

**Working together to support better
fairer health and care at all ages
and in all places.**

2019 to 2024





ARC NENC in numbers

£26 million
applied health
and care research
funding for our
region



£2.7 million
awarded to **53**
innovative projects
through our
Open Funding Scheme



Over **190**
research projects
delivered, funded
or supported



Over **570**
active and engaged
practice and public
members



More than **450**
research papers
published in
peer-reviewed
journals



17,000
people have been
involved in our
research



Building applied research capacity in our region

In collaboration with our six regional universities

University of
Cumbria

Durham
University

Newcastle
University

Northumbria
University
NEWCASTLE

University of
Sunderland

Teesside
University

21
ARC
Fellows

30
PhDs

25
Masters
places

16
Practice
Fellows

10
Mental
Health
Fellows

6
Social Care
Fellows

5
Dementia
Fellows



Hosted by

NHS

Cumbria, Northumberland,
Tyne and Wear
NHS Foundation Trust

Working with our partners to develop and deliver evidence to address regional and national health and care priorities

Examples of our work



The issue:

Understanding the impacts of COVID-19 to shape future policy



The work: ARC NENC led a cross-ARC programme of research around COVID-19 and health inequalities. The work highlighted the extent and evolution of regional inequalities in COVID-19, their causes, and the health and social impact of interventions to address them.

Key findings included demonstrating the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in the North of England on health and productivity, including impacts on mental health, and the impacts of Long Covid.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Tackling inequalities faced by children in the North

The work: ARC NENC researchers collaborated on an influential piece of work - the 'Child of the North' report - which highlights the challenges and inequalities that children living in the North of England face. The report was backed by MPs and led to the development of the 'Child of the North' All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG).

[Learn more](#)



The Parliamentary launch of the report

The issue:

Inequalities experienced by women in the North of England



The work: Researchers from the ARC NENC contributed to a national 'Woman of the North' report, highlighting the significant and growing inequalities faced by women in the North of England.

Research findings show that women in the North of England face unequal challenges and inequalities in their lives and health – including being more likely to work more hours for less pay and to be in worse health. The report was backed by Kim McGuinness, Mayor of the North East, and Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire.

[Read the report](#)

The issue:

Preventing Sudden Death in Infancy (SUDI)

The work: ARC NENC funded the development of an evidence-based training and implementation programme to prevent Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) in some of our most hard-to-reach communities.

The online training helps staff to spot unsafe sleep situations and offer appropriate advice. More than 1,000 members of staff have been trained so far, including 400 police officers, and the training is now being put into practice across the region.



[Find out more](#)

The issue:

Supporting parents who may struggle to bond with their baby



The work: Parent-infant relationship services work with parents who are struggling to bond with their baby, but provision of this service is unequal across the country, with only one service in our region. Researchers developed a toolkit for commissioners that provides a strong, evidence-based case for this provision, with the aim of supporting the availability of more parent-infant relationship services locally and nationally.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Helping adults at risk of self-harm or suicide



The work: Researchers worked with people with lived experience to create a tool for developing personalised safety plans for adults at risk of suicide or self-harm. The personalised safety planning framework was developed in collaboration with people who have experience of self-harm and suicide attempts.

The work has the potential to influence suicide prevention policy and guidance - and reduce preventable deaths. Work is now underway on a second phase of the project, to test the approach across different settings.

[Find out more](#)

The issue:

Addressing high demands for mental health support in primary care

The work: Mental ill-health concerns take up a third of GP appointments and research suggests many GPs' high workloads prevent them from providing good-quality mental health care. This issue is even more pronounced in areas of severe socioeconomic deprivation.

Researchers co-developed a pilot scheme which saw clinical psychologists recruited into GP practices in some of our most deprived communities, to support patients more effectively and reduce pressure on GPs.



[Learn more about this work](#)

The issue:

Supporting people with severe mental illness to access cancer screening



The work: People with severe mental illness are 2.1 times more likely to die from cancer before the age of 75, compared to people without severe mental illness, yet cancer screening uptake is low amongst this group.

Researchers from ARC NENC explored the factors that make it difficult for people with severe mental illness to access cancer screening, and developed recommendations for practice to address these barriers.

[Find out more](#)

The issue:

Improving lipid management in areas of deprivation to improve cardiovascular health



The work: Researchers from ARC NENC and Health Innovation (HI) NENC worked together to analyse how primary care practices in areas of deprivation were supporting patients with lipid management.

The research led to recommendations to inform the national lipid management programme, and the development of a pilot scheme to make cholesterol testing more accessible for patients.

[Find out more](#)

The issue:

Addressing the barriers that make it difficult for families on low income to access healthcare

The work: Researchers worked with parents and voluntary sector staff to understand what makes it difficult for families living on low incomes to attend healthcare appointments. The work identified several key themes which led to the development of recommendations for changes.

Children North East are using the findings to develop a toolkit which providers of healthcare services can use to 'Poverty Proof' health care and address these barriers.



[Read more](#)

The issue:

Developing evidence to address alcohol harms



The work: Research supported by ARC NENC evidenced the impact of Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) on alcohol purchasing habits in Scotland and Wales, showing an impact on consumption in some of the heaviest-drinking households. The work found that MUP is an effective policy option to reduce alcohol purchases and levels of consumption. The work was featured extensively across national media.

[Learn more](#)

The issue:

Helping NHS staff to stop smoking



The work: Researchers from ARC NENC worked with regional partners to evaluate the effectiveness of a smoking cessation pilot scheme for NHS staff in our region. The evaluation has been used to develop recommendations to support ongoing implementation of the scheme across NHS trusts.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Exploring how to help patients to get fitter, and stay well, before and after surgery

The work: A study led by ARC NENC explored the impacts of prehabilitation before surgery.

It found that patients who were involved in prehabilitation were fitter before surgery and in some cases this improvement lasted up to a month after surgery. It also found that prehabilitation helped smokers to quit before surgery and that some patients continued to not smoke for up to one year after surgery.



[Read more](#)

The issue:

Developing evidence to help tackle childhood obesity



The work: Researchers funded by ARC NENC evaluated Gateshead Council's strategy of using planning policy to prevent any further fast-food outlets opening up in the borough, to support public health.

The work found that restricting fast-food outlets in areas with a high concentration, and as part of a package of policies, may help to reduce childhood obesity.

There was a noticeable 4.8% decrease over four years in the percentage of overweight and obese Year 6 children in the most deprived areas, compared to other similar areas in the region.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Exploring how reading for pleasure can support mental health and wellbeing



The work: Reading for Wellbeing is a regional scheme that supports people to read for pleasure, with the aim of improving their mental health and wellbeing – and which was initiated and part-funded by author Ann Cleeves.

Researchers from ARC NENC evaluated the impact of the scheme, and the findings have been used to refine the Reading for Wellbeing offer, as well as expand the scheme across the region.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Reducing the risk of falls for people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

The work: People with COPD are four times more likely to fall than healthy adults of the same age due to poor balance. Higher levels of socioeconomic deprivation are also linked to a greater risk of falling.

Ongoing research co-developed with patients and their carers is exploring the causes of falls in people with COPD, to inform the co-development of an evidence-based balance training programme.



[Read more](#)

The issue:

Understanding the mental health support needs of refugees and asylum seekers



The work: Work led by researchers from the ARC NENC has looked at migrants' experiences of mental health services in the UK, and how these might be improved.

The study involved interviews with refugees and asylum seekers in England and Northern Ireland, to explore whether refugees and asylum seekers with various pre- and post-migration traumatic experiences might need different therapeutic approaches.

[Find out more](#)

The issue:

Supporting health and care for people with multiple and complex needs



The work: People experiencing multiple and complex needs (MCN) may face issues of homelessness, substance misuse, repeat offending, and/or mental ill-health. They can also experience disproportionate levels of health inequalities and earlier deaths.

Researchers from ARC NENC worked with experts by experience from the Fulfilling Lives charity to explore the underlying factors behind these issues, and develop recommendations for prevention in Newcastle and Gateshead.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Supporting primary care in areas of blanket deprivation

The work: 'Deep End' networks aim to support GPs to deliver care within areas of blanket socioeconomic deprivation, and to advocate for wider systemic changes in healthcare funding. Researchers from ARC NENC worked with primary care practices across our region to develop a new Deep End Network for the North East and North Cumbria.

Researchers have since supported a number of pilot projects within the Deep End Network, including work around reducing opioid and gabapentinoid prescribing, improved lipid management, and improving mental health support.

[Read more](#)



The issue:

Improving mealtime experiences for people with dementia



The work: An ARC NENC Dementia Research Fellow has worked with care home staff and residents to develop a training programme to help care home staff support people with dementia at mealtimes. The programme is based on evidence and was co-developed with experts by experience. The training programme is now being tested in local care homes, to assess its impact on staff and residents.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Driving improvements in residential care homes through research



The work: A research partnership between Eothen Homes and Newcastle University, supported by ARC NENC, aims to support care home staff and residents to be involved in research, in order to improve residents' experiences and care.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Supporting better care for people with a life-limiting illness or who are approaching the end of life

The work: ARC NENC has supported a new network in the North East and North Cumbria to develop better care for people with a life-limiting illness or who are approaching the end of life.

The RIPEN (Research in Palliative and End of Life Care North East) network brings together researchers, clinicians, patients, carers, plus faith and community groups, to develop and lead new research that can improve care experiences at the end of life. Its aim is to grow palliative and end of life care research in areas where patients and families are most likely to benefit.



[Read more](#)

Visit our Evidence Hub to explore more short and simple summaries of our research findings

[Visit the Evidence Hub](#)

What is the issue?

What difference could it make?

What did we find?

Who will find it useful?

Why is it important?

Building applied research capacity across our region

Our Practice Fellowship Scheme aimed to build research capacity within our regional health and care workforce.

16 Fellows were recruited from a diverse range of roles across our health and care system.



Given protected time to focus on an area of research related to their role.



Supported by an academic mentor and linked to a network of researchers.



Resulted in improvements to care and additional financial investment.



Supported a culture of learning and improvement.



Fellows continue to act as research champions within their organisations.



“I have access to patients and can discuss issues that are important to them, making projects clinically relevant as well as being able to bring in new evidence to the shop floor, and embed it into practice.”

Karen Caulfield, ARC Research Fellow & Clinical Specialist Paediatric Cardiothoracic Physiotherapist at the Freeman Hospital

Outcomes from our Practice Fellowships

The issue:

Exploring deaf people's experiences of using digital healthcare technology



The work: Findings from a project led by a Clinical Nurse Specialist to explore deaf people's experiences of using the NHS app were fed into the national NHS App Ambassadors Forum and led to the development of a Deaf Experts by Experience group.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Protecting vulnerable adults at risk from exploitation

The work: A Safeguarding Adults Manager used her Practice Fellowship to evaluate how adult victims of exploitation were identified and supported. Her research is the first to show the conditions necessary for safeguarding processes to be effective. Findings have shaped policy at Newcastle City Council and have been shared nationally.



[Read more](#)

The issue:

Improving care for head and neck cancer patients



The work: A speech and language therapist who specialises in head and neck cancers researched pathways of care and decision-making for patients who develop 'late-effects' caused by scarring from radiotherapy, and is using the findings to improve patient care.

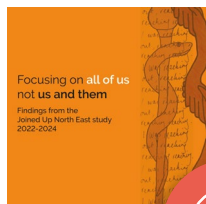
[Read more](#)

We've funded 30 PhD studentships across our six regional universities

Examples of work

The issue:

Understanding the experiences of marginalised LGBTQ+ people when accessing healthcare



The work: A PhD study co-developed with people from the LGBTQ+ community, has explored the complex barriers that this group can face when accessing health and care services. The work has led to the development of key recommendations for health and social care policy makers and providers.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Understanding the challenges faced by women who experience multiple and complex issues

The work: ARC NENC and the NIHR School for Public Health Research jointly funded a PhD studentship to investigate the barriers that women who experience multiple and complex issues face when it comes to accessing health and care, working with women with lived experience. The research also explored how issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence, trauma and poor mental health can contribute to and complicate the issue of homelessness in women.



[Read more](#)

The issue:

Improving patient care through ethical in-home monitoring



The work: Research led by an ARC NENC PhD student jointly funded by Northumbria University explored how AI can be used to maintain the privacy of patients whilst they're wearing specialised glasses that record daily activities and allow medical staff to monitor how they move around their homes and communities. The work could lead to significant improvements in the accuracy of patient fall risk assessment and in the decision-making processes around patient care.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Exploring ways to support patients with chronic breathlessness



The work: A study led by an ARC NENC PhD student at Teesside University is exploring how a Walking Football programme could be developed to support people with chronic breathlessness.

The work includes using Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) methods to co-design a Walking Football intervention for people with chronic breathlessness, and testing its suitability with patients in real-world settings.

[Read more](#)

The issue:

Supporting wellbeing for people living with the later stages of dementia

The work: Work led by an ARC NENC PhD student at Durham University is investigating how Namaste Care can improve wellbeing for people in the later stages of dementia.

Namaste Care enables care home staff to cater to the personal needs of residents with advanced dementia, focusing on the person rather than the process and protocol.

This work seeks to provide objective information about the effects of Namaste Care for the person living with dementia, and the Namaste Caregiver. The findings will help to inform national policy guidance.



[Read more](#)

The issue:

Understanding fathers' needs during the perinatal period



The work: Research led by a PhD student with our Supporting Children and Families theme has focussed on the experiences of fathers during the perinatal period. This included exploring fathers' mental health and wellbeing concerns within the transition to fatherhood, and found men often struggle because of a lack of information and lack of emotional support targeted to their needs.

The research, published in BMJ Open, highlighted several key areas where support could be improved, to support fathers during the perinatal period.

[Read more](#)

Public Involvement and Community Engagement (PICE)

Public involvement and community engagement within and across our research is fundamental to everything we do.

‘Nothing about us without us.’

Our PICE groups

Public Advisory Network

Young Public Advisory Network

African Family Research Group

Deaf Wellbeing Network

Care Homes PICE Network

End of Life and Palliative Care PICE group

Examples of our work

Pioneering the Dialogue and Change Award

The Dialogue and Change Award was a pilot scheme that helped us to evaluate the impact of Public Involvement and Community Engagement across our activities.

We wanted to ensure that our PICE activities are impactful and transformational – and that they help to shape the way that research is designed, conducted, and implemented.

A total of 26 projects achieved the award during the pilot.

[Read more](#)



Members of our Public Advisory Network research receive the Dialogue and Change Awards for two major projects.

Developing research partnerships in care homes – Dorothy's story



Dorothy is 92 and is a resident in a care home in Stockton. She has been working with us to help to develop health and social care research. She jumped at the chance to get involved in something that would stretch her mind and give her something to do.

She has been involved in a study that is developing a Falls Prevention Checklist, where she shared her observations on the processes involved. This has helped the research team to look again at how the information is collected.

[Read Dorothy's story](#)

Funding to develop a new Children and Young People's Research Partnership for our region

We worked with children and young people to secure a £150k grant from NIHR to develop this new partnership.

Its aim is to ensure that children and young people are directly involved in shaping a research agenda for the future. The programme will be co-delivered by Investing in Children, with researchers from the ARC NENC, Newcastle University and Lancaster University.



[Read more](#)

Our pledge to put public involvement and community engagement at the heart of our work



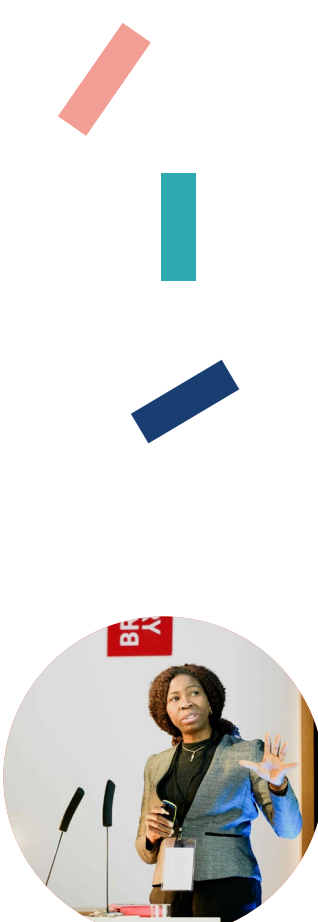
In 2022, we made a pledge to improve public involvement in research by signing the Health Research Authority's Shared Commitment to Public Involvement in Health and Social Care Research.

We were the first of the 15 ARCs nationally to do so. The Shared Commitment aims to bring about changes which will drive up standards in health and social care research.

By signing the shared commitment, we promised to ensure that all ARC NENC research is developed and undertaken collaboratively with communities, groups, patients, and members of the public in our region.

[Read more](#)

A message from the ARC NENC team



Thank you for taking the time to explore our 2019-2024 review brochure, which is a snapshot of some of the work we have delivered, and continue to deliver, since we launched in November 2019.

As you may know, our initial funding from NIHR was for five years until November 2024. In 2023, we received an extension which will take our current ARC North East and North Cumbria to March 2026.

2024 has been a busy year for us. One particular highlight was the delivery of a national cross-ARC event in London in March 2024, which showcased leading research linked to Health Inequalities and Prevention from across all 15 ARCs.



Professor Bola Owolabi, Director of the National Healthcare Inequalities Improvement Programme at NHS England, opened the event with a keynote address emphasising the critical importance of using research evidence in practice to improve care, and to reduce the significant and deep health inequalities that we experience in our country.

Prof Bola Owolabi

A focus on knowledge mobilisation

A focus of our work across 2024 has been the mobilisation of research evidence into practice, to improve health and care outcomes across our region, and beyond. This has included working closely with partners across the health and care system, including colleagues in our Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care System for the North East and North Cumbria.

Earlier this year, we received **new funding from NIHR** for up to four new Knowledge Mobilisation posts, to champion the use of research evidence in health and care. The Fellows will be in place from early next year.

We also welcomed six new Social Care Research Fellows to the ARC, supported by our partners in the NIHR Research Support Service.



In addition, we were awarded a further £340k to extend our programme of Mental Health research work, including funds specifically for Mental Health Knowledge mobilisation.

We also strengthened our Leadership Team this year, with four new appointments.

They are:



Prof Ruth McGovern
Newcastle University

Interim Co-Director,
co-lead Supporting
Children and
Families Theme.



Prof Sam Harrison
Teesside University

Deputy Director and
Academic Career
Development Lead.



Prof Emily Oliver
Newcastle University

Deputy Director
and Lead for
cross-cutting mental
health activities.



Prof Mark Stoutenberg
Durham University

Deputy Director
and Lead for
Research Inclusion.

We have achieved a significant amount over the last five years, and still have much more to do.

We'd like to thank our collaborators and partners for your ongoing support, and we look forward to working with you across 2025 and beyond.

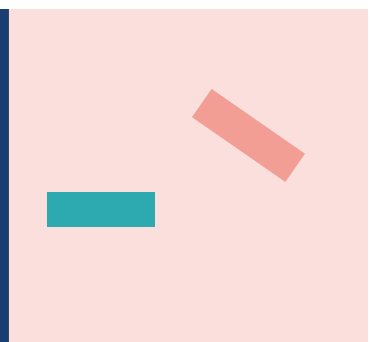
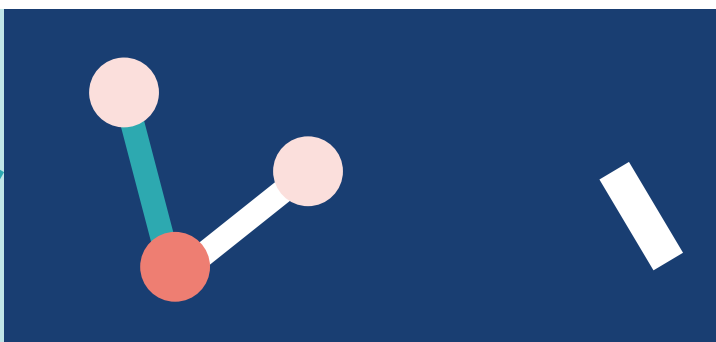
There is much more we could have included in this round-up, and we invite you to [visit our website](#) to read about our work in more detail.



Thank you

Professor Eileen Kaner

Director, NIHR ARC North East and North Cumbria





NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration
North East and North Cumbria



Get in touch

Email: arcnenc@cntw.nhs.uk

Visit: www.arc-nenc.nihr.ac.uk