



## **The Centre for Co-production and Peer Research (CoPPeR) Network - involving communities results in better research**

[The Bradford Institute for Health Research](#) worked with local authority officers and leaders, faith leaders, researchers, VCS leaders and police on a flagship co-production research project. The project developed innovative ways of working that made it possible for communities, researchers and organisations to work together as equal partners. Communities living in Bradford identified the built environment (the area where people live and their surrounding infrastructure) as important to health. This study provided a platform to help communities design and conduct research to explore what is positive and negative about their local areas and then suggest improvements to policy makers and decision makers.

Four community organisations from different parts of Bradford were supported to undertake citizen science projects to gather evidence using robust research methods. The project engaged with diverse groups to include Asylum Seekers, Eastern European Roma, White British communities, and Pakistani communities. By working with trusted community organisations who all serve different identities, the project partnership created opportunities for seldom heard groups to take a leading role in improving local matters through the application of research

The support to the community organisations was in the form of funding and practical help to enable local residents to undertake this work. Training was provided by researchers from the Bradford Institute for Health Research. This sort of collaboration, which we call co-production, is likely to produce research that is relevant to local people and the organisations that might fund any changes that are recommended from such research.

The outputs went much further than generating research findings; the project found this approach led to strengthening partnerships between researchers and community organisations, creating fertile grounds for more research on other topics. Development in confidence and capacity was another key outcome as the process highlighted an increased interest by the citizen scientists to take an active role in working with service providers to support improvements. Civic and health service organisations in Bradford have welcomed this possibility.

Now that the projects have been delivered, the team have turned our eyes to evaluating how well our co-production projects worked for each of the four partner organisations and their citizen scientists and what changes would be necessary to make things work even better for any future projects. The experience gained through this study will inform plans to create a Centre for Co-production and Peer Research (CoPPeR) network. This more inclusive participatory model of research will be of interest to communities and organisations beyond Bradford - doing 'with' rather than doing 'to'

Doing co-production and citizen science has to be a slow burner. It takes time because research systems can be unfamiliar. It also takes time because communities may not be ready for these approaches as trust and confidence in systems may need strengthening before citizen science approaches can commence.

Traditional research systems (including ethical approval systems, research funding portals and governance systems) are less familiar with co-productive ways of working as it can present as square peg which often only deals with round holes. This can be a challenge. Equally, communities are often consulted or given opportunities to be participants in research, so it is quite a leap to move into position where they decide on the questions and collect data about their chosen areas. It takes several efforts to get the arrangements in place to make this work in a robust and rigorous way.

The Centre for Co-production and Peer Research (CoPPeR) will be established after we have considered the findings from the evaluation. The team brought together stakeholders in May 2025 to support the creation of the CoPPeR Network and establish collaborative plans and priorities moving forward.

[Check out the protocol paper for more information on the Co-Production and Peer Research \(CoPPeR\) Network](#)