



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 contributes to this vision.

Overview

The purpose of the NIHR Leadership Programme is to develop a strong leadership capability within the NIHR Faculty, so that the research NIHR supports is carried out effectively, and delivers its full potential for increasing health and prosperity.

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

The leadership programme is for individuals in the NIHR, who are in or who are aspiring to leadership positions in the NIHR. The leadership programme was launched in 2009. In total 330 research leaders participated in the first phase of the programme. A second phase was commissioned, informed by an independent evaluation, and completed 31 March 2015. The NIHR announced Ashridge Business School as the successful bidders for the next phase of the Leadership Programme which commenced in September 2015.

Aim

The aim of the NIHR Leadership Programme is to improve the quality of leadership in 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 programme focuses on leadership development that contributes to research performance and to the strategic priorities of the 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.
- The NHS R&D management community - to help them fulfil their key role in facilitating high quality research.
- Patients and the public – who ultimately gain from more effective leadership delivering enhanced research within 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** – for the most senior research leaders of the NIHR, and to individuals on course to reach these positions. These include directors of the NIHR's major research centres, units, networks, facilities and programmes, and NIHR Research Professors. Criteria for selection include the extent of responsibilities in research and within 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 commitment to developing leadership skills.
- **NIHR Trainees** – for 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 part of the programme supports individuals and teams who are taking forward projects of strategic significance for the NIHR. This includes both current NIHR organisational units and new developments. The leaders supported in this way are 'learning while doing' – tackling important projects and becoming more capable leaders for the future.
- **NHS R&D Managers** – this programme element fosters 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 in the R&D management community that reaches beyond programme participants.

Designing and delivering the leadership programme

A team from Ashridge Business School was commissioned through open tender, to establish the NIHR's leadership programme. The programme is 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 in 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, to learn from and with each other, in order to be able to play their full role within the NIHR.

Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the NIHR Leadership Programme was carried out by RAND Europe¹. This determined that the programme had made a very positive impact on participants and should be continued. A further evaluation of the previous programme was undertaken, the final report can be found here: [Evaluation of the NIHR Leadership Programme](#) .

Further information

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

Department of Health Lead:

Richard Carter

Deputy Director and Head of Research Standards and Support

Science, Research and Evidence Directorate

E-mail: richard.carter@dh.gsi.gov.uk

¹ Morgan Jones, M., Wamae, W., Fry, C. V., Kennie, T., Chataway, J. (2012). The National Institute for Health Research Leadership Programme: An evaluation of programme progress and delivery. Cambridge: RAND Europe. Available at <http://www.rand.org/randeuropa/research/projects/nihr-leadership-programme.html>