

“Supporting Health and Care Professionals to improve lives through research”

Northern Care Alliance
Clinical Research Capacity Building Plan for the Health and Care Professions



This work plan falls from the Northern Care Alliance (NCA) Research and Innovation Strategy 2022-2027.

Who is the plan for?

The NCA Clinical Research Capacity Building plan has been developed for Health and Care Professionals within the NCA. Namely; nursing, midwifery, Allied Health Professionals (NMAHP), pharmacists, healthcare scientists, social workers, radiographers and psychologists.

What is the National and Local Picture?

The NHS is committed, through the NHS constitution, to the promotion, conduct and use of research and innovation to improve the current and future care of the population. NHS England has a legal duty to promote research and innovation and use the evidence generated to improve clinical services¹. From 2019, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) included questions on research as a priority for improving patient care, as part of its well-led framework². Locally Health Education England recently published a dedicated research capacity building strategy for nurses, midwives and AHP's³.

Historically, the healthcare professions allied to medicine have had greater involvement in the delivery of research rather than leading it. Clinicians who lead research and continue to maintain their clinical practice are often referred to as clinical academics. Overall, nationally the proportion of healthcare professionals (allied to medicine) who are clinical academics is less than 0.1% of the workforce⁴. By contrast, clinical academics make up around 4.6% of the medical consultant workforce of the UK⁵.

In recent years there has been greater growth of clinical academics within the Allied Health Professions (AHP)'s. This has been demonstrated by the largest number of submissions and successful awards, to the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) fellowship schemes led by AHP's. In contrast the NIHR strategic review of training in 2017⁶, identified applications by nurses and midwives as the lowest and with the least likelihood of being successful.

The need to develop a research ready nursing, midwifery and AHP (NMAHP) workforce has been recognised and addressed through national (England) research strategies. The Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) for England published a research strategy for nursing (2021) to address a cultural shift and increase engagement of the workforce with research. This was closely followed with publication of a research strategy for the Allied Health Professions (2022) with similar ambitions to develop a skilled and engaged workforce in terms of research and evidence-based practice. Publication of a CNO for England research strategy for Midwifery is expected during 2022.

The Council of Deans of Health (2018) report on NMAHPs academic research careers suggests that 1% of the workforce should ideally be either pursuing doctorate or post-doctoral research opportunities⁷, the intention being to develop a cadre of research leaders to support the workforce.

Research Vision

Our vision is to create a vibrant culture for research, innovation and improvement, with pioneering opportunities for all, that advances and rapidly translates knowledge to improve clinical outcomes. Our aspiration is to be an international leader of research, innovation and health improvement across key specialist services aligned to organisational expertise and to exploit maximally those opportunities that are unique to the NCA.

Where Are We Now?

In accordance with the NIHR objectives, all clinical and care specialities across our Care Organisations will be committed to supporting high quality clinical or care practice-based research, innovation and improvement initiatives. There will be an increased focus on developing research

opportunities and the research skills of specific professional groups such as nurses, midwives, AHP's, pharmacists, social workers and healthcare scientists who have not traditionally led research.

These health and social care professions as research leaders are currently limited across NCA, with but a few AHP, pharmacist and healthcare scientist post-doctoral research leaders actively pursuing and successfully obtaining research income and undertaking applied health research to improve patient care.

The NCA has the ambition to increase engagement and leadership of research within the health and care professions. Currently there are 5 postdoctoral AHP roles, with none being formal clinical academic roles, and with no nursing and midwifery postdoctoral roles. We are not aware of any pharmacists, and only one healthcare scientists, who are actively engaged in undertaking research, although it's possible that the limitation is visibility rather than a lack of individuals successfully pursuing research. A small pipeline of clinicians (mainly AHP's) are developing early research skills with the intention of submitting external fellowship awards.

Currently the aspiration and pursuit of these opportunities for the health and care professions are underdeveloped. Opportunities abound with respect to clinical and care service research and improvement science; a key ambition is to harness these opportunities, inspire individuals to foster and develop a cadre of clinical academic health and care professions within the Trust. Senior management support for the CCR research capacity building plan and clinical and care staff job plans etc is essential. Clinical and care pressures and the pressures that clinical services are under is acknowledged. However, it is imperative that the professions are encouraged and supported to pursue improvements in care through research to not only improve care, but also to help attract and retain health and care staff in the organisation.

What Next?

Creating senior level clinical academic appointments within the relevant professional groups is pivotal to the success of this work. The aim is to provide opportunities for doctoral and master's study with the University of Salford and other Higher Education Institution (HEI) partner organisations. Talent spotting across the workforce and sign posting to internal and external research skills development opportunities (and mentorship) are required through a specific strategy.

Consultant level roles across NCA will be reviewed to scope the level of research activity currently being undertaken and post holders supported to enhance this activity and support others in their clinical area. The activities and strategies required to develop the research skills and confidence of the workforce are numerous and require focussed and directed sign posting for staff. A focal point for development and implementation of the strategy will be provided through the creation of a Centre for Clinical and Care Research (CCR). This will provide staff and patients with a central point to gain support, mentorship and guidance.

Our Strengths

- Board level support
- Strong partnerships with our local HEI's, specifically the University of Salford
- Support from the GM NHR Applied Research Collaborative (ARC)
- Close collaborations with medical and scientific colleagues
- Strong clinical expertise
- Access to local and national expertise for both research delivery and clinical academic career development
- Strong engagement in the research agenda by patient groups

Our Challenges

- To develop and implement an NCA clinical academic research career pathway
- Creating a culture and environment where the participation in research for patients, staff and the wider community is valued, encouraged and facilitated
- Identifying and developing staff with the talent, ability and drive to pursue a research career
- Establishing sustainable funding resources
- Creating dedicated clinical academic careers and roles

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Aim One	Aim: Establish the Centre for Clinical and Care Research (CCR)
	KPI:
	Objectives: 1.1 Branding 1.2 Infrastructure funding 1.3 Establish supportive roles – post doctoral and administrative 1.4 Launch a webpage on the intranet 1.5 Create a steering group 1.6 Create a faculty of clinicians and clinical academics to support the clinical academic stewardship
Aim Two	Aim: Talent Spotting
	KPI:
	Objectives: 2.1 Contribute to the Clinical Academic roles Implementation Network (CARINS) national annual survey 2.2 Establish a database that tracks talent progress 2.3 Capture health and care professions publications bi-annually 2.4 Running a programme of events 2.5 Publicise success 2.6 Provide bespoke opportunities for clinicians to contribute to research
Aim Three	Aim: Mentorship and Support
	KPI:
	Objectives: 3.1 Build on our strong links with UoS and HEI's across GM 3.2 Develop mentors (internal) - support next generation 3.3 Support fellowship applications (share successful applications) 3.4 Provide mock interviews 3.5 Identify suitable academic supervisors 3.6 Launch early researcher forum
Aim Four	Aim: Research Skills and Development
	KPI:
	Objectives: 4.1 Directing to HEI research methods courses 4.2 Provide a programme of internal research skills training 4.3 Support development of Journal clubs 4.4 Maximise development opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise internal and external internship opportunities 4.5 Health and Care Professions research conference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination skills 4.6 Networking opportunities

Aim Five	Aim: Career Pathways
	KPI:
	Objectives: 5.1 To develop an NCA clinical research career pathway 5.2 Establish career pathways for each post-doc (in collaboration with HEI's) 5.3 Identify pathway and roles for developing clinical academics 5.4 Engage with clinical and service managers 5.5 Problem solve 5.6 Create joint clinical and academic roles

Delivering the Strategy

The following high-level metrics will be used to monitor progress against the NCA research capacity building plan for health and care professionals.

Metrics	Target				
	22	23	24	25	26
Number of health and care professionals applying for external research awards	5	10	20	25	30
Number of health and care professionals engaging with research opportunities	20	50	100	125	150
Success rates of external research funding applications	40%	50%	60%	60%	60%
Number of publications by health and care professionals	20	30	50	75	80
Health and care professionals academic collaborations across GM	5	10	15	20	25
Total income associated with health and care professions research (£)	100K	300K	900K	1200K	1500K
Number of joint clinical academic posts	1	2	3	3	3

Key Performance Indicators against the aims

More detail metrics against each aim of the plan can be seen below.

Aim 1: Establish the Centre for Clinical and Care Research (CCR)						
KPI:						
Objectives	Actions/Measures	Target				
		22	23	24	25	26
1.1	Branding	√	-	-	-	-
1.2	Infrastructure funding	√	√	√	√	√
1.3	Establish and maintain supportive roles – 3X post-doctoral and administrative	√	√	-	-	-
1.4	Launch and maintain a webpage on the intranet	√	√	√	√	√
1.5	Create a steering group	√	-	-	-	-
1.6	Create a faculty of senior clinical academics to support the clinical academic stewardship	√	-	-	-	-

Aim 2: Talent Spotting						
KPI:						
Objectives	Actions/Measures	Target				
		22	23	24	25	26
2.1	Contribute to the Clinical Academic roles Implementation Network (CARINS) national annual survey	N/A	√	√	√	√
2.2	Establish and maintain a database that tracks talent progress	√	√	√	√	√
2.3	Capturing health and care professions publications bi-annually	√	√	√	√	√
2.4	Running events	2	2	2	2	2
2.5	Publicise success	√	√	√	√	√

Aim 3: Mentorship and Support						
KPI:						
Objectives	Actions/Measures	Target				
		22	23	24	25	26
3.1	Increasing the number of research/academic collaborations with UoS/ HEI's across GM	5	10	15	20	25
3.2	Develop mentors (internal) - support next generation	5	7	10	12	15
3.3	Support fellowship applications	5	7	10	12	15
3.4	Provide mock interviews	5*	7*	10*	12*	15*
3.5	Ensure fellowship applicants have a suitable academic supervisory team	5*	7*	10*	12*	15*
3.6	Launch and maintain early researcher forum	√	√	√	√	√

*refers to individuals (developing clinical researchers) rather than number of actions/events

Aim 4: Research Skills Development						
KPI:						
Objectives	Actions/Measures	Target				
		22	23	24	25	26
4.1	Directing to HEI research methods courses	10*	15*	20*	25*	30*
4.2	Implement and maintain programme of internal research training	√	√	√	√	√
4.3	Support development of Journal clubs	3	5	7	10	12
4.4	Maximise development opportunities					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise external development opportunities Develop internal research internship scheme 	3	5	5	7	7
4.5	Health and care professions research conference:					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination skills 	3*	5*	7*	7*	7*
4.6	Facilitate NCA wide networking opportunities	N/A	N/A	√	√	√
		2	4	6	8	10

*refers to individuals (developing clinical researchers) rather than number of actions/events

Aim 5: Career Pathways						
KPI:						
Objectives	Actions/Measures	Target				
		22	23	24	25	26
5.1	To develop and implement an NCA clinical research career pathway	N/A	√	√	√	√
5.2	Establish career pathways for each post-doc (in collaboration with HEI's) includes Job descriptions and funding agreements	1	3	3	5	5
5.3	Identify pathway and roles for developing clinical academics	2	3	3	5	5
5.4	Engage with clinical and service managers providing problem solving	√	√	√	√	√
5.5	Create joint clinical and academic roles	1	2	3	3	3

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