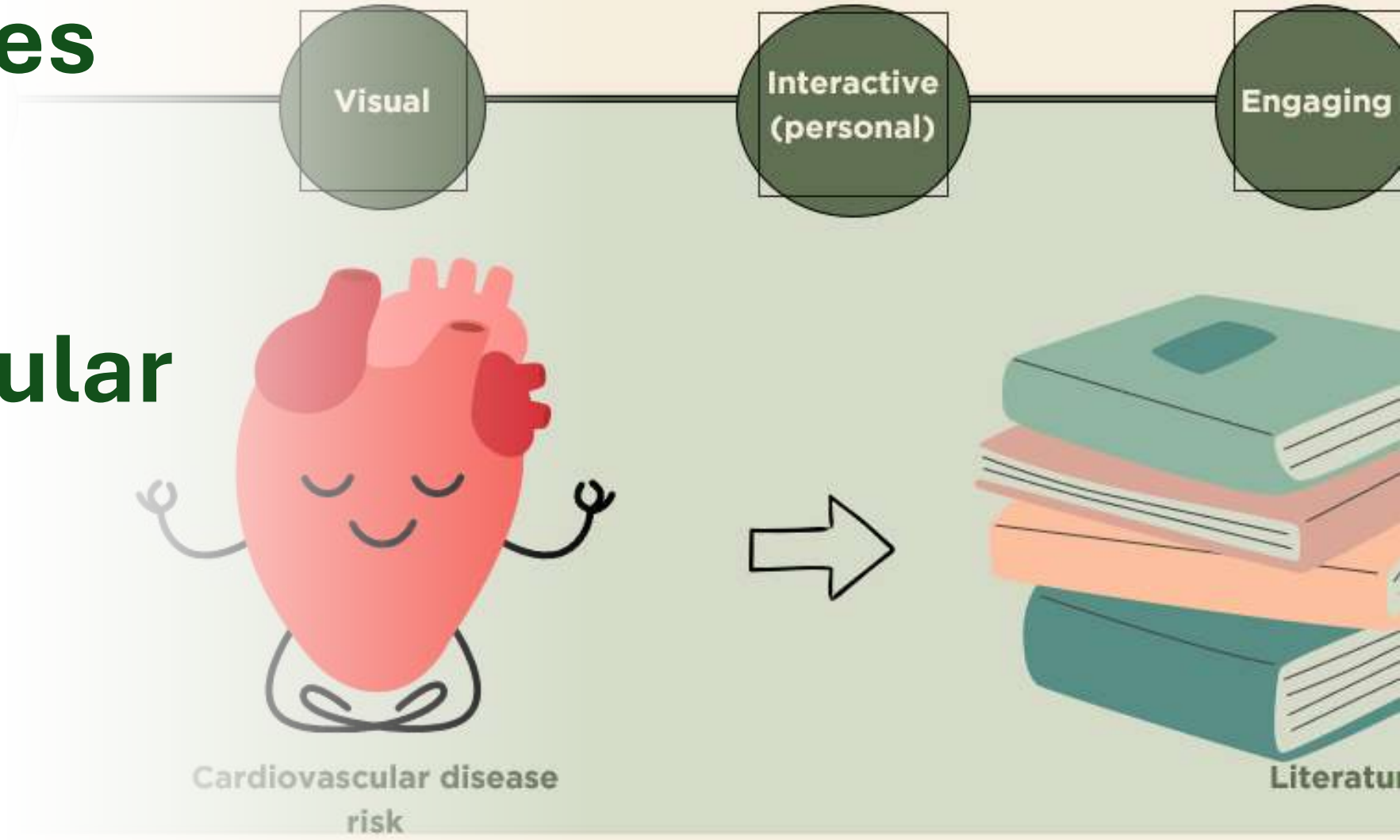


KEY CONCEPTS - GIVING INFORMATION

Working with communities to shape inclusive cardiovascular research



Why this work mattered

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains a major cause of hospital admissions in the UK, with many repeat events linked to preventable risk factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes. Prevention strategies, including lifestyle changes and taking medication, can reduce cardiovascular events; however, information is not always shared with people at risk in a way that feels relevant, trusted or improves understanding. Cardiac Nurse Consultant and NIHR predoctoral fellow David Burnett worked with Crawley Community Action and the Hangleton and Knoll Project to explore how people want to learn about heart health, and how community perspectives can help shape more meaningful cardiovascular research.

How the collaboration worked

The work was built around partnership from the outset. David Burnett was introduced to the health panels by Luke Boucher from Crawley Community Action and Claire Hines from the Hangleton and Knoll Project, enabling access to trusted local networks. Heart health sessions were delivered in familiar community settings rather than clinical environments. These sessions combined simple, visual demonstrations with open discussion, giving people space to ask questions, share experiences and talk about heart health in ways that felt comfortable and relevant. The sessions were designed to be inclusive and accessible, with flexible timings and a strong focus on clear communication. Community members played an active role, helping to shape thinking about how information should be shared and what future research should focus on.

Benefits of working collaboratively

Participants reported gaining a clearer and more personalised understanding of heart health, cardiovascular risk factors and prevention. Visual materials helped make complex information easier to understand, while open discussion enabled people to feel heard, informed and empowered. Community leaders highlighted the importance of creating safe, trusted spaces for these conversations. For researchers, the collaboration provided valuable insight into what communities need from health information, including the importance of trust, clarity, personal relevance and acknowledgement of digital exclusion.

The impact

The collaboration demonstrated a clear appetite from communities to engage with cardiovascular research when it is delivered in the right way, through trusted organisations and community settings. Participants reported increased understanding and confidence in managing their heart health, and many expressed interest in being involved in further research activity. For the research itself, community feedback is already shaping next steps, helping to ensure future studies are more inclusive, relevant and applicable. By working directly with communities, this approach supports better representation, stronger engagement and insights that more accurately reflect lived experience.

This case study highlights the importance of community collaboration in shaping inclusive cardiovascular research, leading to increased understanding, confidence, and engagement in managing heart health.