

NIHR

Health Determinants
Research Collaboration
Bradford

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Areas of Research Interest 2025



City of
BRADFORD
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The Bradford Council Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) are research priority areas designed to generate the evidence needed for informed policy decisions and service improvements. Bradford Council service areas have identified the research priorities detailed below to put evidence at the heart of decisions and provide better services for all people across the Bradford district.

A 2020 review scoping a local authority research system (LARS) for Bradford Council, recommended a strategic approach to mapping and addressing evidence gaps via high-quality, collaborative research. These ARIs will therefore act as a unifying outline for both Council officers and academic researchers to understand what research areas are of paramount importance for Bradford Council.

The Government Office for Science developed the ARI approach in response to Professor Sir Paul Nurse's 2015 review as a way for government departments to inform academic institutions of their research interests, so they can work together to address evidence gaps and ensure research impact. As part of Bradford Council's NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) programme, the local authority benefits from productive partnerships with the Universities of Bradford, Leeds and York, and the Bradford Institute for Health Research (BIHR). Via these ARIs, we are also welcoming research collaborations from academic researchers across the UK.

Our inaugural ARIs are intended as a conversation-opener to prompt research collaborations around our most pressing evidence requirements. Reflecting the breadth of work that is conducted in a local authority, the areas range from the overarching strategic questions that may be more suited to large externally-funded research programmes to the smaller-scale research projects that would help in the delivery of services and policy development. They are not an exhaustive account of our research needs, nor intended to restrict research collaborations to these areas alone. As the body of evidence grows and the needs of our residents and district evolve, so will our evidence requirements. This will be reflected in future ARI publications.

Interested parties, including Bradford Council officers and academic researchers, can get in touch via HDRC@bradford.gov.uk.

BRADFORD COUNCIL'S VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Bradford Council is working alongside public and private sector partners and communities to deliver services across what is the fifth largest Metropolitan Local Authority District in England. Our population is one of the country's youngest. Over 150 languages are spoken across the district, and ethnic minorities make up one third of the population, equality of access to quality services is at the heart of Bradford Council's mission.

The key ambition of our Council is to grow the local economy in an inclusive, fair and sustainable way, achieved by supporting businesses to be innovative, so that they create great jobs. To achieve this ambition, we are focusing on the following priority outcomes:

1. **Growth and regeneration:** We will grow our local economy in an inclusive and sustainable way by increasing productivity and supporting businesses to innovate, invest and create great jobs.
2. **A great place to grow up:** We will help our children to have the best start in life by improving life chances, educational attainment and overall quality of life for all young people regardless of their background.
3. **Happy and healthy people:** We will help people from all backgrounds to lead long, happy and productive lives by improving their health and socio-economic wellbeing.
4. **Safe and strong communities:** We want the Bradford District to be a place where everyone can play a positive role in their community and be proud to call the district their home.

**1. GROWTH AND
REGENERATION**

**2. A GREAT PLACE TO
GROW UP**

**3. HEALTHY AND
HAPPY PEOPLE**

**4. SAFE AND STRONG
COMMUNITIES**



1. GROWTH AND REGENERATION

Context

We want to understand how to achieve our district's vast potential for sustainable, equitable growth; making Bradford District a more accessible and attractive place to work and live by examining the current landscape for adults and the future horizon for our young people. We want to understand how to best harness regeneration, redevelopment and major infrastructure projects to achieve lasting economic growth and access to high-quality, sustainable work. In the present, we want to understand what works to remove barriers to employment for groups such as adults with learning disabilities and how to equip these groups with the right skills for work. Forecasting for the future, we want to understand the aspirations of young people living in the Bradford District and whether they envisage themselves staying and working in Bradford District. The ambition of these research questions is to generate evidence to make the labour market in Bradford District an equal and thriving place for all.

1.1. How do we best support economic growth and improve life chances through inclusive, healthy urban regeneration for future generations?

- What is the optimal balance between urban and rural environments, especially in the context of counter-urbanisation post-pandemic?
- What are the key components of transportation schemes that best stimulate economic growth, improve health and alleviate poverty?
- How can we measure and evaluate the impacts of culture-led regeneration on wellbeing and on sustainable and equitable economic growth?

1.2. How do we grow a dynamic, sustainable and equitable labour market in Bradford District?

- What are our key labour sectors? And where are our jobs predominantly positioned in the supply chain of these sectors?
- How do young, diverse cities best realise their potential for economic growth via public and private labour market investment?
- How can we retain the district's young talent, including University of Bradford graduates, to remain and work in the district?
- How can we attract incoming young talent?
- What approaches are successful in upskilling adults with learning disabilities so they can enter and stay in the job market?
- What factors distinguish care leavers who do get jobs from those who struggle to achieve gainful employment?
- Is there a correlation between experience of work before the age of 16 and success in jobs post-16 or studying?

1.3. Tackling challenges in recruiting and retaining quality teaching staff in our schools, and the extent to which school reputation affects this.

- To what extent is Bradford District disproportionately affected by recruitment and retention challenges in the teaching sector?
- What are the drivers leading to low recruitment and to poor retention, and what are the destinations of those who quit?
- Is the reputation of schools a factor in low recruitment and poor retention of teachers? If so, what works to recruit and retain quality teaching staff in schools affected by reputational challenges?



2. A GREAT PLACE TO GROW UP

Context

We want Bradford District to be a great place to be a child – a place where all our children and young people are given the best start in life and can fully develop their talents and abilities. At the foundation of this is education, and it is an ambition of ours to work tirelessly to reduce the educational attainment gap and ensure no child is left behind so that our most vulnerable children and young people are protected. We would like to better understand what alternative educational provisions might be successful in combatting the rise in exclusions and suspensions. Understanding this better will allow us to more efficiently provide resources where they are most effective. One of the great costs associated with the pandemic was its effect on child health, especially for those children experiencing inequalities in the social determinants of health. We would like to understand whether schools, students, and teachers are experiencing a breakdown of the social contract following the pandemic, and what approaches might be most effective in attaining re-engagement to improve attendance rates.

2.1. How do we best tackle child poverty and its life course impacts at a local level; and understand which interventions have the most impact in Bradford District?

- Working with us to ensure our strategic plans are focussing on the right areas to achieve the greatest impact.

2.2. How has alternative educational provision provided by further education institutions helped to improve outcomes for children at Key Stage 4 in Bradford District?

- Do alternative educational provisions ameliorate the rise in exclusions and suspensions, and what are the challenges and opportunities?
- What is the difference in skillset attainment through this provision?
- Would KS4 children in Bradford District benefit from an alternative education programme provided by a further education (FE) institution?
- Does the FE method engage those who struggle with mainstream education?

2.3. How do we best assist schools in managing higher rates of challenging behaviours following the pandemic?

- What are the factors driving the rise in challenging behaviours in Bradford District's schools?
- Is there evidence to support a hypothesis of a breakdown in the social contract between parents and schools, post-pandemic, and if so, to what extent is this responsible for observed increases in challenging pupil behaviour?
- What approaches are most effective in supporting schools to manage challenging behaviours and re-engage parents and families in managing attendance and behaviour?

2.4. Where do young adult residents of Bradford District see their future?

- What are their aspirations? What skills and experience do they want?
- Do they see themselves staying in Bradford District? If not, what are the reasons?

2.5. What is it like to be a child in Bradford District?

- Understanding the experience of children in poverty in Bradford District through their lived experiences.

2.6. What impact are the digital determinants of health having on young people in Bradford District?

- What approaches are effective to tackle the drivers of under-identification and underdiagnosis?
- What is the impact of undiagnosed autism spectrum disorders on KS4 attainment?





3. HEALTHY AND HAPPY PEOPLE

Context

As a district, Bradford is exposed to a wide range of health inequalities due to a range of factors, including higher rates of poverty, fewer opportunities for work than other areas, and poorer educational outcomes. To help address these inequalities, we would like to research proactively and with a focus on those who are most vulnerable and at most risk of even poorer outcomes due to these existing disparities. The themes covered in this area will be wide-ranging, as the wider determinants of health are.

3.1. Reducing homelessness.

- Who is most at risk of becoming homeless in the Bradford District?
- What approaches are effective in preventing homelessness in those most at risk?
- What works at a local level to move households out of temporary accommodation and to support them to remain out?

3.2. With changing social and cultural norms in our communities, is there a decline in female 'sandwich' generation carers in multigenerational homes and family networks, as more women enter or remain in paid work through mid-life, and retire later?

- What impact might these changes have on childcare, elder care, and growing/changing demand for local services?

3.3. Forecasting future population needs and potential changing demands on services.

- For example, to what extent can we forecast a potential increase in the number of older people depending on services (e.g. dementia care) due to a shift in cultural norms relating to the dependence on family networks and multi-generational households?

3.4. Can we predict which children are at greatest risk of going into care?

3.5. What initiatives have had the biggest impact on preventing (reducing and delaying) the need for adult social care?

3.6. What impact does the late diagnosis of neurodivergence in parents have on their children?

- What might the future needs of these children be?
- How do we identify those families that would need this support?

3.7. What are the benefits of the newly announced Crisis Resilience Fund, and what are the implications if it were ceased?

3.8. Improving the condition of private rented sector housing.

- What are the barriers to addressing poor the conditions of housing in the private rented sector in Bradford District?
- How have other local authorities overcome these barriers?

3.9. How can homes in Bradford District be better adapted to protect health?

- What initiatives work best to adapt housing for environmental health pressures such as increased temperatures, due to climate change, in Summer, and preventing fuel poverty in Winter?
- What do we know about the indoor air quality in homes in Bradford District?
- Are there any specific barriers to adapting homes in Bradford District based on the type of housing?





4. SAFE AND STRONG COMMUNITIES

Context

Communities that are safe and strong empower citizens and communities to feel like they can make a difference in their neighbourhood, and to feel protected and valued in their area. An integral part of this is co-producing research with communities so that we are conducting research with people and not “to” them. With this in mind, we would like to understand the difference in adoption of interventions such as low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in communities that display trepidation to interventions, and the effect that community engagement can have on successful adoption. We would also like to understand to what extent the South Asian community has changed in the Bradford District over time, with a specific focus on how any changes might have affected the relationship between family and community, and what effect this has had on the lives of children.

4.1. What strategies have worked in other local authorities to build community in areas that see a high turnover of residents, such as city centres?

- How can population churn and neighbourhood decline be decreased in inner city neighbourhoods?
- What events help bring people of different backgrounds together to increase civic pride and strengthen inclusive identities?
- What ways help the integration of new arrivals into a community, such as Eastern European Roma people and other new migrants to the district?

4.2. To what extent has the relationship between family and the community changed and what impact has this had on the lives of children?

4.3. How do we engage neglected communities with low self-esteem?

- How do we improve community cohesion to prevent future tensions and reach communities that fall through the cracks of stakeholder inclusion?
- How do we encourage fresh and new applications from VCSE groups representing individuals and groups yet to be reached?

4.4. How do we build trust with communities that display concern or hesitancy towards interventions?

- For example, what strategies have other local authorities used to successfully implement Council priority campaigns and initiatives within communities, such as; low traffic neighbourhoods, measures to reduce fly tipping, and increasing road safety.

4.5. How can community interventions prevent residents from needing to access services?

4.6. What are the social determinants of violence against women and girls? And how can understanding these determinants lead to better prevention?

- Reducing anti-social behaviour and the harassment of women.

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

The Bradford Council ARIs have been created by the Bradford Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC), in collaboration with our Bradford Council service areas. The ARIs have been created using an unbiased approach by meeting with Assistant Directors and Heads of Service and asking a series of questions that included:

- **What are your priority areas?**
- **What evidence gaps do you have?**
- **What research areas do you perceive as being irrelevant to your service area?**

Our unbiased approach means that these ARIs have not been built around preconceived priority areas and instead have focused on evidence gaps as opposed to business priorities.

Following these meetings, the answers provided by each directorate were analysed to pick out key research themes and priority areas and then each priority area was researched to understand whether a) the priority was not an actual research area b) the priority was a research area with extensive existing evidence c) the priority was a genuine evidence gap.

For those areas where extensive evidence already exists, we have collated sources of this evidence to provide to the directorates.

Priority areas that were genuine evidence gaps were included in a workshop where members of the HDRC suggested questions or further ways in which priority areas could be broken down.

Our ARIs were then grouped under the ambitions of the Bradford District Strategy 2025-2035. Our ARI list was then further reviewed by our HDRC senior management team and the HDRC Board before publication.

ABOUT HDRC BRADFORD

Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) Bradford is part of the Health Determinants Research Collaborations | NIHR and hosted by Bradford Council, in collaboration with our partners, Bradford Institute of Health Research, Bradford University, Leeds University and University of York.

The aim of the Bradford HDRC programme is to sustainably transform the council, so it becomes evidence-led, and data driven, at all levels of decision-making to improve the wider determinants of health and reduce health inequalities.

The determinants of health refers to social, economic and environmental factors that can effect the health of people in our communities, such as housing, poverty, education, social care, access to green spaces, diet, and the air we breathe. Our research is focused on these topics, with the aim of understanding how these factors influence the health of Bradford residents and what policies can be put in place to improve health and reduce inequalities.

Our vision is for Bradford Council to be a local authority leader in generating and using research to support decision making and democratic accountability. We will transform our understanding of what works best for who so that we make better and more cost-effective decisions, improve services and improve the health of all our citizens and communities.

Get in touch

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