

St John's 1st of July Research Event Findings

On the 1st of July 2025 Sara More, a Community Research Champion in Peterborough, put on an event at St John's Church in Cathedral Square to promote participation in health and care research to the people who regularly attend the Tuesday community cafe. Also in attendance were James Farson and John Robinson, from the Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service (PCVS), who provided logistical support to the event, as well as Donna Coe and Esther Reeve from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), who provided promotional materials and were around to have conversations with people about taking part in research.

A survey was developed in conjunction between Sara and PCVS, which was used at this event to gather some data about barriers to engaging in health and care research and as a conversation starter (along with the table full of snacks we placed next to our banner and leaflets!) We also intended to capture some short conversations about barriers to research on film; anyone agreeing to a short interview with Esther received a £20 one4all voucher. (We'll let you know when the film is available to watch!)

In terms of sample size, we had ten responses to our survey, and filmed interviews with eight people. There were roughly thirty guests at the St Johns hub that morning, so while the sample size was small, we think that having spoken to roughly a third of people using the hub that day makes the results of some interest, if nothing else.

The majority of respondents (80%) had never been asked to take part in health and care research before, but an even larger majority (90%) would be interested in taking part in a study in the future if it was on a topic that interested them. When asked what else would encourage them to take part in health and care research, responses were varied; 70% of people said that being rewarded or recompensed in some way for taking part would be important to them (there's a reason we offered vouchers for the video interviews and snacks to the people taking part in the survey!) Slightly fewer (60%) respondents also said that factors like the research taking part in a familiar location, being treated with respect by researchers, and being given a clear idea of how the research will benefit them, were important to them.

Some individual respondents noted needing flexibility around care arrangements, or being willing to enter into studies if it was to help manage a condition they are currently struggling with.

We also asked what kind of things might stop people from taking part in health and care research. The two standout responses to this question were, 1) concerns around privacy, and 2) concerns around how complex the study, and the questions, might be.

When asked what health and care topics were important to people, two main themes emerged: mental health, and dementia, with over a third of responses mentioning one or both of those topics. There was a smaller undercurrent of interest in how the healthcare system in the UK works, in general, along with some individual responses for conditions like arthritis, that almost certainly would have been more prevalent if we'd had a bigger sample size.

As a last question, we asked people if they had anything else they'd like to mention about the topics raised. Not everybody had feedback, but four people, half of those that chose to answer this question, highlighted that they'd gladly take part in health and care research as long as they were helped to understand how it could benefit other people; knowing they could help their communities was a strong motivator among the people we spoke to on the day.

We've attached this report to an infographic with some of the key points.

Our colleagues are busy compiling your video responses; when we have something to share, we'll let you know!

Many thanks to St Johns for hosting us and to everybody that spoke to us, whether you took part in a survey or an interview. We had a really great time chatting to you and we hope you found it interesting too!

The Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service are currently looking for new people to become Research Champions! To find out how helping promote research can benefit your community, have a chat with Sara, or please feel free to contact James at james.farson@pcvs.co.uk, or text him at 07760702430.

This report is available online from the PCVS website:
<https://www.pcvs.co.uk/news/community-conversations-at-st-johns-church/>