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Blackpool Researching Together training opportunities

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Health inequalities research capacity and capability programme (HIRCC)

Blackpool Researching Together are funding and co-delivering a health inequalities research capacity and capability programme with NHS Research and Development North West and Lancaster University. Two previous pilot cohorts were funded by the North West National Institute for Health and Care Research Clinical Research Network and Research Delivery Network, which enabled us to test and learn our approach.

The programme helps support voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE), public health, social care and other local authority professionals to develop their capacity and capability to use and deliver health inequalities research within their roles, with and for local communities. This may support participants to:

- Make use of research literature to support funding bids, business cases, service design or strategies, policies and plans.
- Develop evaluation frameworks to measure the impact of services, strategies, policies or plans.
- Join research collaborations and deliver research.
- Develop funding applications.

We are delivering a blended learning programme with a mix of taught components, reflection, projects, and mentoring. We wanted there to be relevant practical applications so partnership projects were included, and a legacy so we built links to existing research collaboratives and networks and a requirement for personal action plans.

Programme objectives

- To bring together a funded cohort of VCFSE, public health, local authority and NHS professionals as a learning community
- To co-design a programme that builds upon the existing skills and assets of the cohort and meets the research ambitions of the participants and their organisations
- To deliver a coproduction residential, six capacity building workshops, a celebration event and closing residential (total commitment 15 days with personal study time)
- To work on group projects to build capability in health inequalities research, mentored by academics
- To help cohorts develop an application for [Blackpool Researching Together seed funding](#)
- To develop personal reflections on the learning journey and personal research action plans
- To build a research network, linking into the Lancaster University Health Partnership Team, the Fylde Coast Research Collaborative and shadow research activity

Programme content

- Opening workshop - team building, introduction to health inequalities research, knowledge and skills assessment and coproduction of the programme
- Workshop 1 - conducting literature reviews and developing research questions
- Workshop 2 - critiquing literature and understanding how to take evidence into practice
- Workshop 3 - introduction to evaluation
- Workshop 4 - public involvement, co-production and research dissemination
- Workshop 5 - ethical and practical considerations in research
- Workshop 6 - poster, presentation and reflections development
- Celebration event and closing residential - presentation of final research proposals and personal learning journeys, Networking event and development of personal action plans

- 6 days - personal and group learning time
- 2 days - optional opportunity to shadow research activity

Cohort 1 - 2023/2024

The first cohort included 12 participants from Citizen's Advice Bureau, Healthwatch Blackpool, Blackpool Better Start, The Hub at South Shore, Blackpool Volunteer Centre and Lancashire Women.

They were split into 2 working groups and developed research proposals on the following research questions:

- What are the fears and anxieties of asylum-seeking women in Blackpool?
- What is the result of the Community Navigators programme on the stakeholders involved?

A celebration event was held in September 2024 at Lancaster House Hotel. [View a reflection video from the cohort.](#)

In November 2023, we presented our approach to capacity building at a knowledge exchange event for the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project, Community Solutions for Health Equity.

In March 2024, we presented our approach at the North West Coast NIHR Clinical Research Network Research Showcase.

Cohort 2 - 2024/2025

The second cohort included 15 participants from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Blackpool Poverty Truth Commission, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), Richmond Fellowship, BoingBoing Foundation and Blackpool Council.

The cohort were split into 3 working groups and developed research proposals on the following research questions:

- How and why does co-production inform service design in children's social care?
- What are the perceived barriers and facilitators to accessing secondary education in Blackpool, for a neurodiverse young person?
- How do mental health practitioners working with dual diagnosis perceive the concept of trauma informed practice?

A celebration event was held in April 2025 at Lancaster University, Health Innovation Campus. [View a reflection video from the cohort.](#)

In May 2024, we were invited to present our approach to capacity building at the NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Community Engagement group.

In June 2024, we submitted a poster to the NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborative National Event.

Cohort 3 - 2025/2026

The third cohort is currently underway and will run from June 2025 to January 2026. There are 15 participants from Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, BoingBoing Foundation, Healthwatch Blackpool, Lancashire Women, Blackpool Better Start, The TIC Group and Blackpool Council.

The cohort have been split into 3 working groups and are developing the following research proposals:

- Co-production in the local authority commissioning cycle
- Experiences of understanding and utilising health information when self-managing Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder
- Perceived barriers and facilitators to seeking an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis for children within Asylum seeking families

We are delighted to report that the third cohort of our Health Inequalities Research Capacity and Capability (HIRCC) programme is almost complete, join us to celebrate.

Celebration event details

- Thursday 29th January 2026, 9.30am to 4pm
- Health Innovation One, Lancaster University

Morning session - 10am to 1pm, a celebration event for the programme.

Afternoon session - 2pm to 4pm, a knowledge exchange and dynamic networking space.

Refreshments will be provided throughout the day. Lunch will be provided from 1pm to 2pm.

As part of the event, we will host a dynamic networking "marketplace" to strengthen links between HDRCs, local authorities and

academics. Our knowledge exchange space will allow academics to share their research interests and local authorities to share the challenges faced in everyday practice.

We hope to foster practical connections between researchers and local government officers. This will provide a key opportunity for wider collaboration on important programme areas where research and evidence-based approaches could improve decision making to address health inequalities.

The event is for anyone interested in:

- The themes of the research proposals
- The co-production and capacity building approach of Blackpool HDRC
- The opportunity for broader collaboration between universities, local authorities, and HDRCs

[Register your attendance](#)

The NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Blackpool is part of the NIHR and hosted by Blackpool Council. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborations enable local authorities to become more research-active, embedding a culture of evidence-based decision making.

Additional information

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Municipal Buildings
Corporation Street
Blackpool
FY1 1NF

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