

March 2026 Update

This monthly update summarises recent news, announcements, guidance, and updates on progress made to propel the aims of the UK Clinical Research Delivery (UKCRD) programme of work.

As such, this update provides examples of how organisations individually and collaboratively are achieving the collective goal of making the UK a world leader in clinical trials.

Highlights

- The key performance indicators data for the 150-day set-up ambition will be published by the Department of Health and Social Care on 15 April 2026 on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). Further information on the 150-day metric and an animation explaining the NIHR's standard and enhanced offers of support for research sites can be found on the [NIHR website](#).
- From 10 March 2026 HRA has introduced a new proportionate process to make it easier to set up research involving health and social care staff as participants in the UK. The new process has been developed in partnership with NHS Research Scotland, HSC Northern Ireland and Health Care Research Wales following a [successful pilot](#) throughout 2024 and 2025. Read more about the changes in the [HRA Now bulletin](#).
- The NIHR has launched the Industry Hub and published the [Commercial Trials Delivery Plan and Performance Framework 2026-28](#) which sets out how NIHR will restore predictable delivery, national accountability and system credibility for commercial clinical research.
- DHSC has published the [Research Delivery Data & Intelligence \(RDDI\) project](#) on the UKCRD website, so that partners can receive information about this key digital project, which aims to succeed Local and Central Portfolio Management Systems (LPMS and the CPMS). The RDDI system will provide a unified, modular platform to support both national and local research delivery functions. Through shared access to research data and study lifecycle management it will produce accurate real-time data and intelligence on the delivery status of health and care research ensuring seamless integration with other critical national research data sets and research systems. Read the [March 2026 Update](#) for the latest news about this project.
- HRA has launched its 2026 Study set-up at site survey to understand whether the changes introduced over the past year have improved the experience of study set-up in the UK. [Complete the survey](#) by 5pm on Monday 13 April 2026 please.
- On Thursday 12 March a joint MHRA-HRA webinar was held on the Clinical Trials Regulations: Countdown to implementation – preparing for the update to come into force on 28 April 2026. You can watch the recording on the government's [Clinical Trials Regulations webinar recordings page](#).

Trust Level Set-Up Report

One of the deliverables of UKCRD [Study Set-Up Plan](#) is to provide an additional monthly snapshot of site-level commercial study set-up performance. The aim of this report is to take initial steps in improving the granularity of study set-up activity to support closer to real time monitoring of system performance.

Read the [Trust Level Set-Up Report](#).

Contact

UK Clinical Research Delivery

UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk



[Read the latest UKCRD key performance indicators \(KPIs\) report.](#) The report provides transparent updates on progress towards our goals over time.

News and Announcements

The following updates are from our dedicated partners from across the sector.

- The Office for Life Sciences (OLS)'s [Life Sciences Competitiveness Indicators \(LSCIs\)](#) were published on 19 March 2026. This covers a range of metrics broadly covering 2022-24, depending on the measure. When reporting on trial set-up speeds, it is important to distinguish between historic benchmarking and current performance tracking:
 - The Life Sciences Competitiveness Indicators (LSCIs) should **not** be used to measure progress against the government's 150-day set-up target, given that the relevant data used is 2023, before the April 2025 announcement of the ambition.
 - The [DHSC UK Clinical Research Delivery KPIs](#) are the only appropriate source for tracking improvements. They provide the timely, high-coverage data required to monitor the March 2026 delivery commitments accurately.
 - LSCIs are a historic international benchmark rather than a reflection of the UK's current delivery environment or operational progress.
- HRA is releasing an updated version of the Amendment Tool on IRAS ahead of the updated clinical trial regulations. The new [Modification Tool](#) will be available on IRAS from the end of March for information purposes only, so that sponsors and researchers have time to familiarise themselves with the updates. The tool will go live on 28 April 2026 and will accept submissions from that date.
- HRA has shared an update on widening the scope of its simplified arrangements for consent advisory group. This work forms part of the implementation of the amended clinical trials regulations, which come into force on 28 April 2026. [Read the blog on the HRA website.](#)
- To support implementation of the updated clinical trial regulations the MHRA has now published [guidance on Good Manufacturing Practice \(GMP\)](#) for radiopharmaceutical Investigational Medicinal Products (IMPs). Alongside this, they have released guidance and a new [ICH E8 definitions document](#) ICH E8 UK-specific annotations. Stay up-to-date with the latest guidance on the [MHRA clinical trials hub](#).
- NIHR has announced the second stage in a significant two-stage capital investment totaling over £100 million. This £55 funding call - which closes in May - is delivered in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry through the Voluntary Branded Medicines Pricing, Access and Growth (VPAG) Investment Programme and is designed to turbocharge the UK's clinical trial capacity and shift research delivery closer to patients' homes. Read NIHR's news stories on the awards being made for the first stage of this investment - [cash injection for primary care to 'turbocharge' clinical trials](#) and the second stage [£55 million to boost NHS research](#).
- The NIHR Greater Cambridge & Suffolk CRDC Primary Care team is piloting a new way to help patients learn about clinical research through computer-generated avatars to provide clear, multi-language video explanations of clinical studies, helping to overcome the barriers of complex written documentation and improve research accessibility in primary care. [Read about the pilot on computer-generated avatars.](#)
- The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) has published a new report '[Globally competitive UK-wide data-enabled clinical trials: the time is now](#)' highlighting that the solution to rapidly recruiting more patients suitable for industry clinical trials is better use of NHS health data. The [UK CRDC Network](#) and [HRA](#) have issued responses welcoming the report and its recommendations.



News and Announcements Continued

- Read the latest blogs from ABPI including a reflection on the need for [more inclusive research and diversity in clinical trials](#) and an exploration of the importance of [NHS-industry relationships](#), and the safeguards in place to ensure they always put patients and the NHS first.
- The Health Innovation Research Alliance Northern Ireland (HIRANI) have shared an article on the ABPI's work in Northern Ireland - [strengthening Northern Ireland's health and economy through life sciences leadership](#).
- Scotland's first Practice Embedded Research Unit (PERU) has opened at Penicuik Medical Practice in Midlothian, helping to take more clinical research into primary care, with more set to be rolled out over the coming year. The PERUs are part of a wider focus on commercial research and complement Scotland's four new Commercial Research Delivery Centres (CRDCs). Read the full story about [Midlothian GP practice's primary care research facility](#).
- A Wales-based study using the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank, funded by Health and Care Research Wales, found that a structured approach to interpreting routine blood tests can detect liver disease much earlier. Automatically flagging abnormal results increased diagnoses of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, supporting earlier intervention. Read the full story on detecting liver disease early on the [Health and Care Research Wales website](#).

A number of sites have published success stories of recruiting quickly. We are always keen to hear of others: UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk

- **Streamlined IG** - Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust carried out a project supported by the NIHR RDN to streamline local information governance (IG) reviews for health research, resulting in faster study set-up times. [Read the full information governance \(IG\) review process](#).

The HRA incorporated the learnings from this work into the new '[What Good IG Looks Like](#)' [guide](#) and has launched a [pilot](#) to get feedback on the guide which aims to reduce uncertainty and duplication to support study set up.

- **Internal review with redesigned pathways for progress** - This month, University College London Hospitals NHS Trust shared the progress being made to meet national standards for clinical trial set-up including an internal redesign of research delivery pathways. [Read more on how UCLH is improving its clinical trials processes](#). UCLH also recruited the first participant in the world to a new global phase I study for early Alzheimer's Disease. [Read more about the Early Alzheimer's Disease study](#).
- **NIHR RDN support for Global First** - Devon Partnership NHS Trust has recruited a global first participant for a new commercial digital dementia study. [Read the full story here](#).
- **NIHR RDN support for European First** - The Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust recruited Europe's first participant for a new commercial study for people living with Alport syndrome, a rare inherited kidney condition. [Read the full story here](#).
- **CRDC European First** - The NIHR Sheffield Children's CRDC, which recently [celebrated one year as a pioneering commercial clinical research hub](#), has become the first site in Europe to recruit a patient to a commercial clinical trial investigating a potential life-changing treatment for Dravet syndrome, a severe form of epilepsy. [Read the full story here](#).

If you would like to submit an update to this monthly publication, please email UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk.



Department
of Health &
Social Care