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# Getting involved with Blackpool Researching Together

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We would love for you to get involved and help shape our research.

If you would like more information on Blackpool Researching Together or how to get involved, please email [hdrc@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:hdrc@blackpool.gov.uk).

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**Sign up to receive our newsletter**

## Upcoming events

### The BIG Evidence Fortnight

Blackpool Researching Together are hosting The BIG Evidence Fortnight. Two weeks of expert led events to help you use research and evidence in everyday work to improve lives in Blackpool.

The BIG Evidence Fortnight will take place from Monday 20 April, until Friday 1 May.

Joined by experts from the world of research and evidence, there are 18 sessions on offer.

[For more information](#)

### Health inequalities research capacity and capability programme celebration event - January 2026

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.

#### 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.

[Register your attendance](#)

We are hosting a celebration event for HIRCC participants to share their experience and their 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

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

[Find out more about the health inequalities research capacity and capability \(HIRCC\) programme](#)

## Previous events

### Evidence Champion event - February 2026

This month we held our Evidence Champion event on Friday 13 February at Bickerstaffe House. At the event, attendees took part co-designing a process for developing an Evidence Champion role within Blackpool Council.

The Evidence Champion role will help incorporate research and evidence into everyday decision-making across teams. The aim was to gain insight from council officers on how the role can be shaped to suit local needs. Information gathered during the event will inform the next stage of the project as we shape the requirements of the role.

We look forward to sharing further details in the coming months.

### Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) workshop – February 2026

On Tuesday 10 February, we hosted a Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) workshop as part of the ongoing evaluation of the Health Inequalities Research Capabilities (HIRC) programme.

The workshop offered attendees the opportunity to explore how the work of the HIRC programme has influenced individuals, teams, and the broader community through ripple effect mapping. We gathered insights from cohorts 1 and 2 about the programme’s impact.

These insights will support the programme’s development and deepen understanding of its effect on reducing health inequalities locally. The results are currently being analysed, and we look forward to sharing the findings when they become available.

### Spring into Spring - May 2025

Spring into Spring is organised by Blackpool Place Based Partnership, a group that brings together NHS organisations, local authority and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector colleagues to deliver Health and Social Care in Blackpool.

This year there were six days of free community health and wellbeing events taking place at various locations across the town. The events also offered free health checks, taster sessions and the chance to discover brilliant local activities, services and support.

We attended sessions at Revoelution Hub, Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre, Claremont Park Community Centre and Blackpool Sports Centre.

It was a great way to meet the community and discuss what help and support is available to our local residents, while also talking more about the work we're doing to create a better Blackpool!





## More events

### Annual learning event - November 2024

Our second annual learning event took place on Wednesday 27 November 2024 at Blackpool Football Club.

This year's theme focused on "co-production within research" and highlighted the importance of community involvement in projects. We're proud to have community co-researchers in the Blackpool Researching Together project, bringing their lived experience to all areas of the work we are doing.

We welcomed a wide range of local and regional partners, community members and colleagues from other HDRC's to the event, giving everyone a chance to learn more about the co-production work that is taking place in Blackpool.

We held a number of workshops for attendees to learn more about the importance of co-production and how this can impact projects, sessions included:

- Community co-researchers presenting their experience of the project so far
- Co-producing research capacity building programmes
- Capturing the ripples of impact through Ripple Effect Mapping
- Health equity in the North West

We also hosted a marketplace at the event, giving attendees the opportunity to network, make connections and find out about the wider work of our partner organisations.

In true Blackpool style, attendees were asked to provide their feedback on postcards. We're looking forward to reading through everyone's thoughts on the day to make our next event even better!





## Active into Autumn event - October 2024

We recently attended the Active into Autumn event at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool. The event, organised by Blackpool Place Based Partnership, brings together NHS organisations, local authority and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector colleagues to deliver Health and Social Care in Blackpool.

It was a great opportunity for residents to find out about the help and support that is available in the community. We loved meeting everyone and sharing more about the work we're doing to create a better Blackpool.



## Blackpool and The Fylde College Freshers Fair - September 2024

Our co-researchers attended Blackpool and The Fylde College Freshers Fair to showcase the work we are doing to the local students. During the event they were also able to network with other organisations, which was useful for the mutual sharing of information.

It's important that we're able to connect with various members of the community to make sure everyone has the opportunity to input into our work!





## FUSE international conference – June 2024

As part of our work on the Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) evaluation, we were really excited to get the opportunity to present at the Fuse International Conference at Cornell University in New York!

Working together with NIHR PHIRST Fusion, the team have been evaluating who is benefitting most from the CHiL scheme currently and if there are people in need who are missing out on this opportunity.

Dr Bronia Arnett, NIHR PHIRST Fusion Knowledge Exchange Broker, presented at the conference in-person to discuss the importance of co-research for public health projects.

Although the Blackpool Researching Together community co-researchers weren't able to attend in-person, they did play a vital role in the presentation by sharing their experiences working on the project through short, pre-recorded videos.

The team are also looking for other opportunities for the co-researchers to share their work in the future.





## Spring into Spring event - April 2024

The Spring into Spring event is organised by Blackpool Place Based Partnership, a group that brings together NHS organisations, local authority and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector colleagues to deliver Health and Social Care in Blackpool.

It was a great way to meet the community and discuss what help and support is available to our local residents, while also talking more about the work we're doing to create a better Blackpool!



## Community engagement events - December 2023

In December, we went out into the community at a number of events to speak to local residents about their personal experience of health inequalities in Blackpool to help shape our research priorities.

We also joined the NIHR Clinical Research Network & Fylde Coast Clinical Research Network at the "Kitty" research bus to engage with

members of the public in the Clifton ward. We talked about the HDRC project and what it means for the community in Blackpool.



## Annual learning event - November 2023

Our Annual learning event took place on Wednesday 22 November 2023 at Blackpool Football Club.

It was a chance for our partners and community members to get together and find out where we were up to in the project and what we had planned for the year ahead.

We held a number of workshops for attendees to learn more in-depth about our work and help shape our knowledge, including:

- The importance of language and Health Inequalities
- Dissemination
- Community Engagement

Feedback from the annual learning event showed it was a success and we're already looking forward to the next one!





## Launch event - June 2023

The Blackpool HDRC launch event took place on Wednesday 14 June 2023 at local community hub @The Grange.

Partners and stakeholders were invited to celebrate this project and find out more about our goals for the next five years.

Keynote speaker Professor Nicola Graham-Kevan delivered a thought-provoking presentation on using lived experience to drive research based on her own personal experiences.

After the lunch event we held a community engagement session open to all our community members, giving them the opportunity to come along and meet the team and learn more about the project.

Attendees were invited to share their personal experience of health inequalities in Blackpool to help shape our research. We'll be using this feedback to drive our work forward.

If you were unable to attend on the day, you can [watch our launch events highlights video](#).





## News

If you want to keep up-to-date with all the latest news, follow us on social media [@Blackpool HDRC](#)

### Health inequalities research capacity and capability programme, workshop four - November 2025

This month we held session four of the [health inequalities research capacity and capability \(HIRCC\) programme](#) at Lancaster University. The groups were joined by Dr Katarina Panagaki, Prof. Mark Limmer and Dr Andrea Waling, who all shared their considerable knowledge on coproduction and public involvement methods in health inequalities research. The afternoon session focused on research dissemination and was delivered by the inspiring Made by Mortals who bring lived experience to life through creative methods, giving the groups the opportunity to coproduce a lived experience story into music.

The groups will now be working on developing their research proposal for presenting at the next session before they present to a large audience at the end of the programme Celebration Event on 29th January 2026.

We'd love you to join us at the Celebration Event to find out more about the work that the groups have been doing!

[Sign up to the Health Inequalities Research Capacity & Capability Programme Celebration Event 2025/26](#)



### Join our Community of Research & Evidence (CORE) Teams channel - October 2025

We recently launched our Community of Research and Evidence (CORE) Teams channel.

The space is designed to share information about training, development, and resources related to research and evidence-informed practice, including:

- Upcoming external training sessions, workshops, and events
- Links to useful tools and e-learning
- Opportunities to connect with others interested in research

So far we have over 90 members and the group is growing.

We welcome all Blackpool Council staff and those from our community partners. If you would like to join the group, please email [HDRC@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:HDRC@blackpool.gov.uk)

## Health inequalities research capacity and capability programme, workshop two - September 2025

Session two of the [health inequalities research capacity and capability \(HIRCC\) programme](#) took place at another excellent Blackpool venue, the Solaris Centre. Our groups heard about local research and research networks. Thank you to Heather Catt, Pauline Wigglesworth, Gillian Southgate, Andrew Harding and Jez Bebbington for giving us their time to demonstrate that research is for everyone. We also had a session learning about how to critique literature using the CASP framework from Natasha Harding. Each group presented their research question for feedback from the programme team and the other groups. Some great questions developed and we're excited to see how these evolve as their proposals develop.



## Health inequalities research capacity and capability programme, workshop one - July 2025

Workshop one for the [health inequalities research capacity and capability \(HIRCC\) programme](#) took place at Lancaster University's Library and saw our cohort learning about how to conduct literature reviews and developing research questions. The amazing Bob and Gemma from Lancaster University delivered an excellent, non-clinical introduction to literature reviews and the groups have begun to search for literature relevant to their topic areas. Next steps for them are to review their literature and meet with their academic mentors to begin shaping their research questions, which they will present at our next workshop.





## Health inequalities research capacity and capability programme, opening session - June 2025

This month we welcomed our third cohort to the [health inequalities research capacity and capability \(HIRCC\) programme](#) at Blackpool's @theGrange community centre. Our cohort includes people working in Blackpool across public health, local authority, NHS and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector who will work together as a learning community until the end of January 2026.

During this programme, the cohort will learn about research skills in a way that respects and builds upon their existing transferable skills. They will apply their learning by developing a group research proposal, working with an academic mentor. New for this cohort is the inclusion of the Health Inequalities Assessment Toolkit, which aims to support the integration of an intersectional equity lens into research and consider how people with lived experience and policy or practice expertise can be involved in the process. At the end of the programme, our groups will have the opportunity to apply for the [Blackpool Researching Together seed funding scheme](#) for funding to take forward their projects. They will also be supported to develop a personal research action plan to set out how they will embed research and evidence into their ongoing practice.

The opening workshop was hosted by the wonderful facilitator Ali Kahn from The Comedy Workshop, who has been a part of the programme since it started. The group and programme leads engaged in team building activities, took part in a world café to delve into their existing transferable skills and learnt about health inequalities research and the programme. The cohort are now sorted into groups based upon their research interests and in our next session, will begin to develop their research questions.





## Welcoming the NIHR to Blackpool - April 2025

We were honoured to welcome NIHR Public Health Research (PHR) Programme Director, Professor Brian Ferguson, to Blackpool in April 2025.

The team created a 'market place' to showcase all the work we've been doing in the town with different teams sharing details on work they've been involved in. It was a great way to engage in open conversations about our experiences as a HDRC so far, and we could tell Professor Ferguson was just as passionate about the HDRC's as we are.

Table one focused on our approach to build research capacity within the council and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector. Our community co-researchers shared their experience and future goals after recently completing our introduction to research training sessions. We were also joined by our colleagues in public health, commissioning and Healthwatch Blackpool who have completed the [health inequalities research capacity and capability programme](#), sharing details on how they have implemented research into their work since finishing the programme.

The second table delivered information on collaboration and data. This table also featured representatives from our community partners Boingboing Foundation and Healthwatch Blackpool, who discussed the importance of collaboration and the community co-researchers involvement in our work. Dr Andrew Harding from Lancaster University also shared the relationship we have developed through embedding two researchers from the university into the team. Finally, our Senior Public Health Intelligence Analyst, Emmanuel, shared our approach for facilitating data sharing for evidence-based decision making.

The final table showcased the impact of enabling research by reflecting on three of our projects to assess the research capacity and capability we have established; born into care, evaluation of Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHIL) project and the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP). We also discussed the progress of creating an evidence hub in Blackpool, to enable the local authority to become more research-active and embed a culture of evidence-based decision making.

The day closed with a presentation from our community co-researchers to highlight why Blackpool is in need of change and the importance of HDRC's on a town like ours. The team also presented the impact that the scheme is already having on our local community (like our former community co-researcher Siobhan who is mentioned in the story below).

Thank you to everyone who attended and made the day such a great success!





## Impact on the local community - March 2025

Today we're highlighting the amazing impact Health Determinant Research Collaborations (HDRCs) are having on local communities.

Before joining the Blackpool Researching Together team in 2023 as a community co-researcher, Siobhan was a stay at home mum who was looking for a way to make a difference in her local community.

Since joining the team Siobhan has developed her skills and confidence, enabling her to go back into education and complete a Social Care/Pastoral Services level 3 qualification followed by functional skills Math's and English qualifications. She has now progressed on to a Foundation degree course and is just approaching the end of her first year of university through a local college.

Through the support and skills she has learned working as part of the Blackpool Researching Together team, Siobhan has been able to follow her passion of supporting disadvantaged communities in her local community and started a Chat and Play group within Claremont. Local families now have a place to get together to play and socialise with toys, crafts and food and drink available.

The sessions have proved to be a big hit and started a ripple effect in the community with local residents now also volunteering at the sessions due to the large number of attendees. After being involved with the sessions one local resident has gone on to gain a Food Hygiene level 2 qualification and has also been able to get back into employment after many years.

Using her new confidence, skills and passion for improving disadvantaged communities, Siobhan has now successfully started a new role with Healthwatch Blackpool as a community engagement officer in her local area. Although we're sad to see her go, we're so proud that we could be part of her journey!

Read Siobhan's reflection of her journey over on our [community blog](#).





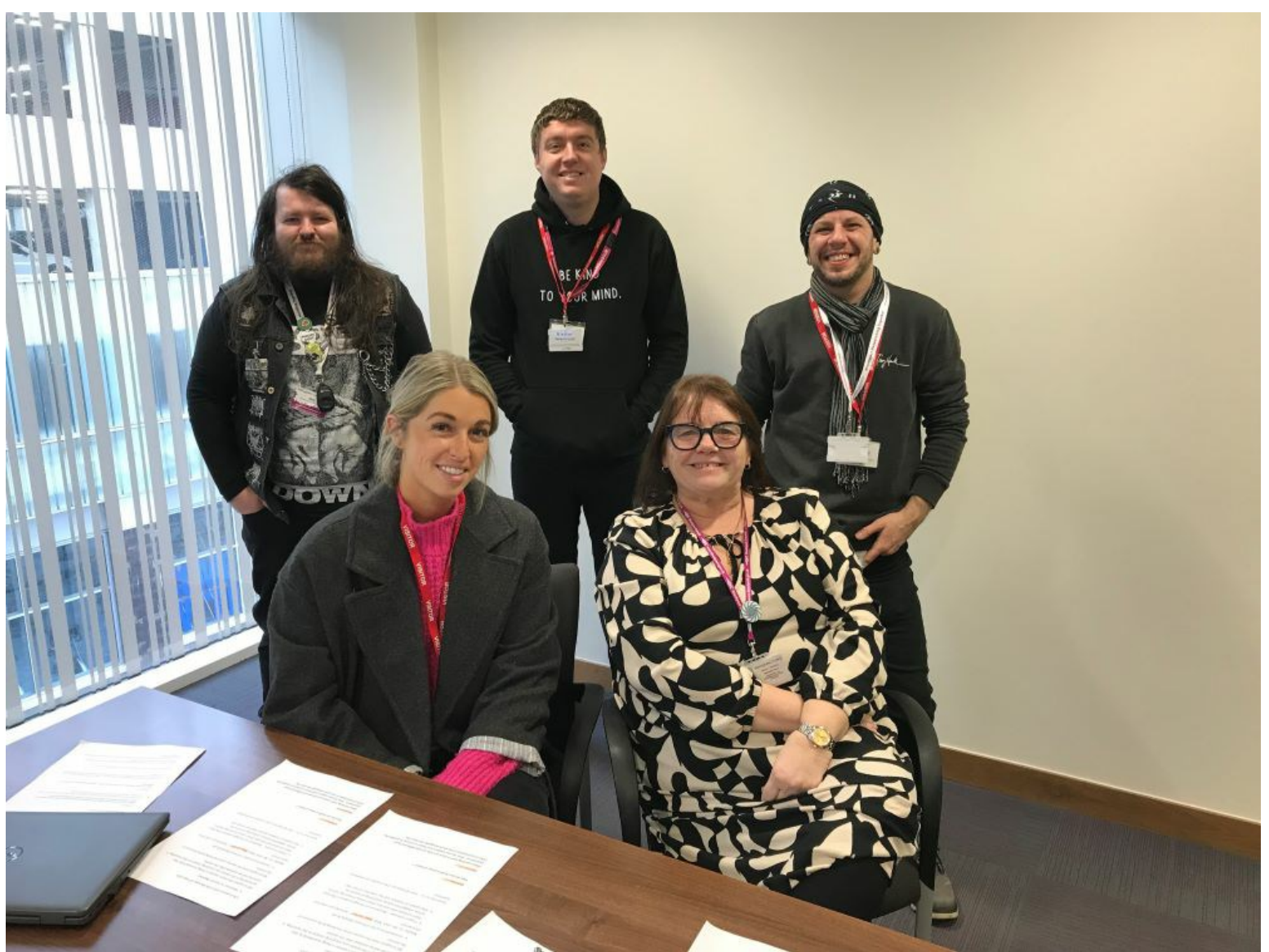
## Community co-researchers live Q&A session - February 2025

Our community co-researchers ran an amazing workshop at the annual learning event to share their experience working as part of Blackpool Researching Together. Following this we were inundated with positive feedback from attendees who wanted more time to speak to the team.

Our co-researchers were happy to do this and hosted a live question and answer session on Teams. The session was open to all attendees of the annual learning event and was hosted alongside Abigail Lee, Projects and Involvement Manager at Healthwatch Blackpool and Cy Karoonian, Project Co-ordinator at BoingBoing Foundation.

It was a great chance for the team to share their journey and offer advice to other people wanting to be more involved in introducing co-production into their work.

We're hoping to run more of these sessions in the future so make sure you [sign up to our newsletter](#) to be kept up to date on upcoming sessions.



## HDRC Cumberland visit to Blackpool - December 2024

It was great to have the HDRC Cumberland team in Blackpool, sharing how their first year as a HDRC is going. We discussed everything from our co-production model to the steps they've taken already to start embedding a research culture.

There are now 30 HDRC's and we're all learning together and sharing our experiences to get the best outcomes.





## Blackpool Researching Together research opportunities launched - July 2024

- Are you passionate about addressing Blackpool's health inequalities?
- Have you always had an idea for a research project, but never had the support or funding to develop it further?
- Or maybe you have a short term evaluation or research project you would like to carry out?

Blackpool Researching Together's seed funding grant scheme has now launched, providing up to £20,000 funding to support a collaborative approach to Blackpool becoming more research active.

Applications are welcomed from any Blackpool-based organisations or groups who have previously expressed an interest in becoming more research active or are already carrying out research.

[Find out more about the seed funding grant scheme](#)

## HDRC South Tees visit to Blackpool - December 2023

We had the great pleasure of welcoming some of the HDRC South Tees team to Blackpool.

We're learning together as HDRCs and were able to offer each other advice and support while we tackle health inequalities across the UK. By sharing our experiences of our first year we're hoping to get the best outcomes from the HDRC projects for everyone.





## Health inequalities research project funding announcement - October 2022

Blackpool has been awarded £5million of funding for a health inequalities research project from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

Blackpool has c.140,000 proud residents and is known for many fabulous things such as its beautiful beaches and the world-famous illuminations. Sadly, despite the hardwork of many partners across the town, Blackpool still has poor life expectancy and health inequalities.

The funding being announced today will help to find out exactly why health inequalities exist and how we transform our services and systems to work better for our local communities.

[Read the full story](#)





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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