



National Institute for Health Research

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH UNITS

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 sets out how the NIHR Biomedical Research Units is contributing to this vision. Information about other elements of the NIHR clinical research infrastructure can be found in companion documents.

Overview

NIHR has established sixteen Biomedical Research Units (BRUs) within our leading NHS and University partnerships to drive progress on innovation and translational research in biomedicine into NHS practice. The BRUs undertake translational clinical research in priority areas of high disease burden and clinical need, which are currently under-represented in the NIHR Biomedical Research Centres, and in which the country has identified research strengths. NIHR BRUs “build on the best” whilst the NIHR Biomedical Research Centres are about “making the best better”.

Aims

- To support the further development of NHS/University partnerships with existing critical mass in the priority research areas.
- To enable excellent, but comparatively small, research groups (comprising a relatively small number of research leaders, working in one of the priority areas, who are at the forefront of their field internationally) to achieve critical mass.

Selection and Funding

The NIHR BRUs were selected through open competition, by an independent International Selection Panel using the following criteria:

- Relevance of the proposed research to the health of patients and the public.
- Strength of the strategic partnerships including those with industry.
- Strength of the forward plan for the BRU, particularly the strategy for generating a step change in the capacity of the partnership to undertake translational clinical research in the priority area.
- Value for money.

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The majority of units were established in 2008. Funding grants were provided for four years and covers the recurrent costs of patient - or people – based translational clinical research in the NHS. Eligible costs include:

- Research staff engaged on patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS.
- Research support staff supporting patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS.
- Research training, leading to a higher degree by research (e.g. MPhil, MD, PhD), for staff, of all disciplines, engaged on patient- or people-focused translational clinical research in the NHS.
- NHS service support costs of patient or people-focused translational clinical research (e.g. pharmacy, pathology, radiology)
- Other, legitimate and reasonable, indirect costs within the NHS (e.g. accommodation, payroll, HR, finance).

The performance of each BRU is monitored and reviewed by annual reports and site visits by the NIHR Central Commissioning Facility. BRUs that are not performing at the required standard will first be put on notice and, if the required standard is not achieved within a defined time-scale, funding will be withdrawn.

Biological Research Units

Details of the BRUs and their research themes.

NHS Organisation	University Partner	Priority Area
Barts & The London NHS Trust	Queen Mary, University of London	Cardiovascular Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease
Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	University of Leeds	Musculoskeletal Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Inflammatory arthritis, osteoarthritis and joint replacement
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	MRC Institute of Hearing Research & University of Nottingham	Deafness & Hearing Problems <i>Specialism:</i> Hearing and learning in early childhood, cognitive aspects of auditory habilitation, auditory handicap in ageing and tinnitus
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	University of Nottingham	Respiratory Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), fibrotic lung disorders and cystic fibrosis
Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust	University of Nottingham	Gastrointestinal Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Gastrointestinal infection
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre NHS Trust	University of Oxford	Musculoskeletal Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Disease prevention, early joint disease, joint replacement surgery, and surgical technology and surgical skill
Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust	Imperial College London	Cardiovascular Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Cardiac regeneration
Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust	Imperial College London	Respiratory Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Advanced lung diseases
Royal Liverpool & Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust	University of Liverpool	Gastrointestinal Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Pancreatic digestive disease

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Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	University of Sheffield	Musculoskeletal Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Osteoporosis and hip prosthesis loosening
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	University of Sheffield	Cardiovascular Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Coronary artery disease and pulmonary hypertension
Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust	University of Southampton	Nutrition, Diet & Lifestyle (including Obesity) <i>Specialism:</i> Optimising nutrition: to improve maternal and infant health; in child development and ill-health; and for metabolic and musculoskeletal health in adults and the elderly
Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust	University of Southampton	Respiratory Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Asthma and COPD
University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust	University of Bristol	Cardiovascular Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Protecting the heart and patient in adult and paediatric cardiac surgery; vein graft stenosis; unstable atherosclerosis; angiogenesis/arteriogenesis; and inflammation and sepsis
University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust	University of Birmingham	Gastrointestinal Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Chronic liver disease
University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust	University of Leicester	Cardiovascular Disease <i>Specialism:</i> Cardiovascular genetics, hypertension and vascular damage and novel cardiovascular therapeutic interventions

New open competition for NIHR funding from April 2012

The contracts for NIHR BRU funding and designation via the first competition will end in March 2012. A new open competition was launched in February 2011 to designate and fund NIHR BRUs for the next five-year period, starting from 1 April 2012.

An International Selection Panel reviewed applications for funding, and the new NIHR BRUs were announced in August 2011. Details of the announcement are available on the [NIHR website](#).

Further information

Detailed information about the resources and capabilities of the existing BRCs is available at [UK Experimental Medicine Resource Finder website](#), or contact the NIHR Office for Clinical Research Infrastructure at nocri@nihr.ac.uk.

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