



*National Institute for  
Health Research*

Get involved with NHS Research  
and help to make a difference



# What is NHS research?

NHS research is health research carried out in the NHS or funded by the NHS. It can include research into drug treatments and medical devices (e.g. insulin pumps, asthma inhalers). It can also be research that involves questionnaires, or concerned with where people are treated, and how staff members provide care to patients.

NHS research can take place in a variety of different places. These can include local hospitals; GP surgeries and clinics; care homes and also in people's homes. Some research is carried out at many different centres across the country, while other studies are international and have participants in different countries too.

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## The National Institute of Health Research (NIHR)

**NIHR is funded by the Department of Health to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research.**

**Clinical research is, and has always been, at the very heart of the NHS.** Only by carrying out research into "what works" can we continually improve treatment for patients, and understand how to focus NHS resources where they will be most effective.

NIHR Clinical Research Network Kent, Surrey and Sussex is committed to encouraging patients and the public to get involved in the delivery of research. In addition we work to enable as many patients as possible to have the opportunity to take part in research studies in order to benefit themselves and others.

## Research is a routine part of NHS healthcare

35,000 people took part in research studies in Kent, Surrey and Sussex (in 2016/17). Research is being carried out in all of our NHS Trusts across the region and at an increasing number of GP surgeries too. This means patients are taking part in research somewhere near you!

Research enables us to provide new and better treatment for patients both now and in the future. In a patient experience survey, 83% of patients who had taken part in research in Kent, Surrey and Sussex said they considered research to be a normal part of NHS health care, but nationally only about 1 in 5 people said they felt confident to ask their healthcare professional about opportunities to take part in research.

We know that the majority of people who are diagnosed with a medical condition or disease would be willing to consider taking part in a research study if they were offered the opportunity to do so.

**IF YOU WERE DIAGNOSED WITH A MEDICAL CONDITION OR DISEASE,  
HOW WILLING WOULD YOU BE TO PARTICIPATE IN A STUDY?**



## Why become involved in research?

You might decide to become involved with health research for a wide variety of reasons.

- Personal knowledge and experience which you would like research(er/s) to take into account
- A chance to give something back and help influence research to benefit others
- To learn more about your condition and gain experience and confidence through working with others

- Help bring about improvements to health and social care services and treatments for yourself and others
- Help bring about improvements to the environment, health and wellbeing of your local community

One of the strongest motives people give for getting involved in research is to work with researchers to help bring about improvements to health and to improve existing services and treatments.



## Why is it important for patients and the public to be involved with research?

We are all potential users of health services. There is an important distinction to be made between the perspective of patients, carers and service-users and those of people who have a professional role (such as doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses etc).

We need a range of perspectives to ensure research in the NHS is as effective and as relevant for patients as possible. By sharing your knowledge and experience you can make a real difference and help to change patients' lives.

The "public" is made up of individuals and groups who may or may not share common interests and goals. So, although we talk about "the public" or "people who use services", this is really just our shorthand for a very broad range of people.

# Become a Patient Research Ambassador

## **What is a Patient Research Ambassador?**

The Patient Research Ambassador Initiative (PRAI) is an NIHR scheme to promote the role of lay people (volunteers) involved in research.

A Patient Research Ambassador could be a patient, service user, carer or lay person who is enthusiastic about health research and willing to communicate that to patients and the public as well as healthcare professionals.

Many patients and carers are already involved in research activities. They may not think of themselves as being 'Patient Research Ambassadors', but they are all part of the wider community of people who are helping to improve research. Sometimes the Patient Research Ambassador role can be an extension or natural development of the way in which lay volunteers are involved already.

As a Patient Research Ambassador you can help ensure that people using local NHS care have the best opportunities and choices about taking part in research studies.

The Patient Research Ambassador role is a valued and recognised opportunity for lay people to contribute to the NHS. There are opportunities to meet other like-minded people who are Patient Research Ambassadors as part of a local or national network, and to access research training and support.

# What does being a Patient Research Ambassador involve?

You can help the NHS to become more research aware and research active. A wide range of opportunities exist for lay involvement within our research services, for example:

## **Raising awareness of research to patients and the public, and increase understanding of research in the NHS**

- Helping NHS organisations to improve public access to information about research that is taking place locally
- Contributing to the development of communications about research e.g. websites, posters and leaflets
- Becoming a lay member of a local Research & Development Committee

## **Promoting research events and themed days**

- Getting involved locally to support national research initiatives
- Organising events to promote research during national health campaigns e.g. National Diabetes Day

## **Talking to others and sharing your views and experience**

- Sharing your views about research at local NHS events to highlight the importance of research for patients and its value within the NHS
- Talking to other members of the public about research e.g. to patient groups, charities or societies.

## **Understanding and improving the experience of patients taking part in research**

- Supporting the NHS to capture patient experience by asking patients to take part in local patient experience surveys at an NHS organisation.

## **Promoting research to patients**

- Supporting specialist teams by becoming a lay research champion e.g. for Dementia, Cancer or Diabetes

# What skills do I need to be a Patient Research Ambassador?

Patient Research Ambassadors come from all walks of life and all age groups. People have varying skills, but individuals typically have:

- A strong interest in research and improving the health and wellbeing of patients and their carers
- Good communication skills
- The ability to be well organised, to use their own initiative and to problem solve if required
- A friendly and approachable personality

## **What's the time commitment?**

Patient Research Ambassadors are generally part-time, perhaps giving two or three hours a month. Others may accept regular weekly commitments. It's down to negotiation and reconciling the Patient Research Ambassador's interests with the needs of the NHS care organisation they are involved in.



# Register your interest for updates and opportunities with the Patient Research Ambassador Initiative

**Register your interest online at [goo.gl/M0qiYk](https://goo.gl/M0qiYk) or complete the form below**

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms etc) .....

First name .....

Last name .....

Email address .....

Postal address .....

Postcode .....

Home telephone number .....

Mobile telephone number .....

Which of these best describes you (please tick your answer)

Patient

Carer

Service user

Member of the public

If you are interested in a particular area of health research or a specific disease area e.g. diabetes, mental health, please let us know

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Please tell us a little about your experience and why you're interested

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I give my consent for the NIHR to keep my details on a database

**Please tear off and return your completed form to:**

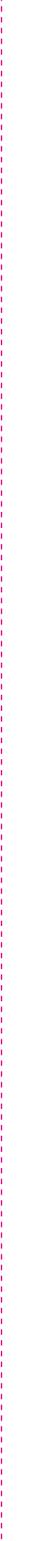
Clinical Research Network Kent, Surrey and Sussex

6 The Courtyard

Campus Way

Gillingham

Kent, ME8 0NZ





## National advice

The main national source of information about patients and the public becoming involved in research is from INVOLVE, <http://www.invo.org.uk>. INVOLVE is funded by the NIHR to support public involvement in NHS, public and social care research. Browse INVOLVE resources <http://www.invo.org.uk/resource-centre/> to find a comprehensive library of advice and information.

For more information about getting involved in research in Kent, Surrey and Sussex, contact the PPIE team, Dr Mark Hayward, Julia Simister, Margaret Hall at [crnkentsurreysussex@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:crnkentsurreysussex@nihr.ac.uk).

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