

NIHR ARC NWC

# Connected Research Communities.

An evolving handbook  
of what they are, how  
they are expected to  
work, their intended  
impact and the  
arrangements for  
governance

Jane Cloke, on behalf of ARC NWC managers  
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# **Connected Research Communities: an evolving handbook of what they are, how they are expected to work, their intended impact and the arrangements for governance.**

## **1 Introduction**

Connected Research Communities is an umbrella term for a number of initiatives in ARC NWC created to engage and support Member Organisations and Public Advisors with their research and implementation ideas and projects. Current initiatives include: Research Development Networks (RDNs), Roundtables, Seldom Heard Voices Forum, the Dementia Network and the Community Research and Engagement Network (CoREN) (see Figure 1).

This handbook aims to give a consistent description of the various approaches to Connected Research Communities: their ‘essential ingredients’; the resources on offer to each group; their objectives; and the governance arrangements, such as how/who is to monitor progress.

## **2 Connected Research Communities**

Connected Research Communities, draws on the principles of social network theory, bringing together all the key stakeholders (professionals; public; academics) that need to work together to deliver an initiative, creating opportunities or spaces for those stakeholders to ‘discover’ and learn from each other and mobilise knowledge. By bringing together individuals that are connected to organisations or communities or special interest groups, we create bridges with the potential to bring and share ideas, information and solutions, ensuring that network for an initiative is engaged and enduring. CRCs differ from Communities of Practice with the inclusion of all stakeholders, not just those with direct relevance to practice.

The higher the density the more likely stakeholders are to organise themselves to support projects and initiatives: The more we bring the right people ‘in the room’ together to discuss how they can work together the better!

The term Connected Research Communities draws on the principles of social network theory. The idea is that not only do we know all the key stakeholders who need to work together to deliver an initiative, that we create opportunities for those stakeholders to get to know each other, to meet, share ideas, etc. Increasing the “network density” ensures that the CRC for an initiative is dense.

We believe these are not only Communities of Practice but the additional processes to ensure network density enhances working, relevance, buy in etc.

We support a number of initiatives that benefit from this ethos:

- 1) IMPaCT Roundtables where all key stakeholders share information, agree shared agenda, clarify roles and opportunities
- 2) Research Development Networks, which develop a collaboration around a particular research topic and include all topic specific and methodological experts, along with health and social care organisations, PPI groups. Whilst the RDNs work across all Themes, one Theme takes responsibility for administration and reporting. Each RDN is intended to bring together extensive collaborations including representatives from ARC non-members with an interest in the topic, to present and discuss research ideas, prioritise potential topics for grant applications, and oversee the work of the grant-development sub-groups.
- 3) Collaborative Implementation Groups (CIG). Used extensively throughout the CLAHRC NWC Partners’ Priority Programme where initiatives were grouped according to a common topic,

is based on *participatory, action-based inquiry methods for improving practice and developing new knowledge*.

- 4) The Community Research and Engagement Network (CoREN) brings together key partners from across health and social care, and includes VCFSE and statutory organisations (local government, public health, and NHS), ARC staff, academics, and public advisors, as well as other stakeholders from across the north-west coast
- 5) The Liverpool Dementia & Ageing Research Forum has two aims: 1) to disseminate research and good practice in dementia care, and 2) to enable collaborations and networking among health and social care professionals, academics, commissioners, Charities, and people affected by the condition. The Forum is national, with international attendance, holding regular public events, including bi-monthly webinars/talks, monthly journal clubs, bi-annual regional networking meetings, and an annual conference.
- 6) Seldom Heard Voices Forum Brings together representatives of seldom heard groups from across the NWC to share issues experienced by the groups they represent, and discuss how best to enhance inclusion in applied health research with stakeholders including researchers, practitioners, commissioners and other communities. Bi-monthly community specific meetings feed into a Community of Practice hosted on the NHS futures platform.  
<https://arc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk/get-involved/seldom-heard-forum/>

### **3 Governance arrangements**

To ensure good governance, each initiative must agree with the Director and Programme Manager a short Terms of Reference to include:

#### Name of group/initiative

#### Purpose or role of the initiative

- the broad purpose of the initiative
- when and who established it
- the aims and objectives, including intended impacts

#### Membership and participation

- who can participate i.e. members of the public; representation from ARC NWC member organisations; representation from other organisations where appropriate
- review of participation on an annual basis

#### Public involvement

The guiding principles for involving members of the public in each of the initiatives should address:

- What are the opportunities for involvement and engagement? How will members of the public know when they have added value?
- How will opportunities be advertised?
- Which opportunities will be paid? And at what rate?

#### Ways of working

- Frequency and format of meetings (online, in-person etc), who organises, chairs and minutes, circulation of agenda
- The means of sharing of information and resources, including confidential materials, web space etc
- Formation of sub-groups

#### Accountability

- Identify a lead, who is responsible for reporting back on activities to the relevant Theme Lead or the Director

#### Review

- the relevance and value of its work and the terms of reference will be reviewed annually (next review ??/20??)

Agreed/approved Terms of Reference for each initiative shall be appended to this handbook.

#### **4 Evaluation**

Groups/initiatives are responsible for collating data to support evaluation during years 3-5 to include the following:

- Who is involved, and what is the sphere of influence?
- Contribution to delivery of ARC objectives
- Changes observed and impacts over time
- Learning points and challenges
- Sustainability of Roundtable beyond or independent of ARC NWC

**Review December 2023**

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for Approved Connected Research Communities Initiatives

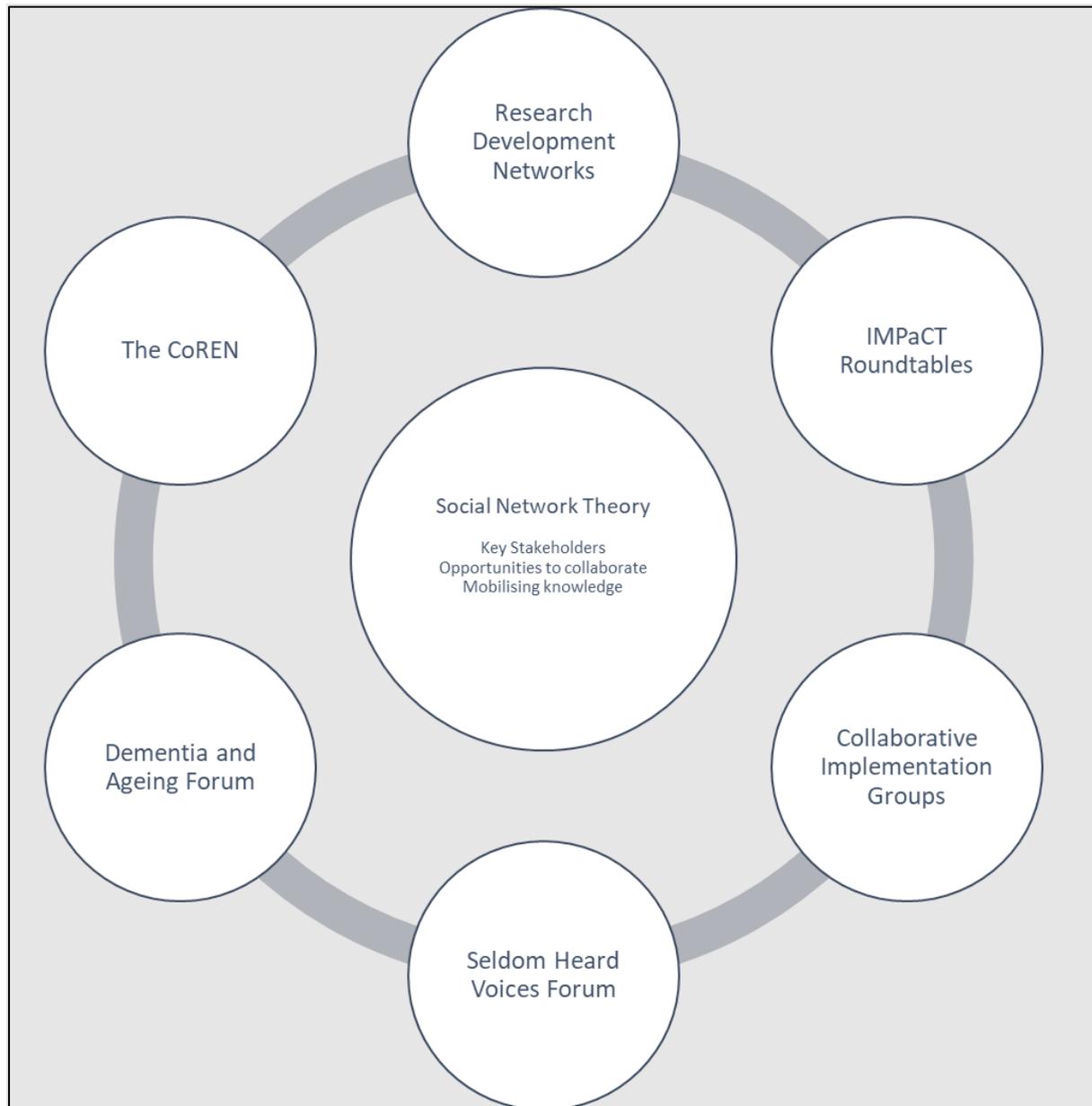


Figure 1: Connected Research Communities

## The Stroke IMPaCT Roundtable: *ToR*

Figure A1: Stroke IMPaCT Roundtable Governance

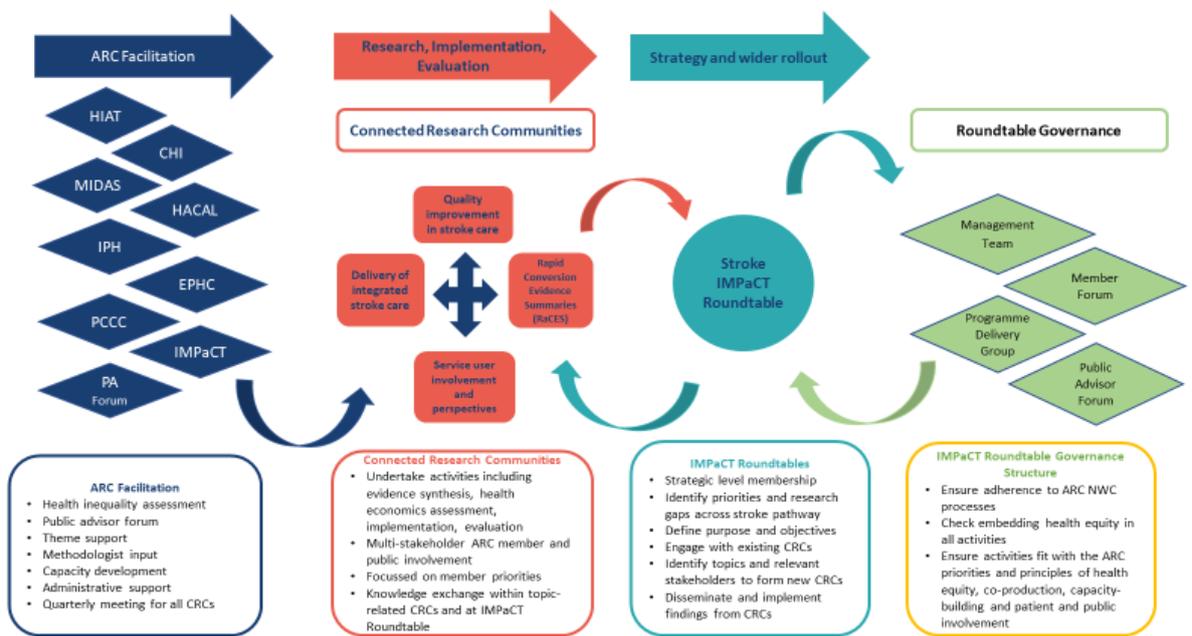
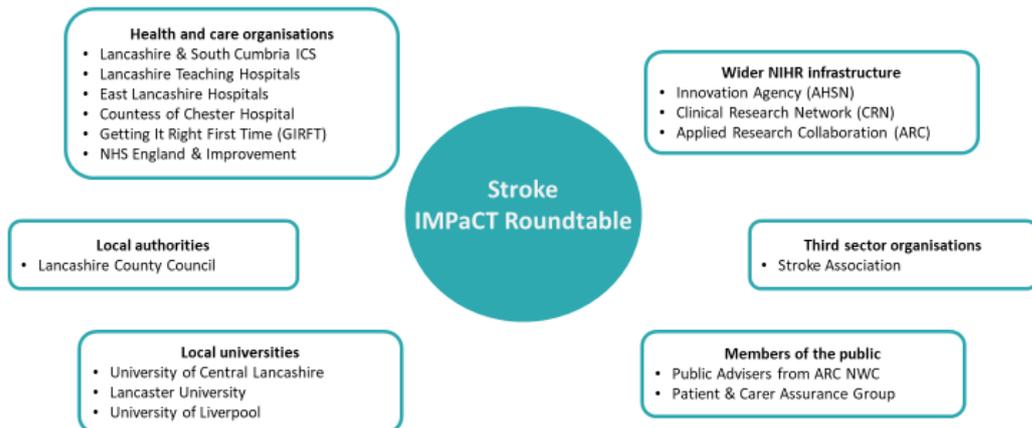


Figure A2: Stakeholders represented in the Stroke IMPaCT Roundtable

### Stakeholders by Organisation



## **Social Prescribing Research Development Network**

### **Purpose or role of the initiative**

This is building on the prioritised programme within HaCAL looking at Social Prescribing research in community settings. The group is reviewing the findings of work initiated towards the end of CLAHRC NWC which includes two systematic reviews and other surveys among providers and commissioners of social prescribing services.

It was established in March 2021 and rapidly evolved into a group coproducing a collaborative cross-ARC grant proposal to the NIHR call for research into Social Prescribing Primary Care linkworkers, led by colleagues from ARC Kent, Surrey Sussex. This wasn't funded. The group is now considering the next grant based upon the ongoing research programme. This is expected by the end of 2022.

### **Membership and participation**

Meetings are open to all ARC core staff, Public Advisors (the PA Forum appoints the lead PAs, and PA participation at the RDN doesn't attract payment), staff from Member Organisations and staff from non-member organisations based within the NWC with an interest in Social Care prescribing, such as Social Care intervention provider organisations.

### **Public involvement**

The nominated PA reps in the grant-development sub-group will receive payments according to standard PA remuneration rates for associated activities within the subgroup in grant development.

### **Ways of working**

As grant proposals develop, subgroups will be established to co-produce a collaborative grant application. Subgroups are tasked with developing and submitting one grant within a year of setting up, and they will be stood down if progress at reviews suggests that this is unlikely to be achieved within the year or at the next suitable submission date for a relevant grant opportunity.

The RDN will oversee progress of grant-development subgroups, monitoring and reviewing progress and supporting the group such as by recruiting and identifying members to cover gaps identified in the collaboration or relevant expertise to ensure the proposal is relevant and competitive, overseeing the work of the grant development subgroups.

Meetings are currently online and are likely to continue to be so unless there are particular advantages for a task-focused face to face meeting.

Meetings are at least quarterly, grant development subgroups may convene more often around specific deadlines and tasks.

Brief minutes are taken of core and subgroup meetings. Minutes and other relevant materials are posted on the relevant section of the host theme pages on the NIHR ARC NWC website.

Grant development subgroup chairs are nominated by the group and report back to the core RDN in advance of their meetings on activity and progress (e.g. by sharing minutes supported by a brief oral presentation at core RDN meetings).

**Accountability**

Currently the RDN is chaired by Prof Gabbay, but as he is theme lead and ARC director the HaCAL theme manager hold him, and the RDN to account.

**Review**

The next review of the group will be March 2022.

## **Social and Community Mental Health and Well-Being Research Development Network**

### **Purpose or role of the initiative**

Established in February 2021 to explore potential grant applications to support mental health in communities in the post-pandemic world, evolving to support mental health initiatives at community level in the emerging environment as the pandemic evolves.

- the aims and objectives, including intended impacts

### **Membership and participation**

Meetings are open to all ARC core staff, Public Advisors, staff from Member Organisations and from staff from non-member organisations based within the NWC with an interest in mental health and wellbeing and recovery from mental ill health. Subgroups are tasked with developing and submitting one grant within a year of setting up, and they will be stood down if progress at reviews suggests that this is unlikely to be achieved within the year or at the next suitable submission date for a relevant grant opportunity.

### **Public involvement**

PA participation at the core RDN doesn't attract payment, but nominated PA reps in the subgroup will receive payments according to standard PA remuneration rates for associated activities within the subgroup in grant development.

The guiding principles for involving members of the public in each of the initiatives should address:

- What are the opportunities for involvement and engagement? How will members of the public know when they have added value?
- How will opportunities be advertised?
- Which opportunities will be paid? And at what rate?

### **Ways of working**

As grant proposals develop, subgroups will be established to co-produce a collaborative grant application. The RDN will oversee progress of these grant-development subgroups, monitoring and reviewing progress and supporting the group such as by recruiting and identifying members to cover gaps identified in the collaboration or relevant expertise to ensure the proposal is relevant and competitive, overseeing the work of the grant development subgroups.

It is anticipated this RDN will work closely with the Mental Health Roundtable linked to the ARC NWC mental health research and implementation capacity-building infrastructure initiative.

The group has completed a HIAT and has been supporting the development of a national implementation project within Social Care and Social Work on Strengths (assets)-based initiatives to promote mental health and wellbeing and support those recovering from mental health problems. Plans include focused rapid reviews of relevant literature and this group will also draw up a grant proposal by the end of 2022 emerging from the evidence reviews synthesised with current innovations and uncertainties in the existing evidence.

Meetings are currently online and are likely to continue to be so unless there are particular advantages for a task-focused face to face meeting. Meetings are at least quarterly, grant

development subgroups may convene more often around specific deadlines and tasks. Brief minutes are taken of core and subgroup meetings.

### **Accountability**

The RDN is chaired by Prof Corcoran.

Minutes and other relevant materials are posted on the relevant section of the host theme pages on the NIHR ARC NWC website.

Grant development subgroup chairs when established will be nominated by the group and report back to the main RDN in advance of their meetings on activity and progress (e.g. by sharing minutes supported by a brief oral presentation at core RDN meetings).

### **Review**

The relevance and value of its work and the terms of reference will be reviewed annually, next review March 2022

## **North West Seaside Towns and Communities Research Development Network**

### **Purpose or role of the initiative**

This RDN focuses on inequalities and challenges for seaside populations at a community level and links to a national ARC group on coastal health, co-led by ARC NWC. It was established in November 2020 prompted by discussions within the national ARC coastal towns and communities co-created and facilitated by ARC NWC (and linked to the relevant NOHR SPHR teams) established in April 2021 to explore the potential to co-produce national ARC collaborative grants on coastal health, wellbeing and inequalities to meet a NIHR public health research call. The NWC group piloted the potential to draw together member representatives to prioritise and develop research into the health of coastal communities- specified as seaside to prevent Liverpool City falling within the category. Thus, seaside areas within Liverpool were included but the entire city as a whole isn't.

The RDN fed into a variety of national grant proposal developments, none of which including a large ESRC Centre bid were ultimately successful in obtaining funding. However, a small centre, based around University of Plymouth has been funded and established and the NWC RDN will be feeding into that.

Subgroups are tasked with developing and submitting one grant within a year of setting up, and they will be stood down if progress at reviews suggests that this is unlikely to be achieved within the year or at the next suitable submission date for a relevant grant opportunity.

The RDN will oversee progress of grant-development subgroups, monitoring and reviewing progress and supporting the group such as by recruiting and identifying members to cover gaps identified in the collaboration or relevant expertise to ensure the proposal is relevant and competitive, overseeing the work of the grant development subgroups.

- the aims and objectives, including intended impacts

### **Membership and participation**

RDN meetings are open to all ARC core staff, Public Advisors (although the Forum appoints the lead PAs, and PA participation at the core RDN doesn't attract payment), staff from Member Organisations and non-member organisations, based within NWC seaside areas.

### **Public involvement**

- What are the opportunities for involvement and engagement? How will members of the public know when they have added value?
- How will opportunities be advertised?

The nominated PAs in the grant-development subgroups will receive payments according to standard remuneration rates for associated activities.

### **Ways of working**

Meetings are currently online and are likely to continue to be so unless there are particular advantages for a task-focused face to face meeting. Meetings are at least quarterly, grant development subgroups may convene more often around specific deadlines and tasks. Brief minutes are taken of core and subgroup meetings.

Minutes and other relevant materials are posted on the relevant section of the host theme pages on the NIHR ARC NWC website. Grant development subgroup chairs are nominated by the group and report back to the core RDN in advance of their meetings on activity and progress (e.g. by sharing minutes supported by a brief oral presentation at core RDN meetings). Frequency and format of meetings (online, in-person etc), who organises, chairs and minutes, circulation of agenda

Four grant-development sub-groups in Education Leisure (Beach Schools, Cross generational), High Street Regeneration, Community cohesion to empower action, Community Mental Health. The community mental health subgroups became a separate RDN, leaving two emerging groups (High Street regeneration and Community Cohesion combining under the leadership of one of the PA reps, Peter Lloyd) focusing on developing an external grant application by the end of 2022.

The subgroups are now considering the next grant based upon the ongoing research programme. This is expected by the end of 2022. Accountability

### **Accountability**

Currently the RDN is chaired by Prof Gabbay but as he is theme lead and ARC director the HaCAL theme manager hold him, and the RDN to account.

### **Review**

The relevance and value of its work and the terms of reference will be reviewed annually The next review of the RDN will be June 2022.

## **Digital Research Development Network**

### **Purpose or role of the initiative**

This RDN is building on the prioritised sub-theme area in PCCC that focuses on digital healthcare. It builds on the work relating to the development of algorithms and the implementation of personalised devices and tools that took place in NIHR CLAHRC NWC and provides a focal point for current themes of work running across the ARC, particularly in PCCC, around remote consultations and digital inequalities. It was established in July 2021, initial meetings have focused on establishing the membership and shared interests. In future, grant development sub-groups will be established. The main objectives of the network are to submit grant applications, produce published outputs and contribute to implementation projects.

### **Membership and participation**

RDN meetings are open to all ARC core staff, Public Advisors (although the Forum appoints the lead PAs, and PA participation at the core RDN doesn't attract payment), staff from Member Organisations and non-member organisations with an interest in digital health and social care and digital inclusion.

### **Public involvement**

The nominated PA reps in any future grant-development sub-groups will receive payments according to standard PA remuneration rates for associated activities within the subgroup in grant development.

### **Ways of working**

Meetings are currently online and are likely to continue to be so unless there are particular advantages for a task-focused face to face meeting. Meetings are quarterly, future grant development subgroups may convene more often around specific deadlines and tasks. Brief minutes are taken of core meeting. Minutes and other relevant materials are posted on the relevant section of the host theme pages on the NIHR ARC NWC website.

### **Accountability**

The RDN is chaired by Prof Tony Marson with Dr Jenny Downing as deputy chair and Dr Pallavi Deshpande as network manager.

Minutes and other relevant materials are posted on the relevant section of the host theme pages on the NIHR ARC NWC website.

When grant development subgroups are established the network will agree the chair and will report back to the main RDN in advance of their meetings on activity and progress (e.g. by sharing minutes supported by a brief oral presentation at core RDN meetings).

### **Review**

The network will be reviewed annually. The next review will be July 2022.

## Seldom Heard Voices Forum

### **Seldom Heard Voices Forum Governance arrangements**

The group was established in February 2021 by Ms Selina Wallis and Dr Shaima Hassan

#### Purpose or role of the initiative

- To bring together representatives of seldom heard groups from across the NWC to share issues experienced by the groups they represent
- Discuss how best to enhance inclusion in applied health research with stakeholders including researchers, practitioners, commissioners and other communities

#### **Aims and objectives**

- Establish conversations between specific seldom heard communities in the NW and researchers, commissioners, practitioners and third sector.
- Establishment of an ongoing community of practice to collaborate, flag up/address unmet research issues related to seldom heard communities etc.
- Enhance the learning about the inclusion of diverse population in applied health care and social research,
- Support and enhance recruitment of diverse community members to ARC NWC public adviser database.

#### **Membership and participation**

- The Seldom Heard Forum is open to members of the public, ARC NWC member organisations, other organisations where appropriate (ie community members, carers third sector, researchers, practitioners, commissioners)

#### **Public involvement**

- The Seldom Heard Forum is co-organised and co-chaired by our public adviser Naheed Tahir. Her role included planning forum topic, linking to seldom heard communities, working and supporting public advisers in developing their presentation for the forum and supporting discussions.
- Other public advisers invited to contribute to forum sessions and blogs for communities they have ties to. All ARC NWC public advisors involved in presenting/contributing at forum sessions will be paid based on ARC NWC usual rates (see Public Engagement Payment Policy <https://arc-nwc.nihr.ac.uk/get-involved/>)
- Public advisors are all welcome to attend forum sessions on volunteer bases (unpaid)

#### **Ways of working**

- Frequency and format of meetings will be widely publicized

- Meetings to be held online or in-person to be organized by ARC NWC Public Involvement Team
- Resources (Blog, video and presentations) from Forum to be available via web spaces (eg NHS Futures Workspace, Video and Blog hosted on ARC NWC website)

### **Accountability**

- Shaima Hassan to report back on activities to the relevant Theme Lead or the Director

### **Review**

**Version 1.3 25.01.22;** The relevance and value of its work and the terms of reference will be reviewed annually (next review 03/2022)

### **Evaluation**

Groups/initiatives are responsible for collating data to support evaluation during years 3-5 to include the following:

- Who is involved, and what is the sphere of influence?
- Contribution to delivery of ARC objectives
- Changes observed and impacts over time@ communities represented, attendance at events, on going conversations, initiatives, research groups, grant applications, research, implementation
- Learning points and challenges
- Sustainability of Forum beyond or independent of ARC NWC

## The Community Research and Engagement Network (CoREN)

### CoREN Governance Arrangements: Version 1 31.1.2022

#### **Purpose or role of the initiative**

The CoREN was an integral component of the CLAHRC NWC Neighbourhood Resilience Programme (NRP) (2016-2019) where, in 10 areas, key system players, including local authorities and other statutory organisations, voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations, and local residents, were brought together “...to share knowledge, prioritise issues for action and co-create solutions” ([Neighbourhood Resilience, 2021](#)). In the ARC NWC, the CoREN will harness and advance the learning gained, and relationships built through the NRP, in order to enable ARC-wide engagement, and to extend the reach of the ARC into communities across the north-west coast. To enable this extension of reach, and generate greater long-term impact, VCFSE organisations and other local partners, will serve as conduits to communities.

The CoREN provides a space for prioritisation setting around applied health and social care research that is responsive to community need, and has the following core aims:

- 1) To encourage and facilitate the sharing of information to increase capacity for health and social care research that is responsive to need in local places.
- 2) To support collaborative discussions around research priorities within local health and social care systems, bringing together organisations working at the community level, ARC NWC staff, public advisors, members, and other statutory partners - acting as an initial ‘one stop shop’.

#### **Membership and participation**

The CoREN brings together key partners from across health and social care, and includes VCFSE and statutory organisations (local government, public health, and NHS), ARC staff, academics, and public advisors in an innovative collaborative.

The CoREN is led by a leadership group, with support and management from the ARC NWC Stakeholder Research and Engagement Manager, strategic oversight provided by the ARC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator (also the EPHC Theme Manager) and monitoring by Professor Catherine Walshe and the ARC NWC Management Team.

3 commissioned VCFSE organisations will be an integral part of the CoREN, sitting on the Leadership Group and taking responsibility for delivering key aspects of the work programme, for example delivering workshops and events.

#### **Public involvement**

2 Public Advisors will contribute to the CoREN Leadership Group – Payments for this activity will follow standard processes for ARC NWC public adviser payments.

An integral part of the CoREN is VCFSE organisations, large and small, who will be encouraged not just to share in the work of the CoREN and attend relevant events, but to lead and develop the activities of the network, creating clear priorities from their own experience for its emerging work plan.

#### **Ways of working**

Meetings / events will be regularly held throughout the year and include networking opportunities, knowledge exchange events and ideas for training and skills development which will be led and developed by the members themselves. All information including resources will be shared with

members via email and through the Neighbourhood Resilience website - <https://neighbourhoodresilience.uk/>

**Accountability**

The key activities of the Network will be reported to the NIHR annually as part of the reporting requirements

**Review**

The relevance and value of its work and the terms of reference will be reviewed annually (next review 03/2022)

## **Liverpool Dementia & Ageing Research Forum**

The Liverpool Dementia & Ageing Research forum was established by Dr Clarissa Giebel in September 2019.

### **Purpose of role of the initiative**

The aim of the Forum is twofold: (1) to bring together different stakeholders in the field of dementia and ageing, including academics, health and social care providers, Charities, lived experts, decision makers, and students, and create a network for joint knowledge exchange, learning, and collaborative research; (2) to disseminate the latest evidence in dementia and ageing to different stakeholders and the general public and raise awareness of dementia.

### **Membership and participation**

Anyone with an interest in the topic can be a member. People can engage with the Forum via the four outlined activities below.

### **Public involvement**

The purpose of the Forum is to have in-depth stakeholder involvement, which to date has resulted in a number of (successful) grant applications and 25+ publications.

### **Ways of working**

There are four regular activities:

- Annual Conference
- Bimonthly public webinars
- Biannual regional networking meetings
- Monthly journal clubs

### **Accountability**

Dr Giebel is the organiser of the Forum.