



**National Institute for
Health Research**

BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 5.1 (established)

NIHR CLINICAL RESEARCH NETWORK

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This Implementation Plan provides more details on one of the key components of that strategy: NIHR Clinical Research Network. This document will be regularly updated. The latest version should be used.

The NIHR Clinical Research Network has been fully implemented.

Version: 10 (final)

Issue date: The final plan was issued in July 2009 and edited in January 2010.

The NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) is the English element of the UK Clinical Research Network (UKCRN), which is being developed as a central work stream under the auspices of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC). The UKCRC is a partnership of organisations including the Department of Health, clinical research funders, academic medicine, the NHS, regulatory bodies, industry and patients. Its aim is to establish the UK as a world leader in clinical research by harnessing the clinical research potential of the NHS (See www.ukcrc.org for more details).

Aim

- To ensure that patients and healthcare professionals from all parts of the country are able to participate in and benefit from clinical research.
- To integrate health research and patient care.
- To improve the quality, speed, and co-ordination of clinical research by removing the barriers to research in the NHS.
- To strengthen research collaboration with industry and ensure the NHS can meet the health research needs of industry.

Purpose

- The purpose of the NIHR Clinical Research Network is to provide a world-class health service infrastructure to support clinical research.

¹ *Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy*. The NHS contribution to health research in England. Department of Health. 2006

- To allocate and manage funding to meet the NHS Service Support Costs of NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio studies. These studies include randomised controlled trials of interventions (including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care) and other well-designed studies for commercial and non-commercial sponsors. This includes pivotal licensing studies undertaken for industry on a transparent full-cost recovery basis. Criteria governing the eligibility of studies for the NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio can be found at www.crncc.nihr.ac.uk
- To play a key role in promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research.
- To enable research to be conducted across the full spectrum of disease and clinical need through a set of managed research networks.

Structure

The NIHR Clinical Research Network encompasses:

- The NIHR Clinical Research Network Coordinating Centre. The NIHR Clinical Research Network Coordinating Centre (NIHR CRN CC), (previously known as the UK CRN CC) was established in early 2005 to co-ordinate the activities of all the NIHR networks in England and devolved administrations. More details are available at www.crncc.nihr.ac.uk
- The NIHR Primary Care Research Network, co-ordinated by the NIHR Clinical Research Network Co-ordinating Centre and comprising eight Local Research Networks.
- The NIHR Comprehensive Clinical Research Network, comprising 25 local research networks covering England, to address all disease/need areas other than (and potentially including) those covered by the Topic Specific Research Networks. This network will play a key role in allocating and managing funding to meet the NHS Service Support Costs of clinical research, and it will streamline research management to deliver proper governance. Co-ordination, support and performance management will be provided by the NIHR Clinical Research Network Co-ordinating Centre. Establishment was incremental over the 2-year R&D transition period, which started in April 2007 and completed in March 2009. (see Implementation Plan 5.1a for further details)
- Six Topic Specific Research Networks in England have been commissioned:
 - Cancer: The successful National Cancer Research Network (NCRN) was established in 2001. NIHR is building on the concept and the experience of the NCRN to establish all subsequent clinical research networks. The NCRN Co-ordinating Centre was established following competition. In England, each Local Research Network of the NCRN is fully integrated with its local cancer service network. The NCRN therefore covers the whole country. No major changes are planned to its structure (see www.ncrn.org.uk/ for more details).
 - Mental Health: The Mental Health Research Network has already been established. It comprises a Co-ordinating Centre and eight Local Research Networks that together cover approximately 60% of the English population (see www.mhrn.info/index.html for more details).

- Medicines for Children; Diabetes; Stroke; Dementias & Neurodegenerative Diseases (DeNDRON): Co-ordinating Centres have been established by competition. Following competitive bidding processes, between six and eight Local Research Networks have been established in each Topic area. Further information is available at the following websites:

Medicines for Children at www.mcrn.org.uk/

Diabetes at www.ukdrn.org/

Stroke at www.uksrn.ac.uk/

DeNDRON at www.dendron.org.uk/

Activities

The core activities of each of the Local Research Networks of the Topic Specific Networks will be:

- Recruiting patients to participate in NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio studies in the topic area.
- Managing the progress of patients through the research process.
- Carrying out investigations, assessments and tests attributed as NHS Support activities using DH guidance on the attribution of non-commercial Research costs, Support costs and Treatment costs
- Collecting, collating and submitting research performance management data
- Promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research.
- Working with the NIHR Clinical Research Network Co-ordinating Centre to achieve the aims of the Network as part of the NIHR Clinical Research Network.
- Local Research Networks will not be funded to:
 - Carry out activities that are attributed to Research Costs or NHS Treatment Costs
 - Support studies that are not in the NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio;
 - Undertake any training other than that required to fulfil their role as NIHR Associates e.g. GCP training is acceptable;

The core activities of the Co-ordinating Centre for each Topic Specific Network are:

- Providing leadership to the Topic Specific Network.
- Establishing and developing the Local Research Networks.
- Managing the Topic Specific Network on behalf of the NIHR and (where appropriate) Departments of Health in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
- Co-ordinating network participation in NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio studies.
- Development and quality assurance of Local Research Networks.
- Promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research.
- Managing internal and external relationships.
- Working with the NIHR Clinical Research Network Co-ordinating Centre to achieve the aims of the NIHR Clinical Research Network.

The core activities of the overall NIHR Clinical Research Network Co-ordinating Centre are:

- Providing leadership to the NIHR and UK Clinical Research Networks.
- Supporting the NIHR and Department[s] of Health in developing all Co-ordinating Centres and, through them, the Topic Specific Research Networks.
- Supporting the Department[s] of Health in managing the NIHR and UK Clinical Research Networks.
- Providing support to all Co-ordinating Centres and networks on issues that are common to all NIHR Clinical Research Networks.
- Strengthening existing research interactions between the NHS and industry.
- Promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research
- Managing internal and external relationships.
- Working closely with all NIHR and UKCRC partners - Government, research charities, industry and the public - to assist the NIHR and UKCRC in achieving their wider aims regarding the organisation and development of research infrastructure, research activity, research workforce, and regulation.

Support elements

- The purpose of the NIHR Clinical Research Network is to provide the NHS infrastructure in England to support NIHR Clinical Research Network Portfolio studies. It will do so by allocating and managing NHS service support funding to facilitate the conduct of, and remove barriers to, research in the NHS.
- Different topic-specific Clinical Research Networks are expected to require different NHS infrastructure support to achieve their objectives. For example, a mental health research network may require additional clinical psychology support for its research, while a stroke research network may require additional radiology support for its research. Therefore, although the specific nature of a requirement may be different (psychology *c.f.* radiology), the general nature of the requirement (NHS service support) is similar.
- The type of support that will be provided through the NIHR Clinical Research Network in a typical Local Research Network will include some or all of the following:
 - Clinical Leadership
 - Local Research Network Manager
 - Research Nurses (or similar staff)
 - Data Managers
 - Secretarial support
 - Junior medical staff sessions
 - Other clinical staff sessions relevant to the topic area (e.g. clinical psychology, community psychiatric nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy).
- Appropriate diagnostic test or clinical services costs, such as:
 - Pharmacy support
 - Pathology support
 - Radiology support

- Information technology support.
- Essential running costs.

Implementation Timetable

- Jan 2006 - R&D strategy published confirming intention to continue establishing the various elements of the Clinical Research Network.
- Feb 2006 - successful bidders for Medicines for Children Local Research Networks (LRNs) confirmed.
- Feb 2006 - LRNs for remaining Topic Specific Networks decided.
- Apr 2006 - allocations to four new Topic Specific Networks commence.
- June 2006 – interviews for NIHR Primary Care Research Network LRNs.
- Oct 2006 – funding commences for successful NIHR Primary Care Research Network LRNs commences.
- Apr 2007 – Implementation of the NIHR Comprehensive Clinical Research Network commences.
- Apr 2009 – NIHR Clinical Research Network fully established.

Department of Health Lead:

Dr Louise Wood

Head of NHS Research Infrastructure and Industry R&D Relations

Email: R&D@dh.gsi.gov.uk