

CUMBERLAND HDRC

NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC)
Cumberland is part of the NIHR and hosted by Cumberland
Council.

ABOUT US

The Cumberland Council's Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) is a five-year project funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). Our main goal is to boost research within the council and support efforts in Cumberland to tackle health inequalities and the broader factors that affect health. As part of this, we have put together a Cumberland Council Research Plan. This plan will help the council focus on the most important research priorities, working together as an organisation and with the community.

WHY DO WE NEED A HDRC IN CUMBERLAND?

- 14 local areas fall within the most deprived and marginalised areas in England
- More than half of Cumberland's residents live in a rural area, more than double the average for England
- Cumberland has a population that is ageing and declining
- Rates of 'deaths from drug misuse' are double the national average
- Rates of 'hospital admissions as a result of self-harm in people aged 10-24 years' are much higher than England and rates of 'hospital admissions for mental health conditions for under 18 years' are also much higher.
- Suicide is a significant cause of death in Cumberland and above national averages
- Pupils in Cumberland consistently perform below their national peers throughout school from the Early Years Foundation stage (3-5 years) to Key Stage 4 (14-16 years).
- 21.0% of children (0-15 years) are living in poverty, this is higher than the England average
- The proportion of Cared for Children is significantly higher than the average across England
- The proportion of children on Child Protection Plans is above both the national and North West averages.

WHY WE'RE HERE

Cumberland Council's vision is to put health and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do and we're here to increase research capacity within the council and conduct research with our communities about health inequalities.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We are here to connect with Cumberland's communities, learn from each other and grow research culture at Cumberland Council to inform policy.

CUMBERLAND HDRC

Our mission

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT US

Cumberland HDRC is independently funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) and hosted by Cumberland Council.

OUR VALUES

It's simple. What we value most is **YOU**

- We value your lived experience
- We value your contributions
- We value the work that you do
- We value your skills
- We value your support

OUR STANDARDS

With everything we do, we will be:

- Creative
- Accessible
- Transparent
- A shared resource
- Accountable
- Applying anti-oppressive principles
- Reflective

OUR COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

- To empower our communities through providing support and training, and providing opportunities for you to be involved in research.
- Become more trauma informed as a team by undergoing relevant training by the end of this year.

OUR OBJECTIVES



A new council, embedding research from the start

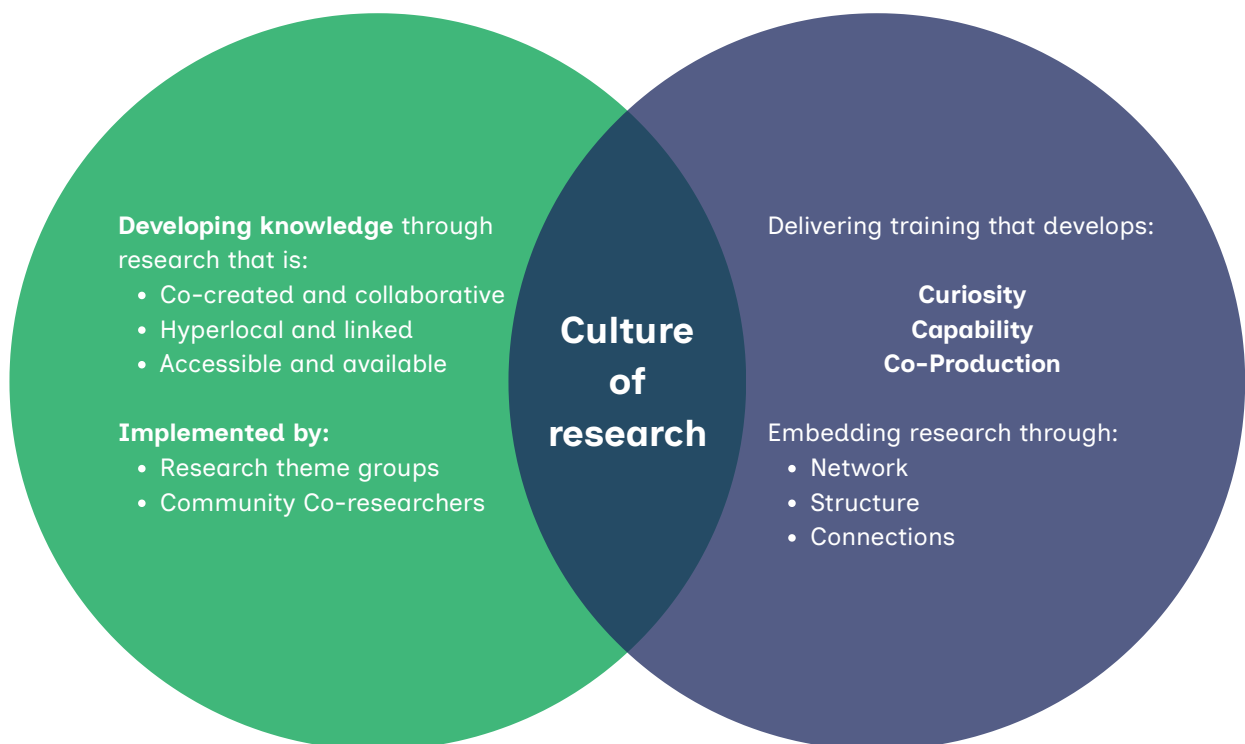
Cumberland Council's vision is to put health and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do.

The HDRC's aim is to inform all policy and practice decisions with evidence.

We will achieve this by increasing the research infrastructure and capability within the Council and by conducting research with our communities about health inequalities.

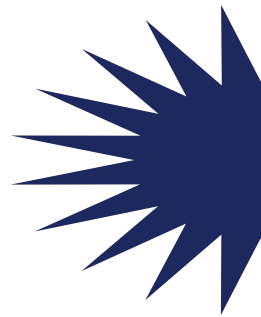


What research culture looks like



NIHR investment in HDRCs will help create an evidence-informed culture, also known as research culture, within local government. It enables researchers and local authorities to collaborate and use evidence when it comes to making decisions. This approach helps improve health and means better outcomes for the public.

OUR RESEARCH PLAN

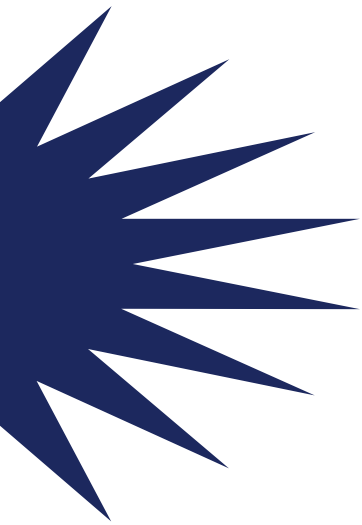


Our research plan will help Cumberland Council and partners gather information about how to improve everyone's health by understanding what causes good and poor health. The plan supports the Council's vision for everyone to have good health and wellbeing and to provide excellent public services. The research plan will be delivered in line with the Cumberland Approach.

We spoke with 107 people including community groups, council staff, elected members, and experts. They shared 211 different questions and gaps in knowledge.

These were organized by factors that affect health, and then grouped into larger research areas, removing any repeated questions.

We ranked the research areas using a priority scoring system alongside Council data to decide what the most pressing priorities for Cumberland are.

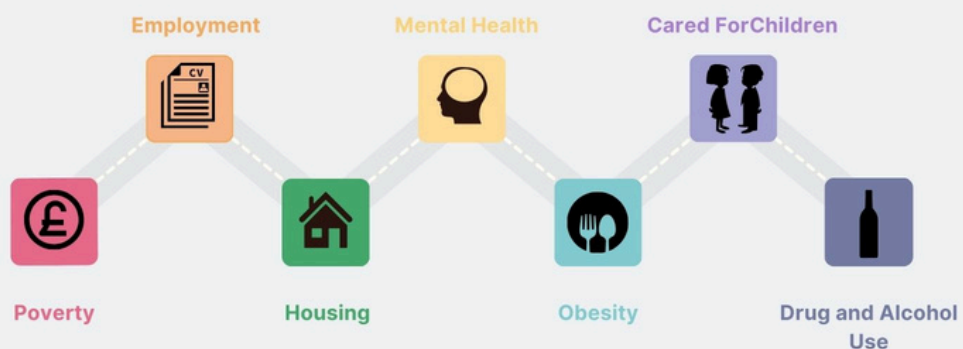


NIHR | Health Determinants
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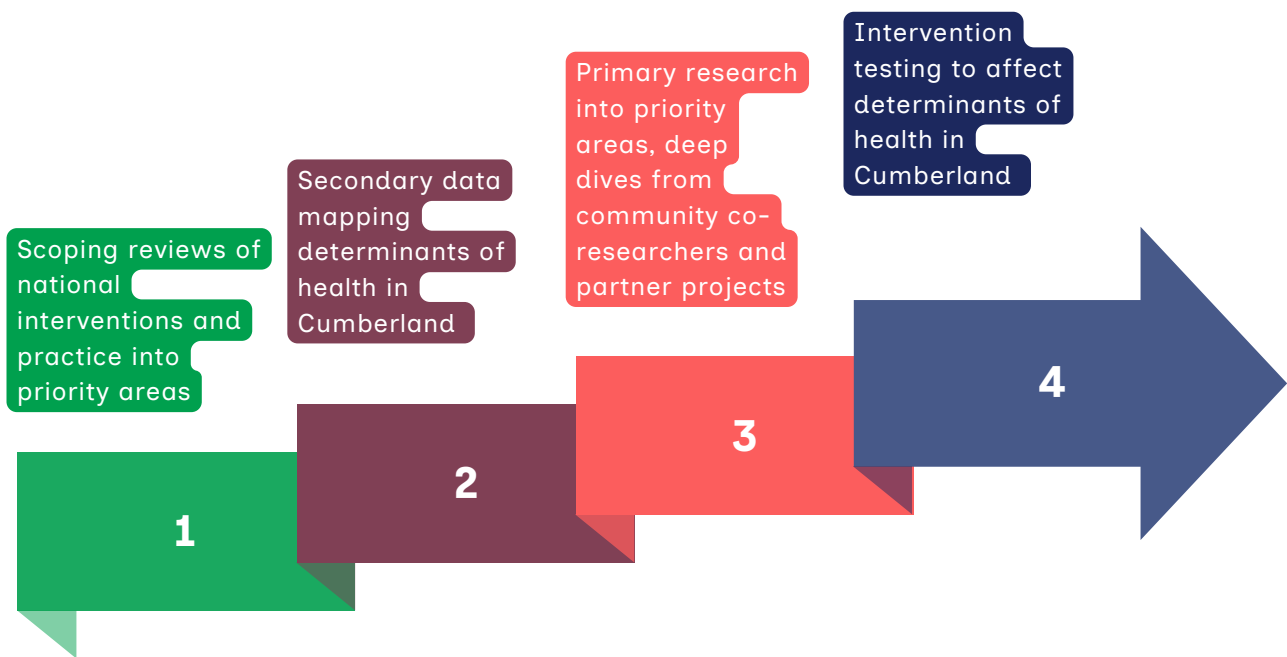


Cumberland HDRC Research Priorities

Our seven research priorities - across the lifespan



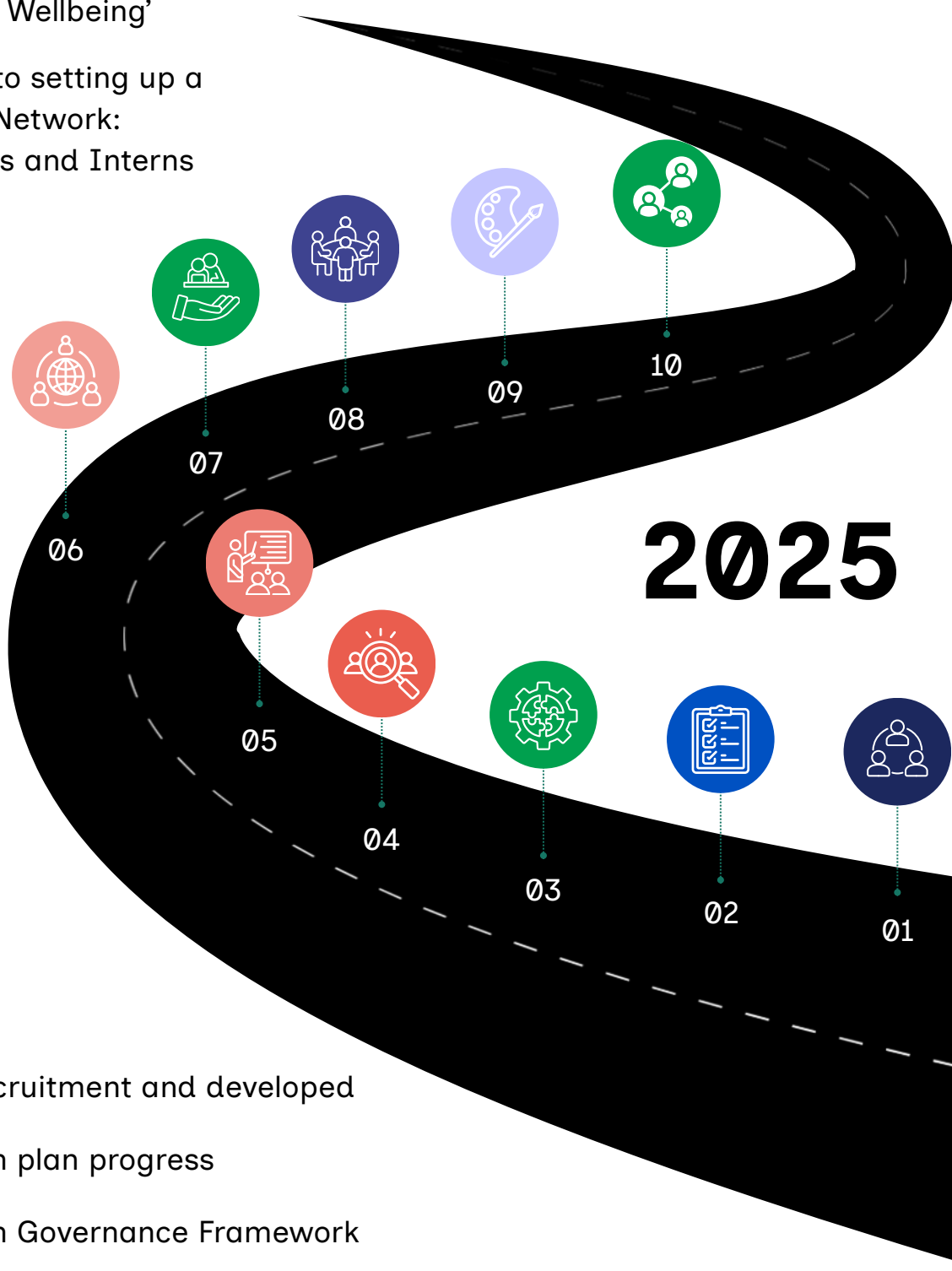
Our Research Plan in Action



In 2025, we carried out scoping reviews of national interventions and practice across priority areas, as well as secondary data mapping to understand the determinants of health in Cumberland. [Scoping reviews \(Cumbria Intelligence Observatory\)](#)

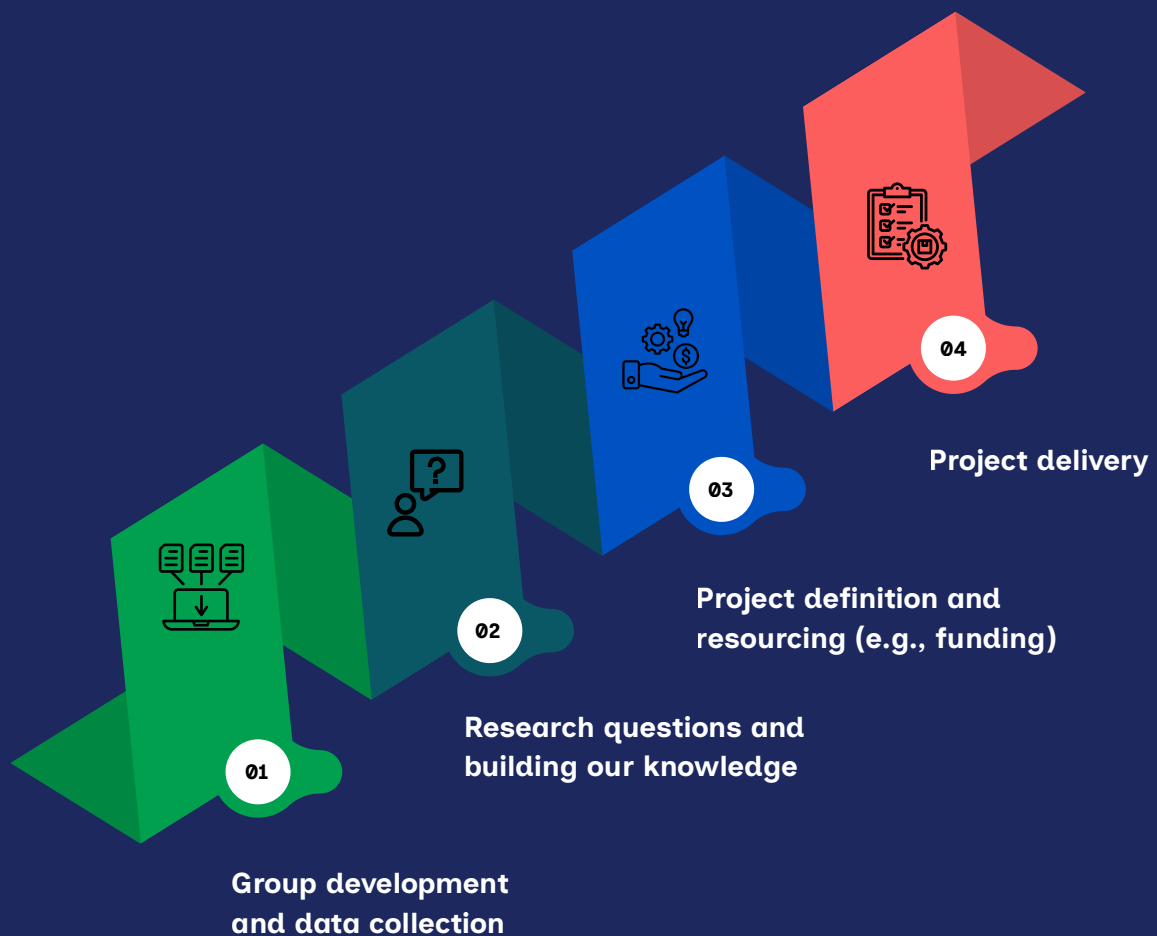
Building on these foundations, in 2026 we will begin primary research, including deep-dive studies led by our community co-researchers and partner organisations. This will be followed by intervention testing, designed to positively influence the determinants of health in Cumberland, ensuring that evidence directly informs meaningful action.

- 06 Growing network
- 07 Supported research projects
- 08 Research groups establishment and plans for 2026
- 09 Community engagement project 'The Art of Wellbeing'
- 10 First step to setting up a Research Network: MRes, Reps and Interns



- 01 Team recruitment and developed
- 02 Research plan progress
- 03 Research Governance Framework
- 04 CCR recruitment and plan
- 05 Training programme delivered to 137 participants

Our Research Groups



Research theme groups have been established with University of Cumbria, bringing together expertise from the council, academia and our community to develop research questions, plans, and apply for funding to tackle the determinants of health.

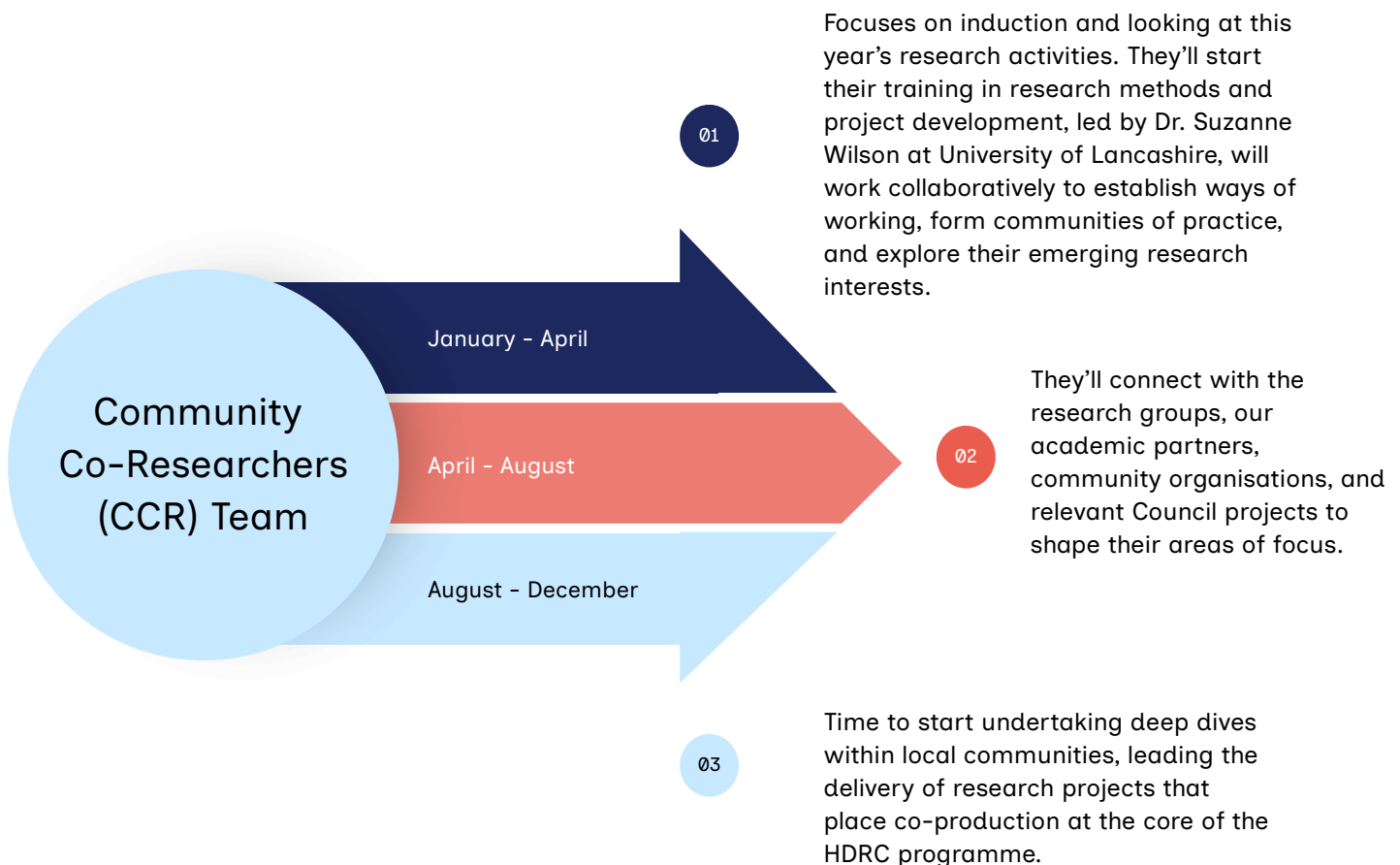
Our groups:

- Education and Employment
- Mental Health, Neurodiversity and Substance Use
- Poverty, Housing, Obesity and Food Insecurity
- Social Care

COMMUNITY CO RESEARCHERS

Our community co-researchers are taking the lead in research, focusing on tackling health inequalities in their communities. They'll be supported to develop their research skills and play a key role in Cumberland's HDRC, co-producing research priorities and co-designing and delivering research projects that are relevant and meaningful for communities.

What matters most to us is lived experience and co-production from the start



Community Co-researchers training and research project development

Community engagement activities co-created by CCR team

New HDRC training programme 'Turn research into action' with Curiosity, Capability, Co-Production and Champion

2026

Launching our research group launch and programme

Developing our Evidence Hub

Research connections: Placements and Dissertations

Launching Cumberland Council Research Network

About Our Training Programme



If you work for Cumberland Council you can find us in the iLearn directory



The HDRC training programme **Turn Research Into Action** is a series of practical sessions designed to help you to feel more confident finding and using research to enhance your work, capture what you already know and share what works (and what doesn't) and to make and support your decisions.

No research background necessary, this is about building on the skills you use every day like asking good questions, gathering insights, learning from what's already out there and turning this into impactful outcomes. At its core, research covers collecting existing and first hand information, and using this to create stronger ways of working. By honing these skills this ensures credible data use, reduces risks, and strengthens collaboration, creating a council that thrives and delivers sustainable outcomes.

Open to all Cumberland Council staff, elected members, and community. Available for booking now on iLearn for Cumberland Council staff and Eventbrite for third sector organisations.

Bespoke training can be delivered. Contact Training Office Jae-Llane Ditchburn at jae-llane.ditchburn@cumberland.gov.uk for more information.

If you work for a community organisation, you can find us on Eventbrite



Our training programme combines short, practical sessions across four areas:



1. Curiosity: finding the 'who' and 'what'

Asking better questions, seeing the bigger picture and thinking differently.

Sessions:

- Ask, Explore, Connect
- Mapping Your Research Journey: Imagine, Discover, Create
- Blueprint of Curiosity: Theory of Change

2. Capability: your guide to the 'how'

Build on your experience and everyday skills to hone them into practical research skills and knowledge you can apply to your day to day role. Build confidence in finding and using data and explore new ways to measure and improve.

Sessions:

- Numbers, Stories and Insights: That's Data, That's Evidence
- Evaluation: Measuring and Improving

3. Co-Production: working together to build a culture of participation

Finding different and creative ways to work together for the best outcomes. Gain a deeper understanding of health determinants, and how your work can influence health and contribute to reducing inequalities.

Sessions:

- The Co-Production Journey
- The Health Equation: Understanding Drivers and Disparities

4. Champion: take the lead

Curious, capable, now take the lead and build your confidence. Plan the key stages of a research project, identify common challenges that arise in research and apply practical strategies to address them.

Sessions:

- Leading Research: Pen to Paper to Action
- Pathways to Impact: Delivering Research

More information about Cumberland HDRC

The NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Cumberland is part of the NIHR and hosted by Cumberland Council. In January 2024, Cumberland Council was awarded £5 million by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to become a 'Health Determinants Research Collaboration' (HDRC).

The NIHR funds, enables and delivers world-leading health and social care research that improves people's health and wellbeing and promotes economic growth.

NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborations enable local authorities to become more research-active, embedding a culture of evidence-based decision making. The NIHR has awarded £150 million to 30 HDRCs across the UK, to provide the capacity and capability for local authorities to undertake public health research to address the wider determinants of health and health inequalities.

This major investment is central to NIHR's offer to local government, providing infrastructure to enable local authorities to become more research active.

How we are governed:

- Our Oversight Board comprised of community partners ensures we are working strategically and delivering our plans on time and to budget
- Our Community Advisory Panel ensures we are appropriately involving communities in the work of the HDRC
- Academic Partnership Meetings ensure we maximise the benefits of these partnerships
- Operational team meetings ensure our work plans are delivered and issues are resolved easily.

Our partners



University of
Lancashire



University of
CUMBRIA



Cumberland
Council

healthwatch
Cumberland

The Cumberland HDRC team

Research and Innovation Manager

Mike Siddall

Research Officer

Dan Gibbons

Research Officer

Ted Roberts

Training Officer

Jae-Llane Ditchburn

Communications and Engagement Officer

Samantha Carberry

Research and Communities Project Officer

Lianna Barrie

Data Analyst

Peter Kelly

Data Technician

Oliver Tait

Administrator

Kristine Zepa

**In partnership
with**



**University of
Lancashire**



healthwatch
Cumberland



**CUMBERLAND
HDRC**

www.cumberland.gov.uk/hdrc

Read our full research plan:

<https://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/health-determinants-research-collaboration-hdrc/>

Contact us at hdrc@cumberland.gov.uk

Find us on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn:

<https://www.facebook.com/CumberlandHDRC/>

<https://www.instagram.com/cumberlandhdrc/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/cumberland-hdrc/>