NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

NIHR Mentoring Programme

Cohorts 2021(1), 2021(2) and 2021(3)

Evaluation Report

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Foreword

The purpose of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) is to develop a highly skilled academic research workforce capable of advancing the best research, which improves health and benefits society and the economy in England and beyond. We have a central role in England's health and care research landscape. We work alongside other organisations that have an overarching aim to strengthen health research in the United Kingdom (UK).

The NIHR Academy was established in October 2018 following a strategic review of training across the NIHR to review the past and look proactively at future training needs. It set out a vision underpinned by a series of recommendations which led to the re-shaping of the training programmes offered. The NIHR Academy recognises and rewards:

○ Collaborative, multi-professional approaches to research

○ The embracing of innovation and new opportunities and technologies

○ Active involvement and engagement of patients, carers and the public

○ Respect for the diversity of methodological and theoretical practices

○ Personal and professional development and support of colleagues

The NIHR Academy comprises 'Members' and 'Associates'. Members include those on an NIHR academic path and those who play a recognised role supporting academic development. They form a key part of the national health research system that is the NIHR.

NIHR Academy Members range from Masters Studentships through to Professorships and Senior Investigators. Membership includes individuals based in both domestic and global health research settings. Some also work closely with industry, developing a cadre of research leaders with combined academic, National Health Service (NHS) and industry insight and experiences.

Members are able to access a portfolio of NIHR Academy development and support activities. They are able to access NIHR research training and career development programmes to help ensure that their research meets the current and future needs of patients and the public, as well as developing and sustaining training routes for research skills to support the development of future leaders across all professions and disciplines.

In addition to the awards themselves the NIHR also provides a range of leadership and mentoring programmes to complement its training programmes, regular networking opportunities, bespoke workshops and events and personal advice and guidance on funding opportunities. Associate Members are those who are part of the NIHR research training ecosystem. They are either on a research trajectory or plan or an NIHR role in supporting research training.
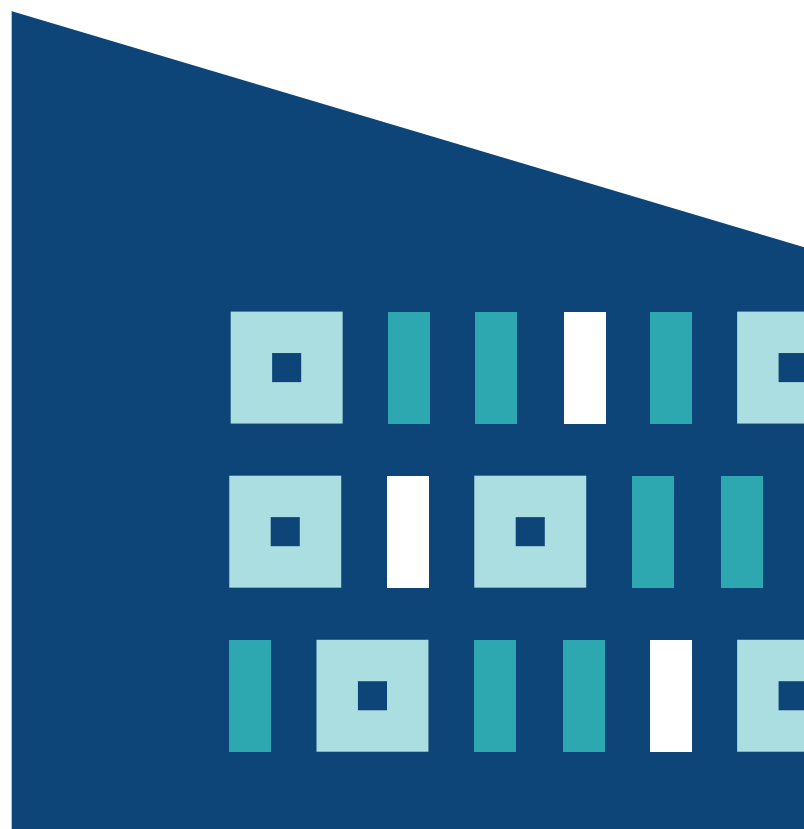
The NIHR provides postdoctoral Academy Members with career development support through its mentoring programme. The programme supports postdoctoral researchers from a broad range of professional and disciplinary contexts across our diverse health and social care communities to mentor others and to seek a mentor. The refreshed programme was launched in February 2021.

In this document, we set out the NIHR mentoring programme approach and key outcomes at the end of its first year. We share the mentoring programme purpose, aims, objectives, participant profile, methodology, outcomes and future plans.

Prof. Anne-Maree Keenan OBE

NIHR Associate Dean

Introduction

The mentoring programme has been developed and guided by a Steering Group whose membership is representative of Academy Members. The refreshed programme builds on the previous NIHR Academy Mentoring Programme that was delivered by the Academy of Medical Sciences, expanding the programme to support all Academy Members, regardless of professional background. The refreshed programme was launched in February 2021. Each year, NIHR provides the opportunity for 75 matched mentoring pairs, prioritising those from backgrounds or disciplines that may not have previously had access to mentoring.

The programme aims to support the academic and career development of NIHR postdoctoral communities by:

○ Extending the NIHR mentoring programme to postdoctoral award holders from disciplines and professional backgrounds which may not have a strong mentoring tradition or may not have had access to programmes such as this in the past.

○ Promoting interdisciplinarity working; mentees are able to seek a mentor from a cognate or complementary discipline or professional background, where appropriate.

○ Supporting mentoring relationships between individuals from different organisations and institutions.

○ Promoting equality, inclusion, and diversity through engagement with, and learning from, under-represented groups.

Active Steering Group

- **Prof. Anne-Maree Keenan**
  (NIHR Associate Dean)
- **Prof. Jon Barratt**
  (Head of the Postgraduate Speciality School
  of Clinical Academic Training,
  Health Education East Midlands)
- **Dr Steve Bloor**
  (CEO, Videregen, Industry Representative)
- **Dave Chuter**
  (NIHR PPI Representative, NCRI Consumer
  Executive Group)
- **Dr Mike Clark**
  (Research Programme Manager, NIHR
  School for Social Care Research,
  London School of Economics)
- **Krishna De**
  (NIHR Assistant Director, Communications,
  Involvement and Development)
- **Dr Georgina Fletcher**
  (Assistant Director, NIHR School
  for Primary Care Research)
- **Dr Julie Haddock-Millar**
  (Associate Professor of HRD
  and Mentoring Consultant)
- **Sarah Howarth**
  (NIHR Development and Support
  Manager - Secretariat)

- **Prof. Jeremy Levy**
  (Director of Clinical Academic Training,
  Imperial College London)
- **Hayley Mableson**
  (NIHR Programme Manager, Global Health)
- **Kay Nunns**
  (DHSC, Research Policy Manager)
- **Dr Marius Roman**
  (Academic Clinical Lecturer
  in Cardiac Surgery)
- **Dr Sara Ronzi**
  (NIHR SPHR Post-doctoral launching Fellow)
- **Dr Ameenat Lola Solebo**
  (NIHR Clinical Scientist)
- **Dr Mariette Stadler**
  (NIHR Clinical Scientist)
- **Andeep Sull**
  (Training Manager, NIHR School
  for Public Health Research)
- **Dr Katherine Tucker**
  (Oxford and Thames Valley ARC,
  University of Oxford)
- **Alana Wilde**
  (NIHR Equality, Diversity
  and Inclusion Manager)

*as at 1 October 2022

How we define mentoring:

We define mentoring as a non-directive developmental relationship; mentors support mentees to learn and grow. The relationship is often two-way: the mentor also develops. Mentors often draw on shared knowledge, skills, competencies and behaviours; they call on the skills of questioning, listening, clarifying and reframing. Mentors tend to have the organisational and contextual experience relevant to the mentee's organisational and career-related system, and typically mentoring relationships tend to be longer-term than coaching.

We base our definition on the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) approach to mentoring. EMCC Global recognises that the practice of mentoring is dynamic and evolving in a rapidly changing global context. In 2021, the EMCC Mentoring Group, was tasked by the Global Executive Board (GEB) to review the existing definition and make recommendations for an updated understanding. The Review Group adopted a triangulation approach, which included a literature search, focus groups and survey of members. The findings reflect and incorporate the perspectives of the wider mentoring community, including views from inside and outside the EMCC's global community.

EMCC Global definition of mentoring:

'Mentoring is a learning relationship, involving the sharing of skills, knowledge, and expertise between a mentor and mentee through developmental conversations, experience sharing, and role modelling. The relationship may cover a wide variety of contexts and is an inclusive two-way partnership for mutual learning that values differences.'

Programme methodology

We adopted the EMCC Global International Standards for Mentoring and Coaching Programmes (ISMCP) as an overarching framework for the design, implementation and evaluation of the mentoring programme. The ISMCP is an independent accreditation awarded to organisations designing, delivering and evaluating mentoring and/or coaching programmes either 'in-house' or externally. It is an integral and essential step on the path to establishing the professional credibility and status of good mentoring programme management, ensuring programmes are:

○ Thoughtfully designed

○ Systematically managed

○ Significantly contributing to the development of participants, strategic drivers of the organisation and wider stakeholder objectives

The purpose of the ISMCP is to provide a consistent and globally accepted benchmark of good practice in mentoring and coaching programme management. The application of the programme framework enables NIHR to:

○ Legitimise our mentoring programme against a recognised standard

○ Strengthen and improve the mentoring programme through rigorous ongoing review

○ Continue to build the evidence for developmental outcomes through mentoring, positively influencing key stakeholders

○ Identify opportunities to promote mentoring development activity internally and externally

We are guided by the EMCC Global six core standards for mentoring programmes:

Clarity of purpose

Stakeholder training and briefing

Participant selection and matching

Ongoing measurement and review

Maintaining high standard of ethics

Administration and support

Clarity of purpose

We ensure the strategic drivers and objectives of the programme are clearly defined; intended outcomes and benefits are understood by all the stakeholder groups. We encourage and support participants to develop their own purpose for participating in the programme within the overarching context of the programme.

Training and briefing

We enable participants to understand the concept of mentoring and programme methodology. We provide opportunities for all participants to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours throughout the programme.

Selection and matching

We help stakeholders to understand the selection and matching criteria and process. Participants have the opportunity to select their matching preferences and consider their developmental needs.

Measurement and review

We have a culture of continuous improvement, enhancing our processes and participant experience. We track progress against our aims and objectives to ensure that the programme meets the needs of the participants and our key stakeholders.

High standard of ethics

We operate to the highest standards of integrity and transparency in our programme design, implementation and evaluation. We encourage participants to underpin their practice with the EMCC Global Code of Ethics.

Administration and support

We are committed to supporting the personal and professional development of our participants, ensuring the programme is managed professionally in accordance with the EMCC Global International Standards of Mentoring and Coaching Programmes.

Programme timeline

Table 1 below shows the programme timeline for Cohorts 1, 2 and 3, including key activities.

Cohorts 1, 2 and 3								
Cohort Number	Orientation	Match confirmed	CPD	Check in point	Interim evaluation	Interim evaluation report	12-month summative evaluation	Final report
Cohort 1	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021-May 2022	July 2021	November 2021	January 2022	June 2022	August 2022
Cohort 2	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021 - July 2022	September 2021	December 2021	February 2022	July 2022	September 2022
Cohort 3	Sept 2021	October 2021	November 2021 - November 2022	December 2021	March 2022	May 2022	October - November 2022	January 2023

Recruitment process

○ The mentoring programme uses expressions of interest for both mentees and mentors to apply to the programme

○ Expressions of interest open six weeks before the cohort launch dates and this information cascades to prospective applicants via the NIHR Infrastructure

○ All potential mentees and mentors are invited to submit an expression of interest within the application window

○ This application can be for the upcoming cohort or a later cohort depending on their preferences

○ Mentees are NIHR Academy Members who hold an NIHR postdoctoral award and/ or hold a postdoctoral position and are based in NIHR Infrastructure or in an NIHR School

○ Mentors are NIHR Academy Members or Associate Members who are NIHR research leaders. They may be an NIHR research professor or senior investigator, or an NIHR-based postdoctoral researcher with significant postdoctoral experiences (typically, at last five years). Alternatively, they may be an NIHR Academy Member or Associate Member, contributing to the NIHR's work at a senior leadership level, for example, an awarding panel member, or a senior leader in NIHR including its centres, infrastructure and schools

Matching criteria and approach

The matching process is broken down into three stages, at stage one we review the matching criteria points that were selected in the expression of interest form. The matching criteria consists of eleven points that all applicants are asked to indicate which are most important to them:

1. Balancing professional and academic work

2. Career progression

3. Career transition

4. Research funding

5. Developing a global/ international research profile

6. Networking/ building relationships

7. Work/ life balance

8. Diversity and inclusion

9. Leadership development

10. Research practice

11. Managing research teams

We then move onto reviewing the free type responses for any additional preferences and supporting information, for example if a mentee would like to be matched with a mentor in a specific field or with specific experiences.

Finally, we conduct a review at stage three of mentee and mentor preferences to ensure they match up and do not have any conflicts of interest before the match is confirmed.

Training and continuing professional development

Attendance at orientation training is compulsory for all mentees and mentors. It is delivered via an online interactive workshop, facilitated by the Programme Manager and external Mentoring Consultant.

The orientation covers the following key topics:

- **The programme team and their roles**

- **An overview of the aim and objectives of the programme**

- **The role of the mentor and mentee**

- **Ethics and confidentiality**

- **Mentoring platform**

- **Professional development offer**

- **Programme evaluation approach, phases and methods**

- **Support documentation**

Following the mentoring programme orientation, mentees and mentors are invited to attend a broad range of continuing professional development (CPD) optional interaction workshops. The purpose of the CPD workshops is to provide ongoing support at key transition points in the mentoring relationship, focusing on knowledge, skills and behaviours. The overall objective of the CPD workshops is to enable participants to achieve satisfactory and successful mentoring relationships.
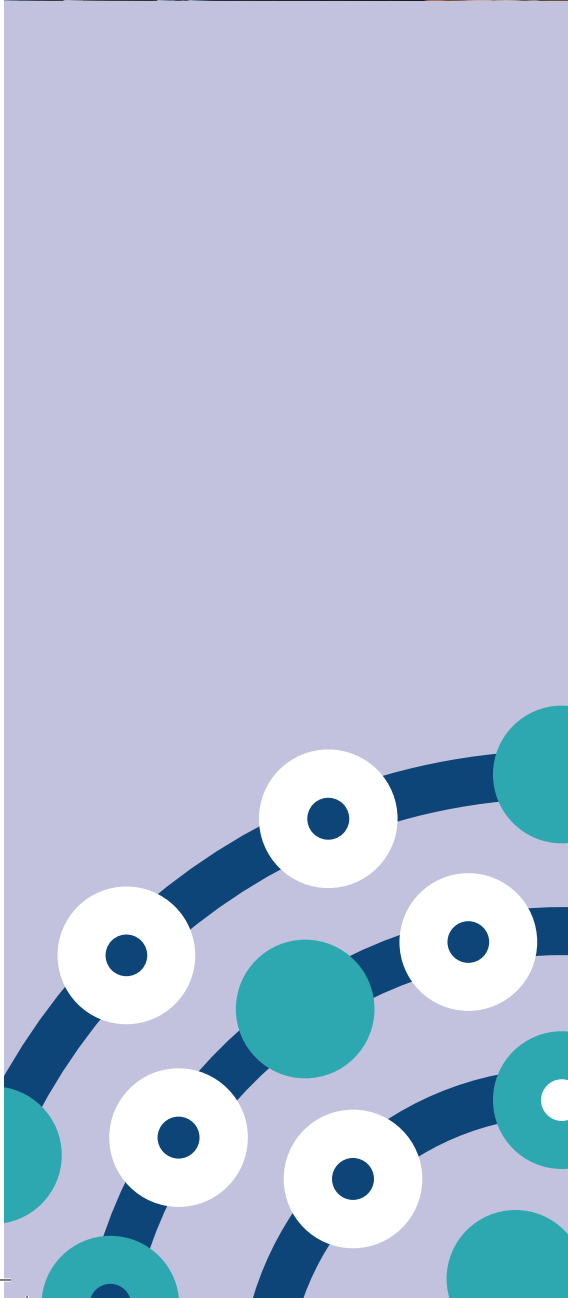
The core CPD topics include:

- **Beginning the mentoring relationship**
- **Purpose, direction and goals**

- **Developing an effective mentoring relationship**
- **Phases of the mentoring relationship**

- **The roles of the mentor and mentee**
- **Maintaining momentum in the relationship**

- **EMCC Global Mentoring core competencies**
- **Reviewing and closing the mentoring relationship**

The programme team have developed additional workshops, based on interim feedback from mentees and mentors to support specific topic areas such as work-life balance, resilience and transitioning from mentee to mentor.

Mentees and mentors are able to attend 'drop-in' sessions to meet the programme team on a monthly basis to address any aspect of their mentoring practice.

In line with EMCC Global ISMCP requirements, mentors are also provided with ongoing reflective practice support with peer mentoring workshops, facilitated by a suitability qualified and experienced external mentoring consultant. Mentees are also able to attend a dedicated reflective practice forum with their peers to discuss any aspect of their mentoring programme experience and/or broader professional development related topics.

Programme evaluation

The mentoring programme has a robust evaluation framework in place which supports the continuous improvement of the programme, the collation of evidence of achievement against the programme's aim and objectives.

Regular updates are shared with key stakeholders and identification of lessons learned informs the ongoing development of the mentoring programme, potential future programmes and wider audiences.

The evaluation consists of two phases, the phase one interim evaluation and phase two summative evaluation.

Phase one

This takes place at four to five months and comprises a light touch temperature check survey for all participants, providing a feedback opportunity and to address any challenges which may arise.

Phase two

At the end of the programme, participants are invited to complete an in-depth survey, focusing on their mentoring relationship experience and outcomes. Six matched pairs attend semi-structured interviews with an external mentoring consultant, providing the opportunity to create in-depth case study exemplars. We share summary exemplars in the individual Cohort reports (see Cohort Reports 1, 2 and 3).

In addition to the two phases outlined, we collect feedback at various touch points, including check-ins with participants at regular intervals and informal feedback via the continuing professional development sessions.

Cohort 1

Cohort 1 interviews were conducted between 7th June and 8th July 2022 by an External Mentoring Consultant. The approved transcriber produced 99 pages of transcription across 5 matched pair interviews, ranging between 7 pages and 14 pages per interview. We prepared initial matched pair case studies. Each case study summarised the transcript content, including mentor and mentee profile, relationship focus, reflections on the mentoring relationship and perceived value. All participants were given the opportunity to review and amend their matched pair case study.

Cohort 2

Cohort 2 interviews were conducted between 20th June and 18th July 2022 by an External Mentoring Consultant. The approved transcriber produced 94 pages of transcription across 4 matched pair interviews, ranging between 7 pages and 16 pages per interview. We followed the same process subsequent to the interviews as outlined for cohort 1.
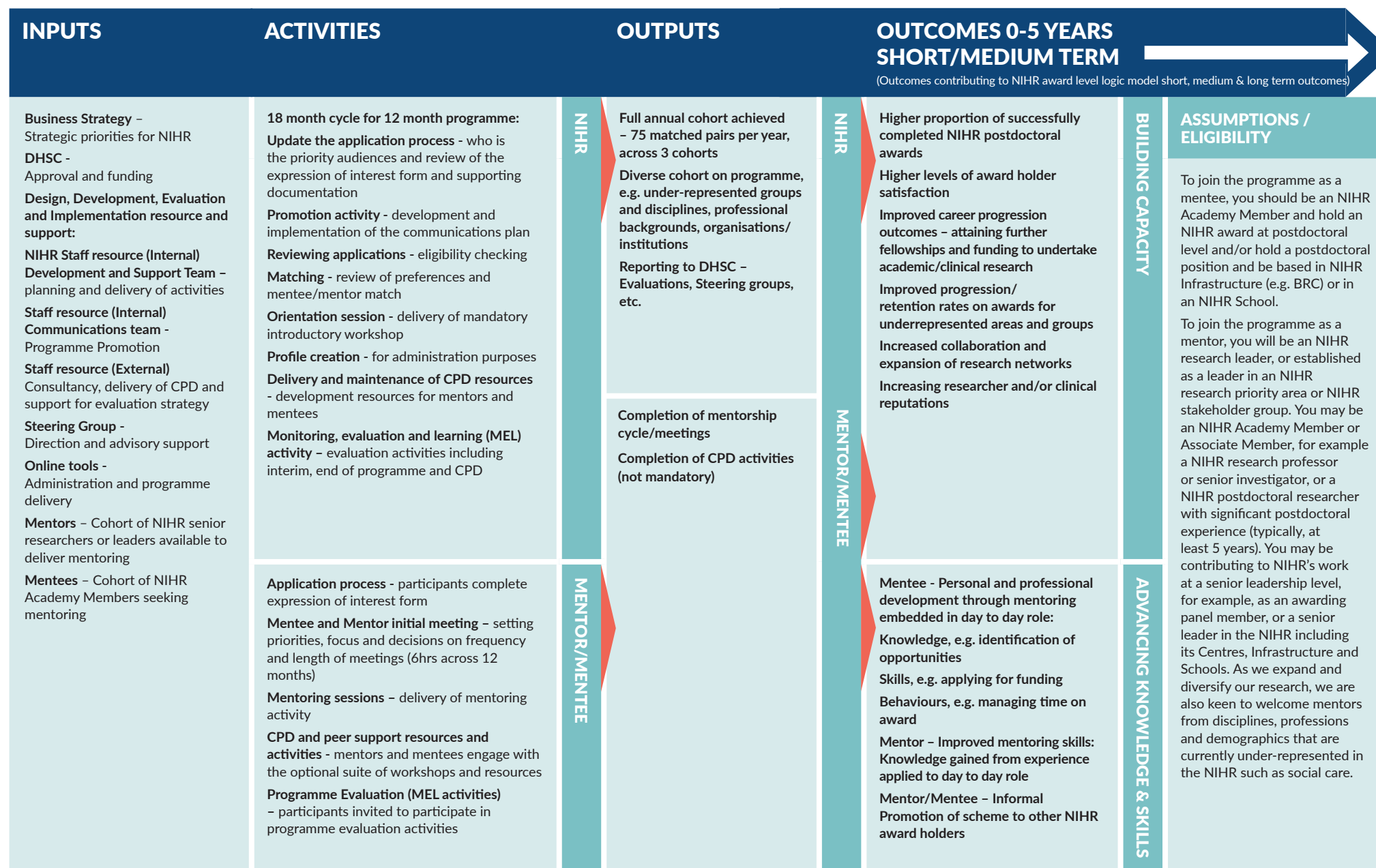
Cohort 3

Cohort 3 interviews were conducted between 11th Nov 2022 and 17th January 2023 by an External Mentoring Consultant. The approved transcriber produced 124 pages of transcription across 7 matched pair interviews, ranging between 6 pages and 15 pages per interview. We followed the same process subsequent to the interviews as outlined for cohort 1.

Logic Tree Model

Figure 1 below shows the overarching evaluation approach adopted my NIHR.

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES		OUTPUTS		OUTCOMES 0-5 YEARS SHORT/MEDIUM TERM (Outcomes contributing to NIHR award level logic model short, medium & long term outcomes)		ASSUMPTIONS / ELIGIBILITY
Business Strategy – Strategic priorities for NIHR **DHSC -** Approval and funding **Design, Development, Evaluation and Implementation resource and support: NIHR Staff resource (Internal) Development and Support Team** – planning and delivery of activities **Staff resource (Internal) Communications team -** Programme Promotion **Staff resource (External)** Consultancy, delivery of CPD and support for evaluation strategy **Steering Group -** Direction and advisory support **Online tools -** Administration and programme delivery **Mentors** – Cohort of NIHR senior researchers or leaders available to deliver mentoring **Mentees** – Cohort of NIHR Academy Members seeking mentoring	**18 month cycle for 12 month programme: Update the application process -** who is the priority audiences and review of the expression of interest form and supporting documentation **Promotion activity -** development and implementation of the communications plan **Reviewing applications -** eligibility checking **Matching -** review of preferences and mentee/mentor match **Orientation session -** delivery of mandatory introductory workshop **Profile creation -** for administration purposes **Delivery and maintenance of CPD resources** - development resources for mentors and mentees **Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activity** – evaluation activities including interim, end of programme and CPD	NIHR	**Full annual cohort achieved** – 75 matched pairs per year, across 3 cohorts **Diverse cohort on programme,** e.g. under-represented groups and disciplines, professional backgrounds, organisations/ institutions **Reporting to DHSC** – Evaluations, Steering groups, etc.	NIHR	**Higher proportion of successfully completed NIHR postdoctoral awards Higher levels of award holder satisfaction Improved career progression outcomes** – attaining further fellowships and funding to undertake academic/clinical research **Improved progression/ retention rates on awards for** underrepresented areas and groups **Increased collaboration and expansion of research networks Increasing researcher and/or clinical reputations**	BUILDING CAPACITY	To join the programme as a mentee, you should be an NIHR Academy Member and hold an NIHR award at postdoctoral level and/or hold a postdoctoral position and be based in NIHR Infrastructure (e.g. BRC) or in an NIHR School. To join the programme as a mentor, you will be an NIHR research leader, or established as a leader in an NIHR research priority area or NIHR stakeholder group. You may be an NIHR Academy Member or Associate Member, for example a NIHR research professor or senior investigator, or a NIHR postdoctoral researcher with significant postdoctoral experience (typically, at least 5 years). You may be contributing to NIHR's work at a senior leadership level, for example, as an awarding panel member, or a senior leader in the NIHR including its Centres, Infrastructure and Schools. As we expand and diversify our research, we are also keen to welcome mentors from disciplines, professions and demographics that are currently under-represented in the NIHR such as social care.
		MENTOR/MENTEE	**Completion of mentorship cycle/meetings Completion of CPD activities (not mandatory)**	MENTOR/MENTEE			
	Application process - participants complete expression of interest form **Mentee and Mentor initial meeting** – setting priorities, focus and decisions on frequency and length of meetings (6hrs across 12 months) **Mentoring sessions** – delivery of mentoring activity **CPD and peer support resources and activities** - mentors and mentees engage with the optional suite of workshops and resources **Programme Evaluation (MEL activities)** – participants invited to participate in programme evaluation activities	MENTOR/MENTEE			**Mentee - Personal and professional development through mentoring embedded in day to day role: Knowledge,** e.g. identification of opportunities **Skills,** e.g. applying for funding **Behaviours,** e.g. managing time on award **Mentor** – Improved mentoring skills: Knowledge gained from experience applied to day to day role **Mentor/Mentee** – Informal Promotion of scheme to other NIHR award holders	ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS	

Logic Tree model

Inputs

Business Strategy – Strategic priorities for NIHR

DHSC - Approval and funding

Design, Development, Evaluation and Implementation resource and support:

NIHR Staff resource (Internal) Development and Support Team – planning and delivery of activities

Staff resource (Internal) - Communications team - Programme Promotion

Staff resource (External) - Consultancy, delivery of CPD and support for evaluation strategy

Steering Group - Direction and advisory support

Online tools - Administration and programme delivery

Mentors – Cohort of NIHR senior researchers or leaders available to deliver mentoring

Mentees – Cohort of NIHR Academy Members seeking mentoring

Activities

NIHR

18 month cycle for 12 month programme:

Update the application process - who is the priority audiences and review of the expression of interest form and supporting documentation

Promotion activity - development and implementation of the communications plan

Reviewing applications - eligibility checking

Matching - review of preferences and mentee/mentor match

Orientation session - delivery of mandatory introductory workshop

Profile creation - for administration purposes

Delivery and maintenance of CPD resources - development resources for mentors and mentees

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) activity – evaluation activities including interim, end of programme and CPD

Mentor/mentee

Application process - participants complete expression of interest form

Mentee and Mentor initial meeting – setting priorities, focus and decisions on frequency and length of meetings (6hrs across 12 months)

Mentoring sessions – delivery of mentoring activity

CPD and peer support resources and activities - mentors and mentees engage with the optional suite of workshops and resources

Programme Evaluation (MEL activities) – participants invited to participate in programme evaluation activities

Outputs

NIHR

Full annual cohort achieved – 75 matched pairs per year, across 3 cohorts

Diverse cohort on programme, e.g. under-represented groups and disciplines, professional backgrounds, organisations/institutions

Reporting to DHSC – Evaluations, Steering groups, etc.

Mentor/mentee

Completion of mentorship cycle/meetings

Completion of CPD activities (not mandatory)

Outcomes 0-5years (short/ medium term)

Outcomes contributing to NIHR award level logic model short, medium and long term outcomes

Building Capacity

○ **Higher proportion of successfully completed NIHR postdoctoral awards**

○ **Higher levels of award holder satisfaction**

○ **Improved career progression outcomes – attaining further fellowships and funding to undertake academic/clinical research**

○ **Improved progression/retention rates on awards for underrepresented areas and groups**

○ **Increased collaboration and expansion of research networks**

○ **Increasing researcher and/or clinical reputations**

Advancing knowledge and skills

○ **Mentee - Personal and professional development through mentoring embedded in day to day role:**

- Knowledge, e.g. identification of opportunities

- Skills, e.g. applying for funding

- Behaviours, e.g. managing time on award

○ **Mentor – Improved mentoring skills: Knowledge gained from experience applied to day to day role**

- Mentor/Mentee – Informal Promotion of scheme to other NIHR award holders

Assumptions/Eligibility

To join the programme as a mentee, you should be an NIHR Academy Member and hold an NIHR award at postdoctoral level and/or hold a postdoctoral position and be based in NIHR Infrastructure (e.g. BRC) or in an NIHR School.

To join the programme as a mentor, you will be an NIHR research leader, or established as a leader in an NIHR research priority area or NIHR stakeholder group. You may be an NIHR Academy Member or Associate Member, for example a NIHR research professor or senior investigator, or a NIHR postdoctoral researcher with significant postdoctoral experience (typically, at least 5 years). You may be contributing to NIHR's work at a senior leadership level, for example, as an awarding panel member, or a senior leader in the NIHR including its Centres, Infrastructure and Schools. As we expand and diversify our research, we are also keen to welcome mentors from disciplines, professions and demographics that are currently under-represented in the NIHR such as social care.

Evaluation key dates and activities

Table 2 below shows the programme timeline for Cohorts 1, 2 and 3, including key activities.

Cohorts 1, 2 and 3								
Cohort Number	Interim survey opened	Interim survey closed	Interim evaluation report	Summative survey opened	Summative survey closed	Matched pair interviews started	Matched pair interviews completed	Final report
Cohort 1	22nd October 2021	8th November 2021	December 2021	12th July 2022	6th August 2022	7th June 2022	8th July 2022	August 2022
Cohort 2	19th November 2021	12th December 2021	December 2021	5th August 2022	30th September 2022	20th June 2022	18th July 2022	September 2022
Cohort 3	24th February 2022	25th March 2022	March 2022	2nd November 2022	16th December 2022	11th November 2022	17th January 2023	January 2023

Key outcomes

This section provides the key outcomes across Cohorts 1, 2 and 3 of the first year of the mentoring programme.

We originally aimed to recruit and match 75 mentoring pairs. Due to the demand for spaces on the programme, we increased the number of matches to 90 in the first year of the programme.

Number of expressions of interest for all cohorts:

- 148 mentees, oversubscribed by 97%
- 137 mentors, oversubscribed 83%

Total matched pairs for all cohorts:

- 93

Number of expressions of interest per cohort:

- **Mentees**: Cohort 1 - 90; Cohort 2 - 40; Cohort 3 - 18
- **Mentors**: Cohort 1- 76, Cohort 2 - 41, Cohort 3 -20
- 6 applicants moved cohorts

Number of matched pairs per cohort:

- Cohort 1 matched pairs: 34
- Cohort 2 matched pairs: 31
- Cohort 3 matched pairs: 28

Participant professional background

Mentees	Cohort 1 - 3 2021
Medically qualified	62
Other*	11
Primary care research	3
Allied health professional	4
Nursing and midwifery	5
Public health research	6
Social Care research	0

Mentors	Cohort 1 - 3 2021
Medically qualified	41
Other*	11
Primary care research	3
Allied health professional	9
Nursing and midwifery	11
Public health research	4
Social Care Research	1

*Breakdown of 'Other'

Other	Mentee Cohort 1-3 2021
Psychologist	4
Epidemiologist	0
Social Scientist	2
Statistician	2
Paediatrics Researcher	1
Behavioural Scientist	1
Operations Manager	1

*Breakdown of 'Other'

Other	Mentor Cohort 1-3 2021
Social Scientist	2
Epidemiologist	2
Behavioural Scientist	1
Paediatrics Researcher *	1
Statistician	1
Methodologist	1
Hearing Researcher *	1
NIHR Leaders	2

Satisfaction with mentee – mentor match

○ 96% of mentors and 90% of mentees were either very satisfied or satisfied with their mentoring match

Interdisciplinary mentoring relationships

○ 67% of mentors and 58% of mentees described their mentoring relationship as interdisciplinary

Continuing in the mentoring relationship beyond the programme

○ 64% of mentors and 48% of mentees will be continuing in their mentoring relationship

Continuing to engage in the mentoring programme

○ 87% of mentors intend to support another mentee in a future programme cohort

Transitioning from mentee to mentor

○ 75% of mentees intend to apply to be a mentor in a future programme cohort

Number of CPD sessions facilitated and participant attendance

○ 74 CPD workshops topic sessions were delivered between June 2021 and July 2022

Most popular CPD sessions for mentees and mentors

○ The most useful CPD workshop topic sessions were beginning the mentoring relationship, developing an effective mentoring relationship, phases of the mentoring relationship and work-life balance

Overall view of the CPD and initial programme orientation

○ The summative survey confirmed 90% of mentors and 70% of mentees felt the CPD and orientation sessions were very helpful, helpful and somewhat helpful during their mentoring relationship

○ 93% of mentors and 100% of mentees felt they were easily able to build trust with their mentee or mentor

Number achieving mentoring relationship objectives:

○ 100% of mentors and 100% of mentees felt that they met all or most of their mentoring relationship objectives

Satisfaction with the mentoring programme

○ The summative survey shows that 100% of mentors and 90% of mentees felt that the programme met all or most of their expectations

Areas of impact

In this section we provide key areas of impact across all three cohorts.

Drivers for joining the programme

The mentees viewed the NIHR Mentoring Programme as an opportunity to learn from someone more experienced and in a more senior position, an opportunity to experience formal mentoring outside of their organisational context, consider career progression and transition and improve work-life balance.

○ One mentee described: 'I was approaching quite a pivotal point in my career and felt that any **advice from someone who had progressed further in their career would be really helpful.** Also having someone independent unrelated to my department.'

○ Another said: 'Because my research support team in my NIHR Fellowship is not very active, I often feel like I am working alone rather than in a team. And I don't feel I have a lot of help from my line manager planning my clinical academic career. **I needed to talk things through with someone.'**

○ A female mentee described: 'I was also looking for a female mentor because a particular focus of mine was addressing work/life balance issues.'

Another mentee joined the NIHR Mentoring Programme as she has received an NIHR Fellowship and wanted the opportunity to 'have an external mentor … someone from another university that is completely separate and in a more senior position.'
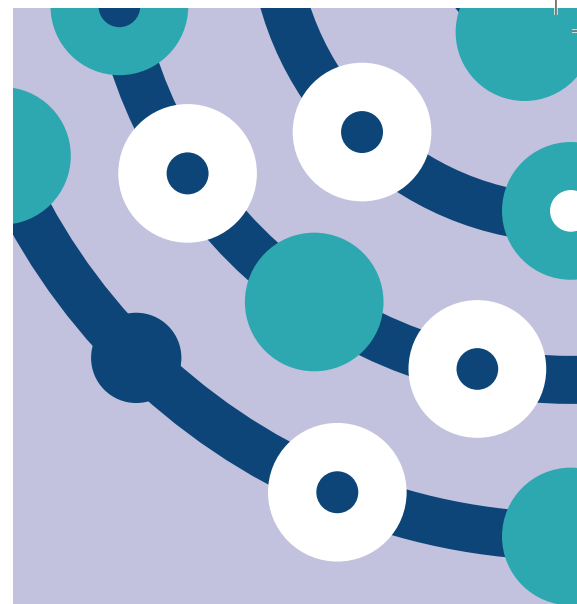
The mentors viewed the NIHR Mentoring programme as an opportunity to share experience, expertise and support colleagues who are keen to progress their research careers in the field of health and social care.

○ One mentor said: '**To share expertise and support others in a similar position** to when I completed the CDRF. Also, I feel Nurses need plenty of encouragement and this was my chance to offer that.'

○ Another explained: 'I wanted to **contribute to the development of postdoctoral researchers,** particularly in nursing and midwifery as these are under-developed professional groups.'

○ Another mentor said: 'I recognise the importance of having **an independent person who you can discuss your progress and plans with.**'

Mentoring relationship focus

Through the programme evaluation mentees and mentors described the overall focus of their mentoring relationship was career planning and progression, building capacity for fellowship applications, research funding and outputs, networking and building relationships, navigating the academic environment including politics and self-presentation, managing work-life balance and leadership development.

Key themes discussed in the mentoring relationship as described by mentees and mentors in cohorts 1, 3 and 3:

○ Career development and transition

○ Work-life balance

○ Research and funding

○ Leadership and management

For some, specific mentoring topics included: managing others; manoeuvring the socio-political academic environment; personal impact; building and leading effective teams; transition to becoming an independent and proactive researcher; work-life balance. One participant observed that rather than talking about grant applications, the conversations were focused on 'how to survive and thrive in an academic environment, how to develop a department, how to gain the trust and support of others and particularly how to navigate the political landscape effectively.'

For many mentees, the mentoring programme and relationship support arrived at a pivotal point in their lives. One mentee explained that the relationship offered guidance and support 'through probably the most challenging aspect of my career to date and ... having this mentoring relationship has given me the best chance of success that I could have had.'

Perceived value of the mentoring and programme

Our mentoring programme has had a significant impact on the mentees both personally and professionally.

○ Personal: at a personal level, the mentoring increased their self-confidence, self-care and managing work-life balance practices

○ Professional: as early career professionals, the mentoring conversation with experienced senior practitioners has helped mentees to explore career options and seek guidance on the next stage of their career. Some mentees expressed that they felt hugely supported in their career transition and learnt ways of networking, applying for research grants, managing the work environment, building collaborative relationships and leadership capacity
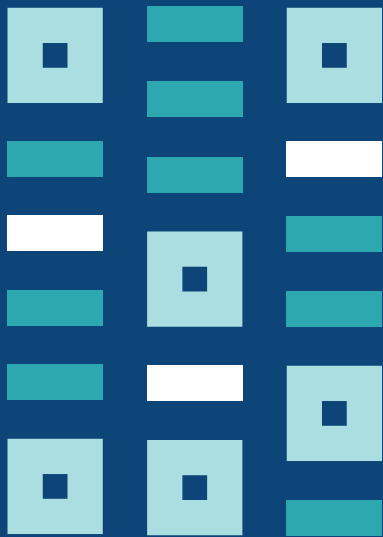
From the professional perspective, from Cohort 2, Stephen (mentee) described: With the support and encouragement of Debbie (mentor), Stephen successfully secured an NIHR Advanced Fellowship award to further develop his research programme and clinical academic career.

Mentees have described how the mentoring has supported them in both the career and psychosocial space:

○ 'Having the opportunity to discuss my career with an experienced academic has been very valuable. **I appreciated the time given and the support received so far.** Having a mentor outside my institution has been very beneficial as it created a safe space for me to open up about various concerns.'

○ 'My mentor connected me with other Clinical Academics in my clinical community. **They also shared their experience of other colleagues** who have crafted a career similar to the one I am aiming for.'

○ 'My mentor was a motivational, inspirational person who was able to share things in a different light that did **leave [me] feeling good about my career, feeling good about myself** after [each session].'

○ 'I think I benefitted quite substantially actually... it was good to have some of your achievements almost appraised, if you like, by somebody who doesn't know you and that led to confidence building. It's also good to have somebody external give you advice about how to put aside some of the self-doubt you might have and how to appropriately reach out to other people. So, I think **from a personal point of view that was good personal development** as well as professional development.'

For mentees, there were numerous psychosocial benefits, including enhanced self-worth, self-confidence and self-efficacy. This is illustrated by the following mentees' interview comments:

○ 'My mentoring experience has been fantastic. My mentor has **helped me to recognise my worth** and has gently encouraged me to stretch outside of my comfort zone.'

○ 'The benefit of being matched to [mentor] is seeing somebody from a similar background who has successfully made it to the top. This **helps you realise that you deserve your place** that you know you've worked hard for.'

Many of the mentoring relationships provided much needed guidance and support. As one mentee described: 'through probably the most challenging aspect of my career to date and, having this mentoring relationship has given me the best chance of success that I could have had.' For some programme participants, the mentoring provided a gentle nudge to enable progression, illustrated by the following mentee comment:

○ '**If I hadn't had those three mentorship meetings, I honestly don't think that I would have made any progress.** I would have just kept putting it off and putting it off because I felt awkward about it and then I just wouldn't do it.'

For some mentees, the mentoring proved timely as they were potentially approaching a significant transition and/or deadline, as the following comments illustrate:

○ 'I really wanted to make sure that my development as an independent researcher was following the track **so I could continue to move forward** … it was really the transition that I really wanted to focus on.' (Mentee)

○ ''**What is he going to do differently,** … how is he getting it altogether…. if he doesn't get Plan A, what's Plan B, what's Plan C, what's Plan D …?' (Mentor)

Our mentoring programme has enabled mentors to build their emotional intelligence and develop their own self-insight around the holistic practice of mentoring, supporting their mentees' personal and professional development, including confidence building, leadership positioning and self-presentation, successfully navigating a postdoctoral career. The formalisation of the mentoring relationships and the accompanying training and continuous professional development webinars were viewed as effective learning and reflective spaces by several mentors. As most of the mentor-mentee matches are across interdisciplinary health research areas, mentors also widened their knowledge and gain further insights into new areas of work.

For mentors the benefits have been broad, encompassing a sense of personal satisfaction, development of key mentoring skills and connectivity:

○ "Share my experience and knowledge... and help someone else develop and progress towards their own career development goal ... I am getting a bit of exposure to a new field, a different location and an opportunity to expand my network.'

○ '**Keeps me grounded** within the wider clinical academic community.'

○ **'Exposure to diverse scenarios** that collectively contribute to my mentoring approach.'

○ 'Help me to **improve my people skills** and active listening.'

○ 'Feels positive that can **help someone struggling with issues.'**

○ 'Interesting to **see what barriers exist in career progression** and how others view/react to them.'

○ 'I think it has been useful to **reflect on my own mentoring practice and experiences.** The relationship provides a useful mirror as well!'

The mentor and mentee match outside of the organisation was viewed as a significant benefit by programme participants as it was seen as enabling the development of open and honest conversations in a safe and supportive space. One mentee explained that the mentor being totally disconnected from his normal network, enabled a 'frank and honest' discussion which was highly beneficial. This objectivity enabled a broader focus on research collaboration options. The following mentee and mentor shared the most beneficial aspect of the mentoring relationship:

○ 'The good mentor I had was in **psychology, which is a much more established academic field than medical education,** which was useful.' (Mentee)

○ 'Different professional group and different clinical area. **It brought an interesting approach to the discussion,** but many aspects / challenges are common (e.g. time and people).' (Mentor)

○ 'A perspective from someone who is neither in my area nor my institution with **whom I can discuss things that I can't talk about with my immediate work colleagues.'** (Mentee)

The NIHR mentoring programme positions the mentoring relationships as developmental which have reciprocal benefits for both the mentor and mentee. The evaluation shows that many mentors and mentees viewed their relationship as one of peers, which had reciprocal learning benefits for both parties. This is illustrated by the following interview comments:

○ A mentee observed that the mentoring relationship was two-way - two professionals, **highly experienced in their own areas of expertise** - so developed into peer mentoring rather than the traditional concept of an older experienced mentor, guiding and advising a less experienced mentee

○ A mentor described: 'to share my experience and knowledge … and help someone else **develop and progress towards their own career development goal** … I am getting a bit of exposure to a new field, a different location and an opportunity to expand my network.'

○ A number of mentees were able to **draw on the experience with their mentors** to develop their own mentoring practice, illustrated by the following mentee:

○ 'The mentoring provided **a fantastically reflective space** … what was so powerful about this opportunity for reflection is that I've not only used this opportunity to reflect on myself and I've briefly told my mentor this … I've also taken on people to mentor and actually I'm using some of the lessons and advice that he's given because I just wanted to share some of that with others.'

The survey and matched pair interview evaluation data highlights that the mentoring programme and the mentoring relationships are having a significant impact on both the mentee and mentor learning and growth. For many, this has been at a pivotal time in their personal and professional lives. The mentor-mentee summary matched pair interviews can be viewed in Cohort 1, 2 and 3 reports.
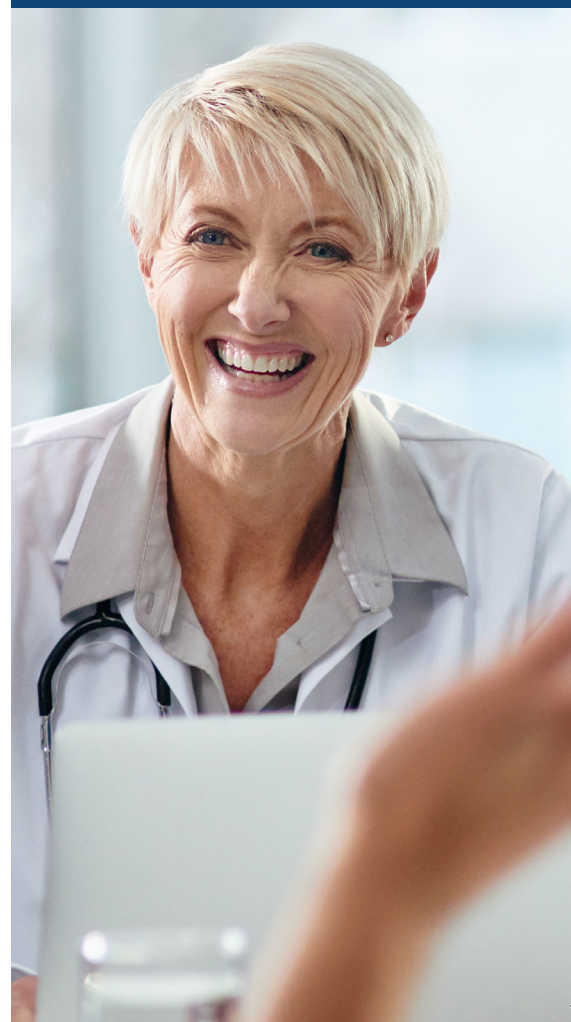
Lessons learned and future intentions

With any mentoring programme, particularly in the early phases, there are numerous lessons learned. Our learning and programme adaptations fall into four categories:

1 **Programme application and matching process**

2 **Orientation, CPD workshops, guides and support materials**

3 **Mentoring platform**

4 **Evaluation process. The key changes are highlighted below**

There were a number of changes to the programme's application and matching process. Changes included updating the expression of interest forms.

To further enhance the matching process, in addition to free type text boxes for mentee and mentor preferences, we introduced 11 matching criteria from cohort 2 onwards.

The orientation was originally 90 minutes, which we changed to 60 minutes based on feedback from participants and added additional content around the matching process. For CPD, we gave all cohorts access to all CPD workshops throughout the programme, enabling participants from different cohorts to attend workshops together. We added topic specific CPD workshops for work-life balance, resilience, reflective practice, and transitioning from mentee to mentor.

We trialled a mentoring platform for the first year of the programme. Feedback from programme participants prompted the decision to shift from the mentoring platform to support relationships to the use of the platform as an internal administration tool.

The evaluation process was adapted to combine the three and six month data collection point, creating one interim evaluation point at six months, followed by the summative evaluation at 12 months. We added an informal check-in email at 8 weeks to offer additional support. We also adapted and added to the interim and summative survey questions.

We will be looking to further develop and continually improve the programme in the financial year 2023/2024 to ensure that it supports the strategic goals of the organisation.

Close

At the beginning of the report, we set out four programme objectives. We are delighted to share that we have:

○ Extended the NIHR mentoring programme to postdoctoral award holders from disciplines and professional backgrounds which may not have a strong mentoring tradition or may not have had access to programmes such as this in the past.

○ Promoted interdisciplinarity working; mentees are able to seek a mentor from a cognate or complementary discipline or professional background, where appropriate.

○ Supported mentoring relationships between individuals from different organisations and institutions.

○ Promoted equality, inclusion, and diversity through engagement with, and learning from, under-represented groups.

The mentoring programme has been a huge success. Due to the demand for places on the programme - 172 expressions of interest - we created 93 matched pairs in the first year of the programme, across three cohorts. The evaluation demonstrates that the mentoring programme and relationships fostered a nurturing and supportive environment at a crucial and challenging time in many colleagues' lives. Unprecedented challenges and constraints influenced every aspect of the mentoring programme and the mentoring relationships. Research shows us that the most enriching mentoring relationships are those where there is reciprocity and mutual learning. Our programme illustrates the power of mentoring to cultivate mutually beneficial mentoring relationships where the positive impact reverberates beyond the mentoring relationships and programme.

The mentoring programme continues to be successful. In 2022 we created a further three cohorts and, in 2023 and 2024, we intend to create three cohorts per year. The programme continues to prioritise colleagues from disciplines and professional backgrounds which have previously not had access to mentoring programmes or historically a strong mentoring tradition. This is something that we will continue to prioritise and take forward through the future cohorts of the programme to ensure we are reaching the broad range of NIHR Academy Members.

So many mentoring programmes are reliant on goodwill and volunteerism, our programme is supported by the voluntary contribution of mentors and many active Steering Group members who willingly give their time in service of others – thank you.