



EMRAN (East Midlands Research Into Ageing Network) discussion

11th March 2026

Thinking about the future of EMRAN

Attendees at the EMRAN event on 11th March were asked to think about the future of the network. They considered the format and frequency of future meetings, what they want from engaging with the network and the type of content they would like to see in future.

Format and frequency of activities

There was a strong consensus that engagement in the network should involve both in-person and online meetings. Overall, one annual event or a biannual event to anchor the group, with regular shorter meetings online in-between. Hybrid meetings were considered a possibility, but attendees noted the difficulties of ensuring these meetings are of a high standard.

In-person meetings:

- Considered valuable for networking, informal conversations, and reducing barriers of hierarchy.
- Preferred 1-2 times a year.
- Justify travel by holding whole day/ half-day events.
- Accessibility must be considered (mobility, later start when in-person, neurodiversity and fatigue).

Online

- Seen as essential to continue regular engagement and inclusivity
- Suggested formats included: short seminars ('lunch and learn'), themed sessions, sub-groups or special interest groups.
- Suggested frequency was around 3-4 times a year.
- There were mixed views on hybrid formats, as it was seen as difficult to deliver well, but offered flexibility.

Content and Activities

There should be a balance between research, practice and interaction. Many saw EMRAN as a platform for linking and connecting people, as well as interdisciplinary peer learning.

- Attendees valued research-focused content (short, concise presentations, research priority discussions, methods discussions and categorising projects).
- There should also be chance for interactive forms ('sandpits' or 'idea labs', workshops for developing and consulting on grants, problem-solving, breakout group discussions).
- Strong demand for practice and impact focused content (real world impact examples, practical implications from research, 'what work' in practice contexts).
- Strong interest in policy and practice translations, as well as implementation and resilience.
- Attendees wanted less theory, more application and impact.
- There should be opportunities for researchers to consult with practice or public members of the network on research outputs, ideas and decisions.

Inclusion and Accessibility

- Attendees discussed barriers to participation, such as travel, mobility and digital skills. There is a need for inclusive formats and flexible engagement.
- The network should actively seek to involve community organisations, frontline practitioners, care staff and members of the public.
- There should be opportunities for research participants and research sites to be involved and share their insights and experiences to the network at events.

Bridging Research and Practice

There was consensus that the network should be a means of bridging research and practice. This was one of the strongest themes in the discussions. Some thought it could be used as a way of 'lobbying' on certain topics, and to ensure knowledge exchange in real world care environments.

- There was a strong desire to connect academic research and frontline social care. To ensure research was usable, impactful and relevant.
- Suggestions for the future of the network included: practical guidance for practitioners, support for ECR's, mentorship for ECR's and networking opportunities.
- Some attendees noted that the emphasis should be on social care environments more broadly, rather than just care homes and healthcare settings.
- Members of the network want to hear about how research is impacting people's lives, and impacting care.

Ways of communicating, staying engaged and knowledge sharing

There was strong emphasis on better communication through the network, in a way that was more accessible and clear. Some thought it would be helpful to know who was in the network, and have a list that was accessible.

- Suggestions included
 - Regular updates: newsletters twice yearly, short research summaries and updates via mailing list, and plain English outputs for public and practitioners.
 - Sharing of funding opportunities, collaboration and participation requests, good news and impact stories.
 - A digital infrastructure that hosted ongoing research and opportunities for participation.
 - A forum to present ideas about research and methods.

Future topics of interest

Several topics were mentioned as future areas of interest to members of the network. These include:

- How to 'get going' in social care research,
- Access to greenspaces,
- End-of-life care,
- Technology.