UK CLINICAL RESEARCH DELIVERY

A cross-sector programme

April 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.

150 days study set-up ambition

The **latest UKCRD key performance indicators (KPIs) report**, published on GOV.UK, confirms a step change in performance across our clinical research system. The report brings together data to March 2026 from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to monitor the delivery of globally competitive clinical research across the UK. It is produced by DHSC on behalf of the UK research delivery system each month and **provides transparent updates on progress towards our goals over time**.

NHS patients get faster access to groundbreaking treatments as government drives forward its 150-day clinical trial target.

By working as a single, coordinated partnership, **we have successfully reduced average commercial interventional clinical trial set-up times from 169 to 122 days, surpassing our 150-day set-up ambition.** The data also shows that 78% of clinical trials of investigational medicinal products (CTIMP) studies are now recruiting the first participant within 150 days of applying for regulatory approval and goes towards making the UK becomes the most predictable global destination for clinical research. The target is for 95% of all relevant trials to be set up within 150-days, so further efficiency and drive on performance is still required.

Read the full story here.

Responses and amplification: **NIHR**, **HRA**, **CRDC UK Network**, **BioIndustry Association (BIA)**, **Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)**

Highlights

New Clinical Trial Regulations (CTRs) are now in force

- New regulations came into force on 28 April 2026 – the largest package of reforms in over 20 years. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in partnership with the Health Research Authority (HRA) sought the views of industry, patients and researchers to develop a new framework for clinical trials regulations, keeping the safety of participants at the centre, while introducing a faster route for lower-risk trials to help the pharmaceutical industry.

  Read about the **launch of clinical trial reforms**. Visit the **MHRA Clinical Trials Hub** for more information and guidance.

  Read **HRA's news story** and **round-up of operational changes**.

Contact

UK Clinical Research Delivery

UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk

Department of Health & Social Care

Recognition of High-performing NHS Trusts in Clinical Trial Delivery

Going forward, the UKCRD programme will be highlighting Trusts with high study-set up performance using a rolling 12-month average or, for Trusts that completed 10 or more studies in the past 12 months, performance across their most recent 10 studies.

Trusts achieving a Global or European First will also be highlighted, reflecting rapid and responsive trial set up.

We will continue to review and may iterate the criteria used to highlight Trusts each month, to ensure strong study set-up performance across different kinds of Trusts is being recognised.

Trust-level set-up performance data are published monthly here: **UKCRD.org**.

Trusts completing set-up for 95% of commercial interventional trials within 90 days
(following approval or site selection; studies on NIHR RDN portfolio)

Trust, Location	% studies set up within 90 days of approval or site selection	Number of studies set up within 90 days / Total studies
Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	100%	4
The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn, NHS Foundation Trust	100%	4
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	100%	4
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	100%	3
East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust	100%	3
George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust	100%	3

Over the past 12 months, for Trusts that completed 10 or more studies, no Trust completed ≥90% of its 10 most recent studies within 90 days.

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Trusts achieving a Global or European First, March 2026

First Recruitment Type	Date Achieved (FPFV)	Therapeutic Area	Recruiting Organisation, Location
European	31/03/2026	Mental Health	Woodstock Bower Group Practice, Rotherham, South Yorkshire
Global	30/03/2026	Renal	Southmead Hospital, North Bristol NHS Trust
European	06/03/2026	Cancer (head & neck)	The Royal Marsden Hospital (Surrey), The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
European	04/03/2026	Cancer (breast)	Royal Sussex County Hospital, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

31 Global Firsts and 61 European Firsts were achieved in England in 2025/26, and one Global and four European Firsts in the Devolved Administrations. A full list and further detail on the parameters can be found here: **Global and European Firsts**.

Study set up acceleration activities

The UKCRD programme will be collating all activities with an objective of accelerating clinical trial set-up times on an ongoing basis. This is to identify opportunities for collaboration, scaling up or potential duplicative activity. If you have ongoing work or are starting a new project in this area, please provide a brief overview to **ukcrdprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk**. Thank you in advance for your collaboration!

News and Announcements

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

- HRA has released the new Modification Tool, an updated version of the Amendment Tool which is used by sponsors and researchers to process changes to research. The tool has been updated to reflect the change in terminology from 'amendment' to 'modification' and the new modification types in the updated clinical trials regulations. **Read more about the tool and guidance for using it here**.
- An updated suite of **model research agreements** for use across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from 28 April 2026 onward has been published. The updates align with legal changes to clinical trials of investigational medicinal products (CTIMPs) and **policy changes** to other types of studies (non-CTIMPs). Changes to the model agreements apply to both CTIMP and non-CTIMP studies. **Read more about the updated agreements in the HRA Now bulletin**.
- **New guidance on Participant Information Centres (PICs)** to support study set-up is available. The guidance will support sponsors, NHS and HSC organisations in setting up and managing PICs. The guidance applies UK wide and has been developed in collaboration with the devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. **Read more about the guidance here**.

Department of Health & Social Care

- New updated protocol guidance and template for use in a CTIMP is available on the **HRA website**. The guidance and template reflect the changes in the updated clinical trials regulations and are designed to support sponsors and researchers when developing a research protocol. The tool will undergo wider review and improvement over summer 2026, with a new version planned for release later this year.

- MHRA has shared **new guidance** on Clinical trials for medicines: roles and responsibilities and existing guidance on **quality and risk proportionality** and **compliance with ICH E6 good clinical practice (GCP)** in the UK has recently been updated. Stay up-to-date with the latest guidance via the **MHRA clinical trials hub**.

- Access **The NIHR Industry Hub: Your new gateway to commercial clinical development** webinar on-demand. Hear from Dr Maria Koufali (NIHR Life Sciences Industry Director) about how the Industry Hub is creating a single, streamlined pathway and reducing fragmentation from set-up to delivery. This session included a panel discussion and Q&A with the Hub leadership team.

- **Professor Seshadri Vasan**, a member of the NHS Research Scotland Management Board and Director of the **Grampian Commercial Research Delivery Centre (CRDC)**, has been awarded the inaugural Taylor Medal by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. The award recognises his leadership in establishing Grampian as one of the UK's CRDCs for pioneering clinical trials and his role in driving research inclusion, workforce development, and training across the UK CRDC network.

- The **11th annual Grampian Research Conference** (14-15 May 2026) is set to place the collaborative drive for improved cancer prevention, detection, and treatment in the spotlight next month. There will be many exciting sessions centred around the theme of 'Better Cancer Outcomes', including a dedicated session on NHS Grampian's role in 'UK CRDC Network and commercial research delivery in primary and secondary care settings'. The event is free and face to face, **register to attend** (deadline: 8th May 2026).

- The Northern Ireland Primary Care Research Network and the Northern Health and Social Care Trust are **expanding clinical trial access through a new demonstrator project** that identifies patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in primary care. Supported by the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access Investment (VPAG) Programme, this approach aims to significantly boost recruitment for a major commercial clinical trial and integrate innovative research directly into local communities.

- Health and Social Care Research & Development (HSC R&D) Northern Ireland fully supports Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) in Health and Social Care research. Between 2020 and 2025, **25 awards** with a total value of £60,588 have been made (**view the infographic here**). Read more in this **article showcasing the impact of PPI in Northern Ireland**.

Recent success stories

Moderna allocates 75% of bird flu vaccine trial recruitment to UK

- The launch of the Phase 3 mRNA bird flu vaccine trial highlights the UK's capacity for rapid, system-wide clinical research delivery. Sponsored by Moderna and supported by the NIHR, the study achieved a major milestone by recruiting its first participant in less than half the government's 150-day set-up target. By utilising the NIHR's Agile Research Delivery Team and the **Be Part of Research registry**, the trial is being delivered across 26 community sites to ensure inclusive recruitment and high-quality impact. **Find out more**.

Accelerating Clinical Trials in the UK

- The UK clinical research landscape is delivering significant setup speeds, as evidenced by a **major international COPD study** that opened in just 81 days, roughly half the traditional timeline, thanks to a specialist Bradford NHS team cutting through red tape. This efficiency is mirrored in a trial for **advanced bowel cancer** that was operational in only 70 days, enabling a UK patient to be the first person in Europe to receive the treatment. The **£42 million landmark TRANSFORM prostate cancer screening trial** moved from regulatory submission to consenting its first participant in under 150 days, while Barts Health NHS Trust recruited Europe's first patient to a **global lung cancer study** in just 110 days by engaging early with the NIHR Life Sciences Industry Hub. These successes help demonstrate how the UK is delivering life-changing benefits for patients and the public, while driving growth across the life sciences sector.

Building a community of people who care about improving palliative care research together

- Kasia is a nurse who works in end-of-life/palliative care, an Ulster University PhD Researcher, and awarded doctoral funding from HSC R&D NI Public Health Agency. Her research develops workplace peer-support interventions for healthcare assistants (HCAs) delivering palliative care in the community. By investigating the wellbeing of these often-isolated lone workers, Kasia has moved research "out of the lab" and into the homes of patients. Her journey demonstrates how supported research pathways for frontline staff improve both workforce retention and patient experience. This work provides clear public benefit in line with the CRDC communications framework by directly enhancing the quality and sustainability of end-of-life care across the UK. **Read the full case study here**.

We're keen to hear about and share success stories about improvements across the system. Please send yours to: **UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk**

Read more about how UKCRD efforts are helping to make the UK a world leader in clinical trials on the **UKCRD news page**.