

# Research-ready communities: Brighton & Hove



Research  
Engagement  
Network

NIHR

Research Delivery  
Network



The Hangleton  
& Knoll Project  
Working for a better community



Trust for  
Developing  
Communities

healthwatch  
Brighton and Hove

## Residents leading research

Local people are the experts in their own lives and communities. When they lead research, it's grounded in their experience and relevant to their needs.

In collaboration with local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, the Sussex Research Engagement Network (REN) aims to increase diversity, inclusion, and participation in health and care research.

As a partnership, we have been supporting residents to get involved in research, ask the right questions, and gather the answers that matter to them. There is now a network of local community researchers who have gained the skills and confidence to run their own projects and reach out to others in their area who are often overlooked.

## Gaining deeper insights from resident research

With the help of our local partners, the Public Health Intelligence Team delivered workshops to gain a better understanding of what communities need to design and carry out local research.

Over two workshops, 13 community researchers from across the city designed insightful research questions from the **Health Counts 2024 survey**, identifying key topics relevant to their communities.

As a group, they also explored methods of presenting findings, delivering group presentations, and collaboratively deciding on strategies for sharing the results.



**Community researchers at the Sussex Research Engagement Network (REN) workshop**



## Research questions and results

The two groups of community researchers developed the following primary research questions in relation to data within the Health Counts survey:

- How does community cohesion relate to the mental health of residents in the East and Central areas of Brighton and Hove?
- How does social connectivity relate to emotional wellbeing in Brighton & Hove residents, specifically in the West of Brighton and Hove?

The results for the research questions showed that in both West, East and Central areas of Brighton & Hove, stronger community cohesion is shown to be associated with higher happiness. The results also identified groups with higher or lower community cohesion and happiness scores.

Further steps identified to develop this work included sharing insights with their communities and the Health Forums, informing commissioning decisions and supporting future community research funding bids.

“I was so happy to talk about our community and loved the passion and commitment from everyone there.”

**Community researcher,  
Research Engagement  
Network (REN)**

## Impact

After the workshops, community researchers reported a large increase in confidence and understanding of how to develop a research question, how to analyse data and different ways to present findings. Nearly all the community researchers were intending to apply what they learnt to future research projects.

## Next steps

The community researchers will be feeding back the results to the local health forums. The Public Health Intelligence and Research team will continue to provide updates on available funding opportunities to our health forums, as well as considering further areas of research as suggested by the community researchers.