



華人身心健康
CHINESE WELLBEING



Mary
Seacole
House



NOVEMBER 2024

Cheshire and Merseyside

ICS Research Engagement Network (REN)
development programme, funded by NHS England
Impact Report

Cheshire and Merseyside

NHSE FUNDED REN PROJECTS

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Foreword

This report represents just 8 months of work and is testament to the individuals and partnerships involved.

We have been fully supported by a multitude of agencies in developing these early building blocks for scaling up VCFSE and community inclusion in health and care research. Not least has been the support of Cheshire and Merseyside ICB's Research and Innovation Steering Group, the Research and Innovation team and Rowan Pritchard-Jones, Steering Group Director and Medical Director for the ICB. The commitment from the ICB, CoREN, ARC North West Coast, the CRN and the new Regional Research Delivery Network to continue working with the VCFSE sector on this agenda is heart-warming. The recognition in that commitment and collective ambition to link to the wider VCFSE sector and scale up our approach to engagement and partnership is now embedded in our purpose.

The key for me is how we link to the wider sector through our VCSE Alliance structures of VS6, CWIP and the Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE Health and Care Leaders Group and make sure we connect to the 19,000-plus local groups, working with and owned by their communities and beneficiaries.

For us, engaging communities is vital but we want to go further and drive genuine community empowerment and real devolution. We need to help build sustainable relationships, partnerships, living evidence bases tied to real-time delivery and implementation of that evidence base. Community-led initiatives cannot rely on 15-year cycles but need to evolve far more quickly. We have an ambitious ICB and ambitious Research and Innovation leadership, and it is our job to make sure that the VCFSE sector is included, keeps up, and is a vehicle to drive research and innovation for our communities.

Amidst all this, if there is one big take-away for me, it has been the development of the Cheshire and Merseyside Phoenix Way Network that includes a growing network of local organisations championing race equality in their communities. This network has been built; now we need to get the academics to it.

Lots of thank-yous. Thank you to Racheal Jones, Jessy Noe, Nichola Verstraelen, Sarah Fletcher, Paula Wheeler, Julie Mugarza, Helen Moreby, and Claire Selby, to colleagues and partners in Lancashire and South Cumbria especially Tracy Hopkins, Conal Land, and Joe Hannett, and VONNE colleagues in the North East for letting us "fast-track policy transfer" their work, especially Greta Brunskill, and everyone involved in the work to date! A huge special mention to Cheshire and Merseyside's first Voluntary Sector Research Coordinator (VRC), Francesca McIntosh, who has been the heart and soul of this work.



Warren Escadale, Chief Executive of Voluntary Sector North West

Background and Overview

This activity was funded through the ICS Research Engagement Network (REN) development programme. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of NHS England or the Department of Health and Social Care.

**STRONG
COMMITMENT**
TO GROW RESEARCH

The Research Engagement Network (REN) is a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing the inclusion of diverse communities in health and social care research. The REN programme seeks to bridge the gap between researchers and underserved populations by fostering collaboration, building trust, and promoting equitable access to research opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the REN programme's in Cheshire and Merseyside are:

**INCREASE
DIVERSITY**



- To increase the participation of seldom-heard communities in research.
- To support the development of inclusive research practices.
- To build sustainable partnerships between researchers, healthcare providers, and community organisations.

APPROACH

- Engaging with local communities to understand their needs and barriers to participation in research.
- Providing training and support to community champions who can facilitate research activities within their communities.
- Collaborating with local healthcare institutions, academic researchers, and voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations.
- Promoting the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles into research governance and practice.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While the programme has seen considerable success, it has also faced challenges such as capacity constraints and the need for sustained funding. The REN team is committed to addressing these challenges by:

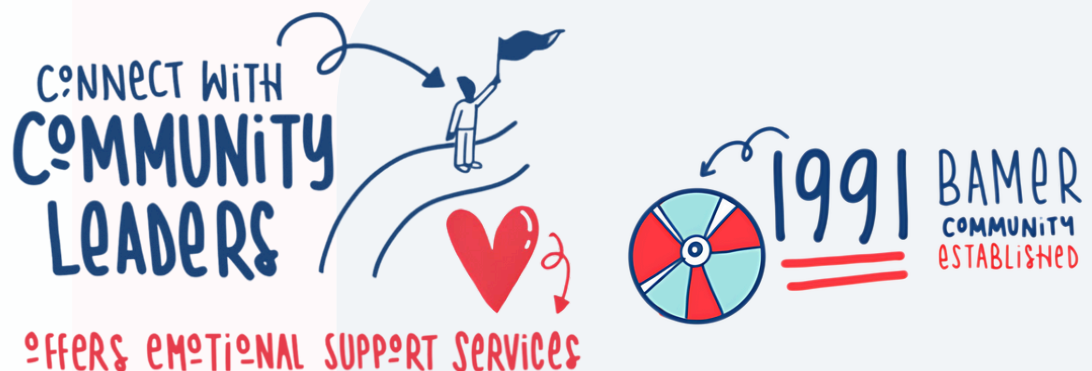
- Exploring additional funding opportunities to ensure the continuity of the programme.
- Enhancing the capacity of community organisations to participate in research.
- Strengthening the integration of EDI principles in research practices across the region.

Key achievements include:

- Establishing a network of community research champions who have been trained to support research activities.
- Facilitating partnerships with over 124 organisations, including community groups, healthcare providers, and local authorities.
- Launching training programmes and events to raise awareness about the importance of inclusive research.

Mary Seacole House (MSH)

REN 1&1.2



Mary Seacole House (MSH) has played a pivotal role in the REN programme by serving as a crucial bridge between healthcare research and underserved communities. The organisation's unique position allows it to effectively reach communities that are often overlooked in traditional healthcare and research settings, particularly those dealing with mental health issues. MSH's involvement has been instrumental in reducing barriers to research participation and promoting inclusivity.

MARY SEACOLE HOUSE

Introducing Research to Ethnic Communities

The partnership between Mary Seacole House (MSH) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has led to several impactful initiatives aimed at ethnic communities. They have successfully trained Community Research Champions, who play a crucial role in increasing research awareness among marginalised communities. They have delivered research awareness workshops in multiple languages, ensuring that the information is accessible to a wider audience.



MSH found that ethnic communities are often hesitant to take part in research due to the above.

Community Research Champions

For REN 1, MSH trained 11 research champions from 9 different ethnicities, holding training sessions in Farsi and Urdu. This effort continued in REN 1.2, where Community Research Champions further increased research awareness among marginalised communities, delivering workshops in languages such as Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Spanish, Tigrinya, and Amharic.



TRAINED COMMUNITY CHAMPS

Community Engagement and Outreach

Through these initiatives, MSH enabled significant outreach, including 10 referrals to studies and expanding into communities like the Kurdish and Iranian. The efforts in REN 1.2 also led to the organisation of weekly Health and Wellbeing Clinics in collaboration with NIHR. Health advisors conducted awareness sessions, allowing service users to sign up for the "Research for Future" program.

Case Study Film

A case study film was produced within an immigrant mental health charity, focusing on a health clinic that supports refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. The film showcases how research is embedded within this service, highlighting the integration of research activities into the clinic's operations to better serve the needs of these communities.

OFFER OF A
HEALTH &
WELLBEING CLINIC

Mary Seacole House Video



TESTIMONIAL

"Mary Seacole House are uniquely placed to reach communities that are underserved by healthcare and healthcare research. It is important that these communities are not overlooked when capturing lived experiences, particularly around mental health. These types of centres are beneficial for reducing barriers to research participation and promoting inclusivity."

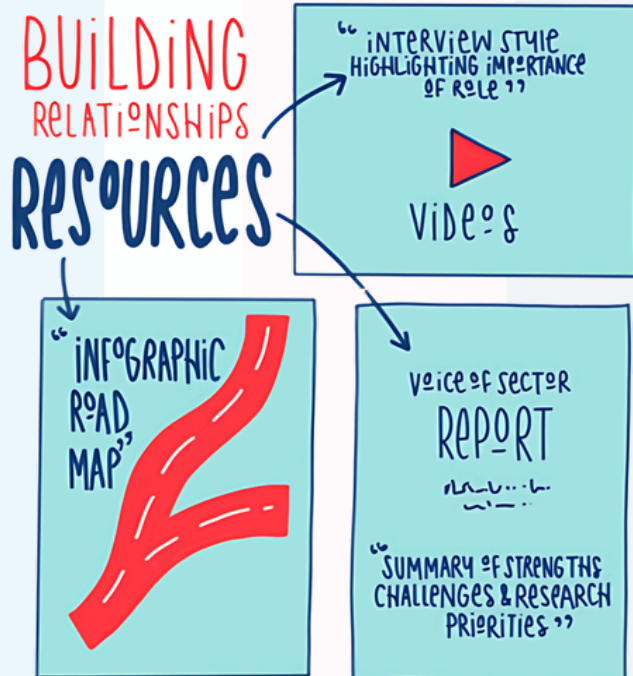
Testimonial data from a sponsor that can help contribute to breaking down some of the barriers to setting up portfolio studies within VCFSE organisations.

IMPACTS SO FAR:

- **Increased Awareness:** Through training Community Research Champions and delivering workshops, MSH has successfully raised awareness about health research among marginalised communities.
- **Enhanced Participation:** The organisation has reduced barriers to research participation, ensuring that underserved communities are included in health research initiatives.
- **Sustainable Partnerships:** MSH has built sustainable partnerships with local healthcare providers and community organisations, fostering a collaborative environment for inclusive research.
- **Health and Wellbeing Clinics:** The weekly clinics organised in partnership with NIHR have provided a platform for health advisors to deliver research awareness sessions and engage service users in ongoing research efforts.
- **Community Engagement:** By offering workshops in multiple ethnic languages and creating research awareness, MSH has facilitated greater community engagement and participation in health research.
- **Case Study Film:** The production of a case study film has highlighted the integration of research within immigrant mental health services, showcasing the benefits of inclusive research practices.

VCFSE Research Coordinator (VRC)

REN 1.2



Cheshire and Merseyside's VCFSE Research Coordinator has produced three significant outputs as part of REN 1.2 in Cheshire and Merseyside, each designed to drive collaborative action between the VCFSE sector and the Health and Care research infrastructure for its members to exchange knowledge and expertise and to learn from each other to support the development, dissemination, and implementation of health and social care research.

Overview of Outputs

VOICES OF THE SECTOR REPORT

A summary of the strengths, challenges, and research priorities of the VCFSE sector, along with recommendations for future collaboration.

The report involved conducting interviews with representatives from the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector, transcribing and analysing the interview recordings, and grouping the findings into thematic categories.

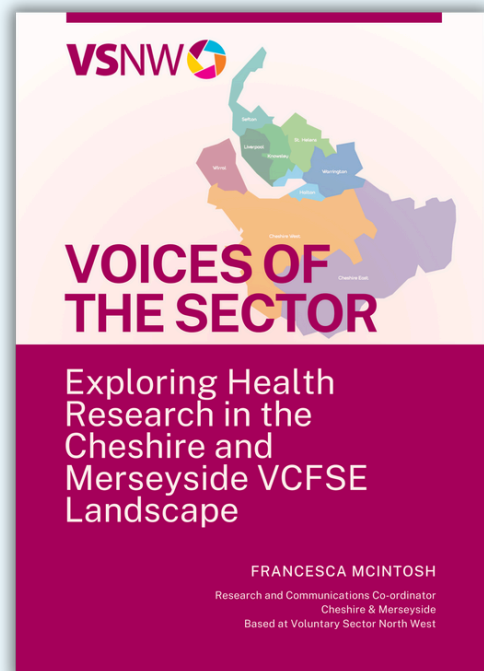
Interview Questions:

1. What do you think are the barriers to research in the VCFSE sector?
2. What are the strengths of the VCFSE sector when conducting research?
3. What research is your organisation currently working on?
4. Are you collaborating with any other organisations on research?
5. What do you think the ICB research priorities should be?

ACCESS TO RESEARCH INFOGRAPHIC

A clear and concise, visual and interactive clickable document, serving as a guide for the VCFSE sector to navigate and understand the complex landscape of health and care research. The co-produced flow chart of the research process aims to simplify understanding within the VCFSE sector. This tool can be utilised in the next phase of developing a training package for the VCFSE and ICB population health teams. The infographic aims to provide comprehensive, relevant information in a clear, easy-to-understand format, ensuring quick and seamless access to the information the reader needs.

Full Report



C&M Access to Research Full Infographic

Cheshire and Merseyside ICB research groups, along with the VCFSE alliances and NIHR infrastructure (ARC and CRN NW Coast) are committed to actively supporting each other with the aim of improving access to research for people from underserved groups and people with health inequalities. [See the Commitment Statements](#)

The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector's Access to the Health and Care Research Infrastructure across Cheshire and Merseyside

This is an interactive clickable document. You can access each section below directly and return to this page at any time through the link at the top of each page.

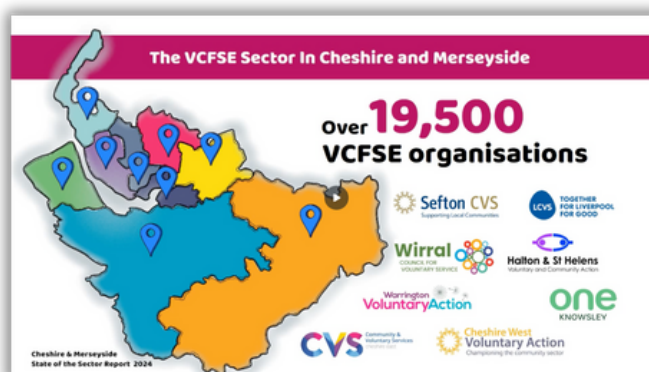
[NIHR NORTH WEST REGION](#)

[CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM \(ICS\)](#)

[HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS](#)

GET TO KNOW THE SECTOR VIDEO

An animated video highlighting the importance of academic involvement in the VCFSE sector. It shows potential collaborations and their impact on communities, aiming to improve researchers' understanding of the sector. The video explains the sector's insights into hard-to-recruit community groups and demonstrates the mutual benefits of collaboration. It seeks to inspire viewers to contribute to VCFSE research, fostering further involvement.



IMPACTS SO FAR:

Impacts so far include a better understanding and identification of gaps in the health and care research infrastructure from the VCFSE sector's perspective, enhanced collaboration with academia, increased visibility and representation, and progress in diversifying research. There have also been positive policy and practice changes within the VCFSE sector based on academic insights, and strengthened connections with Higher Education Institutions, leading to potential collaborative research efforts.

Learning and Recommendations

FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF VCFSE-ACADEMIA PARTNERSHIPS

- Simplify the process for building research partnerships with VCFSE sector.
- Create a centralised research collaboration/dating platform - let's scale up engagement.
- Map out and promote "research-ready" communities and their priorities.
- Codesign research project proposals and define recommendations for implementing findings with VCFSE groups.

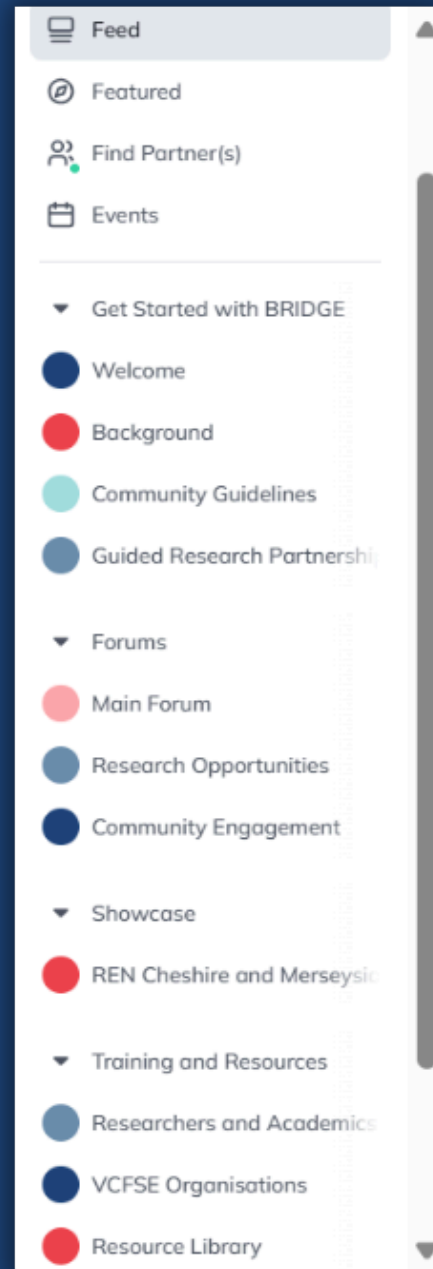
INVEST IN VCFSE RESEARCH CAPACITY

- Build VCFSE research skills through workshops, training, access to data and mentorship programmes.
- Allocate funds for VCFSE inclusion and role in proposals.
- Capitalise on the role of the VCFSE Research Coordinator role to facilitate connections and provide support.
- Continue the REN programmes.





The BRIDGE (Bridging Research Initiatives for Diverse Grassroots Engagement) Research Network is a collaborative portal under development as part of the Research Engagement Network (REN) programme. The network aims to increase diversity in research participation, foster collaboration between researchers and the VCFSE sector, and address barriers to research engagement. It is set to be piloted in Cheshire and Merseyside in February 2025, with plans to potentially expand across the North West region. The Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE Research Coordinator (VRC) is leading this project.



Rapid Conversion of Evidence Summaries (RaCES)

REN 1.2



The Rapid Conversion of Evidence Summaries (RaCES) projects are designed to address practice or policy questions within health and social care. This process involves identifying relevant questions, finding and assessing evidence, summarising findings, and implementing them into practice. The goal is to up-skill members in evidence synthesis and implementation while disseminating findings widely.

RaCES Process



Identifying Practice or Policy Questions

Questions are identified by ARCNWC members or through priority areas in health and social care. Examples include: "Which safety culture survey should I use?", "Is virtual reality effective in treating post-traumatic stress syndrome?", and "Is strength training effective for Multiple Sclerosis patients?".

Finding Evidence and Guiding Assessment

Once a question is specified, guidance is given on identifying and assessing relevant evidence. Support is provided through mentoring by MIDAS and an interactive process using Microsoft Teams.

Summary of Evidence

Members critically appraise the evidence, consider implications for policy and practice, and communicate findings through a two-page summary. This process helps members gain knowledge in evidence synthesis and implementation. All outputs are quality-checked by MIDAS.

Communicating Findings

Findings are disseminated within the member's organisation, to ARCNWC members, and to the public via newsletters, events, and publications in peer-reviewed journals. This helps members gain experience in writing and presenting research.

Implementing into Policy and Practice

If a RaCES identifies a need for policy change or further research, the MIDAS team collaborates to implement changes or develop the evidence base through grant-funded research.

IMPLEMENT
RESEARCH
IN PRACTICE & POLICY

CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE RACES

School-based Indicated Prevention Interventions for Anxiety in Children and Adolescents: A Commentary on a Systematic Review

A recent systematic review by Hugh-Jones et al. (2021) evaluates school-based interventions aimed at preventing and reducing anxiety symptoms in children and adolescents. The review finds that these interventions, particularly cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), can have a small positive effect on reducing anxiety. However, the effect is not sustained long-term, and there are significant variations and risks of bias in the included studies. The commentary by Harris et al. (2024) suggests that while these interventions have potential, further research is needed to evaluate their cost-effectiveness and explore alternatives delivered in community settings.

Catherine Harris, Dave Packwood, Amy Wood, Lynn Loughran, Paula Wheeler, James Edward Hill. (2024). British Journal of Child Health, Vol. 5, No. 3

IMPACTS SO FAR:

- Over 50 Health and Social Care Professionals have produced RaCES, gaining skills in critical appraisal, implementing findings, and writing for publication.
- More than 90 RaCES have been completed and over 75 published in peer-reviewed journals.
- These educational developments have led to promotions, fellowship applications, and future research opportunities for individuals.



MORE THAN 50 HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE PROFESSIONALS HAVE PRODUCED RaCES

Chinese Wellbeing Society

REN 1.2

The Chinese Wellbeing Society was key in the REN programme, bridging researchers and the local Chinese population. They helped create community research champions and provided feedback on engagement techniques. Their involvement led to the production of films and slides in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English, emphasising research importance. This boosted research interest and participation, focusing on dementia, cancer, depression, and chronic conditions. Their collaboration effectively addressed the community's preference for community-led research and overcame barriers.



THE EVENT

The Chinese Wellbeing society event, facilitated by the CRN team, focused on increasing research participation among the Chinese community in Liverpool. The event successfully linked the community with the University of Liverpool and Royal Liverpool to improve consent processes. Separate events were held for the Hong Kong and broader Chinese communities to address specific needs. The initiative emphasised investing in advanced research skills, mentorship, and conducting research by community members to build trust. Educational outreach promoted health education and research among Chinese populations.



The event included the production of films and bespoke slides in Mandarin and Cantonese to communicate important research messages. Positive feedback highlighted the effectiveness of the engagement techniques and sparked genuine interest in health research participation. Key health research priorities identified for the Chinese community included dementia, cancer, depression, diabetes, and more.



TESTIMONIAL

"As an organisation supporting the needs of the Chinese community, we are grateful to have been given the opportunity to work with the CRN team on this important initiative. We learned a lot from the training session and equally from the event itself which was expertly facilitated by Irum and Sayeda. As Community Research Champions, we were given guidance on simple engagement techniques which were put in to practice during the event which certainly kept the energy level in the room high and people focused. The specific examples given as to the importance of participating in health research resonated with everyone attending and has sparked a genuine interest in getting involved. Chinese Wellbeing will continue to spread this important message within the community. Thank you again for your support!"

Service development manager, Chinese Wellbeing society Liverpool

IMPACTS SO FAR:

- **Increased Opportunities:** Linked the Chinese community in Liverpool with the University of Liverpool and Royal Liverpool to improve consent processes, enhancing research participation.
- **Addressing Barriers:** Held separate events for Hong Kong community and broader Chinese community to address specific needs; stressed the importance of investment in advanced research skills and mentorship.
- **Community Engagement:** Highlighted the need for research to be conducted by people from the community to improve trust and participation.
- **Educational Outreach:** Promoted health education and research among Chinese populations, including undergraduates and NIHR mentorship.
- **Case Studies:** Produced films in Mandarin and Cantonese to communicate important research messages; created bespoke slides for community events.
- **Positive Feedback:** Received testimonials praising the engagement techniques and workshop facilitation, which have sparked genuine interest in the community to participate in health research.
- **Research Priorities:** Identified key health research priorities for the Chinese community, including dementia, cancer, depression, diabetes, and more.

The Phoenix Way (TPW)

REN 2

The Phoenix Way is dedicated to forming an accessible, research-oriented network of ethnic minority-led Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations across Cheshire and Merseyside.



RESEARCH READINESS
CAPACITY BUILDING
SOCIAL IMPACT

By establishing a robust network of 115 VCFSE organisations, The Phoenix Way aims to connect these groups with health and care researchers, co-design and lead research projects, and promote race, equity, and equality within the community. Through workshops, training, and strategic partnerships, the initiative seeks to overcome barriers, enhance research readiness, and ensure that the voices of black and racially minoritised communities are heard and influential in health and care research.

Main Areas of Work

Directory and Data

- **Formation of Network:** Established a network of

115 ETHNIC MINORITY LED VCFSE

organisations in Cheshire and Merseyside.

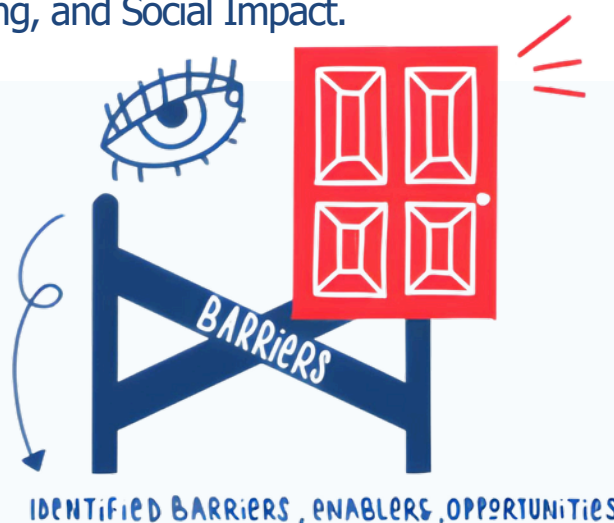
- **Connectivity Mechanism:** Developed mechanisms for connectivity to health and care researchers.
- **Network Directory:** Published a directory to enable targeted engagement for health and care research opportunities.
- **Insight and Framework Development:** Conducted in-depth engagement and identified strong appetite for BAME VCFSE participation in research. Developed a BAME VCFSE Community Framework focusing on Research Readiness, Capacity Building, and Social Impact.

Research Activity

- **Community Framework:** Developed a framework offering health and care academia a pre-delivered engagement activity for shaping research priorities.

- **Identified Research Activities:**

- Smaller cohort/deeper dive research with five Phoenix Way organisations.
- Specific scope research with Wirral Change.
- Wider/generic approach with a workshop addressing community framework barriers.
- Delivery of research champion training to the cohort.



Promoting Race, Equity, and Equality

- **Directory Publication:** Published and will continuously update a directory of 115 BAME VCFSE organisations.
- **Weekly Meetings:** Conducted weekly online meetings with NIHR.
- **Academic Research Partnerships:** Established partnerships with organisations such as Wirral Change – Supporting Disadvantaged, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities in Wirral - with NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) and Wirral Research Collaborative.
- **Funding Engagement Research:** Supporting NIHR ARC NWC on the EDICa Funding Application. This research aims to understand how funding call information influences the engagement of racially minoritised groups.

IMPACTS SO FAR:

- **Network Establishment:** Successfully established a network of 115 BAME VCFSE organisations.
- **Engagement and Mobilisation:** Achieved extensive engagement and mobilisation within a short period.
- **Research Readiness:** Identified and secured participation for co-designing and leading research.
- **Insight for Framework:** Captured valuable insight for developing the BAME VCFSE Community Framework.
- **Increased Participation:** Increased opportunities for BAME communities to participate in research.
- **Trusted Relationships:** Built trusted relationships between VCFSE BAME organisations and academic resources.
- **Forum Launch:** Launched a C&M BAME research forum aligned with the Cheshire and Merseyside Phoenix Way Network to build capacity and address systemic barriers.

Recommendations for Different Sectors

1) Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Why This is Important?

Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) play a crucial role in coordinating healthcare services and ensuring that research initiatives align with the broader goals of improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities. Engaging with research can provide valuable insights and innovations that directly impact patient care and service delivery.

What You Can Do to Support

- Promote Research Awareness: Advocate for the importance of integrating research into everyday clinical practice within your networks.
- Facilitate Collaborations: Encourage partnerships between healthcare providers, the VCFSE sector and research institutions to foster a culture of evidence-based practice.
- Allocate Resources: Ensure adequate funding and resources are available for research initiatives, particularly those focusing on underserved communities.
- Utilise your local REN team and engage with research ready communities.

2) Research Infrastructure

Why This is Important?

Research infrastructure entities, including academic institutions, NIHR research organisations and affiliated health and care groups, are pivotal in driving forward health and social care research. Their involvement ensures that research is rigorous, impactful, and aligned with the needs of diverse communities.

What You Can Do to Support

- Engage Communities: Actively involve community groups in the research process to ensure that studies address relevant issues, are culturally sensitive and communities have access to opportunities for available studies.
- Enhance Collaboration: Foster partnerships with VCFSE organisations to co-design and implement research projects.
- Streamline Processes: Simplify the research process and make it more accessible to non-academic partners, including clear guidelines and support mechanisms.

3) VCFSE Sector

Why This is Important?

Voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations are on the front lines of addressing health and social care needs within communities. Their involvement in research ensures that studies are grounded in real-world experience and address the specific needs of diverse populations.

What You Can Do to Support

- **Participate Actively:** Engage in research initiatives and contribute your unique insights and experiences.
- **Build Capacity:** Invest in developing research skills within your organisation through training and mentorship opportunities.
- **Advocate for Inclusion:** Advocate for the inclusion of marginalised communities in research to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are addressed.
- **Get involved:** Contact your local REN team to discover opportunities to get involved in research engagement initiatives.

Commitment Statements

These commitment statements emphasise the dedication of various stakeholders to fostering relationships and improving research access for underserved populations with health inequalities. They highlight efforts to build partnerships and ensure ongoing research engagement in the region.

"In the current Clinical Research Network (CRN) structure, we commit to building on our relationship with stakeholders within the ICS through the ICB and ICP. We hope to continue to prioritise growing access to research for underserved populations with health inequalities through sustaining the relationships we have built with the local VCFSE sector." - NIHR CRN*

*The new regional research delivery network (RRDN) will be in effect from 1 October 2024, where CRN North West Coast will join with the CRN Greater Manchester to form RRDN North West

"Within the ARC we are committed to creating an environment where ideas and views that reflect issues and needs experienced by seldom heard groups can be exchanged to enhance understanding, awareness and collaborations between researchers, health and social care organisations and diverse communities." - NIHR ARC

"The NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board's Research and Innovation Steering Group actively supports and promotes the research and innovation system of the C&M region, working closely with our local infrastructure partners including HEIs, Primary Care and NHS Trusts, the VCFSE alliance, local NIHR networks and other collaboratives. We commit to building relationships both regionally and nationally to support the growing access to research for underserved populations with health inequalities." - C&M ICB

"On behalf of the Cheshire and Merseyside VCFSE Leaders Group, we will actively support NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and the IRIS, the NIHR CRN, ARC and other research and innovation infrastructure, around the health and care research and innovation agenda in order to better connect Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations throughout the research pathway, from idea to implementation, and to find ways to better address health inequalities." - C&M VCFSE Leaders

Cheshire and Merseyside

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