**Health and Care Research in the County of Hertfordshire and across the Eastern Region – summary presentation by Professor Wendy Wills\***

Wendy explained how the Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) is aiming to improve the health and care of the public and patients.

The purpose is to improve outcomes, access and experiences of the public by:

* Improving the quality, delivery and efficiency of health and care services
* Increasing the sustainability of health and care systems both locally and nationally

ARCs act as a collaborative and support and facilitate research and increase the rate at which research evidence is implemented into practice to deliver a step change in impact.

For the East of England it was a five year collaboration which amongst others includes Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, four Universities in the region including the **University of Hertfordshire**, the Eastern Academic Science Network plus other Trusts, local authorities, charities and partners. There are 25 formal partner organisation and she explained how the power of the network and the collaboration means that they can do more and better together. The ARC has had its funding extended, until March 2026.

In summarising the research for 2022/23 for the East of England Wendy provided some context and supporting data:

* £10m + awarded in research grants
* £1m + from co-funded partners
* 90 plus ongoing research projects
* 65 published papers in peer reviewed journals
* 122 collaborating organisations
* 13 links with industry
* 94 funded people across the East of England ARC

Wendy then talked about her work with the University of Hertfordshire where she is Director of the Centre for Research inPublic Health and Community Care. This is a multidisciplinary research centre focused on producing research that makes a difference to people’s lives by improving the quality of health and social care services and promoting health and wellbeing.

Key areas for her Centre’s research falls into three programmes:

* Communities, Young People and Family Lives
* Place-based Ageing
* Patient Experience and Public Involvement

There are currently 23 research projects underway in Hertfordshire led by the ARC – with 57% focussed in Stevenage. (one of the populations in focus)

25% of projects for the ARC in the East of England are being led by the University of Hertfordshire.

She provided headlines and examples from a range of projects which included:

* Covid research with people with a learning disability and black African and Caribbean communities in Watford
* Household experiences of food poverty (in partnership with HCC)
* Social care research and
* Projects around dementia

**Public Involvement**

She talked about a good example of public involvement – The Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group and the creation of a dementia friendly activities publication led by Stevenage Borough Council. She highlighted the importance of driving service improvements through experience, creating outputs and not merely having a conversation.

She then moved on to public involvement and how people can get involved in driving research.

The University of Hertfordshire has a well-established Public Involvement in Research Group which enables patients and the public, academics and health care services to work together, co-design and produce excellent research. The group covers age, ethnicity as well as roles and organisations.

More information about the group can be obtained by contacting Julia Jones [j.jones26@herts.ac.uk](mailto:j.jones26@herts.ac.uk)

There is also a Young People’s Research and Advisory Group based at the University of Hertfordshire for young people from 8 – 18 years of age.

The group meet roughly every two months to learn about research and work with researchers working in children and young people’s health, care, family lives and communities. Children and young people are involved from the outset.

For information contact Louca-Mai Brady [l.m.brady@herts.ac.uk](mailto:l.m.brady@herts.ac.uk)

**The Social Care Advisory group:**

Set up in 2022 to support growing number of social care research. This research advisory group includes people who:

* Have experience of using social care services (either directly or for a family member or friend)
* Have experience of doing or taking part in research in social care
* Are disabled people with long term health conditions and impairments, including people with learning disabilities

Further information and contacts: <https://scriptstudy.org/public-involvement-in-social-care-research-pi-soc-group/>

She concluded by saying ‘tea and cake are important but it’s more about demonstrating what happened’.

Note: \* Professor Wills is Director of the National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration (NIHR ARC) East of England, Professor in Food and Public Health and the Director of the Centre for Research in Public Health and Community Care (CRIPACC), University of Hertfordshire