

Local authority research systems: identifying the capacity and infrastructure needs of Birmingham City Council

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Registration date 05/11/2020	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 05/11/2020	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Many common public health challenges are the result of non-healthcare factors which influence people's health over their lifetimes. Since 2013, local authorities have been responsible for delivering public health services to improve people's health and to reduce inequalities by addressing the wider social factors that affect health, which include poverty, air quality, education, employment and housing.

To tackle these complex health challenges researchers need to evaluate the effect of making changes across all the systems that affect health e.g. environment or education. They also need to understand how certain actions taken by local authorities might affect health and to understand the extent to which local authorities are able to use research findings to support their decision making.

Currently, it is not clear the extent to which local authorities are able to embed a culture of research across their activities and what infrastructure and capacity development they need to address common public health challenges.

Birmingham City Council (BCC) serves the largest and youngest population in the UK, which is highly diverse. It has a history of working with universities in Birmingham on a wide range of issues. Researchers from the University of Birmingham will work with officers from BCC on this research.

The aim of this study to understand better how BCC engages with the research community. The researchers aim to find out what is needed in terms of new infrastructure or capacity building to support research and the use of research findings by the council. They also aim to understand how universities and other organisations that support research can work with local authorities to support their needs and enable the council to embed research in its work.

Who can participate?

Officers and councillors in BCC will be invited to participate in the online survey. They will also be invited for an interview, along with researchers and people who support research from outside the council.

What does the study involve?

An online survey of officers and councillors in BCC to ask about their involvement in recent or current council research, what barriers they face in taking part in research, what would need to change, or be put in place to support their participation in research, and their use of research findings to support decision making and what stops them putting research findings into practice. The researchers will also undertake one-to-one interviews with 15-20 officers and councillors in BCC to explore in more detail the barriers to embedding a sustainable culture of research across the organisation and identifying what would be needed to support this. To understand the challenges of collaborations between researchers and the council, they will also interview 8-10 researchers and people who support research from outside of the council. The findings from both pieces of work will be brought together.

What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?

The researchers do not anticipate any risks of taking part in the study. Although there are no direct benefits in taking part, participants will be adding to the knowledge base about research culture within BCC.

Where is the study run from?

University of Birmingham (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run?

October 2020 to January 2021

Who is funding the study?

National Institute for Health Research Public Health Research Programme (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Prof. Kate Jolly

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Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number

1.0

Study information

Scientific Title

Local authority research systems: identifying the capacity and infrastructure needs of Birmingham City Council - a convergent parallel design mixed-methods study

Study objectives

The aim of the research is to understand better how Birmingham City Council (BCC) engages with the research community and explore how to develop mechanisms to enhance collaboration and embed a sustainable research system across the local authority that would identify and evaluate how Birmingham City Council's (BCC) initiatives impact on health and health inequalities and how to use evidence already in existence.

Work package 1 aims to explore:

Through a survey, to explore:

1. Current and recent research within BCC
2. Influences on two key research-active behaviours among BCC staff, informed by COM-B and TDF theory and survey questions: retrieval and use of evidence to inform practice, and Initiation of research studies internally or in collaboration with academic partners.

Work package 2 aims to qualitatively:

1. Understand culture and capacity/opportunity for change within officers in the public health directorate, directorates responsible for the wider public health and social care, elected members and supporting infrastructure.
2. Identify an opportunity for change in the way that researchers work with BCC to meet the needs of BCC.
3. Explore the views of stakeholders in relation to research and the potential for BCC to embed routine research, and to identify barriers, potential facilitators and infrastructure needs to embed a sustainable research system able to deliver research outputs relevant to the LA in a timely manner.
4. Explore potential mechanisms to improve the interaction between public health and social care research.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approval pending, the ethics committee at the University of Birmingham (Research Support Group, University of Birmingham Research Governance, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK; +44 (0)121 414 8825; aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk), ref: ERN_20-1354

Study design

Convergent parallel design mixed-methods study

Primary study design

Observational

Study type(s)

Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Health and health inequalities

Interventions

A convergent parallel design mixed-methods study that will comprise two main work packages comprising a cross-sectional survey (WP1) and qualitative interviews with stakeholders (WP2). The findings from the two work packages will be synthesised to produce the final report and recommendations. The study will be informed by the COM-B and Theoretical Domains Framework.

The researchers plan to undertake an online survey of officers and councillors in BCC to ask about:

1. Their involvement in recent or current council research,
2. What barriers they face in taking part in research,
3. What would need to change, or be put in place to support their participation in research,
4. Their use of research findings to support decision making and what stops them putting research findings into practice.

The researchers will also undertake one-to-one interviews with 15-20 officers and councillors in BCC to explore in more detail the barriers to embedding a sustainable culture of research across the organisation and identifying what would be needed to support this. To understand the challenges of collaborations between researchers and the council, the researchers will also interview 8-10 researchers and people who support research from outside of the council.

The findings from both pieces of work will be brought together.

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

Understanding of how to develop mechanisms to enhance collaboration and embed a sustainable research system across BCC, measured using an online survey and qualitative interviews at one timepoint

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Current and recent research activity between BCC and local and national partners (including universities, consultancies and thinktanks) measured using an online survey administered at one timepoint
2. Mapping available infrastructure, capacity and resources (including existing datasets) to support research activity within BCC, measured using an online survey administered at one timepoint
3. Mapping research expertise, understand culture and capacity/opportunity for change within officers in the public health directorate, directorates responsible for the wider public health and social care, elected members and supporting infrastructure, measured using an online survey (one timepoint) and qualitative interviews (at one timepoint)
4. Identifying the opportunity for change in the way that researchers work with BCC to meet the

needs of BCC, measured using an online survey (at one timepoint) and qualitative interviews (at one timepoint)

5. Exploring the views of stakeholders in relation to research and the potential for BCC to embed routine research, and to identify barriers, potential facilitators and infrastructure needs, measured using qualitative interviews at one timepoint

6. Potential mechanisms to improve interaction between public health and social care research, measured using qualitative interviews at one timepoint

Completion date

31/01/2021

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Work package 1:

1. Local authority staff and elected members: public health directorate staff (DPH, consultants, wellbeing leads), housing, transport, environmental health, education, leisure, councillors, scrutiny managers, public involvement panel lead
2. Employees of grades 5 and 6 policy, analyst and service manager roles will be included.

Work package 2:

1. Officers and elected members of Birmingham City Council with decision-making powers
2. Local authority public panel members, members of the local NIHR infrastructure and third sector providers of public health activities

Participant type(s)

Other

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment

01/11/2020

Date of final enrolment

31/01/2021

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Birmingham City Council

10 Woodcock Street

Birmingham

United Kingdom

B7 4BL

Sponsor information

Organisation

University of Birmingham

ROR

<https://ror.org/03angcq70>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Government

Funder Name

Public Health Research Programme

Alternative Name(s)

NIHR Public Health Research Programme, The Public Health Research (PHR), PHR

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

National Institute for Health Research Applied Research Collaboration West Midlands

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The data-sharing plans for the study are currently unknown and will be made known at a later date.

IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date