programme is run by the South East School of Public Health which is part of Workforce, Training & Education (WT&E), NHS England South East and in partnership with the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID South East), Department of Health & Social Care. Our delivery partners are The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC), the University of Reading and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR).

This programme aims to:

- provide training and mentoring in community participatory action research approaches to employees or volunteers from the voluntary, community, social enterprise or faith-based sector organisations.
- develop and support community researchers to engage and build relationships with key stakeholders / strategic partners who can use the insights of the research to implement the actions
- celebrate community researchers' work and their findings at a regional showcase event.

What and how will community researchers learn?

The programme of learning is delivered both online and in-person. The delivery partners for the training and mentoring are outlined below.

The University of Reading will use their 8-stage model which includes engaging with communities, developing research questions, collecting and analysing data and presenting findings. For more information on University of Reading's programme visit their website for their toolkit on [Participatory Action Research](#).

The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) will deliver mentoring in small groups or with individuals. This will provide an opportunity for critical reflection and understanding of the principles and practices required in making decisions about why

and how CPAR can be deployed effectively. See more information on the training [SCDC does on their website](#).

Institute of Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) will deliver workshops with community researchers and their host organisations to support them to identify where/how the research might be best placed to influence health and care policy and practice and who to involve. See more on the [IVAR website about the work around connecting healthy communities](#).

All three delivery partners work together to deliver programme that fits the needs of the community researchers.

Programme summary timeline

Applications open	14 June 2024	
Webinar	19 June, 12:00 - 13:00	Join on Teams
Q&A drop-in session	3 July, 12:00 - 13:00	Join on Teams
Q&A drop-in session	10 July 12:00 - 13:00	Join on Teams
Applications close	15 July 2024 12:00 noon	Submit to the South East School of Public Health
Applicants informed of outcome	1 August 2024	
Training and mentoring programme starting date (detailed training dates to be confirmed, see Appendix 1)	week commencing 7 October 2024	
Research projects completed	2 October 2025	
Showcase event	September/October (date to be confirmed)	
Present to System Leaders	By end of Oct	

Funding Offer

The funding available to support Community Researchers is outlined below.

- Up to 15 hours per week at £15 per hour to reimburse each researchers' time (this amount is based on [Agenda for Change Band 5](#)).
- This payment is to cover attendance at the training and mentoring programme, learning events, showcase and to undertake research activity.
- The timing and method of payments will be made in 3 payments to the host organisations to pay the Researchers (15 October 2024, 11 February 2025 and 15 July 2025. NHS England South East will cover the admin costs for invoicing this work
- Applicant organisations and / or researchers will be responsible for their national insurance, taxes or other pension payments as necessary.
- There is a grant of up to £1,000 per research project to support costs in implementing their research, for example, costs towards translation, filming, film editing, running focus groups etc.

Travel to in-person events as required by the programme will be covered by NHS England.

Application

Who can apply?

Applications for this training and mentoring programme are open to voluntary, community, faith-based and social enterprise organisations (VCFSE).

Joint applications between NHS organisations or local authorities and VCFSE organisations will be accepted provided the application is in full partnership with a VCFSE organisation. For joint applications, we would expect that all organisations involved in the application to clarify their roles and responsibilities in the application form.

We have examples in previous cohorts where this has worked successfully:

1. a local authority provides support in the form of leadership, networking in the local area, local resources, access to generic training like safeguarding, GDPR.
2. the local authority employed the researchers for the duration of the training, receiving the funding from WT&E South East, providing bespoke guidance as required. The voluntary organisation takes responsibility for line management and pastoral care of the community researchers.
3. Healthwatch worked jointly with a grassroots organisation. It provided guidance and support, and received the funding

It is important that you are able to demonstrate how your organisation is working with communities adversely affected by health inequalities.

We accept applications from organisations that are grassroots or non-registered charities.

We will accept applications from organisations who were part of the previous cohorts provided that the researchers are new.

A community researcher will be an individual who is a part of the community where the research will take place. The community researcher will have local knowledge, be engaged with their community, and have some lived experience of the issues taking place. The community researcher is not required to have any experience in research.

Key points to consider in completing the application

- Your application must address issues related to the health inequalities faced by marginalised communities.
- Your organisation will have at least 2 candidates with a maximum of 3 who will train as community researchers, each working up to 15 hours per week.
- By submitting an application all researchers for that organisation agree to work collaboratively on one research project.
- Researchers and your organisation will meet the criteria set below [roles & responsibilities section](#) in Appendix 2
- You will have an idea on how you would like to present your findings; this can be in the form of a report, presentation, short film, animation, drama, music, or any other form of expression.

Criteria for successful applications will be based on the following:

- your organisation works with marginalised communities experiencing health inequalities
- your organisation can demonstrate that it has a strong enduring relationship with the communities affected: evidence of connectedness, lived experience, or longevity in your relationship with them
- Your organisation's aims and objectives or mission fit with training community researchers to address health inequalities
- Issues affecting their community are stated and there is a sense that there is an understanding of the community
- There is knowledge of who the researchers are or might be
- Partnership with other organisations is demonstrated, including strategic stakeholders and other organisations
- Practical support, financial capacity and policies are in place to support researchers with 1 to 1 support or training

Please find the application on the [HEE Thames Valley website](#) – please email your application to: england.publichealthschools.se@nhs.net by **15 July 2024, 12:00noon**.

Training and mentoring

The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) and the University of Reading will deliver the programme of training and mentoring. This will include the University of Reading PAR toolkit and model. For more information on their work in this area, please see [University of Reading Participatory Action Research](#), and [SCDC](#).

FAQs

1. What is community participatory action research?

Community participatory action research is an approach to research where all stakeholders are equal partners, working together to make positive change within communities. This type of research is sometimes known as participatory action research (PAR), peer research, or community action research. All are based on similar principles of equal partnership, collaboration and addressing an issue from within the community.

'**Community**' indicates that the research is based on the issues that affect community members. '**Participatory**' means engaging communities in the research process. '**Action**' indicates that the outcome of the research will lead to change for that community. Researchers commonly come from the communities affected and will play a key role in developing the local research agenda, the research questions, and the tools to collect, analyse and disseminate their findings. The research should lead to an action or actions.

See the [Research Summaries](#) from the cohort 2 for examples of projects.

2. How does the research lead to action?

Community participatory action research aims to ensure the research leads to action.

The approach may be:

Where there is an issue in a community and carrying out research would help to act and make a positive change. For example, to understand an issue in more depth before delivering an intervention.

Where an action is planned or underway that would benefit from a research component to understand the extent of change.

3. What are the values behind this programme?

Insights from the evaluation of the pilot have informed this programme and they form the following key principles:

Valuing the researchers	Researchers are not just another volunteer workforce and will be paid for their time
Co-production from the start	Community researchers or representatives from their organisations the present and previous cohorts will be invited to join forums which will shape this programme
Collaboration	An oversight group will form a broad range of stakeholders to support the design of the researcher recruitment process

Community-led	Communities will set the research question and identify their health priorities
Inclusion	Recruitment of those genuinely connected to communities, with an inclusive panel, ensuring representation at all levels
Learning from communities	WT&E and our partners acknowledge that this is a learning process, and are flexible in any necessary changes needed for the programme

4. Does this research work require ethical approval?

This work carried out by community researchers does not require formal ethical approval. However, the training and mentoring programme will enable Community Researchers to use an **‘ethical approach’**. This means it should be carried out in accordance with sound research ethics and in line with the standards of accountability, ethics and reporting of participating organisations. An example of an appropriate ethical framework can be found [here](#)^{*} and can be expanded in accordance with procedures and policies of the organisation (e.g. protection of children and vulnerable adults) as appropriate to the topic and community.

This research will implement actions at a community level, and we do not envisage that this will present a risk or harm to the public. Researchers will be trained on how to deal with issues that arise when working with the public. In addition, participating organisations should be able to draw on their own policies to support researchers and ensure their health, safety, and wellbeing during the project.

To comply with General Data Protection regulation (GDPR) the community researchers will learn and be expected to implement the principles of consent, confidentiality, and safe storage of information.

5. What is the rationale for the payments?

Community researchers will come from various employment backgrounds. Some may have voluntary roles in their communities, and some may be in receipt of benefits. We want to ensure that receiving payments for research activity does not infringe upon their economic circumstances and therefore this is capped to 15 hours per week.

The hourly payment is measured against a level 5 (degree level) learner. In consultation with our partners, this fits with the NHS Agenda for Change (AfC) pay scale. Please note that this payment amount is not an AfC contract and the AfC terms and conditions do not apply.

^{*} Action Research by, in and of Communities. A Practical Guide to Community-led Action Research p. 28

6. What if researchers spend more than 15 hours on the research work, can they claim more funding?

The amount of time a researcher devotes to the research is up to the individual. WT&E South East has scoped out this work with our partners and have concluded that 15 hours a week for 1 year is sufficient. The researcher will be advised by the mentors on the size of their research work and manageability. There is no expectation to write a dissertation!

We recommend that host organisations work with their researchers to ensure that the input is balanced. WT&E South East is unable to offer funding above the 15 hours, but host organisations are welcome to seek their own funding to supplement any extra time spent on this activity.

7. Can the Lead of the host organisation receive funding to do their role?

The role of a Lead is to provide pastoral and project management support to the researchers. WT&E South East is responsible for commissioning the training and development of the health workforce and therefore cannot fund this type of role.

8. What is the governance?

The groups listed below will provide additional governance for CPAR, ensuring the voices of our communities are heard and advocated for. Membership will be a broad representation from strategic stakeholders, those with expertise in community research, training providers, and a community researcher from the pilot cohort.

Oversight Group – to provide leadership, guidance, and expertise to implementing the CPAR research. Meets quarterly

Operational Group – to lead on the delivery and implementation of the CPAR programme working with the researchers and commissioned providers. Meets monthly

Host Organisation Forum – attended by Leads and WT&E. The forum is an opportunity to hear from organisations and respond to queries.

Researchers' Network – to provide peer support to researchers.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Learning programme (indicative timetable)

Activity	Training provider	Time period (dates will be agreed with researchers)	Format
Stage 1 training – Introductory Session	University of Reading SCDC IVAR	w/c 7 October 2025	online/ in-person
1 st mentoring sessions	SCDC	October 2025	online
Stage 2 training – Agreement, role and expectations	University of Reading	November 2025	In person
Stage 3 training – Planning/Research questions	University of Reading	December 2025	online
Stage 4 training – Research methods/Data collection	University of Reading	January 2025	online
2 nd mentoring sessions	SCDC	January 2025	online
Stage 5 training (1) – Data Analysis	University of Reading	February 2025	online
Stage 5 training (2) – Data Analysis	University of Reading IVAR (to attend)	March 2025	online
Shared Learning session (1)	SCDC	AP to provide	online
3 rd mentoring sessions	SCDC	April 2025	online
Scoping conversations	IVAR	March-April 2025	online
IVAR Workshop 1: What it means to be a system leader and developing ‘focus, findings and recommendation statement’.	IVAR	May 2025	online
Stage 6 training – Key Findings	University of Reading	June 2025	online
IVAR workshop 2: Action planning and stakeholder mapping	IVAR	June	online/ in-person
IVAR workshop 3: Developing your key message and tools and approaches to collaborative working	IVAR	July	online
4 th mentoring sessions	SCDC	June- July 2025	online
Shared Learning session (2)	SCDC	August 2025	online

IVAR's one to one support: To develop key messages and presentations for local ICBs; and showcase event	IVAR	July to September 2025	online
Stage 7 training – Presentation of findings	University of Reading	August 2025	online
Mentoring and preparation for showcase event	SCDC	Aug- September 2025	online
Stage 8 training – What next? Taking Action	University of Reading	September 2025	online
Showcase	NHS England	September/October (date to be confirmed)	In-person
ICB workshops with IVAR to present the recommendations and actions needed to system leaders	IVAR	October 2025	online/ in-person

Appendix 2 - Roles and responsibilities

Community Researcher

The community researcher will have strong links with the local community and will have good working links with the organisation that will make the application.

The roles and responsibilities are:

- Attend CPAR training and mentoring sessions and other training determined by the host organisations, and any meetings with your research lead.
- Attend and engage in the researchers' network sessions facilitated by WT&E South East
- Determine how you will collect information, and how you will share your findings
- Devote 15 hours per week to the related learning, research, and action outcomes
- Inform your organisation on your progress and seek support when required
- Work with your communities by being transparent about the purpose of the research
- Continue to involve your communities when you have completed your research by sharing the outcomes and seeking their feedback to inform future actions

Host organisation

This is the applicant organisation from the voluntary, community, faith-based or social enterprise sector.

The roles and responsibilities will be:

- Identify community researchers through local networks
- Provide local or additional training which is mandatory or specific to enable the scope of research (e.g., GDPR, safeguarding, IT skills, manual handling)
- Provide equipment as required
- Agree with researchers on payments and invoicing, be transparent with researchers about any payment impact on state benefits etc
- Clarify any administrative costs when payments are raised
- Engage with any relevant forums or networks to bring all host organisations together to share learning
- Identify a point of contact who will be supporting the community researchers.

The Lead at the Host Organisation

The lead will be someone who has some experience in community research or working closely with local communities. This person will either be from the VCFSE organisation or the partner organisation if a joint application is made.

The roles and responsibilities will be:

- Develop a project plan with a timeline and budget for the research
- Be available for regular meetings with researchers to support them in their projects
- Identify any logistical support researchers may require
- Support researchers to identify research issue, and any resources that will lead to action outcome

- Identify additional training needs outside the CPAR programme. This could reflect any specific learning needs of researchers or organisational requirements
- Attend the monthly WT&E South East CPAR Leads' forum and the dedicated learning sessions delivered by IVAR
- Inform WT&E South East of any issues related to the researchers' progress, payments, organisational changes
- Act as a link between strategic stakeholders and communities undergoing research

The role of the lead at the Host organisation is not funded by WT&E.

Training & mentoring delivering partners: Scottish Community Development Centre, the University of Reading and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research

The roles and responsibilities will be:

- Deliver training and mentoring programme according to timescales in the programme.
- Implement a training needs assessment of the cohort of community researchers recruited and amend as appropriate.
- Ensure there are planned opportunities for community researchers to come together and share their work and experiences with other community researchers, enabling peer-to-peer learning and lines of co-inquiry.
- Provide a platform to share tools, templates, guidance, and examples in an accessible way.
- Mentor and support researchers to develop a timeline of milestones with mini goals and longer-term goals.
- Provide support to community researchers to prepare their work to present to stakeholders.

Public Bodies

These are institutions like NHS England, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID South East), Integrated Care Boards (ICB) or Local Authorities (LA) who are named in law to undertake activities on behalf of the Government.

The roles and responsibilities will be:

WT&E South East

- Work with partners to establish an oversight group of experts and stakeholders to lead and shape the CPAR project
- Act as main contact for stakeholders including training provider, host organisations and researchers for any issues relating to the project to include setting up forums and networks for relevant stakeholders
- Sharing learning from project with regional and national stakeholders

OHID

- Act as expert advisors to the project
- Make use of existing networks, partners, and connections to promote the programme and share learning with key stakeholders regionally and nationally
- Champion the work at strategic meetings and board meetings

Integrated Care Board and/or Local Authority

- Link with researchers to understand the research and findings
- Share the findings at strategic meetings to inform improvements to health and care service
- Ensure the voice of researchers and their recommendations are included in workplans and actioned by the relevant boards / systems
- Continue to engage with researchers to develop strong partnerships with communities across the system and at place level.