

NIHR Leicester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) Career Development Strategy 2021



This document replaces the NIHR Leicester BRC Training Strategy, 2019.

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 an expanded BRC with additional themes.

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 Career Development Strategy is explicitly designed to ensure that the BRC delivers the aims of the NIHR Academy locally.

The BRC acknowledges its responsibilities under the Researcher Development Concordat and the NIHR Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme.

Strategic alignment of Career Development

The Leicester BRC is comprised of a multi-professional workforce including medical academics, nurses, pharmacists, therapists, dietitians, nutritionists, sports and exercise scientists, clinical research practitioners, statisticians, and basic scientists, as well as managers and administrators. We aspire to offer developmental opportunities to all staff.

The BRC does not and should not operate as a silo organisation, but one that interacts seamlessly with other infrastructure, and the organisations of which it is comprised. Embedding career progression for non-medical clinical researchers is a common aim. The intention is to facilitate an increasing number of strong applications for NIHR Awards from Nurses and AHPs each year. The BRC Career Development Strategy will reflect and draw from other local strategies with common aims, collaborating where possible to achieve those aims. This strategy refers to the UHL R&I Education and Training Strategy for Nurses and Midwives – 2020, and to the UHL Therapy Research Strategy – 2020. These documents set out clearly how staff in these groups will be encouraged to embark on an academic career, and what support will be provided in partner organisations.

Clinical Research Practitioners

Now that the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) has approved registration for CRPs as part of the Academy for Healthcare Science Accredited Register we are focusing on this 'lost tribe' by providing an internal forum for them. There is a need for a dedicated CRP career development strategy to ensure that everyone who wishes to register is able to do so, and we will work with CRP representatives to design this. In parallel a review of CRP job plans and person specifications is being undertaken across the BRC.

Equality Diversity and Inclusivity

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed significant health inequalities in the population, including the clinical workforce. The BRC is engaged in research to address this. The BRC aspires to a workforce that is representative of the population it serves, and will work with partner organisations to ensure that no potential researcher is deterred from applying to do research because of their background.

The BRC is committed to creating an inclusive environment that considers protected characteristics. We will work with the EDI Lead to examine training proposals to ensure they do not inadvertently perpetuate or exacerbate inequalities. We will collect such data as is required to audit, review and report progress.

Developmental Mentoring

The BRC aspires to being able to offer mentoring for everyone. To achieve that it will build capacity by providing virtual Developmental Training workshops. For consistency the model is based on the Academy of Medical Sciences programme, which has been adopted by the NIHR Academy for its own post-doctoral programme. BRC members will be encouraged to select mentors who are not their line manager or supervisor, and who may be based in a different theme or discipline. We will monitor annually the number of trained mentors and the proportion of members in a mentoring relationship.

The BRC will also advocate strongly for the NIHR Post-Doctoral Mentorship Programme, particularly for members of underrepresented groups.

In-House Education and Training

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on research activity and on the lives of BRC members has prompted reflection on the nature of the support we offer to our staff. There has been a transformational change to the delivery of educational events, both nationally and in-house, with the successful adoption of virtual meetings. We intend to collate a register of established educational activities organised by individual BRC Themes that can be opened up to the wider BRC membership to facilitate a greater awareness of research methodologies and promote cross-theme collaborations.

Leicester BRC- East Midlands Integrated Academic Training (IAT) Joint Programme

This provides education and training for Academic Clinical Fellows and Clinical Lecturers in essential skills such as grant assessment and peer review (through the Joint Clinical Academic Training Grant Development Forum), and mock interviews. Particular support has been given to enable flexible working, and to protect academic time in job plans.

The programme has served as a pipeline for career academic clinicians – five university professors and three senior academics to date.

Diet and Activity Research Translation (DART) collaboration

This involves 10 BRCs One of the aims of DART is to increase professional research capacity within the themes of diet, activity and lifestyle, and enable cross-discipline and interdisciplinary working and training. The DART Nutrition Professionals Network has been developed and led by Dr Emma Redman, Senior Clinical Research Dietitian – Leicester BRC. The network is a nation-wide body of nutrition specialist professionals working within BRCs and providing mentorship, professional development opportunities and integrated communication systems for members to share knowledge and best practice. DART collaborators have also been successfully awarded a number of UK NRP Research Workshop grants on a range of novel topics, with the emphasis on early career researcher collaboration and development.

Promoting Research Opportunities for Nurses and AHPs

The BRC is collaborating with the Head of Research (Nursing & Midwifery), an NIHR Academy Incubator Advisor. We are optimistic that the regional Incubator Advisory service will encourage and prepare prospective non-medical clinical researchers to apply successfully for fellowships in the BRC. In particular we will provide research taster opportunities for student nurses and contribute to the Nursing Associate Training Programme.

Academic Clinical Excellence Seminars (ACES)

These popular seminars will continue in a virtual format. Each Theme will host one half-day session per year at which newly-appointed staff can introduce themselves and their work, researchers can present their work to their peers and the wider BRC, and mini presentations on 'common thread' topics will provide essential updates. The seminars will be recorded and, subject to the consent of the presenters, they will be accessible after the event.

Management Forums

We will provide developmental sessions for cohorts of middle managers in the BRC. These will be delivered by senior team members and will cover topics including finance and budgeting, leadership development, influencing skills, line management responsibilities, performance management and stakeholder engagement.

BRC Career Development Framework

Together with the CRF we will deliver an induction programme to include an introduction to R&I, a welcome to the BRC and an introduction to the bespoke development programmes for the individual and their role.

All staff joining the BRC will benefit from a development framework in which to record a bespoke development plan agreed with their line manager. This can be updated at any time, and will be reviewed on a regular basis alongside the CRN Competency Framework. This should ensure that BRC members have the skills required to progress to the next level when the opportunity arises.

Raising Awareness of Training Opportunities - Education and Training Calendar

We intend to develop our workforce so that there are more fundable applications for all categories of NIHR Awards over time. It is important that BRC members are well-informed about the range of training opportunities available to them locally and nationally. The BRC expects its post-doctoral members to be advocates for NIHR career and development opportunities, but recognises they will need access to up-to-date information in order to fulfil that role.

We will invest in the BRC website to ensure it provides a 'one-stop' resource for training opportunities, award application opening and closing dates, courses and events. We will survey BRC members regarding how they access such information currently and promote the training calendar at the same time.

Training Partnerships

We will explore innovative training/career development opportunities in collaboration with research funders from the charity sector and from industry.

As part of the Midlands Health Alliance the BRC can be a regional training provider in certain topics, and facilitate access to training opportunities in others.

Developing Training Metrics

The BRC recognises the importance of demonstrating value for NIHR investment not only in research undertaking, but in developing the careers of its academics. We will continue to strengthen our data collection processes to allow us to monitor our performance against these objectives. The roll out of the Career Development Framework across the BRC and CRF will enable this to happen.

In addition we will encourage NIHR Academy members working in the BRC to complete their ResearchFish career tracker returns annually.

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UHL R&I Education and Training Strategy for Nurses and Midwives – 2020



UHL Therapy Research Strategy – 2020