



**NHS**

**National Institute for  
Health Research**

**I AM**

**RESEARCH**

## **NIHR Clinical Research Network**

**NIHR CRN Allied Health Professionals  
Strategy 2018-2020**

**Delivering research to  
make patients, and the NHS, better**

## The vital role of Allied Health Professionals

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) represent the third largest professional workforce in health and social care — their contributions are critical to the development and delivery of high quality, patient centred clinical research.

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has a mission “to provide a health research system in which the NHS supports outstanding individuals, working in world class facilities, conducting leading edge research which is focused on the needs of patients and the public”.

To achieve this, the NIHR aims to attract, develop and retain the best research professionals to conduct people based research — core to this is realising the potential of Allied Health Professionals.

**“We want Allied Health Professionals to blaze a trail in research, develop as visible leaders and strengthen their impact across the health and research system.”**

Anthea Mould, NIHR Clinical Research Network, Head of Allied Health Professionals

## Working in partnership to maximise opportunities and impact

The purpose of this strategy is to support Allied Health Professionals working with, and for, the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN). It builds on experiences of those working across the CRN and views sought from strategic partners, including the Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR).

The strategy complements existing NIHR reports including ‘Mapping research capacity activities in the CLAHRC (*Collaboration and Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care*) community: *Supporting non-medical professionals*’ and ‘*Ten years on: Adapting and evolving to new challenges in developing tomorrow’s health research leaders*’. The strategy also seeks to build on initiatives led by partners, such as NHS England’s ‘*Allied Health Professions into Action*’, with the aim of working together to amplify the impact of AHPs across the health and research system.

Allied Health Professionals are already leading research, working in a breadth of roles, driving best practice, and linking in with a wide range health and social care networks. As such, AHPs are well placed to embrace the future challenges within an ever changing research landscape, characterised by rapid developments in science and technology, emerging methodologies, and new care models and settings.

## Our strategic goals

The 2018-2020 NIHR Clinical Research Network Allied Health Professionals Strategy sets out five strategic goals:

### **Goal 1: Increase the visibility of AHPs as leaders across all research settings**

Develop effective leadership by AHPs in support of research, including building awareness, demonstrating innovation and promoting and sharing best practice

#### **Evidenced by leaders who:**

- Develop best clinical practice
- Are NIHR ambassadors, visible in the NIHR/NHS building identity and momentum for the professions
- Underpin a vibrant 'AHPs in Research' network, supporting personal development and learning opportunities
- Promote the contribution, opportunities & impact of AHPs in research
- Are visible role models across the NIHR

### **Goal 2: Strengthen AHP research capacity & capability**

Promote the development of an AHP research workforce that is fit for future challenges within research and maximises the potential of AHPs for patient benefit

#### **Evidenced by:**

- Visibility of AHP research roles and the value they bring
- A clear pathway which supports AHPs in research roles, more studies with AHPs as:
  - » Chief Investigators, including as Clinical Academics and Clinician Researchers
  - » Collaborators, including Principal Investigators
  - » Expert Advisers
  - » Clinical Research AHPs (delivering research)
- Initiatives which support personal development and fosters talent

### **Goal 3: Support AHPs to deliver research that is relevant to patients and public**

AHPs are supported to be research active and instrumental in facilitating patient and public access to relevant research, along with playing an active part in supporting the development of appropriate research questions

#### **Evidenced by:**

- Development of resources to enable AHPs to support patient understanding of research and actively signpost patients to opportunities
- Evaluation of current and desired Patient and Public Involvement activities across the AHP research workforce

### **Goal 4: Support AHPs to embrace innovation in their research roles**

AHPs are supported to actively seek opportunities to drive areas of innovation in research challenges, such as new ways of working and digital technology

#### **Evidenced by:**

- AHPs visible as active learners in new and novel approaches to research, new roles, new ways of working and research in new settings
- AHPs reporting increased confidence and competence with digital technology
- Lower barriers to adoption and uptake of digital technology
- Increased AHP presence in digital communities and NIHR digital strategy initiatives

### **Goal 5: Build strong AHP partnerships that deliver visible research impact**

The NIHR CRN works in partnership across and outside the NIHR to maximise the impact of AHP research activity

#### **Evidenced by:**

- Positive and productive partnerships and joint activities across the NIHR with:
  - » Professional bodies and associated organisations, including the Council for Allied Health Professions in Research
  - » NHS England, NHS Improvement, Health Education England and the Academic Health Sciences Network
  - » NHS and academia
  - » Sponsors and Pharma, Biomed and Medtech industries
  - » Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority and Health Regulatory Authority
- A shared repository of case studies demonstrating the range of AHP contributions to UK research

## Promoting and implementing the strategy

This strategy will be shared widely through our partners.

Local Clinical Research Network (LCRN) and Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR) events will be an opportunity for AHPs to:

- Shape delivery activities
- Share information about local strategies and complementary activities
- Share case studies about AHP's in research to bring the strategy to life

For more information or if you would like to be involved in strategy implementation activities, email [\*\*anthea.mould@nihr.ac.uk\*\*](mailto:anthea.mould@nihr.ac.uk)

To find out about upcoming activities and events, visit the NIHR Allied Health Professionals in Research site: <https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/nihrahpsinresearch/home>

More strategy materials are available at: [bit.ly/AHPStrategy](http://bit.ly/AHPStrategy)

### **Additional information for AHPs interested in developing as clinical and academic researchers**

The NIHR supports AHPs to lead their own programmes of research, often alongside continued clinical practice and development as independent researchers, through pre-doctoral, doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships.

The NIHR, in partnership with Health Education England through the HEE/NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Programme, provides opportunities for clinicians to develop as clinical academics.

[www.nihr.ac.uk/hee-ica](http://www.nihr.ac.uk/hee-ica)

The NIHR runs various research training programmes to enable AHPs to develop as research leaders.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-for-training-and-career-development/training-programmes/>