

NIHR Leicester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) and Clinical Research Facility (CRF) Training Strategy 2019

This document replaces the NIHR Leicester BRC Training Strategy, 2016.

RATIONALE

- To ensure that training in the infrastructure fulfils the expectations of NIHR.
- To promote the NIHR Academy in the infrastructure.
- To prepare for an application for contract renewal as combined BRC-CRF infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

The NIHR Academy was launched in October 2018 to ensure the research workforce has the capacity and capability needed to advance the best research which improves health, and benefits society and the economy.

- It recognises the need to attract professional groups where research capacity is low, including nurses, pharmacists and social scientists, and to break down barriers to career progression, especially for women and minority ethnic groups. Flexible working will be encouraged.
- There will be greater emphasis on career development alongside funding, so that NIHR award holders can access high quality support.
- It intends to upskill the research workforce in bioinformatics and data science so that the research community is able to take advantage of big data sets.
- It will encourage training partnerships with other research funders from the charity sector and from industry.
- It will introduce research 'incubators' to build research capacity in priority areas. These will be co-produced and tailored to need.
- It seeks to be able to demonstrate value for NIHR investment by maintaining contact with its award holders throughout their careers.

The revised Training Strategy is explicitly designed to ensure that the BRC and CRF deliver the aims of the NIHR academy locally.

Of course we are not starting from scratch. The two infrastructure organisations have already established training for their staff that is of high quality and has been well-received by those who have accessed it. We will seek to build on those successes and will refer to them later in the strategy. Equally we recognise we could do more and better when it comes to training, and in acknowledgement of this we are using the improvement approach embedded into the University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) NHS Trust culture, a Listening Into Action (LiA) project in the BRC. This has generated some excellent suggestions that will be implemented.

THE VISION

To ensure the BRC-CRF infrastructure is a beacon of biomedical research excellence through the establishment of a local academy, epitomising a research training environment and culture that supports the development and career progression of our staff.

THE STRATEGY

We will attract professional groups where research capacity is low, including nurses, pharmacists and social scientists into the infrastructure.

We will target Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) – non-medical clinical professionals including graduate nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, pharmacists and others working in our partner organisations. Our agreed initial focus will be on nursing and physiotherapy, building on our links with the graduate programmes at De Montfort University and the University of Leicester respectively. The CRF actively engages with student nurses, recognising their potential as future innovators. Professor Sally Singh is an NIHR Training Advocate for physiotherapy.

We run Academic Careers Workshops for AHPs and scientists working in the NHS who want to know how to get involved in research. The format of motivational and informative presentations followed by interactive workshops has been well-received, and has proved successful in addressing perceptions of barriers to getting involved in research.

We will use a variety of methods including research ‘taster’ opportunities in each of the BRC Themes. We will offer flexible opportunities for AHPs to get involved in research projects, as ‘stepping stones’ towards formal engagement with the Health Education England - NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Programmes, and we will support them with the application process.

The Training Lead is a member of the East Midlands Clinical Academic Careers Advisory Group that supports non-medical clinical academics in the region.

Our non-medical Clinical Academics are encouraged to join the East Midlands Clinical Academic Practitioner Network (EMCAPN) which offers biannual conferences, peer support and resources.

We will attempt to break down barriers to career progression, especially for women and minority ethnic groups.

We will ensure that our host organisations have all achieved at least the Silver Award of the Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science, and have signed up to the ECU's Race Equality Charter. Flexible working will be encouraged. All our research staff will be encouraged to identify a mentor who will support them during their academic journey.

Several ‘Women in Medicine’ conferences have been held in conjunction with University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust. We intend to build on this initiative and broaden the scope of the conference to include other under-represented groups.

We are committed to supporting the Clinical Research Practitioners working in the infrastructure to obtain NIHR accredited registration when it becomes available.

We will encourage our non-medical clinical researchers to apply for HEE-NIHR ICA Bridging Schemes to maximise their chance of securing a post-doctoral award.

We will facilitate career development for all our staff and ensure they can access high quality support locally, regionally or nationally.

We will build on the existing training portfolio that includes:

- **Leicester BRC-CRF –East Midlands Integrated Academic Training (IAT) Joint Programme**
This provides additional mentoring and support to local Academic Clinical Fellowships and Lectureships in essential skills such as grant assessment and peer review (through the Joint Clinical Academic Training Grant Development Forum), mock interviews, career mentoring, flexible working and clinical training liaison.
- **Academic Clinical Excellence Seminars (ACES)**
The BRC hosts six half-day training meetings per year at which researchers present their work to their peers and supervisors. There are also ‘common threads’ talks to foster collaboration between the BRC themes.
- **Management Forum**
We have established a forum for middle-grade managers in the BRC-CRF infrastructure. This provides them with opportunities for professional development relevant to their roles.

The BRC Training Lead is a member of the NIHR Training Forum which aims to:

- develop and promote excellence in training and capacity development
- develop bespoke training events, resources and materials
- provide a platform for sharing best practice and progress in training methods

They will act as a link between the national and local infrastructure to keep us strategically aligned.

We will conduct a review of the training available to our staff in order to develop our in-house bespoke training so that it meets their needs. Wherever possible we will seek to avoid replicating training that is readily-available elsewhere, while collaborating in the delivery of training with and for other infrastructure organisations. A major area of expertise is in the methodology relating to physical activity measurement.

We will establish a local infrastructure academy. We will develop the training section of the website as a resource for our research staff. This will include a Training Guide and a calendar of training events and links to external websites including NIHR and HEE. This will ensure that our staff are made aware of local opportunities and events as well as the opportunities provided by the NIHR Academy to its

members, including:

- Infrastructure Visiting Speaker Awards (IVSA)
- Short Placement Awards for Research Collaboration (SPARC)
- ADAPT to Grow
- Infrastructure Training Camp
- NIHR Academy Conferences
- NIHR Leadership Programme eLearning
- Mentorship Programme for non-clinical post-doctoral members

We will encourage our staff to apply for NIHR Awards

- Pre-doctoral Fellowships
- Doctoral Fellowships
- Advanced Fellowships
- Development and Skills Enhancement (DSE) Awards
- Crick-BRC Post-doctoral Partnerships

All our research staff will be encouraged to identify a mentor who will support them through their academic journey. Training will be provided for mentors as necessary.

We will develop training in Public and Patient Involvement (PPI).

The BRC LiA Project provided invaluable insights into what it was like to work and train here. New starters in particular needed information that is not readily available to them. The learning has led to the following actions:

- Design an organogram for the BRC-CRF to help staff understand the complexity of the relationships between the different organisations.
- Create a Training Directory to inform staff how to access in-house expertise
- Implement Individual Training Matrices. This will help new starters agree a training plan relevant to their role with their line manager. Progress against this will be checked at regular intervals and recorded on the matrix, and new targets agreed.
- Create a 'Things I wish I'd known' collation of anecdotes from experienced staff which will be on the training section of the website as a repository of wisdom and encouragement for new starters.

We will encourage training partnerships with other research funders from the charity sector and from industry, and seek to collaborate with other centrally-funded institutions.

Research collaborations are being actively encouraged and this will be reflected in our approach to training. We will explore potential training collaborations with funding partners from charities and industry.

The Midlands Health Alliance (MHA) covers three BRCs, and four CRFs, as well as the Clinical Research Networks (CRNs) and Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs). We will explore opportunities to bring training together at this level. The BRC was well-represented at the successful Midlands Academy of Medical Sciences Research Festival in 2019.

Closer to home, we recognise that we have objectives in common with UHL NHS Trust R&I, and where possible have agreed to share ideas and best practice.

We will make the case to NIHR for a 'Diet and Lifestyle Incubator' to build research capacity in this priority area.

We will work with the other Diet and Lifestyle BRCs who have come together as the Diabetes and Activity Research and Translation (DART) collaboration to establish a Diet and Physical Activity Incubator. This will increase training capacity in diet, nutrition and exercise and health. The need is undeniable with an epidemic of obesity and physical inactivity fuelling the rise of type 2 diabetes and its complications. The incubator would offer the potential to produce a new category of exercise practitioner within the NHS that is so badly needed.

We will develop our training metrics in order to demonstrate value for NIHR investment

Our ability to provide reliable evidence of adding value through training to career researchers is fundamental to securing future infrastructure investment. We will strengthen our data collection processes to allow us to monitor our performance against our objectives. Specifically we will create and maintain a BRC-CRF Training Dashboard to streamline the annual report and to demonstrate our impact. This will record:

- Demographic information
- Annual review of personal training development (training matrix)
- Participation in mentorship and training events
- Applications for awards and success rates
- Completion of PhDs
- Next destinations for career academics

In addition we will encourage our NIHR Academy members to participate in the Researchfish career tracker surveys.

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