

Growing Social Care Research in the West Midlands: Our Shared Purpose



NIHR Research Design Services West Midlands (RDS WM)
NIHR Clinical Research Network West Midlands (CRN WM)
NIHR Applied Research Collaboration West Midlands (ARC WM)
West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Care Services (WM ADASS)
Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC)

Supporting Social Care research is a priority for each of our respective organisations. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Social Care has been at the forefront of everybody's mind.

A desire from us all to collaborate for a shared purpose on this agenda and the increased use of virtual platforms created an opportunity for us to work together across a large region.

With a future [NIHR Research for Social Care funding call](#) in the pipeline we wanted to reach as many people as possible in the Social Care research space.

We decided that the initial focus of our collaboration should be on holding a [Growing Social Care Research Event](#). To achieve this, representatives from our organisations met regularly to set the agenda and contribute to the development of sessions to address key issues in Social Care research. These included involving service users, carers and communities in research; working with practice partners (care homes); making an impact with research; and developing skills and confidence for social care research.

Speakers from our respective practice, research and user communities shared their reflections and experiences of how social care research can help shape and challenge practice and policy.

A shared message was that the key to this is bringing together practitioners, researchers and people with lived experience from the very start to set priorities.

The benefits the collaboration has brought have surpassed event organisation. During the run-up to the event we have learned so much about each other's organisations and the benefits this can bring to build a culture for Social Care Research across the region.

We have been able to problem-solve to allocate capacity-building funding to where there is most need, e.g. funding of a Principal Social Worker to identify improvement ideas that could lead to future research. We have created innovative approaches to spread the message of how our organisations can support Social Care Research.

Our success in achieving this was evident with over 160 delegates signing up for the day.

The event showed a strong desire for communities, people with lived experience, practitioners, and researchers to work together. We are excited to take the suggestions from the event forward and continue to find innovative ways of supporting Social Care Research.