

Local Authority Public Health Research Network (London and Essex)

Terms of Reference

Date: Reviewed November 2024 with input from members

The Local Authority Public Health Research Network (London & Essex) was established by NIHR ARC North Thames in 2021, to identify, share, support and progress opportunities for generating robust academic research in local authority settings. It is open to anybody with an interest in this area and has a mailing list of over 100 from local authorities, regional government and higher education institutions, across London and Essex. Partners include colleagues from NIHR ARC North Thames (providing secretariat), ARCs across London, Regional UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health improvement and Disparities, local authorities, Association of Directors of Public Health London, NHS and academics across London and Essex, Public health registrars.

Central to the work is the importance of developing research within Local authorities with the PH/LA nexus at the heart of the network.

In 2023 a LAPHRN Steering and Oversight Alliance of senior London leaders was established to provide oversight and steer to the LAPHR network to create the conditions in which the network is able to create its priorities and to provide broader steer and support on the strategic direction of applied research in Local authorities for London as an alliance of London partners. The Alliance is centred around a shared goal of developing London and Essex as a robust and thriving research system and supporting LAs to work in collaboration with HEIS to develop a research culture within LAs. The Alliance- which is chaired by the ADPH research lead- has its own Terms of Reference and meets quarterly.

Purpose / role:

The role of the network is to:

- Identify, share, support and progress opportunities for generating robust academic research in LA settings across the region and nationally.
- Provide a platform for sharing findings, assisting local areas in the development of their research that directly addresses local government and London/Essex public health priorities.
- Support the development of research skills
- Enable collaboration on research grant applications with the longer-term goal of improving the wider determinants of health at regional level and beyond, see appendix 1 for examples.
- Support potential for facilitating selection of one or two key themes per year as a focus of Public Health Research in Local Authorities for London and Essex and to support driving the agenda forward in line with direction from the Steering and Oversight Alliance.

- Provide infrastructure to support the organisation of face to face events to further collaboration and partnership in this space

Membership:

- The network is open to anybody with an interest in this area, including NHS partners.
- It might be particularly useful for:
 - Local authority staff with an interest in public health research
 - Academics with local government service role/interest
 - Public health registrars in a local government role and/or interested to conduct local government research
 - Regional colleagues supporting academia within the local authority
- There are no restrictions on numbers or duration of membership.
- Fulfilment of key roles, e.g. chairs, subtheme leads, will be limited to three years, with the possibility of renewal.
- Resident/public involvement will be through liaison with standing resident/lay advisory panels, e.g. ARC North Thames Research Advisory Panel.

Working methods / ways of working: see appendix 1.

Meetings

- Meetings will be held remotely approximately 4-6 times a year, with core business within 60 minutes and a further 30 minutes for deep dive topics (either as a single topic or split into smaller groups). The agenda will include standing items (e.g. conference/abstract deadlines, new funding calls, studies seeking participation), skills development opportunities and specific topic (e.g. mental health, dementia) and AOB.
- Any member is encouraged to propose agenda items, which should be emailed to dahr.laphrn@ucl.ac.uk at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date. Documents will be circulated a week prior to the meeting.
- Hosting/organisation of meetings will rotate between different local authority members, depending on the meeting topic.
- Operational leadership for the network is provided by subregional leads in London for North West London (Billy Hopkins), North East London (Sedina Lewis), a regional lead for Essex (Jyotsna Srinath), a research lead (Jessica Sheringham) and an academic lead (Aradhna Kaushal).
- Lead roles are for 2 years in the first instance.
- Additional lead positions will be added for other regions when appointed.
- Kim Airey and Sharlene Mutyasira (ARC North Thames) will provide secretariat and support for the group.
- Non-members be invited to meetings to present/discuss topics of interest.

Links to wider networks

- The chairs of the network will represent London at the National Network of Regional Public Health Hubs of Engagement (PHERN) hosted by the East of England Population Health Research Pub and report back to the network.



- The chairs will also represent the network at the London Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Advisory Board and will act as an intermediary between the two networks ensuring that learning is aligned.

Sharing of information and resources (including confidential materials) for example

- Communication between meetings will be by email to provide opportunities for timely updates on research funding calls and projects.
- There will be an open, static web space for the group on via SharePoint accessible for all team members with Microsoft office login details.
- Agendas, slide-sets from presentations, meeting notes will be normally posted on the SharePoint, unless content is confidential, there are copyright issues or otherwise sensitive.

Accountability:

- Individual network members are responsible for reporting back on activities of the network and to their constituent organisations
- Updates to the ARC leads or Management Boards will be by regional or subregional leads or Jessica Sheringham, as appropriate. .

Review: November 2025 *[12 months after agreed with members]*

Definition of terms

- North Thames – covers the population living in inner city, urban and rural communities across parts of London, Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire – a total of 26 boroughs. The geography maps to the area covered by the Academic Health Science Network: <https://uclpartners.com/about-us/where-we-work/>
- NIHR ARCs - Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs) support applied health and care research that responds to, and meets, the needs of local populations and local health and care systems. Funded by National Institute for Health Research:

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/collaborating-in-applied-health-research.htm>

Appendix 1: Proposed network principles and activities

LAPHR- Local Authority Public Health Research Network (London and North Thames)

