



National Institute for Health Research

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Introduction

The vision of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research.

This document describes how the NIHR Leadership Support and Development Programme is contributing to this vision.

Overview

The purpose of this programme is to develop a strong leadership capability within the NIHR Faculty, to enable the research that NIHR supports to be carried out effectively, and to deliver its full potential for increasing health and prosperity.

Participants come from a wide range of professional backgrounds, institutions, and experiences and perspectives of leadership. A common thread is that most individuals have had little formal development or preparation for their leadership roles. Many people find themselves responsible for teams of people, large budgets and sophisticated outcomes without significant training and development in leadership. Yet, collectively, the leaders are responsible for the NIHR budget that now totals approximately £1 billion per year.

The leadership programme is offered to individuals as members of the NIHR family, who are in or who are aspiring to leadership positions in NIHR. The leadership programme was launched in 2009, with twice-yearly intakes in the spring and autumn. In total 330 research leaders participated in the first phase of the programme. A further phase has been commissioned, informed by an independent evaluation, with delivery to continue until 31 March 2015.

Aim

The aim of the NIHR Leadership Programme is to improve the quality of research leadership in applied health and social care research. This will ensure that achievement of the NIHR's strategic goals is underpinned by leadership development as happens in other leading organisations. The focus of the programme is on leadership development that can clearly contribute to research performance and to the strategic priorities of NIHR.

Benefits

The NIHR Leadership programme offers benefits to:

- NIHR's leaders – to support and help them to be more effective in their challenging roles.
- Members of the NIHR Faculty – to able them to benefit from effective leadership.
- Patients and the public – who ultimately gain from more effective leadership delivering enhanced research within more research-active and research-aware institutions, leading to better patient care and outcomes.

Eligibility

Opportunities to take up leadership support and development will continue to be openly advertised on the NIHR website, with entry via a competitive process. There are four elements to the programme:

- **NIHR Leaders** – this element is available to the most senior research leaders of the NIHR, and to individuals on course to reach these positions. These include directors of NIHR's major research centres, units, networks, facilities and programmes, and NIHR Research Professors. Criteria for selection including the extent of responsibilities in research and in the NIHR; intensity of leadership challenges faced; commitment to developing as a leader in the NIHR; the desire to make a difference in the NIHR; and the commitment to developing leadership skills.
- **NIHR Trainees** – this element focuses on individuals who are making a significant contribution in their field, and who are taking on their first significant leadership and management roles. Candidates are selected by the programme organisers working with the NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre and the Dean for NIHR Trainees.
- **NIHR Strategic Projects** – this new part of the programme will support individuals and teams who are taking forward projects of strategic significance for NIHR. This should embrace both current NIHR organisational units and new developments. Leaders supported in this way will be 'learning while doing' – tackling important projects and becoming more capable leaders for the future.
- **NHS R&D Managers** – this new element will foster pro-active leadership by R&D managers as key members of the community of NIHR leaders, who have a vital role in supporting and enabling research in the NHS. This programme will focus on interventions that have a wider impact and support change that reaches beyond programme participants.

Designing and delivering the leadership programme

A team from Ashridge Business School was commissioned, initially through open tender, to establish the NIHR's leadership programme. The programme was designed to:

- Build core leadership and management skills.
- Be credible with the research community, having high face validity and an evidence base, utilising 'industry' best practices.
- Be applicable to individuals in different roles and organisations, and tailored to individual needs.
- Engage research leaders by offering clearly relevant content that meets their needs.
- Deliver benefits without requiring disproportionate time of participants.
- Provide training and development real time, in the work setting (not in a classroom or a workshop) and tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities that health research leaders face.
- Offer close, personal support to individuals facing tough organisational and personal challenges.
- Enable individuals to connect with other research leaders and learn from and with each other.

Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the NIHR Leadership Programme was carried out by RAND Europe. This determined that the programme had made a very positive impact on participants and should be continued.

Further information

Further details about the NIHR Leadership Support and Development Programme are available on the [NIHR website](#).

Department of Health Lead:

Dr David Cox
Deputy Director, Research Finance & Programmes
Research & Development Directorate
Department of Health
Email: R&D@dh.gsi.gov.uk