

A photograph of a smiling male healthcare professional with glasses, wearing blue scrubs, in a clinical setting. The background is slightly blurred, showing medical equipment and blue curtains.

Research is Everyone's Business

NMAHPP research strategy implementation plan 2024-2028

Our strategic plan for:

- Nurses
- Midwives
- Allied health professionals
- Healthcare scientists
- Clinical psychologists
- Clinical research practitioners
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy technicians

Introduction

Since our 2018-23 strategy was launched, our research culture, capacity and capability have developed significantly. This is evidenced by the growth in the number and range of externally funded NMAHPP fellowships; stronger partnerships between the Trust, NIHR Imperial Biomedical Research Centre (BRC), NIHR North West London Patient Safety Research Collaboration (PSRC) and Imperial College London; greater leadership support for clinical academic pathways; expansion of training and support from the Clinical Academic Training Office (CATO), increased involvement of NMAHPPs in research activities across the Trust and a growing research delivery workforce.

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust has developed a national reputation for leadership in clinical academic careers, with our NMAHPP leads taking leadership roles within National organisations and funding panels. The supportive environment that now exists within the Trust has enabled growth in NMAHPP research activity and has had a positive impact on recruitment of staff and on clinical practice.



Mary Wells (left) and Caroline Alexander (right)

Co-leads of the NMAHPP Research Strategy

Professor Mary Wells is the Deputy Director of Nursing – Research

Professor Caroline Alexander is the Lead Clinical Academic for AHPs

Progress since the 2018 five year strategic plan for NMAHPPs

Our 2018-2023 strategy aimed to deliver progress through four key mechanisms: developing research awareness; leadership and career structures; enabling and facilitating research networks and collaborations; and identifying, developing and supporting healthcare professional staff to be research active. An overarching achievement has been the development and publication of a research impact capture tool, now used annually to understand the broad impacts of our research active staff in nursing, midwifery, allied health professions, pharmacy, psychology, clinical research and healthcare science.

Highlights include:

Developing research awareness

- Establishment of 'Bringing research back to the floor' monthly seminars for nursing and midwifery
- Huge range of consistently well attended research training available through our Clinical Academic Training Office (CATO), LEARN and our library

Leadership and career structures

- NIHR Imperial BRC post-doctoral funding for protected research time
- Two part-time researchers in residence supported through CATO funding
- An NIHR Imperial BRC PhD fellowship
- Three substantive clinical academic leadership positions within Therapies and an established six month clinical research rotation
- Lead nurse role for clinical research delivery created through NIHR Imperial BRC funding

Enabling and facilitating research networks and collaborations

- Active committee membership across Imperial Academic Health Science Centre, NIHR Imperial BRC, Trust and Imperial College London
- Integration of our clinical academics and fellows into research groups across the Trust and Imperial College London

Developing and supporting healthcare professional staff to be research active

- Expert mentorship and supervision resulting in numerous externally funded research fellowships and successful completion of PhD awards
- Establishment of student nurse placements in research delivery teams

Between 2018 and 2023 our NMAHPP staff have been awarded external funding of £5,626,920 for:

- 44 pre doctoral fellowships
- 10 PhD fellowships and studentships
- 12 post-doctoral awards

Our NMAHPP staff are named applicants on research and innovation grants amounting to at least £7million in additional funding within the same five year period.

In 2023 our research delivery workforce is one of the largest in the UK (n ~ 300), and in addition we have approximately 47 Trust employed NMAHPPs (22 AHPs, 20 nurses and midwives, 2 pharmacists, 5 HCS) who are undertaking research fellowships and/or are active in research (e.g. named on or preparing grants, publishing regularly, supervising MSc/PhD students).

The Association of UK University Hospital's long term goal was that 1 per cent of healthcare professionals would be working within a clinical academic role by 2030. In the Trust this would equate to approximately 60 NMAHPPs. Although we have achieved a great deal in the last few years, only 5 of 47 research active NMAHPPs actually have research embedded within a substantive clinical academic role; a clinical academic workforce with a career structure within the NHS is still to be developed.

In developing this implementation plan, we asked NMAHPP staff what research meant to them. These quotes represent a selection of what they said.

"Research is essential for me to ensure that my patients received evidenced based care. I could not conduct my role without it."

"It means making treatments and care better and kinder, more thoughtful and personal."

"One of the most rewarding parts of the staff management role is seeing staff develop into researchers and have them come back to the team with new skills and focus to help support the team to look at the evidence."

"I received such satisfaction as a research nurse when I was able to offer treatment potentials to the patient population at Imperial which offered them some support with their current condition."

"To be involved in research as an integral member in their care pathway was just so wonderful."

"Research and being a clinical academic has given me career direction, focus and drive, as well as allowing me to focus on patient centred care and building an evidence base within that."

"Being in senior research management has allowed me to support clinicians, academics and delivery staff to reach even more potential participants for research in many different clinical specialties. It can be difficult and arduous at times but it really does give me such pride to know I've made, and continue to make, a difference in so many lives."

"Research to me and my role means innovation, finding ways to do things differently to improve the care of patients, and maximise good health."

Our strategic implementation plan within the national context

Since our last strategy, support for the development of an NMAHPP clinical academic workforce has grown. Key research funders such as the National Institute for Health and Care Research, the Medical Research Council, The Wellcome Trust and others have substantially increased and directed funding towards NMAHPP research and researchers. In addition, research strategies for NMAHPP professions have been published. These are ambitious in their plans to embed research within all roles. To support this, NHS England has published capabilities for research activity at every level of practice.

Looking forward

We present a research implementation plan derived from the principles and themes of our NMAHPP professions' research strategies. This was developed with the support of our NMAHPP Clinical Academic Research Committee, Nursing and Midwifery Research Committee, the Clinical Academics in Therapies group and the Trust Education Committee. The research implementation plan embraces the principles and values of the NIHR Imperial BRC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy as a core foundation. It also explicitly recognises the need to address health inequalities in access to services and in health outcomes within our research.



Research themes

Our key actions (see Table 1) sit under three themes, which are central to our ambition of becoming a world leading centre of NMAHPP research.

1. **Building research capacity and capability**
2. **Building a positive research environment - culture and systems (including data)**
3. **Integrating research and practice – making research part of practice and practice part of research**

Table 1: Key actions

Building research capacity and capability	Target start date		
	2024	2026	2028
Build an infographic of available research training and resources relevant to different levels of research awareness and activity, using the multi-professional research capabilities framework	X		
Develop induction templates which include key research information relevant to departments/wards	X		
Develop and implement training related to research capability within preceptorship programmes	X		
Build capability in using and understanding big data for research and service evaluation e.g through use of QlikView, access to Corndel data driven professional programmes, data clinics, Topol and Digital pioneer fellowships, etc		X	
Build on opportunities for clinicians to implement research findings into practice		X	
Implement the matron's toolkit for research		X	
Increase number of awardees of external fellowships and grants	X		
Increase the number of Trust staff with appropriate honorary ICL and other HEI contracts		X	
Develop ICL commitment to fund research time for senior post docs beyond their fellowship.		X	
Collate information on research activity for those who have electronic job plans (L2P) and use this to develop research capability and capacity across the workforce	X		
Support Advanced Clinical Practitioners to develop the research pillar of their role, providing resources and training opportunities	X		
Develop and increase clinical academic leadership roles and protected time for academic activity within job plans for all professions		X	

Building research capacity and capability	Target start date		
	2024	2026	2028
Work with audit, service evaluation, improvement and innovation teams across the Trust to map support pathways for staff to engage in all these activities and to showcase ongoing work		X	
Develop stronger mechanisms for showcasing research across NMAHPP professions		X	
Support staff to disseminate their research		X	
Develop research awareness and understanding across the Practice Education network	X		
Continue to talent spot and provide mentorship to aspiring clinical academics at all levels	X		

Building a positive research environment	Target start date		
	2024	2027	2029
Incorporate research into JDs at different levels for registered healthcare professionals using the multi-professional research capability framework		X	
Build research roles and a career pathway for clinical academics, with equitable access across professions and divisions			X
Recognise, share and celebrate research success in individuals, groups and across multiple fora	X		
Build mechanisms to ensure research findings are shared and disseminated across the relevant groups and clinical departments	X		
Update the AHSC commitment statement to reflect NIHR principles and obligations and strengthen commitment to supporting fellows to return to posts within their Trust	X		
Implement a new memorandum of understanding between the Trust and Imperial College London for ICL employed researchers/research delivery staff	X		
Review, update and develop the electronic system for collating information about research active staff across the Trust		X	

Building a positive research environment	Target start date		
	2024	2027	2029
Develop and co create strategies to support managers to implement clinical academic roles and enable clinical academic career development within clinical divisions and departments – e.g. a CATO event to begin this process	X		
Develop better links between audit, QI, service evaluation, research and innovation eg develop links between QI leads to a) identify research gaps and b) talent spot potential clinical academics		X	
Continue to refine our pathways and systems for procurement, grant/fellowship spending, data sharing, information governance, industry partnerships through collaboration with relevant department	X		
Ensure all NIHR Imperial Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) Theme Management Committees and Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Governance Committee have NMAHPP representation	X		
Provide guidance for staff to enable discussions about research to be included in appraisals		X	
Develop standardised research related interview questions to be used in recruitment for NMAHPP posts		X	
Continue to implement improved communication systems for research-related activities and opportunities, including the intranet and internet resources	X		
Continue to develop the network of research ambassadors/champions	X		
Develop opportunities for AHPs to develop research delivery careers		X	
Consider sustainability in all our research activity, aligned with the Trust's Green plan.		X	

Intergrating research and practice	Target start date		
	2024	2027	2029
Encourage and facilitate opportunities to develop awareness of and skills in access to big data for practice development and research e.g. iCARE, WSIC		X	
Facilitate two-way communication and knowledge exchange between clinical and academic teams to drive forward practice-related research e.g. NIHR North West London Patient Safety Research Collaboration, Institute of Global Health Innovation, Change Lab		X	
Encourage NMAHPPs to participate in PERC initiatives to develop relationships with diverse NWL communities	X		
Ensure that NMAHPPs align their research to public need, through use of priority setting initiatives such as the James Lind Alliance and professional, National and Integrated Care Board agendas		X	
Ensure that all completed NMAHPP-led research projects are disseminated through the research intranet pages through a one-page summary		X	
Encourage practice education initiatives that include research evidence, e.g. linking with the library for support, clinical supervision, Professional Nurse/Midwife Advocate discussions, CPD activities, study days etc	X		
Encourage research to be discussed as part of annual PDR through the use of a research prompt guide	X		

Intergrating research and practice	Target start date		
	2024	2027	2029
Ensure that library staff are involved in key evidence-based practice groups and committees to ensure up-to-date knowledge exchange	X		
Continue to build regular knowledge exchange such as Therapies Project Presentations, Bringing Research Back to the Floor etc	X		
Increase uptake of library membership, tools and resources, training	X		
Encourage and facilitate dissemination of audit, service evaluation and innovation projects	X		



Imperial College Healthcare
NHS Trust