

# UK CLINICAL RESEARCH DELIVERY

A cross-sector programme

## May 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

- **Faster trials, better treatments: How the UK is changing the face of health research** - The UK has nearly doubled its Global and European patient recruitment firsts to a record 100 this year, signalling a transformation across the UK clinical trials landscape. Driven by system-wide reform and strong national coordination, average commercial trial set-up times have dropped from 169 to just 122 days. These improvements demonstrate how national coordination and reform are transforming the UK into a faster, more predictable, and globally competitive destination for clinical research investment. [Read the full story.](#)
- The HRA [guidance on the interpretation of IR\(ME\)R in NHS research](#) has been recently updated and now applies across all four nations of the UK. The guidance is available on the UKCRD programme website and provides clarifications on national research review processes and IR(ME)R legislation, to help make study set-up and the delivery of research more streamlined.
- The Primary Care Bulletin that was emailed out to all relevant NHS Providers on 21 May 2026 included a highlight on the new GP contract's agreement for [changes](#) to the [Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme \(ARRS\)](#) from April 2026, so that Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are now able to recruit research delivery roles (e.g. a research nurse) alongside any other direct patient care, or non-direct patient care roles, as agreed with the commissioner. This will help to build capacity to deliver clinical research in primary care.
- The next phase of the Research Delivery Data and Intelligence (RDDI) programme is now underway, and the RDDI Invitation to Tender (ITT) went live on the Government's Find a Tender service on 15 May 2026. Following supplier feedback, the ITT closure date has been extended by one week, from 22nd June to 29th June, to provide suppliers with additional time to prepare and submit their applications. [Find more information on the UKCRD website.](#)

### UK Clinical Research Delivery Performance Indicators Report

The [UKCRD key performance indicators \(KPIs\) report](#) brings together data from the 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. **The report provides transparent updates on progress towards our goals over time.**

#### Contact

UK Clinical Research Delivery

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Department  
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## 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 in the preceding month 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.

### 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%	5
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	100%	3
Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	100%	3
George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust	100%	3

### Trusts completing set up for ≥90% of their 10 most recent commercial interventional trials within 90 days (*following approval or site selection; studies on NIHR RDN portfolio; for Trusts completing 10 or more in the past 12 months*)

Trust, Location	% studies set up within 90 days of approval or site selection	Number of studies set up within 90 days / Total studies
University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust	90%	9/10



## Trusts achieving a Global or European First, March and April 2026

First Recruitment Type	Date Achieved (FPFV)	Therapeutic Area	Recruiting Organisation, Location
European	27/04/2026	Cancer (prostate)	Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Global	24/04/2026	Cancer (haematological oncology)	Hammersmith Hospital, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
Global	21/04/2026	Diabetes, Metabolic & Endocrine	Staploe Medical Centre, Ely, Cambridgeshire
European	16/04/2026	Cardiovascular	St Bartholomew's Hospital, Barts Health NHS Trust
Global	10/04/2026	Musculoskeletal & Orthopaedics	The Royal Victoria Infirmary, The Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
European	08/04/2026	Dermatology	Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
European	07/04/2026	Surgery (orthopaedic)	Hinchingbrooke Hospital, North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust
<b>Previous months</b>			
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	26/03/2026	Musculoskeletal & Orthopaedics	The Royal Victoria Infirmary, The Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation 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 64 European Firsts were achieved in England in 2025/26, and one Global and four European Firsts in the Devolved Administrations. A full list of previous Firsts 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](mailto: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.

- In a [recent blog](#), Professor Lucy Chappell highlights that while the UK has cut commercial trial set-up times to 122 days, progress is about more than just speed. By investing in the research workforce and embedding inclusive public participation, the UK is boosting its global competitiveness and attracting vital investment. Ultimately, these system-wide improvements ensure the NHS can deliver impactful clinical trials that benefit us all.
- Following the [updated clinical trials regulations](#) which came into force on 28 April 2026, HRA shared an [update on the way it measures and reports on Combined Review](#) and a new [blog highlighting changes to definitions and terminology](#) used in relation to clinical trials of investigational medicinal products (CTIMPs). Read about why these changes have been introduced and what they will mean for sponsors and investigators.
- HRA has released new functionality onto the digital service, 'Plan and manage health and care research', that means modifications for eligible studies taking place across more than one nation can be accepted for the first time. 'Plan and manage health and care research' will digitise the end-to-end research journey, allowing users to plan and prepare new research, make changes to existing research and review and approve research applications in a seamless way. Keep up-to-date through the [Building better research services newsletter](#).
- [MHRA announces a new regulatory hub in Belfast](#), hosted by 'Invest Northern Ireland', to strengthen collaboration and provide local industry, academia, and healthcare stakeholders with direct access to technical expertise. The MHRA's presence in Northern Ireland builds on [commitments made in 2025](#) to strengthen collaboration. Read the latest in MHRA's strategy blog series from Professor Joann Rhodes, Chief Executive of Health Innovation Research Alliance Northern Ireland (HIRANI), on [why flexible policies and real partnership are the keys to unlocking life sciences potential](#).
- MHRA will be driving a new programme of events and greater engagement with industry, researchers, local NHS and government in Wales. [MHRA Liaison Days will bring MHRA representatives to Wales on a regular basis](#) covering topics such as innovation pathways, clinical investigations for medtech, and regulatory support. This direct access will support clinical research and the development of new therapies and technologies, getting potentially life-saving medicines and devices to patients quicker.



## News and Announcements Continued

- Dementia research across Yorkshire and Humber has been strengthened by funding from the NIHR Research Delivery Network (RDN). The money was used to train NHS staff to use specialist rating scales with dementia patients and their carers. Developing these skills locally means regional teams are now fully ready to run future commercial clinical trials. [Find out more.](#)
- [A new national framework](#) has been launched to support the standardisation and expansion of advanced therapy clinical trials across the UK. Funded by NIHR and Innovate UK, the framework builds on the Advanced Therapy Treatment Centre (ATTC) network's programme of activity to improve advanced therapy clinical trial readiness and help ensure that the UK maintains its position as a globally attractive destination for advanced therapy clinical research.
- The [NIHR Innovation Catalyst](#) is a pilot initiative bringing together research programmes, national infrastructure, and specialist support into a single integrated model. Aligned with the 10 Year Health Plan for England and the Life Sciences Sector plan, the Catalyst provides end-to-end support through continuous lifecycle funding, expert project delivery, and holistic wraparound support while delivering measurable patient benefits and unlocking economic growth for the UK.
- The BioIndustry Association (BIA) [Health data vision 2035: harnessing a national asset for growth](#) report states that for the UK to be a competitive site for future biomedical research, NIHR, MHRA, NICE and the NHS must seamlessly share data and work together.
- The Royal College of General Practitioners has published a [series of blogs on research delivery in primary care](#). The blogs cover developing research delivery capability in primary care for industry-sponsored research, delivering research in general practice across the devolved administrations, and getting started and growing a research delivery portfolio.

## Recent success stories

### UK showcases high-performance delivery in time-critical Norovirus trial

- The UK has demonstrated its capability to deliver high-volume recruitment within time-sensitive windows, exceeding targets for Cohort 3 of Moderna's Nova 301 Norovirus vaccine trial. Highlighting major improvements in system agility, 30 UK sites - majority within the NHS - recruited over 2,500 volunteers in just 65 days. This coordinated effort secured 25% of total global recruitment for this cohort, reinforcing the UK's position as a predictable, high-performance destination for commercial life sciences trials. [Find out more.](#)

### Scotland's research community 'inspired by positive picture' on International Clinical Trials Day

- A new update from NHS Research Scotland outlines a positive picture for clinical research delivery. Alongside celebrating the vital role of patients and the dedication of frontline delivery teams, the article highlights measurable improvements in study set-up and delivery performance. By standardising processes and cutting unnecessary bureaucracy, these advancements show a resilient, high-performing research system focused on driving faster clinical trial outcomes and delivering life-changing benefits for patients. [Read the full story.](#)



## Recent success stories

### UK primary care delivers rapid set-up and early recruitment for global obesity trials

- The NIHR Industry Hub has partnered with Novo Nordisk to fast-track two global Phase 3 weight-management trials entirely within primary care. Bypassing traditional hospital bottlenecks, the 'RENEW' studies prove that the UK general practice network can deliver commercial research with exceptional speed, predictability, and collaboration. [Read the full story.](#)

### Parkinson's patients trial wearable technology to help them step out with confidence

- Wales's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Isabel Oliver, has shared a video celebrating the profound human impact of health research. Prof Oliver highlighted that over 800 commercial and non-commercial clinical studies were delivered across Wales last year alone, with a Welsh site emerging as the top recruiter across the entire UK in 65 multi-site studies. [Read the full story.](#)

### Governance innovation cuts mental health trial set-up times

- South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience have transformed research timelines by replacing slow, sequential approvals with a parallel governance framework. By running sponsor reviews and local Capacity and Capability (C&C) checks at the same time, the Joint R&D Office has eliminated traditional delays to comfortably meet the government's 150-day national target. This shift shows how streamlined processes can drastically speed up clinical trial delivery across the NHS. [Read the full story.](#)

### UK leads the world in rapid activation of complex early-phase ATiMP trial

- The UK has demonstrated the strength of its ongoing clinical trial reforms by setting up a highly complex, early-phase advanced therapy trial in just 113 days. The Newcastle Advanced Therapy Treatment Centre is the first site in the world to activate the 'CHILL' study (sponsored by Quell Therapeutics). The trial pioneers the use of advanced cell therapies (CAR-Tregs) for severe autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, successfully expanding use of the technology from its traditional use in cancer. [Read the full story.](#)

### NIHR announces £11.6m workforce investment to boost UK clinical trial delivery

- The NIHR has launched an £11.6m funding injection to strengthen the UK's pharmacy, radiography, and nursing research workforce, addressing critical capacity challenges that currently impact commercial clinical research. This initiative directly supports wider UK clinical trials reform activity, working to reduce study set-up times, increase commercial research activity, and ensure the UK remains a fast, predictable, and globally competitive environment for health research and life sciences growth. [Read the full story.](#)

We're keen to hear about and share success stories about improvements across the system. Please send yours to: [ukcrdprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto: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.](#)



## Webinars

### Catch up on recent webinars

- Watch [The NIHR Industry Hub: Meet our research delivery infrastructure experts](#) which covered the unique strengths and capabilities of each of the families of research infrastructure and explained how the Hub coordinates infrastructure into a single, accountable national operating model - giving sponsors speed, predictability, and delivery performance.
- Watch [The NIHR Industry Hub: Your new gateway to commercial clinical development](#) which detailed how the Industry Hub operating model creates a single, streamlined pathway to reduce fragmentation from set-up to delivery.
- Watch [Introducing the NIHR Innovation Catalyst: accelerating innovation towards impact](#). The inaugural funding opportunity launches on 9 June 2026.

### Upcoming webinars

#### UK research participation across the ages - data from the Year of Birth Project

- Join NIHR and NHS Research Scotland on Wednesday 17th June 2026, 4-5pm to hear initial findings from the NIHR Year of Birth project and ongoing initiatives to increase the participation of older adults in clinical research. [Find out more and register](#).

#### NIHR Industry Hub: Primary Care Pathway

- Join the NIHR Industry Hub on Tuesday 30th June 2026, 2.30-3.30pm to deepen your understanding of the primary care research landscape and learn how the Hub can help unlock the benefits of delivering commercial research in this agile environment. [Find out more and register](#).

If you would like to submit an update to this monthly publication, please email [UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk).



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