

National Institute for Health Research Online Portal Survey Report

February 2007

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1. **Introduction**

1.1 **Overview of respondents**

Three hundred and fifty people from a wide range of disciplines responded to our survey. A brief analysis of our respondents' backgrounds is shown in Section 5.

1.2 **Additional Comments**

Appendix I lists additional services respondents would like to see included in the portal. Other comments about the portal are grouped in Appendix II.

We will consider all the points made in developing the portal.

2. **Accessing information**

Questions in this section were designed to assess the type of information our stakeholders want to access via the NIHR portal.

2.1 **Repositories**

We asked how useful it would be to access data from a list of repositories. The majority of respondents marked all the repositories listed as at least "somewhat useful."

Delivery of full text documents from Medline searches was the most popular, with 86% marking it as very useful. The least useful was DUETS - 37% of you were not aware of it.

Table 2.1 Usefulness of access to data repositories.

How useful to you will it be to access data from the following repositories?	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	Don't know it
Delivery of full text documents from Medline searches	86%	9%	3%	2%
UKPubMed Central	70%	21%	4%	5%
Cochrane Database	68%	22%	5%	5%
National Library for Health	57%	30%	5%	8%
RDInfo	46%	31%	5%	18%
Research Findings Electronic Register	40%	30%	5%	25%
National Research Register	44%	36%	6%	15%
UKCRN database of clinical studies (portfolio database)	38%	33%	7%	22%
database of NIHR funded researchers	33%	36%	8%	22%
Database of Uncertainties about the Effects of Treatments (DUETS)	17%	28%	17%	37%

Note: There was a small but not significant variation between respondents in different research roles.

2.2 Websites visited

Respondents listed University websites as the most visited sites, followed by the Department of Health.

The five most, and five least, visited websites are shown below.

Fig 2.2a Most visited websites

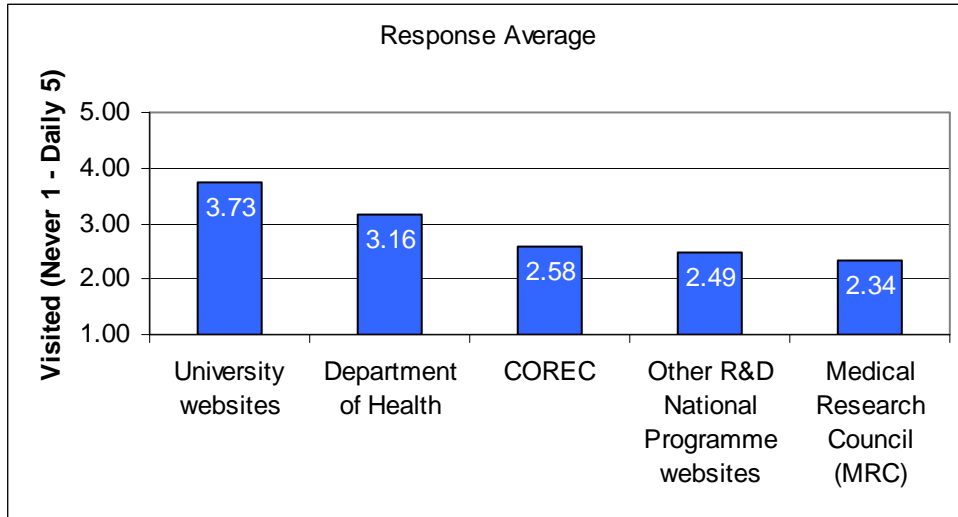
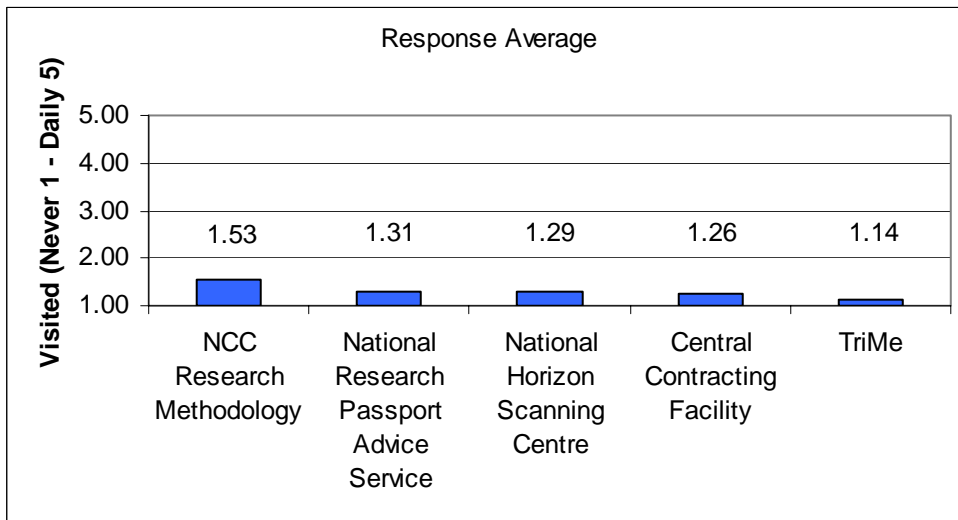


Fig 2.2b Least visited websites.



Note 1: There was no significant variation in the websites visited across the range of stakeholder categories.

Note 2: the TriMe website is not yet available which accounts for its low placement..

3. Portal Services

We asked respondents to rate, from very Interested to not interested, a number of potential services that the portal could deliver via a personalised page. All the services listed were positively received. The top 5 were:

- Calls for funding
- Searchable map of research projects and networks
- Expert advice on ethics
- Expert advice on research methods
- Software to help researchers work together to prepare and submit proposals

62% were 'very interested' in receiving calls for proposals.

Only 3% stated they would not be interested in a 'searchable map of research projects and networks'.

Table 3.1 shows all the services listed.

How interested would you be in receiving the following services via a personalised page?	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not sure	Not interested
Calls for funding	62%	28%	5%	5%
Searchable map of research projects and networks	49%	44%	4%	3%
Expert advice on ethics	49%	41%	2%	8%
Expert advice on research methods	44%	46%	4%	6%
Software to help researchers work together to prepare and submit proposals	46%	41%	6%	8%
Online bibliographic software	41%	40%	6%	14%
General R&D news	30%	55%	5%	10%
Opportunities to have research peer-reviewed	35%	42%	8%	15%
Requests for peer-review of proposals	24%	54%	8%	13%
Collaboration tools (eg Skype phone calls between researchers)	25%	48%	14%	14%
My Research Passport	20%	36%	31%	13%
Online discussion	16%	49%	14%	21%
Researchers re-united (based on a directory of researchers)	18%	43%	16%	24%
Personal web page with social networking features (MyResearchSpace)	17%	39%	17%	27%
Web based storage for files	18%	36%	12%	34%

See Appendix 1 for a list of additional services suggested by respondents

Breaking these results down by respondent types:

- 76% of lead researchers were very interested in receiving calls for proposals.
- Non-professionals were less supportive of the "researchers reunited" idea
 - only 43% showed an interest
 - 40% were not in favour.
- 97% of research managers were interested in the "searchable map of research projects and networks"; 70% want web based file storage. Only 9% of research managers stated they were not interested in the proposal for "researchers reunited".
- Administrative support respondents were very supportive of an expert advice service and 74% were very interested in advice on ethics. They were also the most interested in "MyResearchSpace".
- 88% of research users were very supportive of the "online bibliographic software" and 97% were interested in the "searchable map of research projects and networks".

4. Sharing Information

We also wanted to gauge how NIHR stakeholders felt about sharing personal information via the web portal. The majority of responses were positive, although only 60% would be willing to provide personal contact details to an open directory of researchers. The majority of the remaining 40% were unsure (at 27%) rather than opposed to the idea (at 13%).

As a group, lead researchers were much more willing to share their details in this way, with 70% agreeing and only 6% opposing the proposal. The least willing group to share this information were the non-professionals supporting research, with only 32% registering a positive response (see table 4.1 for more detail).

Figs 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3 How willing are respondents to share their details?

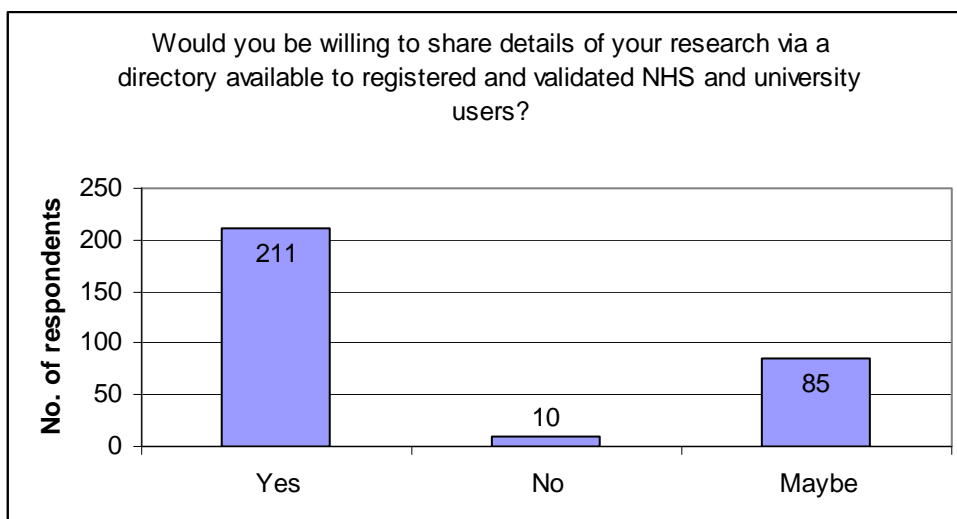
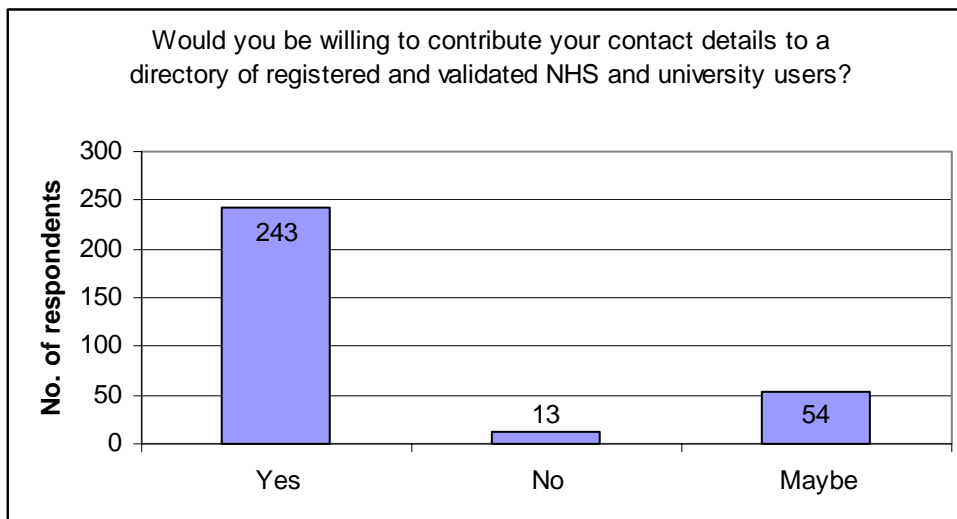


Table 4.1 Willingness to share details by respondent type (figures = the percentages of positive responses to each question).

Role	Would you be willing to contribute your contact details to an open directory of researchers?	Would you be willing to contribute your contact details to a directory of registered and validated NHS and university users?	Would you be willing to share details of your research via a directory available to registered and validated NHS and university users?
Lead Researcher	70%	88%	78%
Researcher supporting research led by others	65%	85%	73%
Research manager	61%	78%	76%
Other	60%	67%	67%
Research user	58%	75%	74%
Administrative support to research	53%	79%	53%
not a research professional but support research done by others	32%	62%	47%
No role with regard to research	25%	25%	25%

5. About the respondents

The 10 most common job titles are shown in Table 5.1 below.

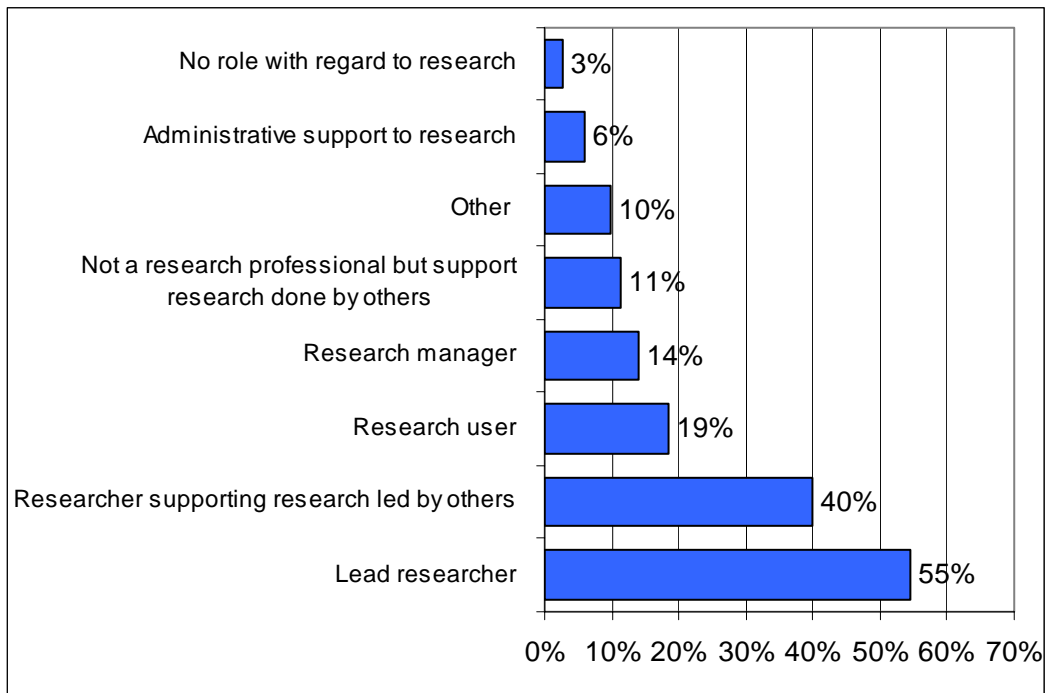
Table 5.1 Top 10 job titles of surveyed respondents.

Job Title	Count
Research Fellow	18
Senior Lecturer	17
Lecturer	14
Consultant Clinical Scientist	10
Research Associate	9
Consultant Clinical Biochemist	7
professor	7
Senior Research Fellow	7
Clinical Scientist	5
Research Network Manager	4

The largest single group of respondents by research role were “Lead researchers” followed by “Researchers supporting work led by others”. These two groups account for 71% of respondents. Fig.5.1 shows the breakdown of respondent’s research roles.

Note: Respondents were able to select more than one role.

Fig.5.1 Percentage of respondents in each research role.



60% of Lead Researchers have published 6 or more peer-reviewed papers as lead author and 26% have published 11 or more papers.

Fig 5.2 Numbers of peer reviewed papers published by respondent type.

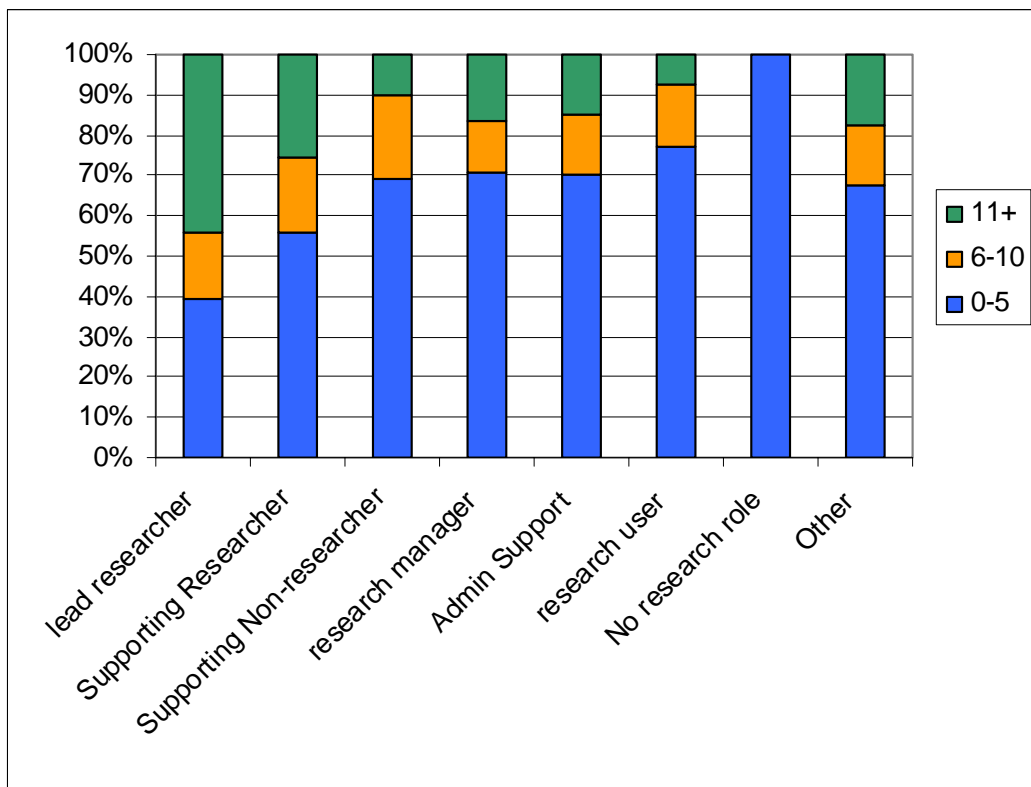
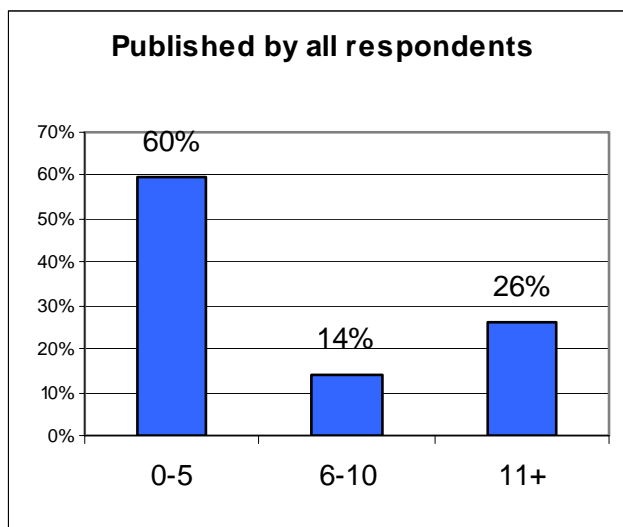


Fig 5.3 Numbers of peer reviewed papers published by all respondents.



Appendix 1

Other services not listed:

1.	Comments about providing advice and support for ...
	... the whole research process, not just methods and ethics
	... for database use and development
	... those with a predominately clinical post on small pump priming research grants
	... from an R&D Support Unit
	... on getting work published and dissemination
	... how to have research user-reviewed
	... on research careers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R&D job opportunities and adverts • Mentoring services for Health Service researchers
	... a comprehensive search engine for systematic reviews. Some institutions provide some of these facilities
	... to obtain advice on drafts of papers to be submitted for publication
	... a central store of useful tools for researchers, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measurement instruments • training manuals • comprehensive sortable list of funding opportunities
	... software to help researchers record/ collate references (reference manager) and analyse data (SPSS).
	... for complete research cycle information and sharing
	... a glossary/bibliography of terms/phrases commonly used in the research arena eg MHRA, CTA, competent authority.
	... careers advice for those new to the research field.
	... online qualitative and statistical software
	... to develop research methodology
	... plagiarism check service
	... independent and confidential career counselling.
	... on other regulatory submissions (including other countries)
	... on R&D applications
	... for specialist topic forums
	... to underpin research review and approval mechanisms
	... 'how to' and where to start research
2.	Requests for access to the following online journals and information ...
	... comprehensive e-journal access, including analytical chemistry journals
	... searchable patent database links
	... advances in the field of Nosokinetics
	... on bioinformatics services
	... impact factors for journals
3.	Requests for access to national datasets for ...
	... commonly used census data
	... statistical programmes for research.
	... medicinal and aromatic plants database
4.	Requests for links to ...
	... strategic documents from major funding bodies
	... assessment of success rates for the various calls for proposals.
	... F7 and Public Health Networks
	... NHS R&D Forum links

	... MHRA and DH updates
	... Networks of people interested in same issue from multi-professional angle
	... user groups interested in promoting or participating in research
5.	Wanted for Patient and Public Involvement ...
	... a forum for patient's views
	... a facility for more interaction and discussion of methods issues to strengthen the knowledge base as opposed to the opinion base. Creating replicable knowledge is largely a matter of methods. A service indexed by detailed methods words, rather than subject words, would be very valuable
	... up-to-date data on infrastructure, e.g. hospital services, locations, contacts, personnel
6.	Guidance ...
	... comprehensive website of research methodology guidance, including detailed publications on optimum methods for conducting all types of research.
	... compendium of outline protocols eg. for an RCT, survey, or systematic review
	... full text EMBASE, MEDLINE, COCHRANE as above would be great
	... on software packages and statistical advice
	... anything which makes the process of ethics and R&D governance more straightforward.
	... on statistics, both in compiling funding applications and seeking REC/R&D approvals
	... on research methodologies
	... statistical programmes for research.
	... on data management.
	... central funding deadline table as recently developed by NIHR
7.	Training ...
	... news about training events, conference calls
	... details of specialist courses - either web based or not
8.	Miscellaneous
	Increasing speed of access to the Ensemble Genome Browser
	I suppose the opportunity to broadcast my own calls and suggestions/ If these services are geared primarily to UK researchers it is VERY difficult to assess my interest appropriately since similar initiatives are also being managed in Canada. This survey does not make the service catchment area clear.
	In addition to web based storage for files, somewhere to store unpublished data and access that of others.
	Access to SPSS
	No I think you may have covered them all, especially having submissions checked before they go and the soft ware to work together. Literature searches are difficult as we have no access to a library as it has been shut in an effort to cut costs.

Appendix 2

Further commentary and views on the NIHR portal

We received a high level of support for our plans to develop the portal:

1. Sounds like a good plan - all power to your elbows!
2. great idea - please do it!
3. Sounds like a really great development that has the potential to kick off much more time/subject efficient networking. I look forward to seeing it up and running.
4. This has enormous potential and I hope it will enable more clinical research to take place.
5. I would like to do research and this type of tool would give me the opportunity to access information, advice and support
6. Great idea. About time we all shared information and support
7. Excellent idea - I already get around 20 reminders and newsletters each month on funding opportunities etc. Just having one would be great.
Thanks

Some of you had concerns about duplicating what is already there:

1. It's a good idea to create a website but I think it might be reinventing the wheel in places. There are already excellent 'soft networks' (e.g. CHAIN) that allow researchers to communicate and share. Most funding bodies offer training in research, peer review, ethics etc. With Roberts funding, universities now also offer training for all research staff around methods, ethics, publication etc. It's also the case that a number of new websites and services are being planned by both commercial and public organisations that this site would be competing with. Perhaps a better approach if such a site is planned would be to have links to other useful sites, materials etc. Trent have a good example of this on their website with lots of free materials on research to download.
2. It seems that a lot of what will be on offer is already available through University websites and open to the general public.
3. Some aspects of the questionnaire are difficult to fill in as we already have ready access from other sources.

Quite a number of points about access were made:

1. many of the developments are (reported) via NHS web sites and are impossible for academic researchers to access. It is important that access is also available to Universities.
2. I just want to check that I would be able to have access to this website. I work for a non-maintained special school for children with language impairments. I carry out research into the effectiveness of speech and language therapy intervention. However, I am not based in the NHS or a university, so can I have access?
3. I conducted my research in a grant maintained school, outside of the NHS, because of the barriers that NHS research protocol imposed to actually getting started. I couldn't access the professional research support I needed (e.g. statistician) through the NHS R&D officer, so finally decided to carry out my project elsewhere and draw on informal support

- for methods and data analysis. My experience was that the NHS ethos of promoting evidence based practice was not matched by professional support on the ground.
4. I welcome this initiative. An increasing number of allied health professionals including myself, work outside of the NHS e.g. in education. We also need to be able to access any research resources set up for allied health professionals.
 5. ? UK wide or just England (as a Scottish based person)
 6. University-based web access in my Trust currently denies access to NHS-based resources.
 7. Will this be a one stop shop for all interested in health and social care research?

Some of you made points about the potential services on offer:

1. This seems very promising. If the portal could provide an on-line CV building database which meets NHS R&D, MRC, SDO etc requirements that would be fantastic and save hours of time. People could share it as wished for bidding purposes.
2. (There is) a real need to have a one-step application to R&D in multiple sites - and that sites are obliged to accept the standard R&D form - without supplements A mechanism whereby research which impacts very little on resources could have a fast track approval (eg where only 1 or 2 patients to be enrolled and very little tests/visits above regular SOC).
3. Please ensure any system is inclusive of social care and include social care resources and research.
4. As a clinician, access to up to date info and current research is so important. Also perhaps guidance on sources of info on getting involved in research and signposting to agencies would be useful.
5. I think it will be important to be able to identify the profession of the researcher, as for some research it is important to collaborate within the profession. Not all professions, in fact few if any of the therapy professions, have up to date searchable databases so networking within the profession is rather ad hoc.
6. Could see our website, www.idrn.org , the Infectious Disease Research Network. We have some of the facilities that you mention available for ID researchers, such as a database of researchers and their contact details and interests, plus a mailing list highlighting events and funding of interest etc. Happy for you to get in touch if you require more info or wish to discuss ideas.
7. Within the AHP professions and to facilitate enhanced patient care, there is a need for a direct link between researchers within HEI institutions and those within DH institutions to be facilitated.
8. Theme and topic, discipline identifiers
9. How about a directory of unfinished papers to assist collaboration with someone with fresh eyes to finish the paper and get it published.
10. Of all the things most needed is full text online with pdf download for EVERY peer review journal. That would be more important than anything else.
11. Universal full text access to all journals is the key to dissemination of knowledge and removes a 'knowledge hierarchy'.

The importance of reliability and usability were highlighted:

1. portals are great if the services and information offered are very clearly described (including management details).
2. Reliability and ongoing support will be key to success. The information must be pertinent and broken links etc sorted ASAP. I am guessing you have thought about this already though!
3. My interest is to take a cross projects view of activity at a site and to monitor its progress through from protocol to patient recruitment.
4. I don't find it very user friendly

A couple of comments underlined the importance of good information dissemination:

1. I had not heard of some of the services which you asked about (shame on me). However, there are sources which are available in some form, but which are not widely known. Among these are:
 - ESDS/UK Data Archive
 - newsletters and events calendar
 - Surrey Question Bank
 - NCRM newsletters
 - Feeds from groups such as science, statistical, statutory and educational
 - ESRC
2. Just to comment that many of the websites that you have included in your questionnaire were unfamiliar to me.