



## **National Institute for Health Research**

### **INFORMATION SYSTEMS FUNCTION**

#### **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 Information Systems Function contributes to this vision.

#### **Overview**

The NIHR provides the framework through which the Department of Health can position, maintain and manage a distributed health research system. To improve the health research environment, the NIHR maintains various corporate information sharing and business support services.

They are managed as a programme to consolidate, unify, streamline and simplify them into a suite of corporate information services for the NIHR. These are known collectively as the 'NIHR Information Systems Function'.

#### **Aim**

To create, with partners where appropriate, an integrated set of national services and systems for health research and research management that:

- Unify and simplify the administrative procedures associated with regulation, governance, and reporting and research administration.
- Enable procedures and input of data to take place once only, recognising the interdependency of systems and processes.
- Make information supporting regulatory approvals and permissions available via secure systems and processes to everyone who needs to act on it.
- Support and integrate the operational functions of the NIHR.

#### **Scope**

The NIHR Information System Function has three key elements all of which are designed to support the NIHR, to meet its overarching objectives.

## 1. The NIHR Portal

The NIHR Portal provides internet and intranet facilities for the NIHR.

The Portal has been developed to:

- Act as the first point of entry for researchers into a range of on-line secure services and applications to support and develop research.
- Support individuals who are involved, or want to become involved, in health and social care research, including researchers, R&D managers, policy makers, patients, service users and the public.
- Provide a unified interface for information required for ethics review, NHS site-specific permissions and regulatory authorisation of clinical trials.
- Give easy access to information, documents, guidance and people to help investigators and R&D managers work efficiently and consistently.
- Offer a central resource of information on each study's design, organisation and progress to facilitate R&D management and inform the public.
- Provide access to a national repository (or network of repositories), where all NIHR investigators can archive protocols, data and conclusions.
- Provide the public internet facility for all NIHR organisations thereby achieving the objectives set out in the government's web standards and guidelines.
- Be the primary on-line communications channel for the whole of the NIHR.

## 2. R&D Information Systems

The NIHR has been developing a number of specific interoperable systems to fulfil identified need within the research community, with many of these systems already live or scheduled to be launched soon:

- Provision of information about NIHR studies so that patients can be informed about research that is of particular relevance to them.
- Provision for researchers and research managers to access and manage the information and guidance required to operate efficiently and participate in high quality patient focused R&D with proper governance.
- Be the national source of information relating to NIHR studies.
- Provide and promote the secure integration of systems within and across the NIHR.
- Enable the facility for "once only" research study data-entry, thus removing the need for data to be entered multiple times in different systems and, in the process, addressing associated data integrity issues.
- Reduce the administrative burden of proposals, applications and reporting, releasing effort to manage outcomes and enable more effective monitoring and review.
- Provision of a Standard Application Form to provide a common integrated gateway to NIHR funding.

- Development of customised modules that meet the needs of individual NIHR organisations (where applicable and necessary), as part of the overarching NIHR systems architecture.

### 3. Data Standards and handling

Parallel to the development of systems the NIHR is also developing vital and necessary data standards that are:

- Reviewing, defining and publishing standards and workflow processes.
- Providing standards that are underpinning systems and services to support the operation of all the main elements of the NIHR including commissioning, funding, approvals, research management and outputs.
- Enabling the development of a repository of data standards for the NIHR and its partners, and adopting international standards where relevant.
- Designed to enable researchers and organisations to exchange standard data sets and documents that require reports and outputs for regulation, accountability, or the administration of grants and contracts.
- Working to ensure that the standard data sets and documents are linked to important collaborators including UK Pubmed Central, and other relevant elements of the NHS National Knowledge Service or systems providing access to research outputs.

### Benefits

The NIHR Information Systems Function is designed to enable the following benefits:

- Improved efficiency and effectiveness of research commissioning and initiation by giving policy makers, commissioners and researchers a clearer view of research requirements, and by supporting researchers and research networks.
- Reduced time taken in seeking ethical and regulatory review by simplifying, clarifying and integrating processes, implementing web-based submission systems, research passports, advice and other services.
- To make the UK more attractive internationally as a site for research.
- Increased recruitment by enabling clinicians, patients and the public to gain easy access to information about current trials and other well-designed studies.
- Improved uptake of findings by increasing the visibility of NIHR research findings:
  - supporting the principle of open access to health research outputs by making NIHR outputs readily and easily available through systems used by decision-makers; and
  - working with partners to contribute to international collaboration.

- Support the Government's policies as set out in the Plan for Growth and the Life Science Package, in improving economic growth within the United Kingdom

### **Further Information**

For further information on the NIHR Information Systems Function including the scope, current activities, programme governance and approach, are available on the [NIHR website](#).

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