

## Growing our community connections and conversations



In July, Jana Suklan, Senior Methodologist at the HRC, and I took a beautiful scenic drive to Wooler in Northumberland to meet with people from the local community. As part of our public involvement and research inclusion work, we were looking forward to talking with people living in rural communities about our work as a HealthTech Research Centre and one of our current collaborative projects evaluating a new test for stroke. We visited the Cheviot Centre in Wooler where we held a first public conversation event. This opportunity arose through connecting with [The Glendale Gateway Trust](#) who offer a whole range of activities and types of support within and beyond the Cheviot Centre.

Eight people generously gave their time (and left their sunny gardens!) to come and meet with us to share their views and ideas. We learned such a lot about the challenges people face in their area when accessing urgent medical care for conditions like strokes. Due to these challenges, the group felt that the potential value of the new rapid stroke test in rural, isolated communities could be even greater than in other areas. We were grateful for the interest and energy shared by the Wooler group and were delighted that they are keen to stay in touch with us. We look forward to a further conversation with them in the autumn.

As well as the learning we took from the event, our experience of working with The Glendale Gateway Trust has been brilliant. Before joining the HRC, my Research Partnerships role at [VONNE focused on building better partnerships between health researchers and organisations](#) like Glendale Gateway Trust in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. I would often speak to research teams about the value of working with VCSE organisations when trying to involve more diverse people in their research, particularly because of the deep and trusted relationships organisations have with the communities they support. I feel incredibly fortunate to have experienced this first hand and thank Karen and Gemma at the Glendale Gateway Trust for their willingness to work with us, and all they did to help make this first event a successful one. It is clear they are trusted and well regarded in the community; within just a few days they had a great response to our poster invite! We are very grateful for our connection with

the group and the Glendale Gateway Trust, and excited about our continued work together. I would also like to acknowledge and thank David Burgess, Public Co-applicant involved in the stroke project who helped to develop us prepare this PPIE activity.

If you would like to know more about the stroke research described here, you can read more in this [impact story](#). We are actively growing our connections and public involvement - if you know of any other community groups or organisations who would be interested in connecting with us, please get in touch: [greta.brunskill@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:greta.brunskill@newcastle.ac.uk)

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