



Improving Lives Together through Research

Our Sussex Health and Care Research Strategy

Improving Lives Together

Contents

●	Foreword	3
●	Sussex Health and Care System	4
●	Improving lives together	7
●	What is health and care research?	8
●	Research in our system	10
●	Development of this strategy	11
●	Our research vision	12
●	Enablers of success	13
●	Research infrastructure	14
●	Strategic plans	15
●	Next steps	19
●	Appendix	20

Foreword

This is the first research strategy for the Sussex Health and Care System. It has been co-developed by all NHS, local authority, academic and research partners, with input and insight from members of our Strategic Public and Community Advisory Group. It sets out our collective vision for health and care research for the next five years.

Conducting high-quality research and using research-generated evidence to transform our services and practice are essential components of any effective health and care system. Research helps us make health and care advances, improve the outcomes and experience of people through their health and care journey, and deliver services more effectively. It improves the performance of our system and helps us develop and attract research expertise and funding into the region. Ultimately research benefits our public and communities, patients, workforce, health and care system, our academic partners, our society and our economy.

Sussex is research active through its health and care providers, universities and medical school, and it produces research outputs that are nationally and internationally impactful. It has unique data assets such as our Sussex Integrated Dataset and Secure Data Environment and is home to key players in the life sciences and technology sector. Yet to date, the region has not fully realised the benefits of these opportunities - Sussex has some of the lowest health and care research participation in England.

This research strategy sets out how [Sussex Health and Care](#) - which includes all our Sussex Health and Care providers and our local authorities - will work together with our universities, medical school, and other research and innovation partners, to grow and embed research across our system and ensure our population, workforce, and system benefit fully from health and care research.

It focuses on research that helps the population of Sussex and the wider United Kingdom to live healthier lives, have access to the best possible services and treatments when they need them, and maximises the social, and economic benefits research offers to our health and care system and region.



Sussex Health and Care System

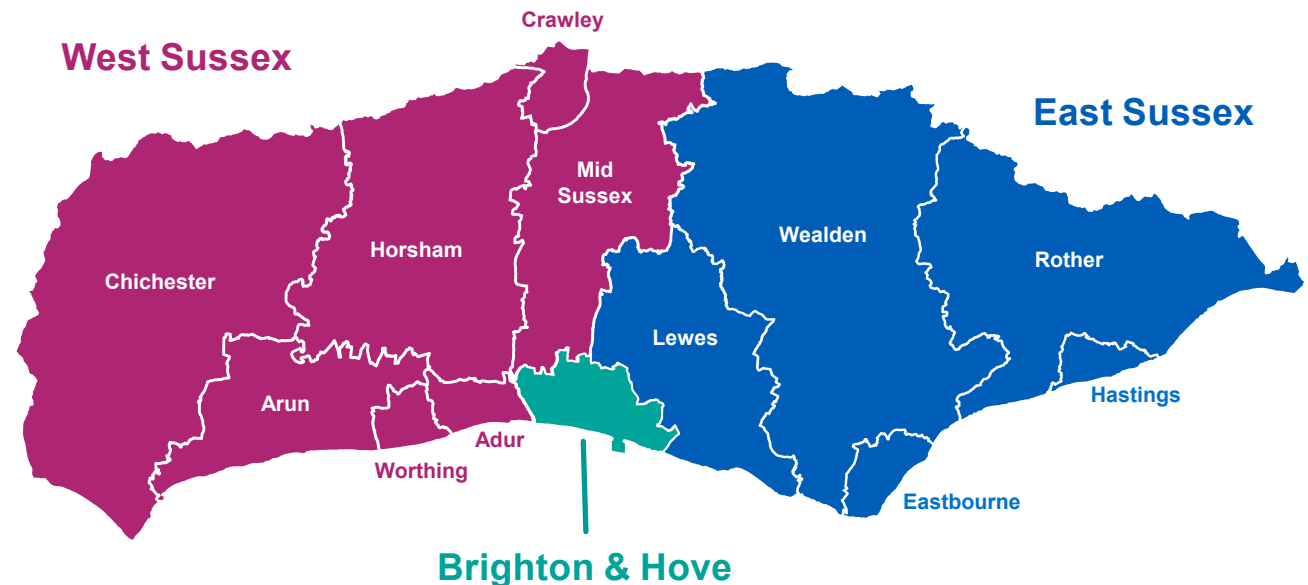
The four statutory partners of our Sussex Health and Care System are NHS Sussex, Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council.

NHS services are provided by:

- 7 NHS Trusts,
- 156 GP Practices,
- 293 Community Pharmacies,
- 312 contracts to provide Dental Services and
- 164 Optometrists

Local Authorities provide Adult Social Services, Children's Services and Public Health Services through a wide range of providers including 821 private care homes.

Around 10,000 **voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations** also provide vital support to local communities throughout Sussex.



Sussex Health and Care System

⊕ Health and Care Providers

- ▶ East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- ▶ South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
- ▶ Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- ▶ Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- ▶ Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust
- ▶ Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- ▶ University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust
- ▶ GP Practices (156)
- ▶ Community Pharmacies (293)
- ▶ Dental Contracts (312)
- ▶ Optometrists (164)
- ▶ Sussex Hospice Alliance
- ▶ Sussex Primary Care Provider Collaborative
- ▶ Sussex VCSE Alliance
- ▶ Sussex Care Homes

👥 Patient, Public and Community Stakeholders

- ▶ Healthwatch
- ▶ Sussex Research Engagement Network
- ▶ Public and Community Involvement and Engagement groups

🔍 System Research Assets

- ▶ Clinical Trials Unit
- ▶ Joint Clinical Research Office
- ▶ Research Training Hub
- ▶ Clinical Research Facility
- ▶ Strategic Public and Community Advisory Group (SPAG)
- ▶ Knowledge and Library Services
- ▶ Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex

🎓 Higher Education Institutions

- ▶ Brighton and Sussex Medical School
- ▶ University of Brighton
- ▶ University of Chichester
- ▶ University of Sussex

🤝 National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Partners

- ▶ Applied Research Collaboration Kent Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS)
- ▶ South East Regional Research Delivery Network (RRDN)
- ▶ Commercial Research Delivery Centre



Sussex faces distinctive population health and care challenges¹.

- **People living in Sussex are older on average** than elsewhere in the UK and over half of future population growth is expected to be in this age group.
- Our population has higher-than-average rates of **chronic disease, and of people with multiple long-term conditions.**
- **Our children and young people have high rates of mental illness,** and we have challenges related to substance misuse, homelessness and multiple compound needs.
- **Our coastal and rural geography** creates additional challenges for health and care delivery.
- **We have areas of significant deprivation and inequalities** and tackling the unmet needs in our underserved communities is a priority.

There is strong correlation between health, social and economic inequalities. Working together across the integrated care system we are in a much stronger position to address these wider challenges and determinants of health and wellbeing as identified in our Joint Strategic Needs Assessments²³⁴.



¹ [Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2023 – Health in an Ageing Society \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/Chief-Medical-Officers-Annual-Report-2023-Health-in-an-Ageing-Society.pdf)

² [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment)

³ [East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | \(eastsussexjsna.org.uk\)](https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/)

⁴ [Welcome to the West Sussex JSNA - West Sussex JSNA Website](https://www.westsussexjsna.org.uk/)

Improving Lives Together

The Sussex Health and Care System's integrated care strategy is called *Improving Lives Together*. This was co-produced through widespread engagement with our system partners and thousands of members of the public living in Sussex.

The aim of '*Improving Lives Together*' is to drive improvements in the lives of everyone living across Sussex now and in the future. We want local people to thrive and live healthier and more fulfilled lives, supported by the best possible health and care services when and where they need them.

'*Improving Lives Together*' sets out long-term, immediate, continuous and place-based improvement priorities and provides a framework which all stakeholders and partners can use to work together to improve the health and care for the people of Sussex. This includes our academic, research and innovation partners in Sussex who can promote the achievement of these strategic ambitions through evidence-based innovative research integrated with best practice identified in other health and care systems in this country and around the world.

Health and care research is about generating high quality evidence that enables us to understand, develop and innovate to continuously improve health and care services and population outcomes.



Summary of Sussex Health and Care System's *Improving Lives Together Shared Delivery Plan*

What is health and care research?

High quality evidence is vital to allow commissioners, service providers, practitioners, our population and service users to make informed decisions. Research evidence helps us to promote health and wellbeing and prevent ill health. It helps us improve health and care services, treatments, and outcomes for patients, service users, communities, and our workforce. It is one of the most important ways we can improve our health and care services, improve access and experience, ensuring we deliver the best possible outcomes.



Health and care research seeks to answer many different types of question ranging from discovery science and experimental medicine, such as clinical trials, to observational research which seeks to understand service users' preferences, experiences and outcomes. Research uses robust methods to ensure its findings are accurate and reliable, and it brings together different forms of data and real-world experience, to help us understand impact and benefit across health and care.

To date, the majority of health and care research has been conducted in hospitals and universities. As more focus moves towards prevention and integrating health and care nearer to people's homes, so will the focus of the research we undertake⁵. Placing research at the heart of health and care across Sussex will help achieve the ambitions of *Improving Lives Together*.



⁵ [Independent investigation of the NHS in England](#)

Specifically, research and our Sussex Health and Care Research Strategy will help us achieve:

<p>Improvements in population health and reductions in health inequalities</p>	<p>Services which are efficient, agile and sustainable</p>	<p>Improvements in quality of care, clinical outcomes and experience of care for service users</p>	<p>A supported, satisfied workforce</p>
<p>✓ Helping us better understand local populations, the drivers of health inequalities and how to tackle them and identifying measures to improve health and wellbeing</p>	<p>✓ Helping service providers focus on what is effective and provides value for money adapting to changing needs and new evidence</p>	<p>✓ Informing commissioning and service decisions, the adoption of innovation, and the types of treatments and services we provide for optimal benefit</p>	<p>✓ Helping us recruit and retain staff, enhancing job satisfaction and developing the skills of our workforce to drive quality improvement through research</p>
			

Research in our system

There is now a legal duty for Health and Care systems to facilitate and promote research, and the use of evidence obtained from research, in the health and care services we deliver. Health and care systems should maximise the opportunities, benefits and value of research, including improving outcomes, tackling inequality, enhancing productivity and cost-effectiveness, and supporting social and economic development.⁶⁷



Developing a system-wide approach to research, that encompasses all elements of health and care, will reap wider individual and health and care system benefits. It will also allow Sussex Health and Care to fully capitalise on NIHR infrastructure including the South East Regional Research Delivery Network, and the research-potential of its academic partners, and better enable them to respond impactfully to local, regional, national and international needs. Together we can grow a reputation for distinctive, excellent health and care research across Sussex and nationally.

This will help our universities grow their national and international reputation for research excellence, attract more researchers to live and work in Sussex, enhance the training of our research-active workforce, and attract more research funding and infrastructure along with commercial partnerships, to support and grow the Sussex economy.



⁶ [Health and Social Care Act 2022. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/31/contents/enacted](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/31/contents/enacted)

⁷ [NHS England » Maximising the benefits of research](#)

Development of this strategy

Development of this strategy has been led by the executive of the Sussex Health and Care Research Partnership, on behalf of Sussex Health and Care.

Established in 2022, the Brighton and Sussex Health Research Partnership emerged from a collaboration between Brighton and Sussex Medical School, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust, and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. Since its inception, the Partnership rapidly broadened its scope, incorporating representatives from primary, community, and secondary care NHS providers, as well as public health authorities, local councils, the University of Chichester, and regional NIHR infrastructure partners, including the Clinical Research Network, Applied Research Collaboration, and the Health Innovation Network.

The strategy draws on relevant national guidance including the NHS Long-term Plan, and key research strategy documents from NIHR, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England⁸⁹¹⁰. It allows us to take the opportunities for life sciences research being set out by the UK government¹¹.

It has been shaped by the needs of the Sussex population set out in *Improving Lives Together*, and our Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Wellbeing Strategies. It has been co-designed with our Strategic Public and Community Advisory Group drawing on public and community involvement and engagement groups working across the system.

Mapping the research priorities of research-active provider and academic partners was undertaken to shape the strategy's research priorities. Extensive stakeholder engagement through workshops across the system was undertaken to refine the strategy and ensure system-wide commitment to delivering its ambitions.



8 [NHS Long Term Plan » The NHS Long Term Plan](#)

9 [Best Research for Best Health: the Next Chapter 2021: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/reports/best-research-for-best-health-the-next-chapter/34535](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/reports/best-research-for-best-health-the-next-chapter/34535)

10 [DHSC's areas of research interest - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/dhscs-areas-of-research-interest)

11 [HM Government Life Sciences Vision 2021.](#)

Our research vision

In five years' time, the Sussex health and care system will have an integrated and sustainable research infrastructure and a culture of practice-embedded research. This will deliver high-impact research and drive improvements in population health, health and care services and outcomes for patients, service users and the broader community.

This vision will be achieved through four work themes:



Working in partnership

We will establish the Sussex Health and Care Research Partnership to enable and integrate research across our health and care system and grow our system's collective research capacity and capability.



Addressing community and population challenges

We will use shared intelligence and data and work with Sussex's diverse communities to ensure our population needs shape our research priorities, locally and nationally.



Empowering the health and care workforce

We will enable our workforce to shape, deliver and apply research, building capacity and capability and embedding research in their working lives.



Research into practice

We will facilitate the uptake of all relevant research from discovery science to clinical and service transformation so the people of Sussex benefit from the latest evidence based health and care.

Enablers of success

Data infrastructure assets

The Sussex Health and Care System is committed to leveraging quality data to drive research and innovation while ensuring the highest standards of data stewardship.

- The Sussex Integrated Data set (SID), positions it as a leading example of integrated data sharing.
- Our region has been awarded substantial NHSE funding to establish a Sub-National Secure Data Environment (SDE) for research: the Kent Medway Sussex Secure Data Environment (KMSSDE).
- Future plans to expand the SID and KMSSDE to include data that captures wider health determinants promise to enrich population health analysis and improve our understanding of health and care trajectories.

Our increasing data and digital maturity, supported by rigorous standards for data privacy and security will substantially enhance our capability to use data for research purposes, enabling us to better understand the needs of our communities, develop new ways of delivering care, design and efficiently deliver research employing diverse novel methodologies.

Research assets

Across the system our three universities, research groups and centres of excellence work across a broad range of health and care research fields.

There are diverse public and community involvement and engagement groups working with researchers, including the Sussex Research Engagement Network and the Strategic Public and Community Advisory Group.

Research infrastructure assets including the Brighton and Sussex Clinical Trials Unit, the Joint Clinical Research Office, the Health and Care Research Training Hub, the new Commercial Research Delivery Centre (CRDC) and research facilities at partner organisations offer support for research development and delivery with the potential to scale and diversify support of high-quality multiprofessional health and care research system-wide.

Research infrastructure

The strategy themes and enablers can be summarised as follows:



Data infrastructure assets

Growing data and digital maturity, backed by strong data privacy and security standards, will significantly improve our ability to leverage data for research, helping us better understand community needs and design efficient studies using diverse methodologies.

Sussex Integrated Data set

Kent Medway Sussex Secure Data Environment

Research assets

The collective research infrastructure assets which exist across our system, underpinning research excellence and public and community engagement can be developed and scaled to enable high-quality multiprofessional health and care research system-wide.

Partner Research Infrastructure

Clinical Trials Unit	Joint Clinical Research Office	Health and Care Research Training Hub	Research Facilities	Sussex Commercial Research Delivery Centre
----------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------	--

University Centres of Excellence and Research Groups

Public and Community Research Engagement Groups

Strategic plans

Working in partnership

We will establish the Sussex Health and Care Research Partnership to enable and integrate research across our health and care system and grow our system's collective research capacity and capability.



Over the next five years we will:

Establish a Sussex Health and Care Research Partnership to:

- ✓ Provide integrated leadership and coordination for health and care research
- ✓ Streamline research governance processes
- ✓ Develop and maximise access to research infrastructure and services
- ✓ Maximise the use of Sussex datasets and developing a unique digital and data-enabled research capability
- ✓ Facilitate bi-directional collaborative working across the system, with academia, and industry to deliver impactful innovations
- ✓ Develop distinctive, high impact research themes that address population, and system needs with our universities to respond to priority health and care challenges
- ✓ Increase the quality, quantity and breadth of research undertaken locally, including within primary care, public health and social care
- ✓ Establish strategic relationships with pharmaceutical and health technology companies to maximise the health, economic and societal benefits of the life sciences industry to our population
- ✓ Increase the opportunity to participate in and benefit from commercial research.
- ✓ Work collaboratively to attract and increase research funding into Sussex.

Strategic plans

Responding to Community and Population Challenges

We will use shared intelligence and data and work with Sussex's diverse communities to ensure our population needs shape our research priorities, locally and nationally.



Over the next five years we will:

- ✔ Prioritise research that addresses the needs of our communities, identified in *Improving Lives Together* and our Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessments
- ✔ Identify the evolving health and care research priorities of Sussex communities and services
- ✔ Facilitate co-design of research addressing local priorities working with communities affected, voluntary sector partners and our Research Engagement Network
- ✔ Grow and widen diverse community participation in research
- ✔ Reduce inequalities in access to and benefits from research activities and health and care
- ✔ Build awareness in our communities of research findings and impact on their health and care
- ✔ Work collaboratively with regional and national partners to respond to the research needs of communities in Sussex.

Strategic plans

Empowering our health and care workforce

We will enable our workforce to shape, deliver and apply research, building capacity and capability and embedding research in their working lives.



Over the next five years we will:

- ✔ Establish an enabling and inclusive research culture across our health and care system which is accessible to all our staff
- ✔ Ensure senior leaders across the system demonstrably value research at all levels and professions as a driver of high-quality care and service improvement
- ✔ Build the capacity and capability in the multidisciplinary workforce, providing equitable and inclusive training and development opportunities
- ✔ Ensure all staff have opportunities to embed quality improvement, research and innovation in their working lives
- ✔ Facilitate establishment of research career pathways and develop our system's future research leaders
- ✔ Make Sussex a place known for the excellence of the research career opportunities available to our health and care workforce and academics

Strategic plans

Research into Practice

We will facilitate the uptake of all relevant research from discovery science to clinical and service transformation so the people of Sussex benefit from the latest evidence based health and care.



Over the next five years we will:

- ✔ Enable development of distinctive, high impact translational research themes applying the research expertise of our universities to priority health and care challenges including preventing ill health, healthy ageing, reducing inequalities, data and digitally enabled health and care, improving patient outcomes, sustainable healthcare; and future priorities as they emerge
- ✔ Ensure efficient translation and application of research findings, working with our Applied Research Collaboration, Health Innovation Network and library services to maximise impact and knowledge exchange
- ✔ Systematically use evidence from research to inform the decisions we make accelerating the most impactful evidence into practice
- ✔ Improve health and care outcomes through the utilisation of research and evidence-based innovation
- ✔ Ensure the impact of research conducted across the system is recorded, shared and celebrated.

Next steps

Our *Sussex Improving Lives Together Through Research Strategy* sets out our system's research ambitions for the next five years, enabling us to identify and respond to the complexity and challenges which exist across our health and care system. The strategy's delivery plan will set out how we will achieve and measure the success of these ambitions, including our governance arrangements and ways of working for the new Sussex Health and Care Research Partnership as well as establishing a sustainable financial model to enable delivery of our research ambitions now and in the future.

In five years, through delivery of this strategy, across our health and care system we will be able to demonstrate how:



Our population has benefited from research activity that enables people to live healthier lives and have access to the best possible health and care when they need it.



Our workforce has been empowered to be research active and embed evidence into the work they deliver, helping us attract and retain research active workforce.



Our Health and Care System has been able to improve their services and population health through research and innovation.



Our universities have been able to respond to local, regional, and national health and care research priorities, improve translation of their research into practice, and increase the impact of the research they do.



As a region, Sussex has reaped the economic and societal benefits of being more research active.

Appendix

Appendix

Definitions and explanations

The Kent Medway Sussex Secure Data Environment (KMSSDE) Secure Data Environments are data storage and access platforms, which uphold the highest standards of privacy and security of NHS health and social care data when used for research and analysis.

The KMSSDE allows approved users to apply, securely access and analyse de-identified health and social care data from across Kent, Medway and Sussex, and access an extensive network of data assets including imaging and genomics data from across England. The Brighton and Sussex Clinical Trials Unit (BS CTU) is fully accredited by the UK Clinical Research Collaboration. It supports the design, conduct, analyses and publishing of clinical trials and other well-designed studies. It has the capability to provide specialist expert statistical, epidemiological and other methodological advice and coordination to undertake successful clinical trials.

The Joint Clinical Research Office (JCRO) is a joint venture of the University of Sussex, University of Brighton, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust. It brings together expertise across partner organisations and provides practical support, management and advice across the clinical research lifecycle, from grant application to study completion.

South East Regional Research Delivery Network (RRDN) The RRDN forms part of the national Research Delivery Network launched by NIHR in 2024. The RRDN builds on the success of the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN). Its vision is that the UK is a global leader in the delivery of high quality, commercial and non-commercial research that is inclusive, accessible, and improves health and care.

The RRDN has two primary purposes:

- To support the successful delivery of high-quality research, as an active partner in the research system
- To increase capacity and capability of the research delivery infrastructure for the future

As a result, research will reach more people, address changing population needs, support the health and care system and the economy, and become a routine part of care.

Appendix

Applied Research Collaboration, Kent Surrey and Sussex

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. The NIHR ARC Kent Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) is one of 15 ARCs across England, part of a £135 million investment made by the NIHR in 2019 to improve the health and care of patients and the public.

Health Innovation, Kent Surrey and Sussex

Health Innovation Kent Surrey Sussex (HIN KSS) is one of 15 Health Innovation Networks in England established by NHS England in 2013 to improve health and generate economic growth by spreading innovation at pace and scale. The HIN works to connect citizens, NHS and academic organisations, local authorities and the third sector and industry to facilitate changes across whole health and care economies, transforming lives through innovation.

Health and Care Research Training Hub

The Hub was created in 2024 as a single point of contact for advice, best practices, and information on health and care academic research careers and recruitment to research fellowships. It provides access to training and development for academic clinical practitioners and health and social care professionals at all stages of their academic journey.

Sussex Research Engagement Network

The Sussex Research Engagement Network was established in 2023 with funding from NHS England to develop partnership working between health and care providers, researchers and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations across Sussex, with the aim of engaging minoritised groups from areas of deprivation and to improve research participation.

Strategic Public and Community Advisory Group

The Strategic Public and Community Advisory Group was established by the Health Research Partnership in 2023 to provide strategic level public and community input to the development and delivery of a research strategy for the system and to work in partnership with Patient, Public and Community Engagement groups at partner organisations across the system.

Sussex Commercial Research Delivery Centre

The Sussex Commercial Research Delivery Centre (SCRDC) is new research infrastructure. It is 1 of 20 centres funded through government investment to enhance the speed and efficiency of commercial clinical research and it will provide more people in Sussex access to cutting edge treatments. The SCRDC will open in 2025 and will be based at University Hospital Sussex NHS Foundation Trust.

Sussex
Health&Care