



**National Institute for
Health Research**

BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 5.1

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH CLINICAL
RESEARCH NETWORK**

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This Implementation Plan provides more details on one of the key components of that strategy: NIHR **Clinical Research Network**. This document will be regularly updated. The latest version should be used.

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The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Network is the English element of the UK Clinical Research Network (UKCRN), which is being developed as a central workstream of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC). The UKCRC is a partnership of organisations including the Department of Health, clinical research funders, academic medicine, the NHS, regulatory bodies, industry and patients. Its aim is to establish the UK as a world leader in clinical research by harnessing the clinical research potential of the NHS. (See www.ukcrc.org for more details.)

Aim

- To ensure that patients and healthcare professionals from all parts of the country are able to participate in and benefit from clinical research.
- To integrate health research and patient care.
- To improve the quality, speed, and co-ordination of clinical research by removing the barriers to research in the NHS.
- To strengthen research collaboration with industry and ensure the NHS can meet the health research needs of industry.

¹ *Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy*. The NHS contribution to health research in England. Department of Health. 2006

Purpose

- The purpose of the NIHR Clinical Research Network is to provide a world-class health service infrastructure to support clinical research.
- To support and conduct randomised controlled trials of interventions (including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care) and other well designed studies for commercial and non-commercial sponsors. This will include pivotal licensing studies undertaken for industry on a transparent full-cost recovery basis.
- To play a key role in promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research.
- To enable research to be conducted across the full spectrum of disease and clinical need through a managed set of research networks.

Structure

The NIHR Clinical Research Network encompasses:

- The UKCRN Co-ordinating Centre (UKCRNCC), The UKCRNCC was established in early 2005 to co-ordinate the activities of the whole UKCRN in England. More details are available at www.ukcrn.org.uk
- One NIHR Primary Care Research Network, co-ordinated by the UKCRNCC, and comprising eight Local Research Networks.
- One NIHR Comprehensive Research Network, comprising local research networks covering England, to address all disease/need areas other than those covered by the Topic Specific Research Networks. This network will play a key role in allocating and managing funding to meet the NHS Service Support Costs of research, and in streamlining research management to deliver proper governance. Co-ordination, support and performance management will be provided by the UKCRNCC. Establishment will be incremental over a 2-year period, starting in April 2007. Please see Implementation Plan 5.1a for further details.
- Six Topic Specific Research Networks in England:
 - Cancer: The successful National Cancer Research Network (NCRN) was established in 2001. We are building on the concept and the experience of the NCRN to establish all subsequent clinical research networks. The NCRN Co-ordinating Centre was established in competition. In England each Local Research Network of the NCRN is fully integrated with its local cancer service network. The NCRN therefore covers the whole country. No major changes are planned to its structure. (See [National Cancer Research Network \(NCRN\)](#) for more details.)
 - Mental Health: The Mental Health Research Network has already been established. It comprises a Co-ordinating Centre and eight Local Research Networks that together cover approximately 60% of the English population. (See [Mental Health Research Network \(MHRN\)](#) for more details.)

- Medicines for Children; Diabetes; Stroke; Dementias & Neurodegenerative Diseases: Co-ordinating Centres have been established in competition. Following competitive bidding processes, between six and eight Local Research Networks have been established in each Topic area. Further information is available at the following websites: [Medicines for Children Research Network \(MCRN\)](#); [Diabetes Research Network \(DRN\)](#); [Stroke Research Network \(SRN\)](#); [Dementias and Neurodegenerative Diseases Research Network \(DeNDRoN\)](#)

Activities

The core activities of each of the Local Research Networks of the Topic Specific Networks will be:

- Recruiting patients to participate in specific research projects in the topic area funded by commercial and non-commercial sponsors.
- Managing the progress of patients through the research process.
- Collecting, collating and submitting research data.
- Promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research.
- Working with the Co-ordinating Centre for the Clinical Research Network to achieve the aims of the Network as part of the UK Clinical Research Network.

The core activities of the Co-ordinating Centre for each Topic Specific Network are:

- Providing leadership to the Topic Specific Network
- Establishing and developing the Local Research Networks
- Managing the Topic Specific Network on behalf of the Departments of Health in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland
- Co-ordinating network participation in research projects
- Development and quality assurance of Local Research Networks
- Promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research
- Managing internal and external relationships
- Working with the UK Clinical Research Network Co-ordinating Centre to achieve the aims of the UK Clinical Research Network.

The core activities of the overall UKCRN Co-ordinating Centre are:

- Providing leadership to the UK Clinical Research Network.
- Supporting the Department[s] of Health in developing all Co-ordinating Centres and, through them, the Topic Specific Research Networks.
- Supporting the Department[s] of Health in managing the UK Clinical Research Network.
- Providing support to all Co-ordinating Centres and networks on issues that are common to all Clinical Research Networks (e.g. workforce organisation)

and development, training, information systems, biological sample collection).

- Strengthening existing research interactions between the NHS and industry.
- Promoting the active involvement of patients and the public in research
- Managing internal and external relationships.
- Working closely with all UKCRC partners - Government, research charities, industry and the public - to assist UKCRC in achieving its wider aims regarding the organisation and development of research infrastructure, research activity, research workforce, and regulation.

Support elements

- The purpose of the NIHR Clinical Research Network is to provide the NHS infrastructure in England to support clinical research. It will do so by funding NHS support costs to facilitate the conduct of, and remove barriers to, research in the NHS.
- Different topic-specific Clinical Research Networks are expected to require different NHS infrastructure support to achieve their objectives. For example, a mental health research network may require additional clinical psychology support for its research, while a stroke research network may require additional radiology support for its research. Therefore, although the specific nature of a requirement may be different (psychology *c.f.* radiology), the general nature of the requirement (NHS service support) is similar.
- The type of support that will be provided through the NIHR Clinical Research Network in a typical Local Research Network will include some or all of the following:
 - Clinical Leadership
 - Local Research Network Manager
 - Research Nurses (or similar staff)
 - Data Managers
 - Secretarial support
 - Junior medical staff sessions
 - Other clinical staff sessions relevant to the topic area (e.g. clinical psychology, community psychiatric nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy).
- Appropriate diagnostic test or clinical services costs, such as:
 - Pharmacy support
 - Pathology support
 - Radiology support
 - Information technology support.
- Essential running costs.

Implementation Timetable

The Planned implementation timetable is:

- Jan 2006 - R&D strategy published confirming intention to continue establishing the various elements of the Clinical Research Network
- Feb 2006 - successful bidders for Medicines for Children Local Research Networks (LRNs) confirmed
- Apr 2006 - allocations to four new Topic Specific Networks commenced:- Medicines for Children; Diabetes; Stroke; Dementias and Neurodegenerative Diseases
- June 2006 – interviews for NIHR Primary Care Research Network LRNs took place
- Oct 2006 – funding commenced for successful NIHR Primary Care Research Network LRNs
- Apr 2007 – Implementation of the NIHR Comprehensive Research Network commences
- Apr 2009 – NIHR Clinical Research Network fully established

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