

Coventry HDRC

Three years of Progress and Collaboration



Celebrating success

Now that we have reached our four-year milestone, it is the perfect time to reflect on our achievements since 2024 and look ahead to an exciting year.

In October 2022, we were among the first 10 local authorities to receive Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Fast-forward to today, and we've built a team of dedicated individuals to drive the work of the Coventry HDRC forward alongside colleagues from Coventry City Council, Coventry University, University of Warwick, University College London, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust (UHCW), key Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE), and public representatives.

"The aim of the Coventry HDRC is to use research to address the unfair differences in health in Coventry. This year we have demonstrated strong progress towards this by continuing to broker and build strong relationships between the Council and our universities. We are developing meaningful and trusted relationships with our communities and shifting towards a more research-focussed culture within the Council."



Valerie De Souza,
Director of Coventry Health Determinants Research Collaboration

Drivers and priorities

The Coventry HDRC's priorities for research into the wider determinants of health align with the Marmot City Principles and the One Coventry priorities. These include the best start in life, the local economy, employment and skills, digital inclusion, housing and homelessness, and more. We will also explore other research opportunities and emerging priorities as they arise.





Our progress so far

Data and Governance

- Launched the Research Governance Framework, which applies to projects researching the wider determinants of health
- Recruited and established a Research Ethics Panel to review research projects. Membership includes members of the Council's employee networks, members of the Public Voice Group and representatives from Coventry University, University of Warwick, and UHCW
- Developing a Data Catalogue that aligns with the Council's new Data Strategy. Topics include air quality, digital inclusion, housing and homelessness, employment and skills, early years, and young people

Training and Skills

- Launched a new online course about the building blocks of health, available to all Council staff and up to 1000 local people through a new online platform
- Provided one-to-one support for people to apply research in their everyday work, and for Coventry residents to become trained community researchers
- Increased uptake and engagement across our training offer. We had 200 total attendances in our monthly "So What?" journal club, 600 attendances at our regular webinars, six colleagues who started a masters-level research course, and more





Public Involvement

- The Public Voice Group (PVG) has placed Coventry residents at the heart of the Coventry HDRC, with growing membership and increased involvement in research activity
- The Voluntary Sector Reference Group (VSRG) has expanded to include eight local voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) collaborators
- A second intern from the Warwick Institute of Engagement was hosted and interviewed Public Voice Group members after the group's first year

Evaluation

- Led a group of ten HDRCs to publish an article about our findings and learning from evaluating the early phase of HDRCs. This was published in the journal Health Research Policy and Systems
- So far, we have carried out surveys with over 300 people, over 50 interviews and focus groups, and looked at key documents and meetings to understand our progress and make improvements
- Our findings share the successes, challenges, and opportunities for HDRCs as new, innovative, and ambitious research collaborations

Impact and Implementation

- Delivered evidence reviews, mixer events, research partnership building, policy and service evaluation, and scoped research opportunities in priority areas
- Recruited three Research Ambassadors within the Council (with five more planned for autumn 2025) and developed eight voluntary sector ambassador roles supported by research capacity building grants
- Established a University Secondment Scheme placing embedded researchers from the University of Warwick and Coventry University in Council teams, and supporting research design and funding applications focused on wider determinants of health

Communications

- Focused our communications at council staff, elected members, local universities, students, community groups and residents, both internally and externally. This has increased engagement and awareness of how research and evidence can have a positive impact on local communities through community action and evidence-based Council services
- Have continuously produced a monthly newsletter, sharing updates, insights, and research reports for our subscribers
- Are expanding our library of case studies to showcase continuous impact



Looking forward to our fourth year

As we approach our fourth year, we are excited to build on our successes and continually evaluate our work to maximise the potential of Coventry HDRC. During this period, we will continue to collaborate, emphasising the use of sustainable research structures that address the wider determinants of health in Coventry, while also creating a positive research culture. These findings will help us to improve the health of Coventry residents and contribute to greater equity in their lives.

How can Coventry HDRC collaborate with you?

- Increase your research knowledge and skills
- Guide you in using research evidence to make better-informed decisions
- Support you in thinking in new ways about your area of work and encourage you to see things from a different perspective
- Advise you on how to develop public involvement in your research
- Work with you to design, develop, conduct and learn from research and evaluation
- Assist you in applying for research funding into the wider determinants of health

Gain insight into our projects

Health and Homelessness in Coventry

The Coventry HDRC has facilitated a secondment between the Warwick Medical School and the Council's housing and homelessness team, involving Associate Professor Jenny Harlock. Over a one-year period, Jenny conducts desktop research to analyse existing national and local data, and engages with stakeholders from the health, housing, social care, and voluntary and community sectors. She also engages with individuals with lived experience of homelessness in Coventry, to identify key health challenges and the barriers and enablers to improving the health of homeless people in Coventry.

Council Research Ambassadors

The Coventry HDRC has funded three Council Research Ambassadors. There have already been early benefits, such as building networks and collaborations with universities, communities and businesses. Cross-sector connections have been strengthened with the transport, housing and homelessness, green energy and culture sectors. Ambassadors have developed their knowledge and skills, and gained confidence in research, evaluation and innovation. Funding opportunities have been secured, such as bids from Horizon Europe and the National Lottery, and evidence has been embedded into services by improving data quality, evaluation and service design.

Data Catalogue

The Coventry HDRC is creating a Council Data Catalogue to bring together accessible data in one central location. So far, this has been piloted by the children's services, digital inclusion, employment and skills, air quality, and housing and homelessness teams. The Coventry HDRC Data Catalogue is intended to support the Council's goal of making better use of its data. We are currently working with the new Planning and Performance Directorate to identify the council's priority areas in which to continue this work and build on the data that has already been collected.

Year 1

- Funding received 1 October 2022
- Established a team
- Established a work pattern
- Conducted a Council wide training needs assessment



Year 2

Infrastructure being built:

- Ethics review processes
- Governance processes
- Evaluation framework
- Developing training
- Communication and engagement
- Initial research priorities



Year 3

- Knowledge mobilisation of existing research and funding opportunities
- Identification of possible research questions and areas of interest
- Recruited Research Ambassadors
- Coproduced research with communities
- Developed research projects
- Implemented research governance processes
- Secured external funding for research applications



Year 4

- Establishing wider communities of practice in key areas
- Utilising research fellows and research evidence to improve practice
- External funding for research projects and applications
- Improve the use of council data for research and evidence
- Scale up research ambassadors in the Council and VCSEs
- Develop routes to impact from research and evidence

Year 5

- Culture change within Local Authority
- Externally funded research studies
- Evidence impacting decisions



Long-term

- Evidence-driven approach to tackling wider determinants of health
- Use of research evidence to improve services and address health inequalities
- Further development of HDRC concept/infrastructure



The Coventry Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC), hosted by Coventry City Council, is part of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The Coventry HDRC is a collaboration between Coventry University, the University of Warwick, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, University College London's Institute of Health Equity, Coventry City Council, and those working, studying or living in Coventry.



If you would like to find out how you can get involved with the Coventry HDRC, please email us at:
CoventryHDRC@coventry.gov.uk

Visit our website
Coventry.gov.uk/HDRC



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 newsletter

