

Winter, 2025



Mersey and West Lancashire
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Trust

Research Newsletter



NIHR | National Institute for
Health and Care Research

Why take part in Research?

Clinical research is the single most important way in which we improve our healthcare – by identifying the best means to prevent, diagnose and treat conditions.

The research conducted at MWL is critical to drive future medical advances, with patients benefitting from prevention of ill-health, earlier diagnosis, more effective treatments, and better outcomes and faster recovery.



Government Policy Statement

Action to enhance visibility of clinical research delivery against the UK government's commitment to reduce the set-up time for clinical trials to less than 150 days

In April 2025 the Prime Minister announced that the UK government is committed to reducing the time it takes to get a clinical trial set up from over 250 days, down to 150 days by March 2026. This commitment is a headline action of the recently published Life Sciences Sector Plan and is reinforced in the 10 Year Health Plan for England.

How are we measuring progress towards the government's target?

The Department for Health and Social Care are now closely tracking the performance of all studies held on the National Institute for Health & Care Research (NIHR) Research Delivery Network (RDN) Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS) for the purpose of a metric that measures the entirety of a study's set-up journey against the government's 150-day target.

The 150-day metric measures the time taken in calendar days for a single study from application for regulatory approval through to recruitment of first study participant.

It comprises three distinct stages of study set-up

1. Time taken for the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and Research Ethics Committee to deliver a combined review decision - target is 60 days.
2. Time from combined review decision to study opening - target is 60 days.
3. Time from study opening to first participant recruited - target is 30 days.

The metric applies to all clinical trials, with a focus on commercial interventional clinical trials.

Excluded from the reporting are studies where the 150 day metric is not expected in the study milestone plan, such as rare disease and other low recruitment studies - using criteria that apply already in our [UK Clinical Research Delivery Key Performance Indicators \(UKCRD KPI\) Report](#) - and extension studies.

What does the 150-day metric mean for sites?

As part of this commitment to speed up the set-up of clinical trials, there is an accompanying policy expectation that all participating sites for a study must complete their set-up activities within 90 days. That is, sites in England must recruit their first participant for a study within 90-days of a study receiving regulatory approval, or the site being selected to take part, whichever comes later.

This metric comprises two distinct stages of site set-up:

1. Time from regulatory approval (either Health Research Authority and Health and Care Research Wales [HRA and HCRW] approval, or suitable equivalent used by the other devolved governments) or date site selected, whichever comes later, to site opening - target is 60 days.
2. Time from site opening to first participant recruited - target is 30 days.

We strongly advise sites to begin set up processes as soon as possible in parallel to regulatory assessments to help them meet the target of setting up within 90 days.

To monitor site-level performance against the 90-day target, we will produce a separate site-level report, using data from studies held on the NIHR RDN CPMS.

Our Research teams are working hard to put in processes to ensure that we meet the expected targets.

Welcome To Our Chief Nurse

We were extremely pleased to welcome our new Chief Nurse “Professor Sarah O’Brien” to our Trust. Sarah has worked in the NHS for more than 25 years and has always been a big advocate for raising the profile research, she is keen to provide opportunities for nurses to develop skills in understanding, using, and generating research, as well as building research-focused careers.



Sarah has been involved in developing the [NHS England » Research matters: enabling and sustaining a research-positive culture for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals](#) and recently said:

“I had the opportunity to work on this important guidance with a group of Chief Nurses and Nurse academics who are continuing to advocate the importance of research in nursing. Research active organisations deliver better patient outcomes and staff are more fulfilled in their careers. There are some excellent tips and examples in this document to support Chief Nurses like me to embed a research culture in the organisation and develop research career pathways for nursing. I will be aiming to do this at MWL and I am looking to connect with anyone who is interested in supporting this agenda or developing their own research skills”

In September 2025 Mersey West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals (MWL) and Edge Hill University are delighted to announce Professor May Ng OBE has been appointed Professor of Child Health, bringing her vast expertise and dedication to the University's Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine:

Edge Hill University is proud to announce the appointment of Professor May Ng OBE as Professor of Child Health within the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine.

Professor NG is a renowned consultant paediatric endocrinologist, bringing with her over two decades of clinical research and leadership experience in child health. Her appointment reflects Edge Hill's commitment to advancing healthcare education and research with real-world impact.



Speaking about her new role, Professor NG said: “I am honoured to join Edge Hill University and look forward to working alongside a dynamic and forward-thinking team to continue improving paediatric care through research, education and advocacy.”

On the 5th July 2025 we celebrated Research Appreciation Day which gave us an opportunity to shine a light on the brilliant work being done by researchers across health and care. This was supported by Professor Ascanio Tridente Specialty Lead Critical Care and Clinical Director of RD&I at MWL who said:

“I am working on several projects in Critical Care research, locally, nationally and internationally, and I am PI for several NIHR portfolio studies, including commercial.”



We are pleased to announce that we have received some excellent feedback from trial centres regarding the setting up of studies:

BSR-PsA

WSN— “Just a quick message to say a huge thanks for your recruitment efforts in the last few months. I’m having a look at this year’s recruitment figures and you’ve made a great contribution”

S&O—“Please pass on our thanks to Anna as she is recruiting well to the study!”

Universal

“Congratulations!!! I think that must be the quickest recruit from green light that we’ve had with UNIVERSAL!!!”

“I just wanted to say a massive thank you to you and the team for recruiting so many participants!!! You have exceeded your target in just over a month of being open!!! We haven’t had any other sites that have recruited so quickly and the whole team have been very impressed with your achievements! It really has been fantastic working with such a motivated team and very much appreciated”

Leader

“Thank you all for recruiting your site’s first participant to LEADER today, and the first participant to the LEADER trial overall! We’re very glad to reach this milestone and send thanks to all of your team.”

Plumb

“It was lovely working with you all. Your site is the highest recruiter with 34 patients! This is a remarkable feat so well done for this, can’t thank you all enough. I would love to work with you in the future too”

ENDONET

Miss Lena Chagla the PI for the Endonet study praised the team for their efforts in recruiting to this study.

We are committed to offering our cancer patients the opportunity to take part in research and it was fantastic to see some of our breast cancer studies highlighted in the Cancer Services Bulletin

Breast Trials Open



ROSETA

Optimisation in collaboration with the Psychology Department.

How best to support women taking endocrine therapy by testing four interventions.

(SMS text reminders, leaflet, website, Skills programme Acceptance and Commitment Therapy).

ENDONET

A study for Post-menopausal women with ER+ Breast cancer who require surgery.

Looking at if giving Neo-adjuvant Endocrine therapy for a period of time prior to surgery 'tumour shrinking period' reduces the amount of breast surgery needed and improves recovery.

ATNEC

A randomised study investigating whether axilla treatment and its associated side effects can be avoided in patients with no residual cancer in the lymph nodes after NACT.

LOLIPOP

Working in collaboration with the Anaesthetic Department

After breast cancer surgery some patients experience long term pain around the operation site. The LOLIPOP trial aims to find out whether Lidocaine (a type of anaesthetic) given via a drip during surgery reduces the number of patients reporting significant pain one year after surgery.

LOLIPOP
Long-term Outcomes of
Lidocaine Infusions for
Post-Operative Pain

Cancer Clinical Trials Team

Harmonie

In the September 2025 Chief Executive Blog, it was excellent to see the CE Rob Cooper celebrate the great work of the Paediatric research team:

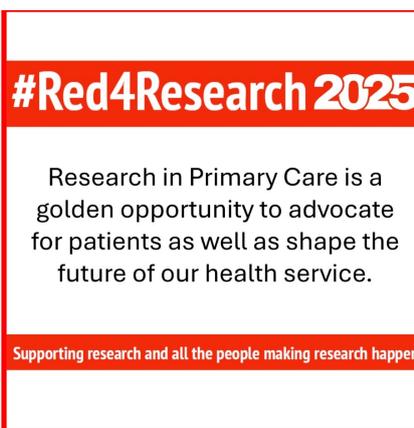
“Paediatric research contributes to lifesaving vaccination rollout Congratulations to Dr Rosaline Garr, Principal Investigator and Kerri Bowness, Research Nurse I’m pleased to share that the Trust’s Research and Paediatric teams played a key role in the national ‘HARMONIE’ study, which has led to the rollout of a new RSV vaccine to protect premature babies. Led by Dr Rosaline Garr as Principal Investigator and supported by Research Nurse, Kerri Bowness and the wider team, our paediatric research contributed valuable data to this important study. The vaccine is now recommended in the UK’s Green Book and is being offered to at-risk infants born before 32 weeks. This is a fantastic example of how research carried out here at Whiston Hospital is helping to improve care and outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children across the country”



Red4Research—20th June 2025

On the 20th June 2025 we celebrated “Red for Research Day” We want to thank everyone who took part by supporting the delivery of research our Research Team, Principal Investigators and the wider members of staff at MWL.

More photos of the day can be found on X— @MWLNHS_Research



GCP Refresher for new Clinical Trials Regulations

Are you currently involved in a research study? Have you previously completed Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training? If so, then you will need to complete a Refresher course to update you on the changes that are coming into force in April 2026 with the new Clinical Trials Regulations. For further details on the changes please see:

[Clinical Trials regulations signed into law - GOV.UK](#)

We have arranged a number of face to face sessions across the Trust:

Monday 19th Jan, 1-3pm, Education Centre, Whiston Hospital

Thursday 5th Feb, 9.30am – 12.30, Ruffwood Suite, Education Centre, Ormskirk Hospital

Wednesday 11th March, 9.30am -12.30, Learning Zone 1, Education Centre, Southport Hospital

St Helens – 27th February 9:30 am-12:30, Rennie Seminar Room, St Helens Hospital

Alternatively from January 2026 onwards you can complete the GCP Refresher including the new CT Regulations online at NIHR Learn - [Identity Gateway](#)

Any questions please contact:

soh-tr.researchsonhs@merseywestlancs.nhs.uk

OR research@merseywestlancs.nhs.uk

Strategic funding call update– Marshall Cross GP Surgery

At MWL are in a unique position of having a GP practice based within St Helens Hospital. In April 2005 we applied for, and were successful in, securing strategic funding to actively support and increase research activity within primary care via Marshalls Cross GP Practice. The practice welcomed Sanifa Dias and Amanda McCairn (Research Nurses) to the team and they have been working hard with Professor Greg Irving to open and recruit to studies. Dr Jenny Glover has also completed her GCP to work on research studies.

So far, the team have:

Opened numerous studies including, Indigo Community 29 participants (to date), REIMAGINE (MCMC is acting as a PIC site for this commercial study), are displaying research posters for the following studies D-MAPP, Attitudes W and Restore and have invited eligible practice patients to take part in the Extod Active research study.

The team are in the process of working on a pending study Dare 2 Think, and have expressed an interest in 3 commercial studies Panthera, ENLIGHTEN-1 and ENLIGHTEN-4

Marshalls Cross Medical Centre is committed to improving patient outcomes by undertaking clinical research that will lead to better treatments for patients undergoing care in the GP Practice. Research is promoted throughout the GP practice via notice boards and the waiting room screen. The GP practice is committed to providing patients with the opportunity to take part in high quality research studies that will reach the wider community.



Improving Public Engagement for Research

At Made By Mortals, we recognise the challenges researchers face in creating studies that are both rigorous and engaging while achieving meaningful impact. Our work supports the research community to make health research and public involvement more inclusive, accessible and beneficial for the communities they serve through an arts-based approach. We bring together professional artists, health and social care practitioners, commissioners, and, most importantly, individuals and diverse groups with lived experience.

We use participatory arts methods such as audio, film, live theatre and interactive workshops to inspire innovation across the research process, from study design to dissemination and knowledge exchange. This creative approach not only helps share research findings but also opens up new ways of gathering insight from people who might not usually take part. By bringing in tools like sound, storytelling and character creation, we help shift dynamics and reduce barriers between researchers and communities. Working with fictional characters allows people to explore real experiences safely and express themselves freely without feeling exposed. In these spaces, conversations flow, trust builds, and voices often unheard find meaningful ways to be part of the research story.

We help build vibrant, inclusive communities around research goals, ensuring everyone contributes from a place of equity, creativity and confidence. By combining imagination with evidence, we turn research into a shared experience that informs better practice, strengthens partnerships and fosters lasting social change.

Read more about our approach to research on our [website](#)



The Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine at Edge Hill host a series of breakfast research seminars (8.30-9.15am online). Giving an opportunity to their research active staff, and external speakers, to present about research topics and projects they have worked on or are currently working on. Everyone is welcome to attend these online events.

Please see below details for 2025/26

Date	Subject	Presenter
Wednesday, 10 September 2025	How to start in research as a new academic	Prof Julie Abayomi
Tuesday, 14 October 2025	How to write a good research question	Prof Lyvonne Tume
Tuesday, 11 November 2025	QUALITATIVE research methods	Prof Lucy Bray
Tuesday, 16 December 2025	Designing case study research	Prof John Sandars
Wednesday, January 21 2026	QUANTITATIVE research methods	Prof Adam Watts
Thursday, 26 February 2026	Aligning knowledge exchange (KE) with research	Prof Michelle Howarth
Thursday, 12 March 2026	Mixed methods research	Prof Lyvonne Tume
Wednesday, 22 April 2026	Choosing an analytical framework for education research	Prof Jackie Leigh
Thursday, 14 May 2026	Intro to health economics	Dr Valerio Benedetto (ULan)
Tuesday, 9 June 2026	Research in social care settings	Dr Ciaran Murphy

Further information and details of how to register can be found - [Breakfast Research Seminars | Faculty of Health | Edge Hill](#)

NIHR HEALTH & CARE PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME 2026 - 2028

Applications are now open for the NIHR HCP Internship Programme 2025/26

Are you a Nurse, Midwife, Allied Health Professional, Pharmacist, Healthcare Scientist or working in Social Care, Social Work, looking to embark on a practitioner research career and make a difference through undertaking high quality research?

Do you have the drive and ambition to be a future research leader?

The internship provides a funded opportunity for early career health and care researchers with dedicated time away from their substantive role to engage in research-based activities.

There are 23 places available on this highly prestigious 12-month programme providing predoctoral tailored and bespoke learning and development to the full range of health and care professions (not including doctors and dentists) across the full range of research related career aspirations i.e. from a desire to increase research awareness within clinical practice up to and including providing individuals with a strong foundation on which to build a research related career.

If you are curious about putting research into practice or are already engaged in this in a limited way, then the Internship programme will be of interest.

For further information please visit [NIHR Health & Care Professional \(HCP\) Internship Programme 2026 - NHS Research and Development North West](#)



We are pleased to welcome our newest member of the team, Libby!

Research Support Assistant

I'm Libby, and I've recently joined the team in Southport as a Research Support Assistant. This is my first role since graduating with a degree in Biomedical Science over the summer and I'm excited to be stepping in the world of research.

Already in my short time since joining I've gained a wealth of knowledge thanks to the support from the amazing team here and at Ormskirk. I'm looking forward to contributing to the research process, support ongoing projects and continuing to learn.



**For any further information about items in
this newsletter, please get in touch with us!**



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