



## **Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026**

### **Research and Innovation Award**

## **The Norfolk and Waveney Research Engagement Network (REN) Team**

**NHS Norfolk and Suffolk ICB, East of England NIHR Research Delivery Network,  
Community Action Norfolk, Purfleet Trust, The Bridge for Heroes, West Norfolk Deaf  
Association, Involve Razem CIC, Menscraft, Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre,  
Feathers Futures, Procommunity CIC, Disability Advice North East Suffolk, Women Like  
Me, Kirkley Peoples Forum, Opening Doors, Vision Norfolk, Bridge Plus+**

The Norfolk and Waveney Research Engagement Network (REN) Programme is transforming how health and care research reaches underserved communities. Established in 2022, REN has developed a practical, evidence-based model that connects the Integrated Care Board, VCSE organisations, the Regional Research Delivery Network, primary care and researchers with communities often excluded from research. Beginning in coastal areas such as Great Yarmouth and Waveney, the programme has expanded to five community-led Research Hubs across Norwich, King's Lynn, Thetford, Gorleston and Lowestoft. By working through trusted local organisations, REN has shifted the model of engagement—taking research into communities rather than expecting participation through traditional routes.

REN's approach goes beyond one-off engagement, focusing on building sustainable relationships, capability and infrastructure. It has co-developed accessible materials, including easy-read and visual resources, and provided training, toolkits and ethics guidance to support more inclusive research design. VCSE organisations are empowered as equal partners, helping shape research priorities and delivery. The innovative community hub model tailors activity to local need, particularly in areas experiencing high inequality and historically low research engagement, and links directly to live study opportunities.

The programme has delivered meaningful impact by increasing awareness, trust and participation in research among diverse groups, including people with learning disabilities, asylum seekers and refugee communities. It has strengthened partnerships, supported funding bids and created transferable resources. Community hubs have already enabled recruitment into studies, including children participating in type 1 diabetes screening. REN is improving access to research today while building a more inclusive, community-centred research culture for the future.