healthwatch
Herefordshire

Healthwatch Participation Project 2024

Research Engagement Network 2

Co-production Focus Group Outcomes

Contents

Introduction

The Research Engagement Network 2 (REN2) project seeks to establish a health, wellbeing and care participation function and resource for Herefordshire, managed and coordinated by Healthwatch. This initiative will create a framework for public participation in health, wellbeing and care on various topics, research, and services.

REN2 is part of a national scheme Healthwatch has been funded to undertake by NHS England to work in partnership with voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations across Herefordshire, with the aim to engage minority groups and to improve health and care research participation.

Healthwatch will serve as an intermediary for health and care services in the county, coordinating requests for participation and proactively seeking out participation opportunities in areas identified by our volunteers. Healthwatch will also be responsible for recruiting, governing, and coordinating volunteers.

Summary

This interim report provides an overview of the Phase 1 REN2 activities and presents the findings from the focus groups involved, emphasizing the value and importance of co-production and public participation.

Healthwatch actively engages individuals and communities in various projects, including those related to frailty, health and social care research, adult and young carers, health literacy, and individuals with disabilities. While an informal volunteer group currently exists, a new volunteer model is necessary to ensure sustained interest and participation over the long term. Building on the work we have undertaken to increase awareness and engagement of members of underserved communities in heath & care research (Community Led Engagement & Research project), this participation model would be necessary to provide something more than a volunteer notice board and recruitment function. We heard that people want to feel more involved in a community of volunteers, a range of types of opportunities for more than one organisation in topics that interest them, and build a relationship they trust in order to take part. So the REN2 work has focused on talking to the public to coproduce what a wider supportive framework for participation in health wellbeing and care might look like.

The focus groups aimed to assist in designing this new volunteer model through co-production, resulting in an effective framework for engaging communities, including those identified as hard to reach with health and social care topics. This Healthwatch Herefordshire volunteer resource will be readily accessible to all health partners in the region, fostering a cohesive approach to public engagement.

Methodology

Healthwatch initiated the project by inviting existing and potential volunteers into co-production focus groups. These groups were instrumental in shaping the volunteer project. Efforts were made to contact various community groups to ensure robust participation,with the aim of capturing a wide range of views and ideas from different age ranges and demographics. The findings indicated a strong community interest in participating in health and care discussions and a willingness to contribute to the improvement of local services.

- Focus groups were conducted across the county of Herefordshire using current and potential Healthwatch Volunteers.
- A total of 144 members of the public participated in the research. Both male and female participants took part in focus groups, ages ranged from 16-82 years old. These were participants with and without volunteering experience.
- Individuals participated in large and small focus groups including 1-1 sessions and these were used to collect ideas and opinions.
- Focus groups took place through April and May and the start of June.

- 142 participants took part in focus groups.

Demographics

- To ensure a wide range of feedback, views and opinions were captured within the local community, the ages of the individuals who took part in the focus groups were between 16 and 87.

- Our demographic was majority female, this was mainly due to the larger number of females on the Health and Social Care courses at the Colleges we attended.

- We included people with and without volunteering experience in this co-production.

Focus Group Findings

Co-production was conducted in both large groups, small groups and 1-1 focus sessions. During the sessions, we asked a series of questions to gather views and ideas across key areas to shape the volunteer project.

- *The context for the research, or in other words, why was the report written?*
- *How many people took part?*
- *What did you do, when and what did you find?*
- *What should happen next?*
- *Are there any key issues that should be looked at or any next steps/recommendations?*

Question 1: We asked focus groups how we could best connect with people to get them involved in volunteering

- Village noticeboards
- Council notices and magazines, community centres
- Next door app
- Rural community hubs
- Parish councils
- Village whats apps
- Social media, FB,Tiktock,Instagram
- Word of mouth
- Posters and Leaflets
- Billboards
- Village shop and employees
- Videos engaging with viewers (YouTube, Reels, Stories)
- Groups like this one
- Websites, Easy links on the website
- Newspapers, local publications,
- Local groups,

- Tell a friend
- On a t-shirt
- Scanned a QR code
- Library, posters at the library
- Go to schools
- Stands at fairs/public places, Bake sale
- Polls
- CV-driven info for colleges and schools
- Volunteer accounts/video diaries, day in the life of a volunteer
- TV advertisements
- Bright signs and posters, through postboxes and in small Communities to catch people's eyes and get them interested
- Talk to groups,
- GP surgeries

Question 2: When it comes to recruiting volunteers, what ways do you think would make it easy and appealing for people to sign up?

- Online forms
- Talk directly to people 1-2-1,
- introduce idea of volunteering early at school level,

- Going online to find volunteering -given a list of options where to volunteer, what it would be, also being able to go into somewhere and sign up

- CV recognition, feeling rewarded/getting rewards,
- making sure people without social media can access info
- Locality - something local to me
- Aligned with their interests
- Free tea, coffee and cake!
- Discounted local services,
- travel costs and transport where needed
- Feel like you are making a difference,
- Sense of community - we are all tied in
- Fun and sense of fulfilment, personal involvement
- Non-commitment
- Regular newsletter
- Plenty of info
- thank people
- Follow up with emails
- Bi-monthly photos and plans and achievements
- Forms to fill out and send off through the post - a printed-out option
- Advertisement through the post with where to apply or the application form
- Option to be able to speak one-to-one to current volunteers so a person fully understands volunteering
- The younger Generation online, older generation in person
- Link in the bio
- Share info on people's stories (FB)
- Text message for people to find info
- Teams
- Sign up at fun activity day for the entire community
- What are the benefits to signing up
- Sign-up sheet at recruiting events
- Sign-up bonus- pen notebook lanyard keychain water bottle t-shirt
- A referral scheme gives details and chooses SMS post or email
- Posters they can pop their email on
- Taster days
- Indeed (jobsite)
- Website info
- Open events
- QR codes
- Online interviews
- Simple info with bullet point steps

Question 3: What does a standout influencer in our community look like to you? What qualities do they have that make them so inspiring?

Question 4: When welcoming and inducting new volunteers, do you think they would prefer to join a group session or have a one-on-one chat? What would make them feel most at home?

The reponses were mixed and reflected the need to consider the needs of the role and the individual volunteer preferences. Here are some of the comments:

"2 stage operation - group induction then go on to have a 1-1 for specific role needs."

"Group sessions for introduction and aims and ideas. Also allows volunteers to build a network."

"In a group setting, 1-1 (too judgy in group settings also some people have social anxiety), small group in same age range, group induction so you can see who you will work with, group intro to make you comfortable with others, 1-1 easier to understand"

"1-1 initially as it's sometimes intimidating talking in a group. Group setting might feel easier to speak up as don't have to answer all the questions like in 1-1"

"Group sessions so you can discuss together and learn from others' experiences as well as smaller groups so everyone's voices can be heard"

"Both making them feel comfortable treating them in a good way being polite, kind and friendly"

"Group session with one-to-one follow-up chats able to mingle with drinks, including long-time volunteers and new starters able to talk to each other"
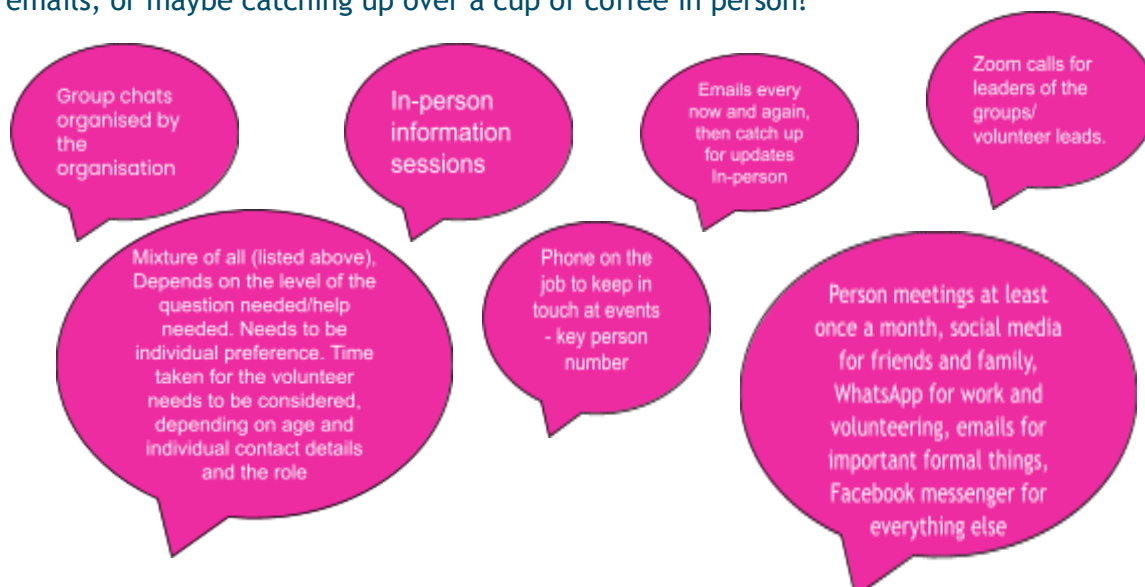
Question 5: What do you think should be in our volunteer handbook to make sure everyone knows what's what and feels supported?

- Key information and advice in case you forget
- Location of organisation
- Out line Requirements & Expectations
- Training needed for the role (if its provided)
- Names of who you are going to be working with on the day (colleagues and volunteers)
- Project purpose and beneficiaries, Knowing the staff and organisational structure
- How to communicate - emails phone numbers of organisation/ support available during volunteering and who/ The designated person for each shift/ WhatsApp numbers
- Volunteering hours
- Role description/duties - Daily activities and role responsibilities, Volunteer activities and community engagement/What is expected of you/
- Policies and procedures
- Terms and Conditions (Ts&Cs)
- Health and Safety (H&S) - policy and procedure - handouts
- Fire safety procedures for location
- Code of conduct
- Safeguarding procedures
- Situation guidance
- A list of do's and don'ts
- Info on any Benefits/Incentives of volunteering
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Training options/opportunities
- Activities taking place

Question 6: How do you think volunteers could really connect with others and make a difference right here in our community?

- Organised groups,
- FB and social groups to post volunteer activity, make the best use of social media.
- Making a connection through online by creating a group chat
- Have a fixed venue volunteers can check into for a meeting place, and public can use, where the community can go to be able to build relationships and trust with each other
- A network venue, get community groups going again (post COVID) make connections
- Open community- Use volunteer's own connections, gathering people they know already to help out,
- Renew good local connections in the community already
- notice boards, local pubs and social clubs
- Like-minded organisations
- Word of mouth, Face-to-face, one to one chats
- text message
- phone message
- Arrange activities a wide range to fit interests and what is most engaging,
- emails phone group chats for people to use, send letters emails etc
- holding events providing info fundraising events for locals to come and join
- hand out flyers and leaflets
- go and see people face to face in town
- go out and do talks so people are aware
- flyers or on the phone, sticking up posters at places where there's large communities
- Videos
- Community fayre, coffee morning soup kitchen summer sports activities Bake sales to connect with the community have sign-up forms available
- open call line to have a chat get support and request/ signup
- Get a feedback sheet/Survey to see what they think you can do, Helps to get to know people and what happens in their community
- A van/Community Bus
- Listen to others
- Schools and Youth club talks
- Charity runs/events

Question 7: How do you like to keep in the loop? Would you prefer WhatsApp chats, friendly emails, or maybe catching up over a cup of coffee in person?

Group chats organised by the organisation

In-person information sessions

Emails every now and again, then catch up for updates In-person

Zoom calls for leaders of the groups/ volunteer leads.

Mixture of all (listed above), Depends on the level of the question needed/help needed. Needs to be individual preference. Time taken for the volunteer needs to be considered, depending on age and individual contact details and the role

Phone on the job to keep in touch at events - key person number

Person meetings at least once a month, social media for friends and family, WhatsApp for work and volunteering, emails for important formal things, Facebook messenger for everything else

What's App preferred messenger service by many - feels more work/organisation official

Your Herefordshire - other social media news outlets

Facebook group all volunteers could join the group

Catch up over food and drink

Some cautionary comments about data protection:

Whats app doesn't have data protection from other users in group open to abuse?

Snapchat but information will disappear after 24 hours so not easily monitored

Question 8: How should we keep track of everyone's skills and interests? Any ideas on how we can make sure we're matching volunteers with the right opportunities?

- Take their qualifications if they want to give them at recruitment.
- Talking to them, to make them feel at ease. Look at character as well as a persons skills
- Further training, have information easily accessible,
- Forms at sign up and reviews, bit about your skills interests
- Spreadsheets
- Role dependant
- If they want to do it - ask them
- Questionnaire would you be interested in the following yes/ no
- Any info ask for and the box for anything else they want you to know
- An app
- Have chats with volunteers to see people's interests
- Have chats during different periods to update on what's needed and improve skills
- CVs and certificates
- Fill in a form of our interests and hobbies
- Organising events and specialised Fields
- Ask for information when first spoken to
- Training and CVs
- Putting on fun enjoyable events
- Could help with job opportunities by gaining new skills
- Fill out a form/survey/call about what they prefer/don't like

- A questionnaire to find out what their skills are
- Regular meetings
- Keeping track of what training has been done with surveys
- Fill in a little questionnaire every few weeks
- Regular questionnaires options to change regularity keeping in touch with the volunteers to ensure they are okay and enjoying it still
- Regular training options
- Do training modules for the volunteers
- Ask them for any other training certificates to help with a better opportunity
- As the volunteers where they feel most comfortable
- File communication/ forms
- Organising in groups of same skills/quals
- Using tables on Word
- Personally match volunteer and organisation
- Talks over the phone to decipher where skills are most useful
- Questionairres - skills needed and qualities
- Talk to them, put them where they would enjoy
- Individual meetings to talk about skills
- Speed dating type event

Question 9: How can we make sure everyone hears about exciting chances to get involved? Any thoughts on the best way to spread the word?

We were given different format ideas

- Leaflets and Posters
- Facebook pages like your Herefordshire
- Social media, community forums and pages line Moreton on Lugg community page.
- Website,
- Emails
- Adverts
- Leaflets in the post
- Speaking to communities
- Adverts on telly
- Social gatherings
- Fun activities days promote who you are and what you do to get people involved days activities to target the community

Locations:

- Parish Councils and Hubs
- Train stations
- Library and GP surgeries
- Standing in town to grab attention/ social events in the centre of Hereford
- Using connections and skilled people you know
- Stand at festivals, gigs and events, events organised by another organisation
- fun runs and sports events
- Visits to community groups like the Army Cadet Force Scouts and brownies etc
- School talks, College talks
- Roadshow - stands
- Pubs - display leaflet

Question 10: How do you think we should collect updates and info from our volunteers? Online forms or good old-fashioned notes?

- Depending on the roles and age of volunteer some may prefer hand-written some may be able to use a computer.
- Email, should collect official information on people in this day and age to make sure it is above board.
- Forms stored online, available on website to input
- Talking to people, meeting in-person for update
- Depend on the skills, online might be overwhelming for some people.
- Options for people who don't like online forms- handwritten forms, with prepaid envelope
- Don't make blanket checks needs to be role specified
- 24h/365dy access to their own form to update
- Teams
- Bar charts pie charts
- A spreadsheet
- Be confidential to keep key information safe

Question 11: Any ideas on how we could recognise our volunteers for all their hard work?

- Group chats and social media/online recognition show each other and public their achievements.
- Celebratory social gatherings/ events with party atmosphere and food
- Certificates and badges, medals- CV recognition
- Gifts/ rewards
- Hampers (Christmas), gift bags
- Volunteer award of the week/ month quarter/year with award ceremony
- Alll winners entered into a prize drawer for a cash prize/ cards/ sweets/ fun days out
- Vouchers/ Gift cards
- Discounts
- Written recognition- online, newsletter, reference
- cake and tea/coffee
- A fayre that could involve the community
- Fun activities for everyone to enjoy
- meals out
- Freebies - pens
- Employment opportunities

"Just a thank you or a shout out so I know I am valued, maybe a little personalised card."

"Thank you would be nice, I was never told thank you when I volunteered."

Question 12: What kind of training do you think volunteers would find most helpful?

Our feedback about the training was that they wanted it to be role specific and minimal and optional. Also that the needs of the volunteer and training that may help with career progression or infomation that they can then teach others

Some training subjects that were suggested were:

- Computer use in the community- local training is important. Time management,
- Customer Service
- Risk assessment
- Mental health
- Diversity training
- NVQs specific to the role if available
- Food handling
- First aid
- Counselling training
- Teamwork
- Accountancy
- Finance
- Event training
- Safeguarding
- Communication

- Fire safety
- Medication
- Health and Safety
- People/community skills

Suggested formats and considerations:

- Hub for volunteers
- One-to-one training
- Online learning
- Shadowing and practical experience- General knowledge based on the role
- Training must be free

Question 13: We're brainstorming some cool names for our volunteer roles! Got any ideas that capture the spirit of what we're doing here in the community?

The HWTeam

HWA (Ambassadors),

HWS Speakers

Team HW

Helping Hands

Healthwatch Hub Volunteers

Hereford Alliance

Healthwatch Helpers

Healthwatch hands

Healthwatch Heroes

H-Dub Do-ers

Healthcare opportunists

Health is watching

Vital Link

Support Sync

Wellness Watchers

Healthcare volunteers

Health Watchers

Healthwatch ambassadors

Handy health watch helpers

Herefordshire Helping Hands

Watch Health

Helping Herefordshire

Health Watchers Herefordshire

Bank watchers

Health watch Warriors

Healthcare saver

All together health

Health life

Help those in need

The Healthy Helpers

Helpout

Health Swats

Question14: We're thinking of designing a logo for our project! What kind of logo and promotional materials do you think would catch the eye of our community members? We'd love to hear your thoughts and ideas on what the logo should look like!

Conclusions

The focus groups enabled us to gather responses from of a variety of people, ages and areas of Herefordshire with different personal circumstances and therefore produced a mixed collection of opinions and ideas allowing the co-production of the REN-2 project to move to the next stages.

The focus groups identified some key issues to consider when shaping the volunteer project:

- Advertisement and signing up to the Volunteer role and the opportunities available need to be accessible to all, online and off line options.

- Regular updates and contact with the volunteers needs to be down to their personal preference and this needs to be asked at induction.

- Awareness of the volunteers ability to use technology needs to be identified at sign up and if required/wanted training and support given. Telephone or in person provision and administration support needs to be provided for those who cannot utilise our app/website.

- The co-production reflected that we need to ensure role is defined so that we have the appropriate level of documentation, training and support for the volunteer in the role. In some cases a light touch or minimal information is preferred to make volunteering feel less 'job like'.

- Volunteers would like to have the option a community element to the role, expressing gratitude through the provision social gatherings to create a community of volunteers.

- Due to the larger older demographic in Herefordshire, we found that the use of Technology was a barrier and consideration in recruiting volunteers. There were also notable differences in the preferences of the younger and older demographics in how they would like their achievements and efforts in volunteering recognised.

Next Steps

- The volunteer role name has been agreed as 'Wellness Watchers' this was the most suggested name by our focus groups. This can now be used to engage the community in Logo creation,including the HCA (Hereford College of the Arts) Design students. (Chosen design to be announced in July)

- The Team Kinetic app, a volunteer management tool has been adopted by Healthwatch. This will be core to organising and running an effective volunteer team. Work will commence on populating and testing the app with volunteers to ensure it is configured in line with the requirements outlined in the focus groups and meets the needs of the new volunteer model.

- Plan and deliver health roadshows/schedule of events to encourage community engagement and recruit volunteers. Include volunteers in the co-production and delivery of these events.

- Plan launch to organisations for them to provide volunteer opportunities to recruited volunteers.

- Plan and schedule the launch of the Wellness Watchers model to health partners and other organisations to encourage them to provide volunteer opportunities to recruited volunteers.
- Design the content for volunteer inductions and handbook for current roles. Interview volunteers.

- Share external opportunities to volunteers and support into roles.

- Respond to organisation/partner requests and monitor outcomes.

Acknowledgments