

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
Directorate of Education, Research and Innovation

Research Plan 2022–2027



**Working together to
transform today's research
into tomorrow's care**

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1.0 Introduction and Trust context

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust (ELHT) has a vision “to be widely recognised for providing safe, personal and effective care”, research is pivotal to achieving this as is documented in the Education, Research and Innovation Strategy and the Trust’s Improvement Continuum. Evidence demonstrates that health care organisations with greater research activity have better clinical outcomes, even after adjustment for staffing and structural factors (Ozdemir et al. 2015, Boaz et al 2015, Jonker, L. & Fisher.S.J 2018). Other benefits from being a research active organisation include:

- Safer, more efficient and higher quality patient care with better experiences.
- Opportunities for the workforce to improve their skill sets and retention/attraction of the highest calibre of colleagues
- Development of an evaluative, questioning culture and an atmosphere of scientific challenge and reflection are created
- Cutting edge new drugs and technologies are made available.
- Additional income is generated

Research is core to the NHS principles of maintaining the highest standards of excellence and professionalism:

‘through its commitment to innovation and to the promotion, conduct and use of research to improve the current and future health and care of the population’ (NHS Constitution 2015).

It has direct impact on the quality and safety of patient care and is central to NHSE/I strategic plans, Care quality Commission (CQC) standards and Key Lines of Enquiry. In 2021 the policy paper Saving and Improving Lives: The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery was published. This clearly states that research is the single most important way of improving healthcare by embedding clinical research at the heart of patient care across the NHS, making participation as easy as possible and ensuring all health and care colleagues feel empowered to support research.

To be able to meet the intended quality outcomes local and national mechanisms to support research development and delivery, subsequent knowledge translation and implementation into clinical practice where appropriate are essential.



2.0 Vision and mission statement

Vision

Our vision is to work with system partners to integrate research activity into all areas of ELHT for the benefit of our patients and colleagues thereby ensuring we are widely recognised for providing safe, personal and effective care. This will enable us to fulfil our ambition to achieve University Hospital status (University Hospitals Association 2021).

Our aspiration is that every clinical area will be engaged in high quality research and every patient and member of colleagues will have the opportunity to be part of research activity.

Mission Statement

Research is an integral part of the Trust's vision to constantly improve and be able to offer better care for patients. We see research as fundamental to everything we do and our mission is to embed research in all of our clinical services and in doing so achieve a national reputation for being a research-led University Hospital.

Achieving our Mission

The mission of the Research Plan is underpinned by a core commitment from Trust leaders who recognise the values of a research active workforce. We have strong partnerships in place with local HEIs and a number of our clinical services have already established academic expertise and substantial research portfolios. We recognise the importance of research to clinical care in services with less well-established research programmes and value the contribution of clinicians in developing those portfolios. We understand the potential for clinical research to link our services to local and regional partners and support health system change across the full care pathway. We aim to support colleagues to realise the research potential in their clinical areas. In doing so, we will constantly improve clinical outcomes, the standard of care for patients and the health and wellbeing of colleagues, fully contributing to a Learning Health System.



To achieve our mission we will:



All of the above align to the key themes documented within The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery: 2021 to 2022 Implementation Plan (DHSC 21).



3.0 Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)

The NIHR maximise opportunities for patients and the public to influence and participate in research (2021) and to be actively involved in all NIHR-funded health and social care research in order to:

- Set research priorities
- Identify the important questions that health and social care research needs to answer
- Give their views on research proposals alongside clinicians, methodologists, scientists, and public health and other professionals
- Help assess proposals for funding
- Take part in clinical trials and other health and social care research studies, not just as subjects but also as active partners in the research process
- Publicise the results

ELHT has a reputation of involving patients in the design of local studies to be submitted for grant applications. Involving patients and members of the public in research can lead to better research, clearer outcomes, and faster uptake of new evidence and is a compulsory component of any major grant application. In addition, this same approach may be utilised to provide valuable service user opinions on clinical care pathway development within the Trust.

To further develop and enhance our offer we will in the:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Ensure ELHT researchers engage fully with PPI in clinical research question prioritisation, design, conduct and dissemination of research findings and to optimise diversity and inclusion in research
- Ensure PPI follows national guidelines e.g. NIHR INVOLVE
- Advise on appropriate PPI and resourcing e.g. NW RDS bursary Public Involvement Fund to cover PPI at grant application stage
- Work in partnership with Patient Experience Team to identify potential PPI research champions/representatives and to bring together relevant patient focus groups
- Support the creation of a diverse and inclusive research environment founded on close and equitable partnerships with communities and groups, including those who have previously not had a voice in research
- Connect with established PPI networks within GM CRN and ARC NWC, as well as with third sector partners to support specific projects or initiatives
- Support national campaigns for increasing public awareness e.g., the annual 'International Clinical Trials Day'



- Achieve an annual increase in the percentage of ELHT patients participating in research studies as active partners
- Increase our NIHR Patient Research Experience Survey (PRES) responses year on year

Medium Term 3–5 Years

- Raise public awareness regarding engagement in healthcare research within ELHT
- Support national campaigns for increasing public awareness e.g. the annual 'International Clinical Trials Day'
- Support volunteer input for research activity.
- Engage the patients and public regarding health research messages and opportunities to participate in studies, for PPI groups for study development and to serve as lay members of local project management groups and committees
- Simplify information for the colleagues and public concerning health research messages such as systems and processes that must be followed, research governance requirements, funding systems, involvement opportunities
- Making it easier for people to participate in research by investing in user-friendly and accessible digital and online approaches.



4.0 Workforce, culture and leadership

We will develop a culture across ELHT in which research and innovation are embedded in, and aligned with, routine clinical services, leading to significant health gains and efficiency improvements in health services delivery (NIHR 2021). We will actively develop a research conscious workforce by supporting our colleagues to lead on and participate in research studies that address local clinical needs, focussed on enhancing opportunities for funding from the NIHR and other funders of clinical research. We will develop our colleagues to be research aware, engaged and for some to develop research capability and skills

We want clinicians to consider every patient's suitability to take part in research as part of their care and will actively support colleagues to achieve this aim. We will encourage colleagues to assume roles on research committees such as NIHR panels, HRA Research Ethics Committee's, funding boards and advisory groups. We need to invest in our workforce to ensure our colleagues have the skills and confidence to engage in research at the level appropriate to them. We need to invest in our leaders and future leaders of research.

To do this we will in the:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Establish research career development pathways for all our colleagues to ensure the workforce of the present and future are adequately prepared to drive the next generation of clinical discoveries, advancing knowledge and improving the health and care of patient
- Establish a cohesive and consistent 'core' DERI offer of education and training for medical and non-medical trainees to develop our next generation of research leaders
- Provide support for early career researchers enabling them to grow a research career whilst maintaining close links to clinical practice and collaborative working with HEIs
- Facilitate access to academic mentorship and trial methodology training for researchers
- Encourage all colleagues involved in research to complete Good Clinical Practice Training every two years and have evidence to support this (for colleagues with delegated responsibilities in clinical trials this is mandated).
- Capacity build clinical and non-clinical research workforce through reinvestment of income leveraged from commercial activity
- In partnership with our HEI partners, review investment in our Clinical Academic workforce and ensure that we maintain a level of funding that is comparable to similar large University Hospital Trusts
- Increase NMAHP and other workforce involvement in research



- Further existing work to increase recognition and where appropriate provide protected time for research in clinician job plan
- Provide skilled support to facilitate external grant applications; reviewing outcomes from grant applications to provide feedback to the research team.
- Facilitate and promote research training and education relevant to needs of research activity
- Promote external training and development opportunities, and monitor outcomes
- Collaborate with Quality Improvement, Clinical Effectiveness and Library and Knowledge Services to identify new ways of working together
- Promote and increase the understanding of all colleagues at ELHT of the role of research and innovation in high quality clinical care by promoting dissemination and implementation of research findings
- Support research groups and leads to be able to communicate key research messages throughout the trust to increased wider involvement and understanding of the national and local strategies for health care research
- Secure appropriate honorary contracts for NHS clinical colleagues with HEI's working in partnership with HR

Medium Term 3–5 Years

- Increase awareness at board level of the value of clinical academic careers and emphasis on the potential impact for patient outcomes, quality and safety
- Support and train managers to recognise the value of NMAHP and Social Care practitioner research careers and the impact on patient/user care
- Increase the number of Principal Investigators by 15 by 2026
- Increase the number of Chief Investigators by 2026 from the 2021 baseline and review how dedicated research time within job plans can be managed
- By 2026, increase the number of Honorary Associate Professors and Professors from the 2021 baseline
- Support an increase in the number of Trust colleagues, across the professions, successfully applying for funded research fellowships/personal awards
- Ensure that ELHT colleagues who work closely with our partner HEIs have the opportunity to receive honorary positions including Associate Professor and Professor academic appointments
- Implement the national recommendations and additional local measures as required on a case by case to support colleagues moving between HEIs and the NHS as part of their clinical and academic training
- Develop mechanisms to identify future NIHR Senior Investigator's and support individuals towards successful NIHR SI applications



- Strengthen management, capacity and leadership of our NMAHP and RSO workforce increasing integration with the clinical services through joint appointments
- Identify and support colleagues delivering quality improvement initiatives and innovation to apply their skills to funded research
- Design and implement a clear research career structure for NMAHPs and others which includes clinical research delivery and clinical academic pathways.
- Expand education and training opportunities for non-clinical research administrative and management colleagues and improve career path and options
- Raise profile of ELHT as a place that develops and nurtures the careers of trainees and aspiring clinical academics and secures them permanent positions

Long Term 5 Years

- Ensure all clinical and non-clinical colleagues are equipped with research know-how relevant to their roles and empower them to use that knowledge to ensure every patient is offered the opportunity to participate in research



5.0 Strengthen and develop our partnerships

In order to realise our vision, we need to have strong and effective partnerships. These partnerships will enable us to enhance our research portfolio for patient benefit through working across organisational boundaries, realising opportunities to access a broader range of resources and expertise and providing us with a competitive advantage. Working together we are better able to meet the strategic aims of our organisations and drive improvements in the health of our patients and the wider public.

By working collaboratively across the system, increasing membership of networks and building relationships with all partners we will create new opportunities to develop and enhance our research portfolios.

To do this we will in the:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Seek to have a managed process for the recovery of non-covid activity as part of the NIHR Recovery, Resilience & Growth (RRG) Programme
- Host and support high quality research, which has the potential to improve patient care in the short, medium or long term
- Ensure a balanced portfolio of studies take place at ELHT – from observational to complex interventional, supporting established teams and encouraging new teams to participate in NIHR Portfolio studies
- Increase year on year research grant applications
- Establish mechanism to better engage Small Medium Enterprises (SME's) in order to deliver new research and innovation collaborations
- Establish new and broaden existing research portfolios in one clinical service per ELHT Division per annum
- Develop a strategic engagement plan to focus on increasing contract commercial research and collaborations with both pharma/medtech and SMEs targeting clinical areas with potential for growth
- Risk and cost assess the implications of sponsoring low risk local CTIMP Studies in ELHT
- Develop pathways to commence sponsorship of low risk CTIMP studies in ELHT
- Ensure timely, reliable and consistent delivery of contract commercial research meeting NIHR CRN key performance indicators for commercial research
- Develop capacity and capability within pharmacy, pathology and imaging to support and lead research studies



Medium Term 3–5 Years

- Open new commercial research portfolios in one new clinical area per year
- Develop a research profile for promoting ELHT to industry partners and ensuring a reputation for delivery to time and target
- Develop a year-on-year increase in research income per annum with greater proportion being derived from commercial research
- Deliver an increasing number of CRN portfolio studies requiring cross system working in partnership with local NHS organisations and the NIHR CRN
- Build on our existing relationships with LSC ICS organisations to improve delivery of research across organisation boundaries
- Develop and execute strategic plan for increased partnership working with charity sector and international partners
- Commence sponsorship of low risk CTIMP studies in ELHT



6.0 Developing our organisation and systems

Research projects in the NHS must adhere to the UK Policy for Health and Social Care Research which sets out principles of good practice in the management and conduct of research. These principles support and facilitate high quality research that patients and the public can trust. The DERI have robust governance process in place.

We recognise that support is needed for those undertaking research to ensure they comply with all necessary governance standards and legal obligations, without compromising the pursuit of innovative, ethical research projects.

To do this we will in the:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Further review and update our governance structure to reflect the expansion and consolidation of research activity throughout the Trust to ensure continued and improve decision making and communication
- Implement all relevant national guidance into our Policies and SOP's and ensure access to all colleagues through ELHT Intranet
- Strengthen the Research Team infrastructure to increase capacity and improve capability to better promote and support the delivery and development of the Trust's research portfolio
- Monitor and audit active studies and provide advice on governance issues and share good practice
- Increase our NIHR Patient Research Experience Survey (PRES) responses year on year from our 2021 baseline
- Ensure that all research is registered with the Research Support Office, has all the necessary regulatory and appropriate service approvals are in place for Trust capacity and capability (approval) before the research commences
- Ensure that procedures for the Trust approval of research (capacity and capability) are robust, timely and in line with relevant guidance, financial probity and relevant legislation.
- Complete data returns for NIHR and other reports requiring research information such as Quality Accounts and Performance in Initiating and Delivering Clinical Research (PID)
- Cascade and implement Trust policy for the management of Intellectual Property.
- Review and enhance internal and external communications systems including the use of the Trust website, OLI, newsletters and social networking
- Develop a clear and effective research related communication strategy to ensure that NMAHPs and others are linked into opportunities to engage, contribute to and lead on research.



- Raise awareness and understanding of research policies, procedures and resources
- Encourage research leads, clinical divisions and specialties to hold research meetings on a regular basis in keeping with their current meeting structure and include research on all directorate meeting agendas
- Hold research events that are relevant to specific clinical areas in collaboration with training and education activities.
- Work closely with the Trust's Communications Department to facilitate external press releases as necessary
- Develop highly professional research support services jointly with our HEI partners

Information Technology and Digital First

Information technology developments are occurring rapidly and as well as enhancing activity, can improve research efficiency i.e. feasibility, delivery (randomisation and data collection), communication, governance, monitoring, permissions and performance measurement

The ability to process 'big data', artificial intelligence (AI) and utilise genomic information will be increasingly important enablers of research, helping to underpin new models of diagnostic and therapeutic developments (NIHR 2021). New methodologies, better use of 'real-world' evidence and the involvement of a wider range of disciplines (including the social sciences and implementation science) will be critical if we are to accelerate progress.

We will in the:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Improve linkage with Trust systems and databases to undertake rapid and accurate feasibility assessment of new studies to aid achievement of set-up time targets by using TriNetX Research Intelligence System
- Make statistics and data management software available to ELHT researchers
- Implement EDGE Research Management system to support tracking and reporting of both research development and delivery activity and financials
- Engage clinical Divisions as collaborators in 'big data' and AI research
- Engage with and support the ongoing IT developments including EPR, CERNER

Medium Term 3–5 Years

- Capitalise on our data assets to develop a data-enabled clinical research environment



Finance

In 2020 we revised our Income Distribution from Research Activity Policy to ensure alignment with national guidance. The DERI has a Divisional Accountant supported by the finance team to support specialised research accounting as required for the NIHR and other research. In order to ensure financial expenses, management and resource transparency

We will in the:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Provide transparent costings and financial management of research at Directorate level with research projects to be listed in each directorates annual business plans
- Ensure all commercial research costs invoiced are in line with the national costing template
- Focus available income on our priority areas of research, maximising the translation of our research strengths into clinical priorities and practice
- Develop and embed systems and processes to facilitate the costing of grant and personal award applications and subsequent reporting of the utilisation and allocation of this income
- Manage Excess Treatment Costs related to studies in line with guidance from NHS England (DH 2019)
- Provide annual finance returns to funding bodies including the NIHR and other funders

Estates and Facilities

To deliver our vision we need high quality estates and state-of-the-art integrated clinical research facilities.

To do this we will:

Short Term 1–2 Years

- Work in partnership with divisions and estates to increase our facilities and research development and delivery space
- Further develop our laboratory capacity and capability to support and deliver research programmes
- Continue to work in partnership as members of the MediPark programme Board to develop an education, research, innovation and commercialisation offer

Medium Term 3–5 Years

- Open MediPark or similar facilities as a state-of-the-art centre for education, research, innovation and commercialisation in partnership with LA and HEIs
- Have a dedicated Clinical Research Facility on the Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital site



7.0 Taking the plan forward

The Education, Research and Innovation Strategy including this Research Plan will be widely disseminated across ELHT and linked to the other associated strategies i.e. ELHT Clinical Strategy, the Trust Improvement Practice Development Plan/Strategy, Quality Strategy, Estates and Facilities Strategy, Informatics Strategy, Divisional and ELHT Annual Business Plans and Strategy

The Research Plan will be reviewed annually in consultation with the DERI Strategic Board. It is recognised that divisions and clinical specialties may wish to produce their own research strategies and objectives but these should be consistent with, and supportive of, the aims of this plan, as well as agreed by the Research & Innovation Operational Delivery Board. Progress in implementing the DERI Strategy and the Research Plan will be reported 3 monthly to the Executive Team and annually to the Trust Board via the DERI annual report.



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