



Capacity Building Showcase 2025

NIHR Applied Research Collaboration
Greater Manchester

Foreword

In November 2025, dozens of professionals came together for the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Greater Manchester (ARC-GM) Capacity Building Showcase. This annual event celebrates the remarkable journeys, achievements, and ambitions of colleagues across Greater Manchester who are shaping the future of health and care through research. The 2025 Showcase was the first to be held in-person.

Highlights from the day included:

- An overview of ARC-GM Capacity Building activity since 2020 and an outline of potential future opportunities;
- Internship presentations showcasing the first steps into research of a diverse group of clinical and adult social care professionals;
- Presentations by Pre-doctoral Fellows, offering valuable insights into the research careers of those developing their research potentially towards PhD level;
- Contributions from the ARC-GM Public and Community Involvement and Engagement Panel, Young Person's Advisory Group and Community Connectors, emphasising the importance of involving communities in shaping research;
- Quick-fire presentations from Social Care Research Champions working with ARC-GM who shared their experiences of moving from practice into research.

At the heart of ARC-GM lies a commitment to empowering people - whether they are young people, health and care professionals, social care professionals or researchers - to realise their potential and drive meaningful change. Over the past six years, ARC-GM has supported 127 individuals through internships, fellowships, and advanced research roles, building a vibrant pipeline of talent and fostering a culture where research is accessible, valued, and impactful.

This booklet shares thoughts, experiences and ideas of those professionals and brings together inspiring stories from across the region. This includes health professionals who have taken their first steps into research, Research Champions who are embedding evidence into everyday practice, and members of the public whose voices are shaping research priorities for the future. Their journeys are not always easy. Barriers such as lack of protected time, confidence, and organisational support remain prevalent. But their achievements demonstrate what is possible when opportunity, encouragement, and collaboration come together.

ARC-GM's approach is rooted in partnership. By working with Local Authorities, NHS Trusts and other care providers, universities, and communities, we are creating pathways for people from all backgrounds to engage with research and develop their skills. We are also committed to addressing inequalities, broadening access, and ensuring that research reflects the diversity and needs of our population.

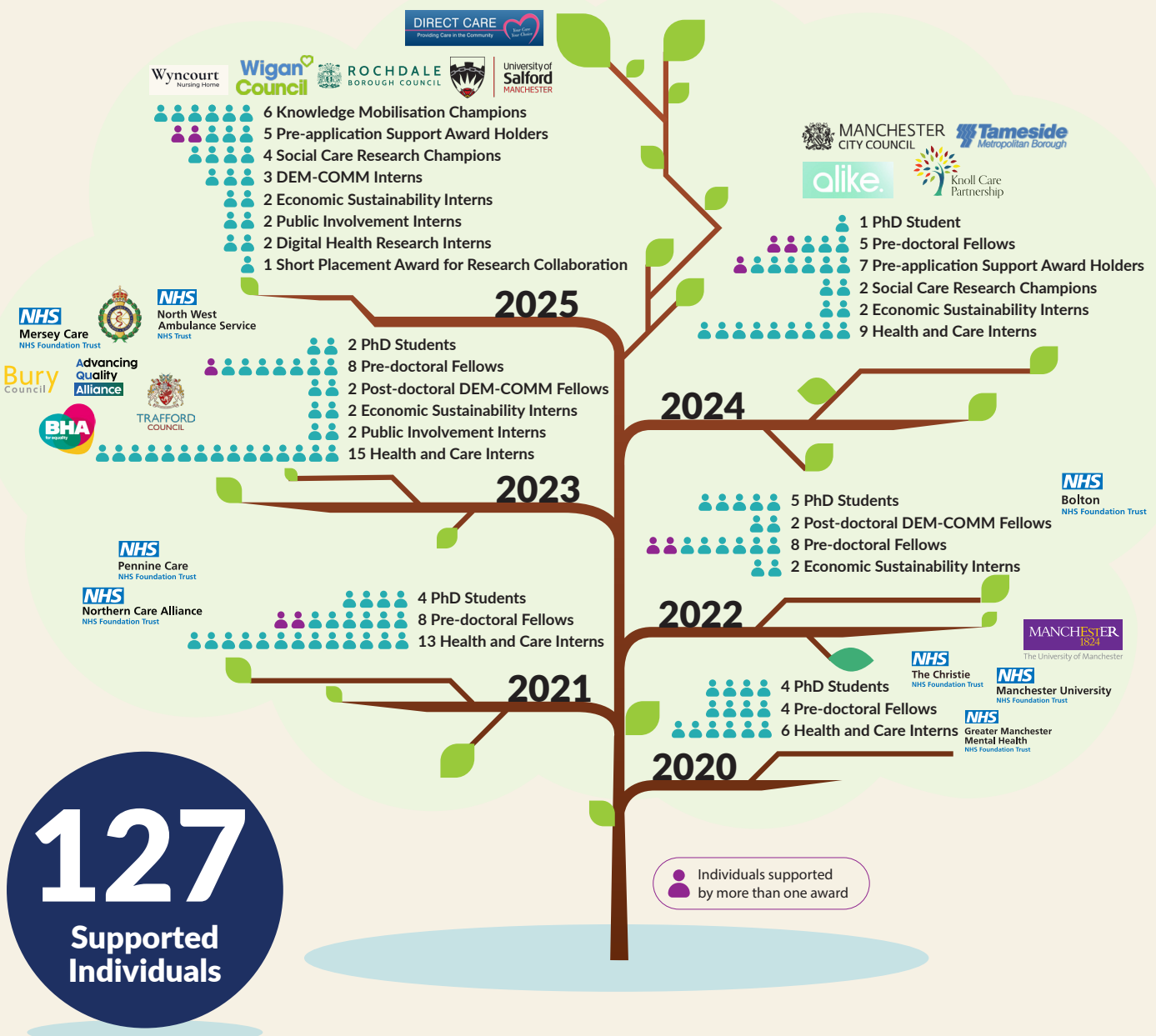
I hope you are as inspired as I am by the passion, resilience, and creativity of our colleagues. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive research community - one that will continue to drive innovation and improve outcomes for everyone in Greater Manchester.

Dr Penny Lewis, Academic Career Development Lead, ARC-GM

Supporting health professionals into research

ARC-GM set out in 2019 to provide opportunities for registered healthcare professionals (except doctors and dentists) to advance their early-stage research careers through a series of Internships and Pre-doctoral Fellowships. In response to the needs of the health and care system, the offer was expanded to include a wider range of staff groups – not only registered healthcare professionals – which led to a broadening of the workforce base we support. Built on the success of these schemes, Capacity Building activity in ARC-GM has grown to support well over one hundred staff working within health and care across all ten Boroughs of Greater Manchester.

ARC-GM Capacity Building: Award Recipients by Year (2020–2025)



Interns

Donna Booth, Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

Donna began developing an interest in caregiver burden and digital health, and through the ARC-GM Internship Programme, she gained theoretical knowledge and practical experience, supported by training in academic writing and networking. Her literature review focused on caregiver burden, using database searches and synthesising evidence to identify research gaps. Donna's work on Virtual Wards highlighted both benefits and challenges, emphasising patient selection, communication, and caregiver involvement. The Internship boosted her confidence, expanded her network, and inspired her to pursue further study, develop local research networks, and support research in her clinical area. Her journey shows how structured research opportunities empower clinicians to drive innovation and improve care through evidence-based practice.

“Taking part in the ARC-GM Internship gave me the confidence and skills to explore caregiver burden and digital health in a meaningful, evidence-based way. The experience broadened my network, deepened my curiosity, and inspired me to champion research and innovation within my clinical practice.”

Loren Whyatt, Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Loren's journey as a research Intern has been shaped by a strong foundation in psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), alongside a passion for integrating research into clinical practice. Through targeted training in both quantitative and qualitative research methods, Loren developed skills in systematic reviewing, using 'Covidence', qualitative interviewing, and participant recruitment. Loren played a key role in a systematic review on depression and anxiety in older adults, creating data extraction templates, screening articles, and building consensus within the research team. Public engagement and regular meetings helped promote research across services. Looking ahead, Loren aims to co-author a publication, support audits, and continue developing research expertise while practicing as a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, demonstrating a commitment to advancing evidence-based care and inspiring others in the field.

“Through the research Internship, I strengthened my skills in both quantitative and qualitative methods, allowing me to meaningfully contribute to a systematic review on depression and anxiety in older adults. The experience fuelled my commitment to evidence-based practice and inspired me to keep integrating research into my work as a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist.”

Sarah Radford, Safeguarding Families Specialist Practitioner, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

Sarah, a Safeguarding Families Specialist Practitioner at Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, became a research Intern to deepen her understanding of research methods and

explore routine enquiry into domestic abuse within mental health services. She undertook a scoping review on cultural competence and routine enquiry, and attended conferences on domestic abuse and suicide, which expanded her professional network and informed her safeguarding practice. Sarah faced challenges such as time constraints, IT system access, and self-doubt about her academic abilities, but benefited from seminars, workshops, and strong peer support. Looking ahead, she plans to pursue a Master's degree related to domestic abuse, continue evidence-based practice, and remain active as a Research Champion, aiming to improve safeguarding across the Trust and contribute to ongoing research and training.

“Becoming a research Intern strengthened my understanding of research methods and deepened my commitment to improving routine enquiry and safeguarding within mental health services. Despite challenges, the experience expanded my confidence, my network, and my drive to champion evidence-based practice and future research on domestic abuse.”

Ahmadreza Karami, Specialist Dietitian, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Ahmadreza's ARC-GM Internship provided dedicated research time, funding for courses and conferences, and the support of an academic supervisor, enabling a smooth transition from student to junior applied health researcher. During the Internship, Ahmadreza benefitted from regular meetings, networking with academic researchers, and participation in writing a systematic review. Study days with the University of Manchester library team and targeted training in qualitative research, data analysis, and tools like Rayyan and EndNote further developed Ahmadreza's research skills. Currently, he is writing a scoping review on nutrition-related health outcomes in Chronic Kidney Disease, collaborating with dietetics colleagues within his Trust and NIHR supervisors. Looking ahead, Ahmadreza plans to conduct qualitative research in Chronic Kidney Disease, apply for funding, and continue working closely with research mentors.

“Through the ARC-GM Internship, I gained the dedicated time, training, and academic support I needed to grow from a student into a confident junior researcher. The experience strengthened my research skills, expanded my professional network, and inspired me to pursue future studies in chronic kidney disease alongside experienced mentors.”

Georgie Wood, Paediatric Metabolic Dietitian, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Georgie's Internship provided a strong foundation in applied research, focusing on inherited metabolic disorders (IMDs). Motivated by the limited evidence base for dietetic interventions, Georgie aimed to enhance knowledge and skills to design future research projects. Key achievements included passing a Master's module in Critical Appraisal and Evidence Synthesis, conducting systematic reviews, contributing to

grant applications, and analysing data for gene therapy trials. Georgie completed an audit, presented at an international conference, and registered a service evaluation on parenteral nutrition in IMDs. Supported by supervision and training, the experience was rewarding yet challenging, helping Georgie build confidence and overcome imposter syndrome. These steps position Georgie to apply for a Pre-doctoral Fellowship and pursue a PhD.

“The Internship was a real turning point for me. Providing dietetic support for people with IMDs made me want to help change the evidence base, but I needed dedicated time to learn more about research. The in-depth teaching and supervision were invaluable, and developing a protocol for my own systematic review and presenting at an international conference was a steep but rewarding learning curve.”

Michelle Krenzler, Psychological Therapist, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

Michelle’s Internship focused on integrating clinical practice with research to enhance patient-centred care and involvement. She attended workshops, engaged in networking, and successfully completed a Research Methods Master’s module. As a Research Champion, Michelle observed Patient and Community Involvement and



Engagement (PCIE) activities and explored equality, diversity, and inclusion in research. Despite barriers such as time constraints and imposter syndrome, facilitators like supervision, peer support, and having realistic expectations helped her progress. Her achievements include securing a Senior Trial Therapist role and planning next steps, such as supporting clinical trials through interviews and data analysis, promoting research within Early Intervention Team services, and considering a service evaluation for publication. This experience strengthened Michelle’s confidence and commitment to shaping clinical guidelines and giving patients a voice through research.

“I wondered if there was a place for me in research alongside my clinical role and how I could give patients a voice. The Internship answered that. Supervision and peer support were invaluable as I overcame imposter syndrome and high expectations. Through workshops, networking, and completing a research module, I’ve grown in confidence and secured a Senior Trial Therapist role - ready to combine clinical care with meaningful research.”

Anna Davies, Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust

Anna, a Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist, focused her Internship on improving inclusion for learning disabled adults in research and healthcare. She completed an advanced qualitative research course at King’s College London,

gaining insight into academic barriers and power structures. Anna collaborated with People First Tameside and Purple Patch Arts to co-produce accessible patient information on cervical screening and explored participatory research models. She attended the Unlocking Speech and Language Therapy in Health and Justice conference, learning about current practices in the criminal justice system. Her work emphasised patient involvement, equality, and meaningful engagement. During the Internship, Anna transitioned to a new role within Mersey Care NHS Trust, expanding her scope to neurodevelopmental conditions and mental health in prisons.

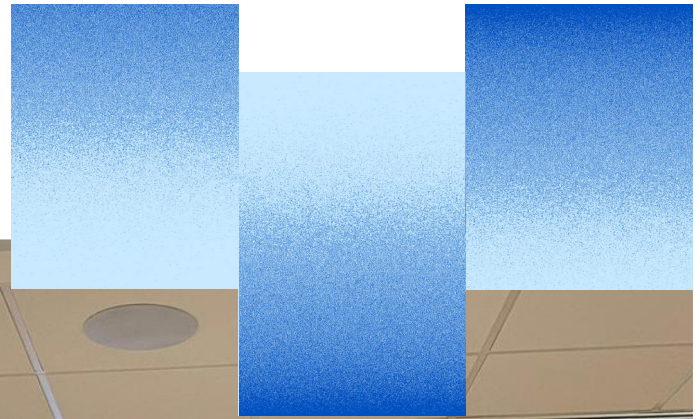
“This Internship challenged me to raise the question of why learning disabled adults aren’t leading the design of services they use. Through workshops with Purple Patch Arts and joining People First Tameside, I explored power structures and co-production. Academic learning and conferences deepened my understanding of systemic barriers. Moving into a prison-based role, I’m committed to ensuring research and service design truly include and empower learning disabled adults.”

**Bini George, Clinical Nurse Specialist Practitioner,
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust**

Bini, a specialist nurse with over 20 years’ experience, undertook an Internship to strengthen research skills and contribute to evidence-based practice. Her focus was a scoping review on improving clinic attendance among people with Hepatitis B in secondary care. She gained experience in

systematic review methodology, data extraction, and appraisal using tools like Rayyan and the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. Bini attended workshops, webinars, and the International Nursing Research Conference, gaining confidence and academic writing skills. She secured dedicated research time, led as a Research Champion, and built strong collaborations across NIHR ARC-GM and Researching Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (REDIC) networks. Her achievements include registering a review protocol, screening over 100 studies, and presenting at NIHR events. Future goals include publishing her review, presenting at RCN 2026, and applying for Pre-doctoral Fellowships.

“I would highly recommend the ARC-GM Internship. It’s an accessible way for anyone to take their first steps into research, learn evidence-based practice, and build networks. The 30 days of protected time allowed me to undertake a scoping review for my clinic, exploring strategies to reduce patient non-attendance. This experience gave me practical skills, a deeper understanding of research methodology, and confidence to improve services through evidence-based projects.”



The Young Person's Advisory Research Group

The Young Person's Advisory Research Group (YPAG) is made up of 20 young people aged 16-24 and was established in July 2022. The group members come from range of communities and backgrounds across Greater Manchester.

The group helps inform our research priorities and realise ARC-GM's ambition of improving the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Greater Manchester through applied research.

Not only have all members of the YPAG contributed to a vast range of ARC-GM projects, but the YPAG initiative itself has helped to build capacity in public and community involvement for applied research in the region.

Meet our young people

Sadia

Sadia's journey with YPAG began at a time of uncertainty, feeling "lost in the world" but driven by curiosity and a desire to connect. Through YPAG, Sadia embraced new ways of working, maximised her skills and built meaningful relationships. Her involvement led to significant opportunities: she now sits on an NIHR funding panel as a reviewer and serves as an ethics adviser for Greater Manchester Police. Sadia's story is one of transformation - taking chances, letting go of self-doubt, and finding purpose in advocacy for racial and health equity.



"I found myself through YPAG - what started as feeling lost became a journey of connection, growth, and real impact. Bringing my brother Tauheed on-board was an especially brilliant moment."

Tauheed

After graduating university, Tauheed felt a sense of lost direction, feeling adrift after struggling to find permanent work. Joining YPAG alongside his sister Sadia provided a much-needed sense of purpose and community. Through active participation in events and projects, Tauheed developed valuable people skills and gained confidence, which proved instrumental in securing a place on a graduate scheme and landing a new job. His experience highlights the importance of accessible opportunities for young people navigating early career challenges, and he credits YPAG for helping him move forward when he may have otherwise 'wasted away at home'.



"YPAG filled the gap between jobs, offering structure, support, and a platform to build my future. Without YPAG, I wouldn't have found the confidence or direction to get where I am today."

Tashinga

Tashinga's late ADHD diagnosis at 18 shaped her YPAG path, fuelling a passion for advocacy and creative contribution. Tash found school challenging, but YPAG offered a space to channel her experiences into meaningful research and community work. She participated in surveys for GPs, reviewed ADHD patient resources, and contributed to developing an app and AI tool to help others access healthcare. Tashinga also trained youth workers on trauma self-care and safeguarding, influencing policy changes at Young Manchester. Her creative talents shone through in projects like short films, studies, and poster design for the innovative Greater Manchester young people's mental health charity, 42nd Street.



"YPAG empowered me to make a real difference, especially for young people with ADHD, and gave me the confidence to lead and train others - even those older than me. It turned my challenges into strengths and gave me the platform to help others and shape real change."

Ashgan

As an undergraduate psychology student, Ashgan found it difficult to gain practical research experience due to ethical and regulatory barriers. Joining YPAG was a turning point, offering her full creative control over events and the chance to collaborate with major institutions like the University of Manchester, NIHR and Manchester Metropolitan University. She planned and hosted events, developed scripts, and managed logistics for diverse audiences. The support she received helped her overcome nerves and step confidently into leadership roles. Ashgan's journey from participant to Research Assistant on the "My Voice Matters in Research" project exemplifies her growth.



"I now lead workshops and host events, drawing on my unique perspective as both a young person and a researcher. YPAG gave me the experience and confidence to lead, create, and see research from every angle."

Beatrice

Beatrice joined YPAG at just 16 after seeing her father participate in research with ARC-GM. She has now been an active group member for five years. Her journey began with “Adam’s Story,” a podcast about a young person’s mental health, which ignited her belief in the power of storytelling to drive community change. Over the years, Beatrice has contributed to numerous projects, events, and outreach activities, always championing the voices of young people. Beatrice’s commitment to making research relevant and impactful has helped shape YPAG’s direction and fostered a culture of inclusion and empowerment.

“Storytelling through YPAG has shown me how sharing our experiences can create real change in our communities. I believe that sharing lived experiences can influence policy and improve mental health services.”



Amber

Amber joined YPAG in her second year of university, initially nervous about public speaking and stepping into new environments. With the encouragement and support of fellow group members, she gradually built her confidence, eventually standing up to present at events and lead activities. Amber credits the group for helping her overcome her fears and discover her voice, both as a young person and as an advocate for others.

“YPAG provided a safe space to grow, learn, and develop skills that extended far beyond research - skills like teamwork, communication, and leadership - its support turned my nerves into confidence and my ideas into action.”



Social Care Research Champions

Dave Wilson, Joint Commissioning and Performance Management, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Dave's growing involvement in evidence-based practice led him to become a Social Care Research Champion within Adult Social Care (ASC). Recognising that health services often excel in research engagement, he began collaborating with local universities and encouraging the ASC service in Tameside to participate in studies wherever possible. This informal role developed into an official ARC-GM Research Champion position focused on understanding out-of-area placements for people with learning disabilities. His work highlights the importance of capturing family-centred perspectives and the often unheard experiences of individuals moved away from their families and communities, particularly in a field with little research over the past 20 years. Key themes emerging from the research include limited preparedness among families and ASC, differing expectations for young people with and without learning disabilities, gaps in the use of valuable family knowledge, tensions between financial pressures and good outcomes, and the need to define what truly supports positive outcomes.

"I'm 12 months into an 18-month Research Champion role – it's been a big undertaking which I'm coming to a crucial juncture with, and I've been liaising with colleagues in workforce development at the council about how to incorporate more research into practice at the organisation."



Rachael Duffy, Finance and Quality Assurance Manager, Direct Care Tameside Ltd

Rachael has seven years' experience as a Domiciliary Home Care Manager and previously took part in research projects as a participant.

Rachael's research journey began with a desire to explore menopause knowledge and its impact on the predominantly female social care workforce, driven by both professional experience and longstanding staff-retention challenges. With no prior research background, she initially found it difficult to know where to begin, but strong support from mentors and the ARC-GM team helped shape her direction and build her confidence. Along the way, she developed valuable networks, joined new professional communities, and deepened her understanding of research methods. Looking ahead, Rachael plans to disseminate her findings and develop an effective support package for social care staff. The experience has opened the door to further research opportunities, inspired her to consider pursuing a PhD, and motivated her to encourage others in social care to get involved in research.

"Becoming a Research Champion showed me that people working in social care can lead meaningful research, not just take part in it. The role has boosted my confidence, expanded my networks, and helped me make real improvements for staff and clients. I'd encourage anyone interested to get involved."

Ben Mattinson, Managing Director and Physiotherapist, Wyncourt Nursing Home, Trafford

Ben's journey as a Research Champion has been marked by leadership, collaboration, and a commitment to innovation in social care. He led a Greater Manchester Combined Authority-funded pilot evaluating Vendlet motorised turning systems at Wyncourt Nursing Home, focusing on improving staff musculoskeletal health, reducing manual-handling time, and enhancing resident comfort. Ben worked closely with ARC-GM and the University of Manchester on project design and evaluation, and actively networked with other Research Champions and researchers to share learning and ideas. Through his efforts, Ben has helped embed a culture of research within everyday care, encouraging staff and families to view research as a positive force. His work demonstrates how independent care homes can contribute to evidence and innovation, overcoming challenges and inspiring others to see research as integral to quality care.



“Being a Research Champion has allowed me to lead innovative projects and show how care homes can meaningfully contribute to evidence and improvement. The experience strengthened partnerships, inspired colleagues, and reinforced my belief that research is essential to delivering high-quality, person-centred care.”

Chantal Corneil – Registered Manager, Wyncourt Nursing Home, Trafford

Chantal’s role as a Research Champion has been defined by her commitment to improving social care through research and innovation. As the Registered Manager at Wyncourt Nursing Home, she has played a pivotal role in embedding research into daily practice, particularly focusing on end-of-life care and staff wellbeing. Chantal’s leadership has fostered a culture where evidence-based approaches are valued, and staff are encouraged to

engage in open conversations about challenging topics such as grief and bereavement. Through her involvement in research projects, she has built strong networks with other professionals, expanded her knowledge, and inspired her team to see research as a positive force for change. Chantal’s work demonstrates how dedicated individuals in social care can drive meaningful improvements, support their colleagues, and contribute to a broader culture of learning and innovation within the sector.

“Championing research at Wyncourt has helped me embed evidence-based practice into everyday care, especially around end-of-life support and staff wellbeing. This journey has strengthened our team, opened up honest conversations, and shown how research can drive meaningful and compassionate change in social care.”

Incorporating research into careers in health and care

As well as providing introductory opportunities for health and care staff to pursue research, ARC-GM plays a key role in supporting those who wish to go on to study at PhD level. Since 2020, ARC-GM has supported over 30 Pre-doctoral Fellowships. The Showcase saw our most

recent Pre-doctoral Fellows present their work and input into table discussions focusing on ways in which ARC-GM and the wider health and care research ecosystem can help people make the step from pre-doctoral to doctoral study.



Pre-doctoral Fellowships

Katy Baldwin – Speech and Language Therapist, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Katy embarked on her Pre-doctoral Fellowship to bridge the gap between clinical practice and research in neurodiversity. With 18 years of clinical experience, she sought a new challenge and aimed to explore the feasibility and acceptability of HAVEN – an intervention designed to support neurodivergent students’ social experiences in secondary schools. Her fellowship focused on developing research skills through literature reviews, qualitative research design, and Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) in research. Katy completed thematic analyses for two qualitative studies, created a Theory of Change, and drafted a preliminary research grant plan.

Katy has achieved significant outputs, including submitting articles to journals, with one paper published, and presentations at national and international conferences. Immediate clinical impact included updates to training packages and interest in HAVEN from across the UK.

Katy’s journey reflects growth in research competence, confidence in shaping her clinical-academic career, and a commitment to improving outcomes for neurodivergent students.

“It’s been a challenging journey, balancing clinical and academic thinking styles, time constraints, and confidence building. Looking ahead, I’m planning a Nuffield Foundation grant application and a stepped-wedge trial to evaluate HAVEN’s effectiveness.”



Neil Bendel – Public Health Specialist, Manchester City Council

Neil focused his fellowship on strengthening research culture and evidence-informed policy within Health Determinants Research Collaborations (HDRCs). His work explored how validated tools and frameworks – such as WReN Spider, R&D Culture Index, and ORACLe – can measure research capacity, culture, and readiness for evidence-based decision-making in UK local authorities. Neil co-designed a follow-up study with the University of Manchester to examine how HDRCs adapt these tools to local contexts, implement baseline assessments, and overcome challenges in embedding evidence into policy processes.

Through this journey, Neil developed skills in literature searching, critical appraisal, research ethics, and qualitative data collection and analysis. His findings highlight that while policy making is often informed by evidence, it rarely relies on it entirely, and qualitative approaches may offer richer insights than quantitative surveys. Neil’s work contributes to understanding drivers of evidence-informed policy, including leadership, training, and organisational capacity.

“This fellowship gave me the confidence and tools to bridge the gap between research and policy, ensuring decisions are grounded in evidence while remaining practical for local contexts.”

Nicola Hodgson – Physiotherapist, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Nicola used her Pre-doctoral Fellowship to tackle a key issue: the lack of whole-body muscle strength measurement in clinical practice for people with cystic fibrosis (CF). With



advances in medical management extending life expectancy, priorities have shifted from survival to thriving, making muscle strength crucial for quality of life and long-term health. Nicola conducted a scoping review screening over 2,000 studies, to find that whole-body assessments are rare, with mid-thigh pull and hand grip tests most commonly used. She also engaged patients and stakeholders through Public and Community Involvement and Engagement (PCIE) sessions, which revealed openness to strength testing, the need for clear communication, and tailored feedback.

Her fellowship included formal training in scoping reviews, behaviour change, clinimetrics, and project management, alongside informal skills such as resilience and navigating opinions. Key outputs include plans to publish the review, develop a Shiny app to guide future strength measures, and begin her PhD application. Looking ahead, Nicola aims to evaluate the clinical utility of the mid-thigh pull test for CF, assessing reliability, functional associations, and feasibility for exercise prescription. Her journey reflects a strong commitment to evidence-based practice and improving patient outcomes through collaborative research.

“This fellowship has given me the confidence and skills to bridge the gap between clinical practice and research. Engaging with patients and stakeholders has been invaluable, and I’m excited to take forward evidence-based approaches that can truly improve quality of life for people with cystic fibrosis.”

Coral Leather – Social Worker, Bury Council

Coral’s Pre-doctoral Fellowship focuses on social work interventions with transgender and gender diverse (TGD) service users. Her work addresses a critical gap in understanding the role of social workers in trans lives and the forms of intervention that best support this community. Coral conducted a scoping review, screening over 6,000 articles, narrowing to 34 for full analysis, which uncovered themes such as advocacy, cultural competence, norm-critical approaches, and peer support. She grounded her research in trans theory, challenging assumptions about LGBTQ “togetherness” and centring TGD adults within an evolving political landscape.

Key activities included attending the Trans Theory and Sexuality Summer School, engaging in public involvement, and presenting at sexuality and social work conferences. Looking ahead, Coral plans to continue public engagement, publish her findings, and apply for an NIHR Doctoral Fellowship, aiming to influence practice and policy for inclusive, affirming social work. *“This fellowship has strengthened my commitment to amplifying trans voices in social work research. It’s been a transformative experience that will shape my future work toward equity and inclusion.”*

Amy McCawley – Improvement Advisor & Coach, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Amy focused her fellowship on exploring psychological safety and improvement capability within NHS administrative and clerical teams—a workforce representing 21% of the NHS yet underrepresented in research. Recognising their essential role in patient access and experience, Amy conducted a scoping review, screening 912 documents and an organisational audit of 201 staff using validated tools, including Edmondson’s Psychological Safety Scale and the Quality Improvement Capability tool. Findings revealed an evidence gap in UK studies, moderate but inconsistent psychological safety, and limited recognition of improvement capability. A strong positive correlation emerged between psychological safety and improvement capability, alongside qualitative themes such as communication, leadership behaviours, and process rigidity.

Amy’s work highlights the strategic opportunity to embed inclusive improvement practices for non-clinical teams. Her next steps include developing a Psychological Safety Improvement Framework, evaluating interventions that strengthen safety, and partnering with national networks to influence NHS strategy. This fellowship has positioned Amy to lead research that addresses systemic gaps and fosters a culture of openness and continuous improvement.

“This experience has reinforced the importance of psychological safety as the foundation for improvement. I’m passionate about giving non-clinical teams a voice and driving meaningful change across the NHS.”

**Best
Pre-doc
Oral
Presentation
Prize Winner**



The future of Capacity Building

ARC-GM is setting an ambitious course for the future of capacity building, building on a strong foundation of success and growth. Over the past five years, ARC-GM has supported 127 individuals through a diverse range of programmes, from Internships and Pre-doctoral Fellowships to PhD studentships and advanced research roles. This commitment has created a vibrant pipeline of talent, ensuring that research capability continues to expand across Greater Manchester.

At the Capacity Building Showcase, ARC-GM facilitated a table discussion which explored how to better support health and care professionals to engage with research. Participants discussed the barriers that often prevent people from taking their first steps into research – such as limited time, confidence, and access to guidance – and shared ideas for how ARC-GM can help overcome them.

Key achievements include the delivery of high-quality training events in collaboration with ARC-GM Themes and the Public and Community Involvement and Engagement team, as well as securing additional funding for pre-doctoral and PhD projects. With 16 PhD students supported and five alumni progressing to doctoral studies in the last 18 months, ARC-GM has demonstrated its ability to nurture academic careers and respond to system needs by broadening out opportunities to include those from non-registered professional backgrounds, as well as those who are clinically qualified. Looking ahead, ARC-GM's vision for capacity building into the next phase of ARC funding focuses on enhancing the region's ability to deliver timely, impactful research that addresses health inequalities and improves care. Future ARC-GM opportunities will continue to provide for those at Pre-doctoral, Doctoral and Post-doctoral level, with priority areas spanning social care, public health, pharmacy and midwifery. These initiatives aim to promote meaningful collaborations,

empower individuals, champion research inclusion, and spread knowledge across sectors.

The research capacity pipeline – from early awareness to practitioner academic – will remain central to ARC-GM's strategy, ensuring that talent is supported at every stage of development. By continuing to invest in people and partnerships, ARC-GM is poised to strengthen Greater Manchester's role as a leader in applied health research, driving innovation and improving outcomes for communities.

Delegates at the Showcase identified barriers to making advances in their research career and suggested a number of solutions which could be supported by ARC-GM activity.

Awareness and visibility

- Some felt that there is a lack of knowledge about research opportunities, networking, and funding.
- Suggestion: Increase awareness through proactive communication and engagement.

Organisation culture and leadership support

- Research is not embedded in organisational culture and there is often inconsistent managerial support.
- Suggestion: Work with senior leaders and Local Authorities to embed research culture.

Protected time and funding

- There is a lack of time and backfill funding for staff to engage in research.
- Suggestion: Ensure long-term stability and practical resources for research engagement.

Skills development and confidence building

- Some experience imposter syndrome and uncertainty about where to start.
- Suggestion: Offer training for award holders and supervisors and demystify research.

Clear pathways and practical support

- There can be confusion between schemes, unclear pathways and application challenges.
- Suggestion: Simplify processes and provide guidance for navigating.

These suggestions will be considered when developing our future Capacity Building opportunities to help award holders feel supported and empowered through their research journey.



**NIHR Applied Research Collaboration
Greater Manchester**

Get in touch to find out more

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