

A coffee with



Helen Clough,

CRN: SWP Community Research Nurse in Somerset

What is your main purpose of your role and what geographical area do you cover?

I work with a group of Somerset GP practices in the community supporting them to recruit patients into the selected NIHR adopted research studies/trials. I also encourage and develop the practices research capabilities and facilitate research within my local area. I am based at Vine Surgery in Street and my furthest practice at present is 11 miles away.

What tasks/duties do you primarily carry out?

I manage the research portfolio to be undertaken within the collaborative of practices and ensure that all proposed research have ethics approval and the approval of Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group before starting. I identify possible participants through database searches and with the lead GP review patients for their suitability for entry into trials/studies. Consenting patients into the studies, reporting and documenting all aspects of the patient care throughout the study and taking samples such as blood from patients is all part of my role. I manage any risks and patient experience.

For the CRN I provide Clinical Trial expertise, support and training to other research nurses in South West Peninsula in addition to the education and training of GP practice staff for particular studies and trials. I am also a CRN working group member looking at the CRN Patient Experience Questionnaire working group and the EDGE2 roll out.

What are the challenges of your role?

Organisation is the key challenge. It is essential to be very committed and efficient as I can be working on several different studies/trials for several different practices in one day. Another challenge is keeping the GPs and practice staff motivated and enthusiastic about primary care research when there are other demands and pressure on their time.

What are the rewards of your role?

I truly love my job as a Community Research Nurse. It is a very rewarding experience working with participants. I enjoy the continuity of building relationships with them and feel that patients can learn more about their condition and raise concerns about their health. There is a happy balance between the practicalities of recruiting and monitoring patients in trials/studies and the academic scientific component of research.

Who do you work with professionally?

As well as the GP practice staff I work very closely with the CRN: SWP Research Associates and the wider delivery team; and with Research Trial/Study managers throughout the country and the research teams at Yeovil District Hospital and Musgrove Park Hospital.

Why does health research matter - what are the benefits for your patients?

Health research is important to improve the health of our population. We need evidence-based research to move forward with new medical treatments for conditions or to find new ways of diagnosis. I work with a wide range of patients from babies to the very elderly. Patients join our research numbers for a number of reasons, some mention altruism, other people say they have received good care through the NHS and wish to give something back. Many other participants feel that they may benefit themselves from new treatments.

