

Document Control

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Research & Innovation Strategy Framework

Date: 4th February 2025



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1. Introduction

This framework describes the North West, North Wales and the Isle of Man Operational Delivery Networks (NWCHDODN) role in Research and Innovation (R&I) and outlines the components of its principles, possibilities and intended approach to achieve an equitable opportunity for all paediatric cardiology and adult congenital heart disease (ACHD) staff, patients and families across the network to be engaged in and benefit from research.

The three core aims of the strategy are to:

1. Promote research
2. Support research
3. Help deliver the benefits of research

2. Context

2.1 Why Research?

Engaging in research is a cornerstone of improving patient care, fostering innovation, and enhancing organisational performance across the healthcare sector.

- **Better outcomes:** Research participation improves patient outcomes, including reduced mortality. Studies have shown that hospitals in the top 20% of research-active Trusts have 15% lower mortality rates compared to those in the bottom 20%. Research-active Trusts also tend to achieve higher CQC ratings, indicating broader organisational benefits.
- **Staff retention and recruitment:** Offering research opportunities attracts and retains high-quality clinical staff, as it fosters professional growth and satisfaction.
- **Well-led organisation:** NHS Trusts are evaluated on how well clinical research is integrated under the CQC's well-led framework, demonstrating its importance in driving organisational excellence.

2.2 Trusts and R&I

R&I should be core business for NHS Trusts, working in partnership with Higher Education organisations, Clinical Research Facilities, Academic Health Science Centres and Clinical Research Networks across the North West.

A strategic priority for NHS Trusts is to develop research and innovation activities that deliver cutting-edge care aligned with the needs of their populations. The NWCHDODN will support staff by signposting them to relevant organisations, promoting research opportunities across the region, and fostering collaboration through national CHD networks.

3. Responsibilities

- The NWCHDODN will support and signpost providers within the region to relevant resources and individuals to facilitate research and improve outcomes.
- The NWCHDODN will facilitate research and innovation aligned with Trust policies and priorities.
- Member Trust R&I services/directorates are responsible for funding, management, governance, and policy implementation.
- The Education, Training, and Research Lead Nurse will support research and innovation by promoting the benefits of research and providing signposting and guidance to help researchers to access the help and support they need
- Trust-based Research and Innovation Managers will oversee the day-to-day management of R&I projects.

4. Research and Innovation Strategy Framework

4.1 Creating a Network research identity

Desired outcome: Embed R&I within the vision for network services, leveraging the connection between research and clinical excellence.

Research enhances patient access to new treatments, fosters a culture of enquiry, and attracts talented staff. A systematic understanding of research activity across Trusts and services is essential. The Network will:

- Initiate dialogue and collaboration with research leads, NHS organisations, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and the Clinical Research Network to understand their perspectives, priorities, and capabilities regarding paediatric cardiology and ACHD research.
- Identify common goals and areas of alignment to help guide collaborative efforts.

4.2 Helping research happen

Desired outcome: Promote, support, and facilitate research, addressing barriers and fostering collaboration.

Research engagement varies widely across the Network due to motivational, knowledge, and logistical barriers. To address this, the NWCHDODN will:

- Facilitate networking opportunities, forums, and collaborative platforms to foster connections and partnerships among researchers, clinicians, healthcare professionals, and academic institutions.

- Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange to drive research excellence and innovation.

4.3 Utilising research resources

Desired outcome: Encourage providers to flexibly deploy resources to attract, nurture, and retain research-active colleagues from all disciplines.

Flexibility in job planning can enhance staff engagement and retention. To achieve this, the Network will:

- Advocate for equitable access to research time and resources for medical and non-medical staff.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, capacity-building, and research support within the network of providers.

4.4 Looking ahead

Desired outcome: Use local and external research insights to anticipate and adapt to future clinical trends.

The Network will:

- Leverage the expertise of clinicians in leadership roles to identify emerging innovations.
- Utilise horizon-scanning processes.
- Encourage knowledge-sharing to raise awareness of and prepare services for new opportunities.

4.5 Creating a culture of evaluation

Desired outcome: Build opportunities for R&I into service development plans.

The Network will:

- Advocate for R&I benefits and plans to be embedded in hospital and departmental strategies.
- Share outcomes of service evaluations and promote lessons learned so that all Trusts in the Network can benefit from improvements.

5. Implementation and Monitoring

Workplans and objectives will be developed under this framework, with measurable outcomes to aid monitoring. Baseline information will be gathered, and annual reports will be presented to the NWCHDODN Board.

Aim 1: Promoting research

We will:

- Encourage staff across providers to share learning, identify key research gaps and emerging issues.
- Promote and engage in networking and learning events.
- Strive to expand awareness of evidence-based practice.

How we will achieve these goals:

- Communicate through the NWCHDODN website and social media, highlight and promote research opportunities and successes, including the dissemination of research results

Key indicators of success:

- Engaged research community in the North West

Aim 2: Supporting research

We will:

- Promote opportunities for professional development, mentorship, and research training tailored to the needs of different stakeholders.
- Facilitate ways for patients and parents to shape and contribute to research.

How we will achieve these goals:

- Focus research efforts on questions that matter most to patients, parents, healthcare professionals, and researchers.
- Support researchers to demonstrate impact and involve patients and parents.

Key indicators of success:

- Increase in research engagement across the network.
- Evidence of patient and parental contribution into research proposals/protocols through education and promotion of these opportunities via staff in our hospitals and the Network Patient and Public Voice (PPV) group.

Aim 3: Delivering the benefits of research

We will:

- Use research to develop resources and learning materials for staff and families.
- Survey stakeholders to assess research implementation and impact.

How we will achieve these goals:

- Share key findings with decision-makers to influence policy and guidelines.
- Highlight research findings that improve care quality.

- Develop accessible resources to communicate key research findings.

Key indicators of success:

- An increased portfolio of research impacts, evidenced by completed research projects from NWCHDODN services that have directly influenced clinical care, care pathways, or guidance. This includes the successful translation of research findings into practice, bringing tangible benefits such as new treatments, improved care processes, and enhanced outcomes for patients.

6. Summary

Through this strategy, the North West, North Wales, and the Isle of Man Congenital Heart Disease Operational Delivery Network reaffirms its commitment to supporting and promoting research as a cornerstone of clinical excellence.

By fostering collaboration, enabling equitable access to research opportunities, and embedding a culture of enquiry and innovation, we aim to improve outcomes for patients, families, and staff across our network.

This framework represents a shared vision for harnessing the benefits of research to shape the future of paediatric cardiology and adult congenital heart disease care. Together, we can drive meaningful progress and ensure our services remain at the forefront of best practice.