

# £64 million funding to back UK-wide plan to strengthen clinical research delivery

- Better health outcomes through more effective and efficient research as seen throughout the pandemic
- Promoting a patient-centred, innovative and data-enabled clinical research environment
- Embedding research in the NHS to increase UK's capacity and capability to deliver cutting-edge clinical research

Patients across the UK will benefit from a super-charged clinical research system, backed by over £64 million of dedicated investment, which will save lives across the country.

Following the bold vision [Saving and Improving Lives: The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery](#) published in March, the UK government and devolved administrations today set out the [first phase of activity to ensure research will have better health outcomes](#) and allow more patients to be involved in, and benefit from, research of relevance to them.

The activity for the coming months will include:

- the development and trial of new COVID-19 treatments and vaccines
- making UK clinical research delivery easier through more rapid ethics reviews and faster approval processes
- boosting clinical research capacity with more virtual and remote trials
- increasing diversity and participation in research in communities traditionally under-served by research
- digitising the clinical research process to allow researchers to find patients, offer them places in trials, and monitor health outcomes

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said:

Clinical research has been vital in our fight against COVID-19 and has saved thousands of lives. Working with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments, our ambitious UK-wide vision for the future of clinical research delivery is essential if we are to build on this exciting and life saving momentum.

We are making this vision a reality by continuing to work closely with our partners across the UK, the NHS, regulators, industry and medical research sector. We will create a more innovative, resilient and patient-centred clinical research system.

The link between research and benefit to patients through better treatments and care has never been clearer. Over the last year the UK's research efforts

fighting COVID-19 have reinforced the vital role clinical research plays in the health of the population. Continued development of new COVID-19 treatments and vaccines will ensure a front-footed approach in tackling the virus.

The activity in the coming months will include:

- driving the recovery of the UK's clinical research portfolio, while continuing to develop and trial new COVID-19 treatments and vaccines – working across the UK in partnership with the research funders, the devolved administrations and other stakeholders to identify the most pressing studies that require support to recover
- making UK clinical research delivery easier, more efficient and more effective through key initiatives including rapid research ethics review allowing faster approval for research and getting trials off the ground quicker
- boosting clinical research capacity, including through increasing the number of virtual and remote trials, enabling more research to take place outside of traditional NHS settings, and expanding Patient Recruitment Centres to provide additional capacity for late-stage commercial research
- increasing diversity and participation in research, by working with partners such as the Centre for BME Health in Leicester to develop systems and processes that enable health research to be directed to and supported within areas and communities traditionally under-served by research to increase diversity of research participants and to help tackle health inequalities
- digitising the clinical research process to make it faster and cheaper by beginning to create a holistic, data-enabled Find, Recruit and Follow-up service, allowing researchers to digitally find patients, offer them places in trials and monitor health outcomes as part of the study, making the set-up and delivery of clinical research faster, easier and more inclusive, to accelerate the development of life saving health-innovations

Lord Bethell, Minister for Innovation, said:

Working with colleagues in the devolved administrations and across the sector on this ambitious plan will ensure that we develop a clinical research environment that benefits everyone in all parts of the UK.

This is the first step in a big ambitious vision. We will continue to build upon these strong foundations to deliver a research ecosystem that positions the UK as a global leader in cutting-edge clinical research. With research embedded across the NHS, UK will be a global leader in trials for new treatments and technologies.

Publication of the plan follows on from the historic G7 Health Ministers' agreement to create a new Therapeutics and Vaccines Clinical Trials Charter

setting out shared principles to accelerate the speed with which clinical trials generate robust evidence and how their findings can be implemented in this and future pandemics.

Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Care, Welsh Government, said:

Wales has great opportunities for clinical research and we are fully committed to playing our part in making the UK clinical research system one of the best, if not the best, in the world. The plan launched today is a key stepping stone to achieve our collective ambitions. I am delighted to see the strong alignment to our 'A Healthier Wales' strategy, in which individuals are at the heart of transformation and modernisation of health and care services, and where research is embedded in high quality care.

Health and Care Research Wales will continue to work collaboratively with all partners, across the UK and across Wales, as we seek innovative solutions and implement this ambitious plan for the benefit of the public, patients and the workforce.

Humza Yousaf, Health Secretary, Scottish Government said:

Scotland has a long history of pioneering health research and through NHS Research Scotland and the Chief Scientist Office of Scottish Government we are committed to working with our partners across the UK to create a more innovative and resilient research environment that will ultimately improve patients' lives.

The plan we have launched today recognises the importance of collaboration and cross border working, ensuring the UK is a cohesive and streamlined location to attract, and undertake, research in a global economy.

Robin Swann, Health Minister, Northern Ireland, said:

Northern Ireland recognises the value of a UK-wide approach to clinical research and we are committed to participation in the delivery of this vision. We are already fully involved in many of the UK-wide workstreams, working in partnership towards collective and compatible solutions to create a clinical research ecosystem which benefits all patients across the UK.

Close collaborative and partnership working between organisations right across the UK through the Clinical Research Recovery, Resilience and Growth programme – which includes representatives from all UK health departments, the NHS, regulators, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), medical research charities and industry – will help make the UK one of the

best places in the world to conduct cutting-edge clinical research.

## Background information

Key commitments in [The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery: 2021 to 2022 implementation plan](#) include:

- continuing to deliver on existing commitments to make UK clinical research delivery easier, more efficient and more effective. This includes an offer of HRA Rapid Research Ethics Committee review as part of the roll-out of the Ethics Committee and Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) combined review of clinical trials of medicines
- reducing the variation and time spent negotiating costs for commercial research through the National Contract Value Review, ensuring an aligned process for contracting of research across the whole UK
- taking the first steps towards digitising the clinical research process to make it faster and cheaper by beginning to create a holistic data-enabled Find, Recruit and Follow-up service
- expanding flexible workforce and delivery models, including increasing capacity for research in primary and community care
- providing recognition for key groups of staff across the NHS who play a key role in delivering research, including through a new accreditation scheme for clinical research practitioners
- supporting and enabling the delivery and evaluation of innovative models of trial delivery such as hub and spoke models, decentralised models and remote participation

In addition to an immediate focus on the managed recovery of the research, the implementation plan is built around 7 key areas of action:

- improving the speed and efficiency of study set-up
- building upon digital platforms to deliver clinical research
- increasing the use of innovative research designs
- aligning our research programmes and processes with the needs of the UK health and care systems
- improving visibility and making research matter to the NHS
- making research more diverse and more relevant to the whole of the UK
- strengthening public, patient and service user involvement in research

The implementation plan sets out the first year of activities towards delivering the vision for [The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery](#), which was published in March 2021 and was focused around 5 main themes:

1. embedding research in the NHS
2. making research more patient-centred to increase access and participation
3. enabling streamlined, efficient and innovative research
4. using data and digital tools to advance the UK research ecosystem
5. creating a sustainable and supported research workforce

The implementation plan has been developed and is being overseen and

delivered by the UK Recovery, Resilience and Growth programme. This UK-wide cross-sector group is made up of the key organisations involved in the delivery of clinical research in the UK, including:

- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI)
- Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)
- Chief Scientist Office, Scotland (CSO)
- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW)
- Health Research Authority (HRA)
- Health and Social Care, Northern Ireland (HSCNI)
- Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
- MedTech industry representation
- NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I)
- NHS Digital
- NHSX
- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
- Office for Life Sciences (OLS)

## **Delivery of clinical research across the UK**

In England, the NHS is supported by the NIHR alongside other networks delivering research. As one of the largest national clinical research funders in Europe, NIHR provides the staff, facilities, training and technology that enables research to thrive.

In Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Research is supported through the Health and Social Care R&D Division of the Public Health Agency, to deliver on the 10-year strategy, 'Research for Better Health and Social Care'. This strategy sets out how the health, wellbeing and prosperity of the Northern Ireland population will benefit from excellent, world-renowned R&D in health and social care, that is led from Northern Ireland.

In Scotland, NHS Research Scotland (NRS) supports clinical research activity, through partnership working between the Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Government and Scottish Health Boards. NRS works with Scottish universities and other organisations to ensure that Scotland provides the best environment to support clinical research.

In Wales, the NHS is supported by Health and Care Research Wales, which promotes and supports health and care research, to ensure it is of the highest international scientific quality, is relevant to the needs and challenges of health and care in Wales, and makes a difference to policy and practice in ways that improve the lives of patients, people and communities.

## **Supportive quotes**

Dr William van't Hoff, Chief Executive of the NIHR Clinical Research Network, said:

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the vital link between

clinical research and better healthcare. Working in partnership with the NHS throughout the country, we were able to support research that improved evidence, saved lives and enabled rapid vaccine development. Now we can build on that collaboration with partners from across the sector, to deliver the UK's ambitious vision for clinical research delivery.

Innovation, efficiency and streamlined research processes underpin the implementation plans to make clinical research faster and easier. This will enable more healthcare professionals to be involved in research, ultimately benefiting patients across the country.

Richard Torbett, Chief Executive of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, said:

Today's plan is a step towards creating a more competitive clinical research ecosystem across the UK, with the potential to help transform patients' lives.

We have a significant opportunity to take what we have learnt from the COVID-19 response and put that into improving NHS care and building a stronger UK life science industry.

Hilary Reynolds, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Medical Research Charities, said:

Delivering on the future vision for clinical research requires a true UK-wide, cross sector collaborative approach. The Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), is pleased to be a partner in this plan to achieve a more patient-centred clinical research environment, which empowers and encourages everyone to take part.

Iain Stewart, UK Government Minister for Scotland, said:

Never at any point in our lifetime has clinical research been more important and, through this new UK-wide plan, we want to create the most productive possible setting for that research to flourish.

The UK government will work hand in hand with all our partners to ensure we build on Scotland's reputation as a centre of excellence for the benefit of patients in all parts of the UK and internationally.