



Norfolk and Norwich  
University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Research Strategy 2020-2025



NHS Research that improves healthcare and benefits our patients, our staff and our community

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## Foreword

The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NNUH) is a large teaching hospital providing care to approximately a million people living in the county of Norfolk and tertiary care to patients in neighbouring counties. This positions the organisation perfectly to lead the way on developing patient centred health research for this region.

Our strength is our population and the research carried out at our hospitals reflects the healthcare needs of people living within the area. This is achieved through our research active staff testing research concepts in a clinical setting not just in a laboratory and by making research patient centred. This approach enables delivery of important healthcare benefits and supports evidence-based service improvement.

Research offers valuable opportunities to improve health outcomes, for example by identifying patients at risk of developing a disease, those whose condition will worsen and empowering patients to self-manage long-term health conditions such as diabetes.

Conditions that are important to our patients and cause challenges in how we as a hospital manage the increased demand for complex care are some of the factors driving our research programme.



## National Context

Collaboration between the NHS and the life sciences sector is at the heart of the UK Life Sciences Industrial Strategy (LSIS) which demands the NHS expands activities in clinical trials, real world data collection and the evaluation of diagnostics and devices. It also set outs to capture the value of NHS data for improving care and costs within healthcare systems.

The National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) is the largest funder of clinical research, investing more than £1 billion a year. In 2019 the NIHR identified research priorities such as developing the NHS workforce, providing for frail patients, older people and socially isolated people or communities.

The NHS Five Year Forward View sets out a clear direction and actions required to deliver the vision of a better NHS including improved ability to undertake research and apply innovation. Notably, the plan states:

*“Research is vital in providing the evidence we need to transform services and improve outcomes.”*



NHS England took stock of progress at the halfway point of the plan and recognised the importance of research in helping to put money back into the NHS and the UK economy. More recently, the NHS Long Term Plan (2019) reaffirms the enormous value of research and innovation to drive improvement.

Linking and correlating genomics, clinical data and data from patients provides routes to new treatments, diagnostic patterns and information to help patients make informed decisions about their care.

‘Research active’ hospitals have better healthcare outcomes including lower mortality rates, with benefits not limited just to those patients who actively participate in research. There are many reasons for this including research active staff gaining greater satisfaction in their work and maintaining a lifelong learning environment.

## Local Context

### Research at NNUH

NNUH recognises the importance of research and this is supported cross divisionally and across all levels of leadership throughout the organisation. Research is a key part of the Trusts Five Year Plan with one of the goals being:

*“To be a centre of excellence for research, education and staff development”*

This has led to the appointment of two new dedicated research senior leaders:

- Director of Research Operations
- Associate Medical Director for Research

They will lead the strategic approach to research and oversee its delivery which will include development of an improved research active culture within the organisation until research becomes part of the hospital’s business as usual.

The Research department comprises of a multidisciplinary team that will mature to support a broad range of research activities across many of the specialities and clinical areas of the Trust.

#### Stars of Research

Stars of Research has been established to shine a spotlight on the many projects at the hospital that are looking to find new treatments and advances in patient care.

There are currently nearly 400 research projects at the NNUH covering many areas of medicine and several thousands of participants take part in research projects at the Trust every year.

Stars of Research focuses on a different research study every month and is shared on the Trust’s social media and website using **#StarsofResearch**.



# Delivering the Strategy

## Aim

This research strategy has been developed for the period 2020 - 2025 to provide focus and clarity of direction for the organisation, its patients and its stakeholders. It sets out our future strategic research goals that will ensure the Trust vision is realised.

The NNUH already undertakes high quality, high value research important to healthcare worldwide. This shall continue to be supported. We will align research with our vision for patient care such as caring for older people, people living with cancer, young babies and children, public health and address the challenges facing our hospital such as the length of time that patients stay in hospital. The Research Strategy will mean the NNUH is well positioned to take a role in leading and driving research locally, nationally and internationally.

## Goals

### GOAL 1

Embed a culture of research throughout NNUH creating an inspirational environment that is recognised nationally and internationally, which inspires future leaders of clinical research

### GOAL 2

Consolidate and deepen the special partnership with the University of East Anglia and Quadram Institute Bioscience

### GOAL 3

Develop sustainable strategic partnerships critical to the region and wider NHS

### GOAL 4

Be recognised as a leading NHS Trust in applying research and adopting innovation to deliver the best patient care and to benefit the wider NHS

## GOAL 1

**Embed a culture of research throughout NNUH creating an inspirational environment that is recognised nationally and internationally, which inspires future leaders of clinical research**

Embedding a culture of research is important because research active Trusts provide better outcomes for their patients (Ozdemir et al 2014). Raising awareness of research and making research part of everyday work of our staff will assist in integrating research into patient care.

### **To achieve goal 1 we will:**

Nurture clinical research leaders by recruiting talented clinical researchers and developing talent within the existing NNUH workforce.

Grow opportunities for medical and non-medical staff to develop their knowledge and research skills, which will support delivery of evidence-based practice and high-quality care.

Support our staff on their journey to being research active by fair allocation of protected research time. Our staff will have access to high quality mentorship, career and professional development opportunities.

Help put research ideas into practice whilst ensuring all legal regulatory and ethical requirements are met with patient safety and dignity being paramount.

Develop programmes that provide research opportunities for our staff in collaboration with academic partners in the East of England, the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and respond to opportunities that arise through the integration of services with other hospitals and general practice networks.

Initiate smaller scale pilot projects through strategic deployment of internal resources and support from the NNUH Charity to grow expenditure on research overall.

Support NNUH goals for the new Interventional Radiology Unit and Radiology department to be recognised as an international Centre of Excellence for patient care, training and research and to develop an Institute of Genomic Ophthalmology with an outstanding reputation for research within the new eye hospital.

We will work with partner organisations, especially the University of East Anglia, to create more academic appointments and research active teams, beginning with Interventional Radiology in 2020.



## Consolidate and deepen the special partnership with the University of East Anglia and Quadram Institute Bioscience



The Quadram Institute (QI) opened in 2018 as a partnership between the Quadram Institute of Biosciences, the UEA and NNUH. The Quadram Institute offers state of the art food and health research, clinical research facilities and an NHS endoscopy centre.

The interests and expertise of our partners is reflected in our research. Our partners, the University of East Anglia (our Partner Higher Education Institution) and the Quadram Institute Bioscience drive the Norwich Research Park to be an internationally recognised centre of excellence in specialist areas such as diet and the microbiome, which will influence longer term health outcomes across the region.

### To achieve goal 2 we will:

Support and further expand opportunities for doctors and clinical professionals to develop clinical academic careers\*.

Form joint project development teams which create realistic 'business plans'.

Apply for a National Institute of Health Research grant for a Biomedical Research Centre or Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre. If successful, these efficiencies of scale and collaboration would mean a step change in research in Norfolk.

Work with the University of East Anglia's fund-raising office to facilitate joint research programmes of mutual benefit including research to digitise key NNUH systems and patient pathways, for example using artificial intelligence in pathology and diagnostics.

Play an active role to support the Norwich Research Park Biorepository, which is a facility that collects and 'banks' human tissue and body fluids making them available to be used in research projects.

*\*Clinical academics split their time treating patients, undertaking research and teaching and can translate research findings into clinical practice and ensure clinical problems inform research*

## GOAL 3

### Develop sustainable strategic partnerships critical to the region and wider NHS

As one of the region's largest acute teaching hospitals in the region we are able to facilitate opportunities to connect with research networks and organisations across the East of England.

#### To achieve goal 3 we will:

Work in partnership with patients and integrate patients into the development and delivery of NNUH research, growing the concept every patient is a research participant.

Ensure the Trust is an active and leading member of a number of regional networks which will allow opportunities for research and collaboration with organisations commercial, charitable and academic organisations, using a pragmatic operational approach to doing businesses. We will continue as a partner with the NIHR Clinical Research Network and extend our networks nationally and internationally.

#### Connect with Regional Networks



**Be recognised as a leading NHS trust in applying research and adopting innovation to deliver the best patient care and to benefit the wider NHS**



We hold clinical information about our patients which we use to provide care and treatment for them. When our patients provide additional consent to use their information for research, we are able to predict health problems that they and similar people may suffer from in the future.

Studying population health and how it changes over time can improve the delivery of future healthcare and interventions with the aim of helping people stay well and prevent disease.

#### **To achieve goal 4 we will:**

Optimise data collection. To utilise this information efficiently, healthcare records need to be digital. The Digital Transformation Strategy for NNUH and the Norfolk and Waveney STP will provide opportunities for data analytics, information sharing and learning from other Trusts more advanced in this area of expertise.

As new digital systems come on line at the NNUH, research will be developed around the longitudinal health and social care record, scanned electronic records and full electronic patient record. This will be best achieved through collaborations with academic institutions and other NHS organisations to enable population based reporting and research.

Our research will focus on regional demographics because we have a stable population with unique characteristics such as the older age population of North Norfolk which is currently a geographical area of low research activity.

We will test new medical devices, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, pharmaceuticals and deliver high quality research, increasing the number of commercial clinical trials to grow this income stream.

# Review

## Governance

This strategy has been developed in consultation with the NNUH's Clinical Research Leads Group and the Research Oversight Board. It is based on an analysis of strengths and opportunities that drive strategic direction and has used weaknesses and threats to inform the resources needed for successful implementation, as described in appendix one.

The strategy will be measured, monitored and overseen by the Research Oversight Board via quarterly meetings and reviewed by the Hospital Management Board every six months.

### Measuring Our Success

By 2025 we will have:

- Embedded a culture of research as part of usual clinical care across the local integrated care system
- Built a balanced & financially viable research portfolio, including a portfolio of commercial studies
- Embedded our annual recurring internal grant scheme awarded by panel review, supporting local research investigators, including allied health professionals
- Developed joint research project teams
- Developed a joint clinical academic lectureship programme
- Applied for a National Institute of Health Research grant for a Biomedical Research Centre or Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre.

## Resources and Sustainability

In the first year of delivering this strategy we will focus on using allocated resources to strengthen research governance and rationalise peer review, which will deliver efficiencies in research operations providing support to NNUH research projects, meaning they will be of high quality, high value and align with this strategy.

Sustaining growth will require investment through 'pump priming'. This priming will be funded by strategic deployment of research income, external sources or approved business cases.

# Appendix One: Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

## Building on Strengths

We have a new leadership team.  
We have partnerships in place.  
We can translate research outcomes into clinical care benefits for our patients, our community and the wider NHS.  
We have a Research Oversight Board and Clinical Research Leads Group.

## Addressing Weaknesses

Reliance on the Clinical Research Network for funding.  
The need to grow NNUH research income.  
Need for protected planned research time.  
Limited candidates for specialist research admin roles.

# Research at NNUH

## Exploiting Opportunities

Dovetailing the Research Strategy with the NNUH Digital Transformation Strategy.  
Natural geographic and demographic advantages that provide unique opportunities for population research.

## Mitigating Threats

Improvement to governance structure and expansion of research team to implement research strategy.  
Governance and operational processes need to be cohesive and coordinated across partnerships for research outcomes to be tested in clinical practice.  
Good communications to advertise positive outcomes and implementation of research findings.

# Appendix Two: Research Governance Structure

