



Strategic Impact Report

2023/24

Funded by



Department
of Health &
Social Care



(l to r) Susan Neeson, Prof Martin Gibson, Sarah Fallon, Prof Andy Ustianowski.

Contents

Foreword	3
10 key highlights from 2022/23	4
2023/24 by numbers	8
Who we are and what we do	9
Who we work with	10
Chapter 1: Relevant Research	11
Chapter 2: Inclusive Involvement	16
Chapter 3: Exceptional Experience	20
Conclusion	26
Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards 2023	28



Foreword

Clinical Research Network (CRN) Greater Manchester is proud to have been part of our research delivery community across East Cheshire, East Lancashire and Greater Manchester, which made it possible for over 65,000 people to be part of CRN research in 2023/24. This activity took place across more than 1,000 studies covering all health and care specialities, with an emphasis on delivering across diverse settings and an increased focus on inclusion. As we finish another strong year, we would like to thank everyone across the network for their fantastic efforts.

Together we have continued to change lives through research delivery. Throughout this report we are delighted to share details of some of the key achievements that have made a difference to our communities and the wider health and care system and services across our region.

In early 2023 we were pleased to launch the call for our annual Strategic Funding initiative to carry out projects designed to enhance and transform research delivery. Each successful project was aligned to one of our three values, Relevant Research, Inclusive Involvement and Exceptional Experience, to encourage collaboration across our health and care system. In March 2024 our strategic showcase demonstrated the outcomes of these initiatives and enabled learnings to be shared across our community.

We have strengthened our commercial portfolio, championed local investigators and launched a Business Development Champions Programme with seven champions selected to work with us to enhance commercial development opportunities and embed best practices and align strategies for growth across research delivery sites and settings.

In November 2023 we co-hosted the first ever [Great North Research Conference](#) with over 450 delegates from the life sciences and Med Tech industries. This was an important opportunity to show the North of England as a cooperative and consolidated, prime destination for commercial research, and emphasised our research strengths and disease burden challenges, bringing together partners from across the UK.

Our new series of blogs was launched which invited individuals and teams from our network to share their area of expertise and reflections of working within CRN Greater Manchester which has been well received across the region.

We introduced our local 'Certificate of Achievement' which recognises deserving teams or individuals who have made a significant contribution to the delivery of health and care research in the region. Eleven certificates were awarded throughout the year and we want to encourage even more people to [nominate for this award](#).

Health and care research opportunities have been increased in areas and populations that have the most need, with our research van taking studies to convenient settings ensuring our communities have increased access to research that is relevant and accessible.

As we conclude the final year for the CRN, we would like to thank everyone who has participated in portfolio research. Research would not be possible without their gift of time and commitment for which we are greatly appreciative. We would also like to thank everyone from across the network who has contributed to our successes, for their fantastic efforts and support, and lastly thank you to everyone featured in this report.

Moving towards working as the Regional Research Delivery Network (RDN) North West from 1 October 2024, we look forward to continuing to provide research which meets the needs of our local communities. Research which is Inclusive, Relevant and provides people with an Exceptional Experience.

Sarah Fallon – Chief Operating Officer
Susan Neeson – Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Professor Martin Gibson – Co-Clinical Director
Professor Andy Ustianowski – Co-Clinical Director



10 key highlights from 2023/24

CRN Greater Manchester had many achievements in the past year. Here are 10 highlights, as chosen by our core team.

1. Over 450 delegates attended the **first ever Great North Research Conference** for the Life Sciences and Med Tech industries, held in the Concorde Conference Centre, Manchester. We co-hosted the major event in collaboration with the other three northern LCRNs. **Read more on page 23**



Staff from the four northern LCRNs organised the Great North Research Conference at the Concorde Conference Centre.

2. Our CRN Greater Manchester core team created **a series of blogs** which formed a successful part of the **NIHR's 'Shape the Future' campaign**. The blogs gave an insight into how each department works, shared successes, and helped demonstrate how we live our CRN GM values.



A selection of staff from the CRN Greater Manchester core team gathered outside the NIHR Research Van.

3. Older people living in Salford shared their perceptions of research as part of **our first Research Ready Communities project**. The findings were presented at a feedback event for the communities which contributed to this project. **Read more on page 16**



Inspiring Communities Together, based in Salford, hosted their Research Ready Communities findings event in November 2023.

4. NIHR's popular 'Ask the Expert' webinar series was successfully delivered by our team with hundreds of attendees joining from across the country. The first focused on **long covid** and the second on **healthy ageing**.



Promotional material for the healthy ageing public webinar held online in March 2024, led by expert Professor Emma Vardy.



Dr Imran Ghafoor (left), a CRN Greater Manchester Primary Care Specialty Lead, joined Ewa Grzegorska, a CRN Greater Manchester Research Support Facilitator, on the Primary Care Knowledge Boost podcast hosted by GPs Lisa Adams and Sara MacDermott.



The Greater Manchester cohort of the Nuffield Research Placement which was hosted by CRN Greater Manchester and CRN North West Coast in August 2023.

5. We reached new audiences by appearing on podcasts such as the Primary Care Knowledge Boost. Our **episode was dedicated to research in general practice** and had over 6,500 downloads, prompting a number of GPs to tell us they were inspired to learn more after listening.

6. **Twelve ambitious A-level students** aiming to become the first in their family to attend university excelled during a jam-packed placement with our core team and our colleagues at CRN North West Coast. The Nuffield Research Placement is a two-week research-focused, work experience placement that runs in the summer school holidays.



Kat Moklak-Dutton, CRN Greater Manchester Business Development Manager (left) and Ash Minchin, CRN Greater Manchester Research Support Facilitator (third left), with Business Development Champions Ola Metryka, Hemant Patel, Alison Robinson, Charlotte Douglas and Sara Bennett.

8. We launched a Business Development Champions programme, with seven champions selected to represent their organisations to enhance commercial development opportunities. They are working with us and the life sciences industry to attract innovative and relevant research opportunities to our network. **Read more on page 23**



Caroline Winckley, a CRN Greater Manchester Senior Clinical Research Practitioner (CRP), joined peers from across the country for their profession's national summit. Inset, Caroline's fellow North West CRP Co-Engagement Leads, Kathryn Slevin (left) and Claire Corless (right).



7. Our region's Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs) continue to grow in number and to organise as a professional group. We formed a shared North West CRN leadership and engagement model which offers support to individuals and partner organisations, including registration workshops, a working group to standardise CRP deployment and a **Community of Practice**.



Members of CRN Greater Manchester's core team on stage at the 2024 Northern Power Women Awards in Manchester Central Convention Complex.

9. Our work was recognised by two awards bodies regionally and nationally. First, we were shortlisted at the 2023 HSJ Awards for the **NHS Race Equality Award**. Then, we **won the award for Inclusive Innovation** at the 2024 Northern Power Women Awards. **Read more on page 17**



10. We established a national prison research community of practice, uniting CRN staff and prison researchers from across England. This group is addressing barriers and enabling more research in prison and probation settings. **Read more on page 19**

2023/24 by numbers



Total participants in research
65,120



Total recruiting studies
1,023



Global, European, UK
first recruits
19



Staff to complete training and
development programmes
4,547



Number of projects awarded
Strategic Funding to enhance
research delivery
18
(almost £500,000 invested)



Percentage of participants
who would take part
in research again
91%



Total invested in local
health and care system
£22.4m



Percentage of commercial
recruitment to time and target
86%
(highest in England)



Total participants in
Primary Care
12,072



Number of studies delivered
across our delivery sites
1,886



Number of participants in Social
Care and community sites
839



Total participants in
commercial research
8,384
(across 260 studies)



The CRN Greater Manchester core team outside their office in Citylabs 1.0 on Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust's Oxford Road Campus.

Who we are and what we do

CRN Greater Manchester is part of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) which is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care.

With a budget of around £22 million per year, it is our role to support health and care organisations across Greater Manchester, East Cheshire and East Lancashire to carry out high-quality research with our regional population.

Vision for the future

From 1 October 2024, CRN Greater Manchester will transition into the Regional Research Delivery Network (RDN) North West, hosted by Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust. The transition from the CRN to the RDN is an opportunity to evolve the network and meet the demands of the future.

The **RDN vision** is that the UK is a global leader in the delivery of high quality, commercial and non commercial research that is inclusive, accessible, and improves health and care.

The RDN mission is to enable the health and care system to attract, optimise and deliver research across England and, in our case, the North West. This is part of the NIHR's overall mission to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. As a result, research will reach more people, address changing

population needs, support the health and care system and the economy, and become a routine part of care.

The RDN is a new organisation, built on the strong foundations developed through the Clinical Research Network, and will have five features in the way it operates:

- A single organisation with greater consistency of experience for customers
- Collective responsibility and joint leadership of the organisation
- A collegiate and customer-focused partner
- Stronger focus on strategic development of research capacity and capability, nationally and regionally, with partners
- Emphasis on continuous improvement, learning and value for money in every part of RDN.



Who we work with

We work with all of the NHS trusts, local care organisations, primary care, social care, public health and non-NHS partners across Greater Manchester, East Cheshire and East Lancashire. A full list is below. There will be a wider community of organisations from October 2024 in the new RDN footprint. Email us at researchsupport.crn gm@nhr.ac.uk if you are keen to be introduced to a research contact at any of our partner organisations.

Our local partner trusts are:

- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust
- Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- East Cheshire NHS Trust
- East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust
- Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
- Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust
- North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust
- Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Stockport NHS Foundation Trust
- Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
- The Christie NHS Foundation Trust
- Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Local Care Organisations

We work with local care organisations in all of our communities across our region. This includes:

- Community mental health / Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Prisons
- Voluntary sector
- Community Hospitals
- Residential care, social care and domiciliary care
- Health visitors / schools
- GP practices / federations / networks
- Urgent treatment centres
- Community nurses
- NHS hospice care
- Urgent care at home teams
- Community based clinics
- Other independent contractors e.g. pharmacy
- Specialist community based clinics e.g. sexual health / drug / alcohol
- Local authorities
- Charities



Relevant Research

Relevant Research is our commitment to fully understanding the health and care needs of our local population and finding the best ways to make a difference to citizens and communities through research. This theme was led by **Professor Phil Kalra**.



Susan Neeson, CRN Greater Manchester Deputy Chief Operating Officer, presents Professor Phil Kalra, Theme Lead for Relevant Research, with a certificate marking his leadership of this programme of work.

Enabling patients to use their last days to make a lasting difference

Last year we saw three hospices in Greater Manchester taking part in clinical research, offering research opportunities to their patients and families and helping to build a research culture within our region. **Bolton Hospice** played an important part in the CHELsea II trial which is assessing whether giving patients in the last days of life fluids via a drip, also known as 'clinically-assisted hydration', is effective at preventing them from developing delirium, or 'terminal agitation'. The team were awarded our CRN Greater Manchester Certificate of Achievement in recognition of them leading the way as the most research-active hospice in the region, serving as an exemplar for other palliative care sites. Dr Ellie McCann, Consultant Physician and Bolton Hospice's Medical Director highlighted how relevant this research has been for their patients, saying: "We have been proud to be part of this trial looking at a topic which is common for patients in our care and around the world in palliative care. The patients and families we have approached have been very keen to play a part in this research and we are extremely grateful for their involvement. By consenting to take part, they are all leaving a wonderful legacy by helping to improve the comfort of future patients in end of life care."



Dr Ellie McCann, Medical Director at Bolton Hospice, received the CRN Greater Manchester Certificate of Achievement from Bindhu Xavier, Senior Clinical Research Nurse at CRN Greater Manchester, in January 2024.



Landmark Respiratory Virus Study

Almost 300 parents across our region enrolled their babies on to a landmark respiratory virus study focused on the UK's leading cause of infant hospitalisation. RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) affects 90% of children before the age of two and Greater Manchester experienced a surge in cases post-pandemic. **The HARMONIE study** was open to families at eight of our region's hospitals which collaborated to support one another, led by a regional study manager from our host trust. GP practices also played an important role as Patient Identification Centres which referred interested parents. The results revealed an 83% reduction in infant hospitalisations among those receiving the antibody, reinforcing the public health benefit of Nirsevimab which has received regulatory approval.



- Liz Stroud's baby daughter Ivy, of Hazel Grove, was just one of the many participants in the region to take part in the HARMONIE trial.

The team at Bolton NHS Foundation Trust were among several Greater Manchester sites to deliver the HARMONIE trial.



Increasing the number of research-active GP practices

GP practices are usually the most convenient settings for people to access their healthcare. Therefore it is essential we make relevant research available to patients within this setting, enabling access to varied treatments and initiatives through research. In 2023/24 we enjoyed **our best year for primary care research** recruitment (over 12,000 participants), providing more patients with opportunities in general practice than ever before thanks to more research-active sites. Our revised engagement strategy saw the number of practices applying for Research Site Initiative (RSI) funding more than double compared to 2022/23. A total of 184 practices recruited to studies, with 103 of these new to research. The Discover Me study, looking at how health and genetic information can allow us to better understand disease, was relevant to all patients and saw 20 practices recruit almost 6,000 participants.

The team from St Johns Medical Centre in Altrincham have been among the research-active practices in the region.



Wigan residents listen to a presentation on how to get involved in research during a CRN Greater Manchester public engagement event in January 2024.



Forming research partnerships

As a network we are committed to making the delivery of portfolio research more relevant to local communities. Through strategic funding we have been able to support a pilot project aimed at **increasing research engagement with communities in the Wigan borough**. One of the impacts of the pilot has resulted in the formation of a Health Research Forum, holding its inaugural meeting in July 2024. Its purpose is to continue the conversations to generate stronger links and collaborations as well as develop priority areas for research through further engagement with patients and partners. This will ensure that research is relevant to meet the needs of the local people and the health and care system for the future.

Demonstrating the scale of the UK's allergy problem

We supported a Food Standards Agency-funded study which for the first time in over 25 years showed how food allergies and intolerance among adults in the UK have changed. We worked with GP practices in South Manchester to invite patients to get involved in **Patterns of Adult Food Allergy**, a Manchester-led study. The results showed more than 30% of adults reported some types of adverse reactions when eating food. Six per cent of adults in the UK, or 2.4 million people, have a clinically-proven food allergy. This is higher than other countries and considered a significant health burden. The research highlighted patterns such as the emergence of plant-based allergies affecting more people into adulthood.



Developing a centralised pharmacy approach

A Greater Manchester pharmacy team have continued their **pioneering work to develop a centralised pharmacy approach** to setting up and delivering clinical trials in NHS trusts across the region. Since 2022 they have been leading on a number of ongoing projects to bring together different elements of research delivery in NHS trust pharmacy departments and thereby address a national challenge. From a regional perspective, this work is harnessing true integration across all health and care organisations, which will over the next year have created more capacity for delivering research at a Greater Manchester level that will save and improve lives. It has achieved real integration across all districts, including those with high levels of deprivation and high prevalence of disease. From a national perspective, the principles of this work are scalable not just across England but also across the devolved administrations, developing opportunities for pharmacy careers in research delivery which is a new spotlight being generated by this work.

Beatriz Duran Jimenez (left), Consultant Pharmacist, and Sophia Boydell, Clinical Trials Operational Manager, both of Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, and their team received CRN Greater Manchester Strategic Funding to develop centralised pharmacy solutions.





Readesmoor Medical Centre, in East Cheshire, received CRN Greater Manchester Strategic Funding to increase research capacity and capability.

Increasing research capacity in Primary Care

As some services traditionally provided in hospitals move into primary care, so too does research need to follow this trend to ensure patient pathways and services remain relevant and provide reliable evidence. We therefore welcomed strategic funding bids that aimed to modify or change local research culture to better tackle research delivery. **Readesmoor Medical Centre** in Cheshire were awarded funding which enabled them to increase research capacity, with a focus on offering a diverse range of research opportunities for their patients. Through this initiative, research is now embedded within the practice culture, demonstrated through their staff and patient feedback, and they have begun to expand research across their Primary Care Network. We also awarded funding to **Ashton Medical Group in Tameside to design and issue a detailed questionnaire** to 14,000 of their patients in order to better understand the barriers to participation. The results are now helping the practice select the types of studies their patients are most interested in, increasing the relevance of their research, reducing dropout rates and increasing future recruitment.



Elisabeta Kothai and Dr Omair Razaq, from Ashton Medical Centre, received CRN Greater Manchester Strategic Funding to seek their patients' views on research participation.



Our Relevant Research special award winner

At the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards 2023, the award for Relevant Research was presented to the FIND-IT study team from Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust.

It is expected over 25% of people living in Greater Manchester will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime. This makes them two-and-a-half times more likely to experience heart failure and twice more likely to have a heart attack compared to people without diabetes. Diabetes is a big priority for Greater Manchester health policymakers and the FIND-IT study, which is **Tameside-led research, could be transformative system-wide** by helping identify type 2 diabetes earlier in people via a simple blood test during visits to A&E. This can set patients on treatment plans to improve health outcomes and reduce long-term strain on the NHS. Of 1,388 patients screened, 420 (30%) were found to have pre-diabetes and 120 (9%) were diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.



The team from Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust received the award for Relevant Research at the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards at The Etihad stadium in October 2023.



A packed audience gathered for presentations at CRN Greater Manchester's Strategic Funding Showcase held in Citylabs 1.0 in spring 2024.

Building capacity and capability in stroke research

The rate of heart attacks and strokes in all 10 Greater Manchester boroughs is above the national average. Strokes are the leading cause of disability. They are classified under the umbrella of cardiovascular disease which is the leading cause of premature death and health inequalities in our region. With this relevance in mind, our strategic funding supported an initiative to develop the research workforce by involving **speech and language therapists (SLT) in clinical research**. Our funding was also used to explore alternative ways to engage with underserved groups and to involve them in future research. This work is achieving impact by supporting SLTs to undertake Principal Investigator roles and developing a model for patient, carer and public involvement. It is also increasing awareness of research among the research community and the public, and supporting interdisciplinary collaborations to establish, attract and deliver research in the areas of Greater Manchester.



Inclusive Involvement

Inclusive Involvement is our focus on identifying underserved communities and recognising research involvement beyond participation. This theme was led by **Professor Kathryn Abel**.



Professor Kathryn Abel, Theme Lead for Inclusive Involvement, with the certificate marking her leadership of this programme of work.

Examples with public

Empowering communities to gather public opinion and make change

Research Ready Communities (RRC) is an NIHR initiative designed to engage underserved communities to improve inclusion and representation in research. We delivered our first two of these projects last year. For the first, **older people living in Salford shared their perceptions of research**, which revealed key insights such as a misconception it has to involve medical procedures. The group we worked with, Inspiring Communities Together, took their involvement a step further by carrying out **Greater Manchester Research Engagement Network Development (REN)** project to co-create a video animation, subtitled in several languages, to support health literacy in older adults. We are focused on making research more visible to communities so that people can learn about it and consider taking part in future opportunities. In addition, we supported REN by collaborating in the development of bids, participating in relevant sections of projects such as giving business intelligence support and completion of data for mapping connections.

Our second RRC project, **was carried out with residents in Blackburn and Darwen**. This 12-month project centred on engaging with the borough's diverse population, exceeding 150,000, with a focus on three target populations: ethnic minority groups, vulnerable adults, and people living with disabilities. It created the legacy of a PPIE group capable of providing 'a true voice for the community' to shape future research priorities in East Lancashire.



Residents in Salford attended the event which shared the findings of the Research Ready Communities project delivered with older people in Salford.



Matt Kenyon, a physiotherapist from East Lancashire, and his team of volunteers share the outcomes from the Research Ready Communities project carried out with residents in Blackburn and Darwen.



Afzal Khan, MP for Gorton, was among more than 1,000 residents who took part in the South Asia Biobank study delivered in Cheetham Hill.

South Asian residents contribute to global study

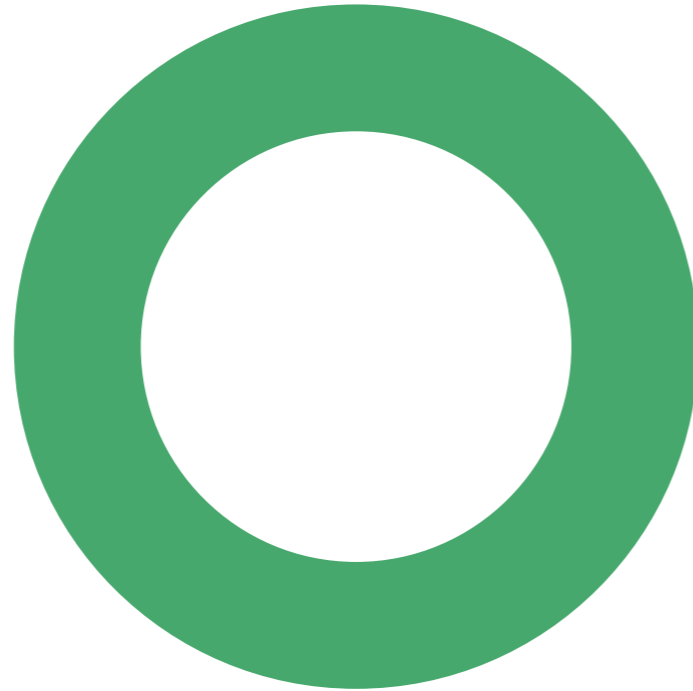
There has been limited, large-scale research into why South Asians are more susceptible than other populations to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and other long-term health conditions. Data also shows these communities have not traditionally participated in research as much as others. It was in this context that we supported the **delivery of the South Asia Biobank Study in a central Manchester** community setting, enabling more than 1,000 residents to be part of this international study. Not only did participants contribute vital data to help improve health outcomes worldwide, they also received a comprehensive report of their personal health. Vilphy Biju, 48, from Fallowfield, took part along with her daughter Neha, 20. She said: "We know some conditions are more prevalent in our South Asian community and anything that can bring more awareness of this and help find answers is positive."

Awards success for inclusive innovation

We won an award at the 2024 Northern Power Women Awards, held in Manchester in March 2024, in recognition of our work in making research more inclusive. The awards showcase trailblazing organisations and individuals, of all genders. We took home the award for Inclusive Innovation which recognised nominations which are pursuing game changing innovation that has led to accelerating equality. Ceremony host, broadcaster Nina Hossain, told the packed audience: "CRN Greater Manchester are transforming healthcare research in the region. Their mission focuses on the equity of access to health and care research for underserved communities, ensuring research represents Greater Manchester's diverse population. The judges wanted to note that innovation in healthcare isn't easy, not least in the NHS. This team are doing incredible work that is changing the connectivity between research and underrepresented groups which is life changing."



Members of the CRN Greater Manchester team celebrated with their trophy after winning at the 2024 Northern Power Women Awards held in Manchester Central Convention Complex.



Examples with staff

Creating a community of prison researchers

Prisoners have not traditionally taken part in research and there are only pockets of experience and expertise in delivering research in this setting. We have taken strides to address this by creating a Prison Research Community of Practice. This group has taken a collegiate national approach and has representation from over 30 CRN staff and prison researchers from across England. The group, which we believe to be the only one of its kind, has been formed to overcome the barriers and challenges of conducting research in prisons and has identified projects to improve processes and ensure a more joined up approach.

Developing a community priority setting partnership

Reducing or removing barriers to participation and inclusion in NIHR portfolio research studies and increasing broader inclusion from under-served communities has been a key part of our strategic funding initiatives. The funding we awarded to VOCAL, Healthy Me, Healthy Communities and the James Lind Alliance to co-deliver is an example of this. The **Gorton Health Matters: Co-led Community Priority Setting project** discovered health and care research priorities in Central/East Manchester; generated a list of questions that can be shared with researchers and partners to develop research questions, projects, set strategy and apply for funding. This work will help ensure that research developments are inclusive and relevant to the health and care needs of the area.

Educating children about health research

We know misconceptions around research persist and public awareness continually needs to improve. Facing the challenge at root, we started a school assembly programme which allowed us to speak with thousands of primary school aged children. Our 20-minute talks cover the basics of prevention, treatment and diagnosis, as well as an interactive eligibility game and readings of our custom-made Ready for Research storybook. This strategy also enabled us to send invitations for parents to sign-up to our registries and developed school relationships to pave the way for delivery opportunities with pupils as and when relevant studies go live.



Ash Minchin, Research Support Facilitator, and Emma Oughton, Assistant Research Delivery Manager, led an assembly on research at River View Primary School in Salford.

Supporting public engagement staff in research delivery

We formed a regional first-of-its-kind Community of Practice for Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) in research delivery. This created a space to explore best practice and provide opportunities for collaboration. The group includes NHS PPIE managers and healthcare professionals seeking support in what can be an isolated role in healthcare. Other such groups existed across Greater Manchester, but none which specialised in research delivery or recognised the breadth of knowledge, skills or work needed in this field.

Our Inclusive Involvement special award winner

At the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards 2023, the award for Inclusive Involvement was presented to the Clinical Research Network and author Alex Winstanley for the **Ready for Research children's book**.

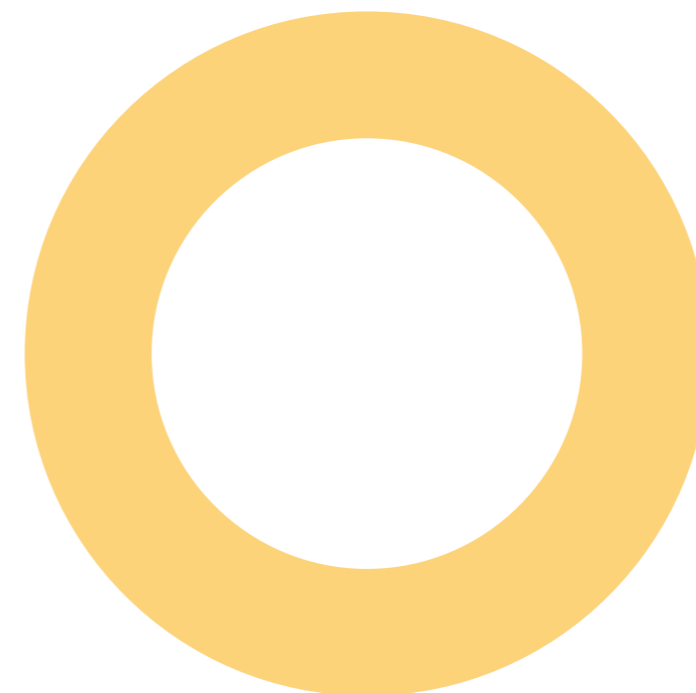
This story book, aimed at pupils aged up to school years three and four, is addressing a need by providing an effective resource to get children thinking about the importance of research from a young age. We made it available in public-facing areas of all our network's hospitals and copies are being awarded to primary schools across the region. Over recent years we have worked hard to build engagement with schools in our region. The book has supported this continued growth by being a tool which our agile team has utilised to promote research in school assemblies. The NIHR also funded copies for every CRN in England.



Contributors to a priority-setting partnership, led by VOCAL, met in Gorton as part of a project which received CRN Greater Manchester Strategic Funding.



Fern Pallister (left), Senior Clinical Research Nurse, and Jo Henry, Matron, met with pupils at All Saints Catholic Primary School in Wigan.



Alex Winstanley, author of the Ready for Research book, received the award for Inclusive Involvement at the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards at The Etihad stadium in October 2023.

Exceptional Experience

Exceptional Experience is our investment to service improvements which advance the practice of research delivery for participants, staff, investigators, communities, partners and sponsors. This theme was led by **Dr Abdul Ashish**.



Dr Abdul Ashish, Theme Lead for Exceptional Experience, with the certificate marking his leadership of this programme of work.

Participant experiences

Nine-out-of-10 research participants would take part again

The Participant in Research Experience Survey gathers feedback from our research participants as we strive to continually improve our service. In 2023/24, experiences were very positive, as the data showed 91% of respondents would take part in research again, while 97% said research staff had always treated them with courtesy and respect.

Last year, we received responses from almost 2,000 adults and young people, almost a 46% increase on the previous year. Survey response rates surged thanks to a new website which offered the survey to participants in person, via email or by providing a unique code to complete their survey at a time which suited them.

"It made me feel that someone was actually listening to me and cared."

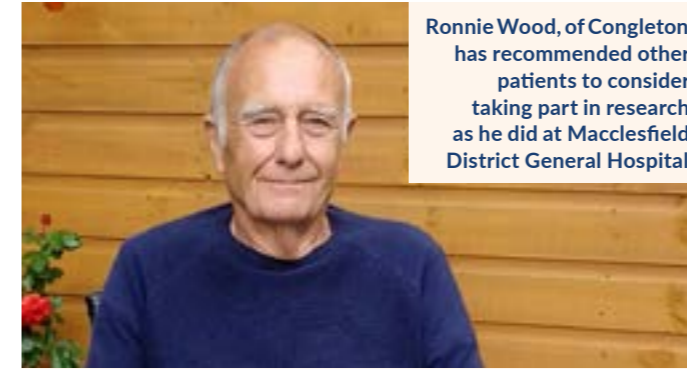
"I was treated by the most caring of staff who put my best interests and well being first in everything they discussed with me."

"Knowing that there were alternatives available to the treatment I was having before was very important to me."

Case study

During the delivery of the South Asia Biobank study which saw a high number of participants each weekday, we were able to **implement suggestions from the survey in real time** to improve the experience. This included adding 'engaged/vacant' signs to clinic doors to avoid interruptions and introducing pre-appointment phone calls and text messages.

Vilphy Biju, of Fallowfield, took part in the South Asia Biobank Study along with her daughter Neha.



Ronnie Wood, of Congleton, has recommended other patients to consider taking part in research as he did at Macclesfield District General Hospital.

Cancer patient Ronnie praises care received on trial

A grandfather living with a life-limiting cancer has encouraged others to be part of research for future generations after taking part in a trial which improved his quality of life. **Ronnie Wood, of Congleton, has been involved in research** at Macclesfield District General Hospital looking at the best way to manage the fluid build-up caused by mesothelioma. The 76-year-old said: "The staff at the hospital are so caring and understanding and I get the very best treatment. I would advise anyone to go on a research study. I think that anything you can do to improve the experience of yourself and others, you've got to go for it."

Staff experiences

Developing tomorrow's researchers

We match-funded 16 consultant medical and senior Allied Health Professionals to complete our latest Research Scholars Programme. They were the **fourth cohort to benefit from this initiative** to equip health and care professionals from across the North West with the tools to become the next Principal and Chief Investigators. The cohort felt indebted to this comprehensive development programme, which offers protected research time. Mr Bill Kirmami, a Consultant Surgeon in the cohort, said: "It has taken me to places that I could not have imagined, and has really developed my research into something that I hope will not just become stand out in the UK, but meaningful worldwide."

Meanwhile, we match-funded 29 individuals to become the fourth cohort to complete our **Early Career Researcher Development Pathway**. This 12-month programme equipped a variety of North West health and care professionals making their early steps in research with the tools to become research leaders.



Health and care professionals from across the North West became the fourth cohort to complete the Research Scholars Programme in December 2023.



Recognising success across our network

After being introduced on a pilot basis, we implemented the CRN Greater Manchester Certificate of Achievement as a recognition scheme accepting nominations throughout the year. The certificate has so far been presented to 10 deserving teams or individuals (all pictured) who made a significant contribution to the delivery of research. It has rewarded colleagues working across settings including secondary and primary care, care homes and hospices, as well as community champions.

It has been great to see recipients continue to make a difference after receiving the certificate. For example, Knutsford Medical Partnership now have ambitions to deliver vaccine trials and are using their expertise to help research-naïve practices get involved in delivery for the first time. Lindsey Whittle, manager at Alexander Care Home in Bury, has since imparted her experience

across the region by sharing a case study of how her organisation has benefited from being research-active and why other homes should consider offering participation opportunities to their residents.

Linda Peacock retired as a research nurse team coordinator on the day she received our very first certificate but has since returned part-time as a lead research midwife and trial coordinator for a Manchester-led study looking to understand and prevent stillbirths between 20 and 28 weeks. Linda said "I'm still a research midwife and recruit and interview women/parents/mothers but my role mainly involves site set - up, training, data management and the day to day running of the 24 UK trusts which are running the study in their units. I have a fantastic Chief Investigator in Dr Lucy Higgins and a very experienced trial manager in Andy Fairclough supporting me. I'm very busy and enjoying the role."



Working from top left and going across each line left to right...

- Dr Ellie McCann, Medical Director at Bolton Hospice.
- The Research Pharmacy Group from Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.
- Research Manager, Helen Hodgson, and Lead GP, Dr Tom Morgan from Knutsford Medical Partnership.
- Lindsey Whittle, manager of Alexander Care Home in Bury.
- Research Midwife Linda Peacock, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.
- Practice Manager Lauren Clarence with colleagues at St Gabriel's Medical Centre in Prestwich.
- Community Research Champion Norraine Mhlanga.
- Community Research Champion Khalid Bashir.
- Becky Hill, Patient Flow Coordinator at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust.
- The team from Ashton Medical Centre based in Ashton-under-Lyne.



Industry and partner experiences

Business Development Champions

CRN Greater Manchester launched a Business Development Champions programme to identify motivated colleagues from the regional research community. Seven champions were selected to represent their organisations to enhance commercial development opportunities. They are working with CRN Greater Manchester and the life sciences industry to attract innovative and relevant research opportunities to sites in our network.



Industry partner experiences

Each year we ask our industry partners for their feedback on their experiences with us. The feedback we received from our CRO, MedTech and pharma partners shows the importance of supporting the planning, placement and performance of research delivery in our region. One MedTech organisation commented on how they felt the direct support they received from our team in making introductions and guidance to local stakeholders was the most valuable part of their experience.

One of our pharma partners said: "The collaboration we have established with CRN Greater Manchester has led to improvements in the running of studies and relationships with our key sites. The relationship has enabled us to resolve issues which would have otherwise caused significant challenges and delays with clinical trials in our portfolio."

First-of-its-kind commercial conference promotes the north

We hosted the first ever **Great North Research Conference** for the Life Sciences and Med Tech industries in partnership with our fellow northern CRNs. The two-day conference in Manchester marketed the north as a joined-up destination for commercial research, emphasising our research strengths and disease burden and bringing together partners from across the UK. Over 450 delegates attended the famous Concorde Centre and 95% rated their experience as good or excellent. In a unique



Delegates at the conference networked in unique surroundings under the wings of an iconic Concorde aircraft.

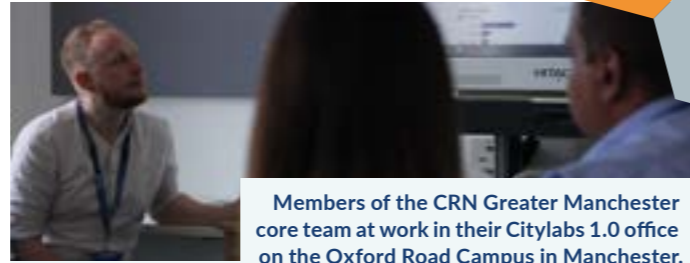
Lord James O'Shaughnessy was keynote speaker at the Great North Research Conference held in Manchester in November 2023.



feature, all delegates had the opportunity to be part of research and over 70 took part in studies. Keynote speaker Lord James O'Shaughnessy, who led the government-commissioned UK review of commercial clinical trials, said: "There is so much great practice in the north – the outstanding growth in commercial trials in Greater Manchester, the focus on digital innovation in Yorkshire, the primary care research strengths in the North West Coast, and the excellence in Med Tech in the North East, to name a few. There was lots of inspiration for the whole country."

Regional vaccine delivery group

The UK government established partnerships with **Moderna** and **BioNTech** to give UK sites the opportunity to deliver respiratory, infection and cancer vaccine studies over the next 10 years. In response, CRN Greater Manchester established a regional vaccine group designed to identify sites and settings with the capability and capacity to set up such trials efficiently, recruit to time and target and provide an **exceptional experience**. CRN Greater Manchester is exploring opportunities to use a hub and spoke delivery model and proposing to use a mobile workforce to complete study activity across multiple sites in the region, quickly and efficiently. This will have a positive impact for equity of participant access across the region and would not be limited to hospital settings.



Members of the CRN Greater Manchester core team at work in their Citylabs 1.0 office on the Oxford Road Campus in Manchester.

Site identification innovation saves five weeks per year

The identification of suitable delivery sites for commercial trials can be time-consuming and delays trials getting up-and-running. We transformed our site ID process with the use of the Site Identification Support App (SISTA). Sites now receive a pre-populated site ID form which saves around 25 business days per year as well as increased data quality and consistency of expressions of interest submitted to companies. Subsequently, research opportunities are being made available to our population sooner.

Our Exceptional Experience special award winner

At the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards 2023, the award for Exceptional Experience was presented to the Research and Development Team from North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

The team enhanced their trust's reputation as a research-active organisation at both a local and national level. Their behaviours had a positive impact across the trust to raise awareness of research and encourage other staff to get involved in research delivery. Last year they had the highest recruitment figures in the trust's history and hosted the national 999 conference right here in Manchester, ensuring hundreds of delegates had an exceptional experience.



The R&D team from North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust were awarded the Exceptional Experience award at the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards at The Etihad stadium in October 2023.



CRN Greater Manchester colleagues use digital applications to create greater efficiencies in the regional research system.

App boosts commercial trial efficiency

The National Contract Value Review (NCVR) is the new UK-wide standardised approach to costing and contracting for commercial contract research. The Lord O'Shaughnessy UK independent review of commercial trials recommended it should be 'radically expanded'. We developed an app to enable proactive study resource performance monitoring for NVCR. This innovation will improve set up times and sponsor experience and reduce business development risk at a regional and national level. In Primary Care, our engagement resulted in our network having the **highest number of committed practices** to NVCR in the UK.

Taking our Health Research Festivals across Greater Manchester

It is well known that public awareness of health and care research is lower than we would like. We also know there are embedded misconceptions which present barriers to participation in research. With this in mind, and to make research more inclusive, we established a Health Research Festival model two years ago.

Since then, our festivals have become a regular fixture in our strategy to make research more inclusive. Working in partnership with the NHS trust local to the area, we held six festivals in six different boroughs. Each has been held in a community setting with high public footfall, such as libraries, an outdoor market, and a leisure centre, providing a bustling marketplace with family fun to help start conversations.

We have attracted up to 400 people per event and worked with the local media, in different languages, to arrange coverage pre and post-event. The festivals have provided an excellent platform for research teams to recruit to studies and dozens of people have taken the opportunity to take part in research on the day each time.

For each festival, we also partner with community health and care organisations and charities from the borough in question. Each hosts a stall, offering advice on their areas of work. As a result, the events have become a one-stop-shop for health and care services in that community, not just those purely related to research. Our festival model has earned regional award success and reached a point where trusts have approached us to get involved.



A little girl enjoyed the family fun at one of the Health Research Festivals.



Attendees engaged with the various stalls inside Blackburn Central Library during a Health Research Festival in March 2024.



Members of the CRN Greater Manchester core team promoted research initiatives at the Health Research Festival in Ashton-under-Lyne in July 2023.

Conclusion

Over the past year our network enjoyed another impactful 12 months across a range of settings and specialties. The pages in this report paint the picture of a vibrant research community which is leading the way nationally in several areas and making great strides in lots more.

But as we come to look back on 2023/24 and the last full year of CRN Greater Manchester, this is also an opportune time for me to reflect on what we have achieved together over the past decade since our CRN formed in 2014 and ahead of the transition to the RDN in October 2024.

For 10 years, CRN Greater Manchester contributed immensely to the advancement of knowledge and improvement of care regionally, nationally and globally. Much has changed in the system during this time, not least the devolution of NHS, public and community services in Greater Manchester and the effects of a global pandemic. But our population's access to high-quality and innovative research opportunities has remained constant. The CRN has been central to this and to our region's reputation as a world-class research destination. Everyone who has contributed to its outputs in 2023/24 and throughout the last 10 years should be very proud.

As CRN Greater Manchester comes to a close, so too does my role as chairman of the Partnership Group. It is a position I have been privileged to fulfil for the past 10 years, allowing me to help lead services that truly make a difference to people's lives every day and enhance care now and for future generations. I have been grateful for this opportunity and I look forward to partnering with the RDN as we move into a new period for the NIHR. Thank you.



Roger Spencer
Chairman of the CRN Greater Manchester Partnership Group,
and Chief Executive of The Christie NHS Foundation Trust



Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals from across North West make their research pledges

Health and care professionals from across the North West made pledges about how they intend to embed research into the core business of their organisation

They did so during our North West Regional Chief Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP) Research Meeting held in St Helens in November 2023.

We co-organised the event with our partners at CRN North West Coast. More than 100 people attended in person and online. The keynote speaker for the day was Professor Ruth Endacott, the Director of Nursing and Midwifery at NIHR, who talked about inspiring forthcoming initiatives for research-interested NMAHPs to start and flourish in research delivery careers.

Over 50 pledges were written on placards, with everyone challenged to follow through with their vow over the following 12 months.



Delegates made pledges for embedding research during the North West Regional Chief Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP) Research Meeting held at St Helens Rugby League Club.

Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards 2023

The achievements of our network were recognised at our 10th annual evening of celebration. The Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards 2023 were held at The Etihad Stadium, Manchester, on 5 October 2023. Winners in 11 award categories, plus Highly Commended finalists in five of the categories, were announced in front of an audience of 220 people featuring national and regional health and care leaders, local research teams, and industry partners. We also presented accolades to four special winners, each of whom represented shining examples of our core values.

The evening featured a keynote speech from Professor Lucy Chappell, the Chief Executive Officer of the NIHR and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department of Health and Care, and [a video montage featuring thank you messages](#) from executives at each of the region's NHS trusts. The awards were in association with headline sponsor Parexel. We were also extremely grateful to our sponsors from Medicines Evaluation Unit.

All of the winners at the Greater Manchester Health and Care Research Awards at the Etihad Stadium in October 2023.



List of winners

Putting Participants First

Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinical Research Team – Bury Care Organisation, Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust

Collaborative Working Accomplishment

Highly Commended – Early Career Researcher Development Pathway team – NHS R&D North West

Winner – Bolton REDUCe 2 trial collaborative delivery team – Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

Outstanding Achievement by a Team (sponsored by Medicines Evaluation Unit)

Highly Commended – Obsessive Compulsive Disorder study team – Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Winner – Dr Pilar Rivera-Ortega and FIBRONEER Trial Wythenshawe Research Team – Wythenshawe Hospital, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Exceptional Research Delivery Leadership

Highly Commended – Natalie Keenan – Macclesfield District General Hospital, East Cheshire NHS Trust

Winner – Dr Anthony Short – Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Inclusive Involvement Excellence

(Sponsored by Parexel)
Stephanie Shoop-Worrall – The University of Manchester

Primary Care or Community Research Contribution

St Johns Medical Centre – Altrincham

Best Contribution to Research Delivery outside of the NHS

Lumi-Nova: Tales of Courage study team – Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

Best Public Engagement

Highly Commended – Introducing the Greater Manchester Research Van to the community – Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust; Vocal; Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Winner – Tameside Health Research Festival – Tameside R&D Team, Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

Transforming Research Delivery

Radiotherapy Clinical Trials Radiographer Team – The Christie NHS Foundation Trust

New to Research Award

Highly Commended – Daisy Pegler – Stockport NHS Foundation Trust

Winner – Dr Qasim Ahmed – East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

Prioritising Wellbeing Award

Simon Kaye – Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

Special Award for Inclusive Involvement

Clinical Research Network and Alex Winstanley for the Ready for Research children's book

Special Award for Relevant Research

FIND-IT study team, Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

Special Award for Exceptional Experience

Research and Development Team, North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Made in Manchester Special Award

Dr Sam Hey, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

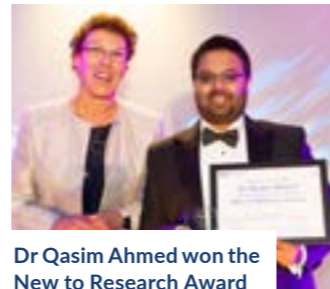




Professor Lucy Chappell, Chief Executive Officer of the NIHR and Chief Scientific Adviser to the Department of Health and Care, was keynote speaker



Simon Kaye won the Prioritising Wellbeing Award



Dr Qasim Ahmed won the New to Research Award



The Obsessive Compulsive Disorder study team, of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, were Highly Commended in the Outstanding Achievement by a Team category



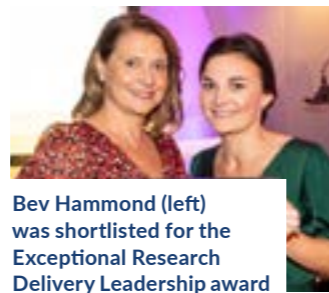
Natalie Keenan was Highly Commended in the Exceptional Research Delivery Leadership category



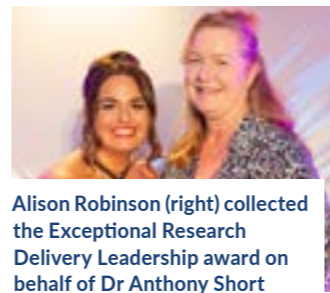
Stephanie Shoop-Worrall won the Inclusive Involvement Excellence award



The Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinical Research Team, of Bury Care Organisation, won the Putting Participants First award



Bev Hammond (left) was shortlisted for the Exceptional Research Delivery Leadership award



Alison Robinson (right) collected the Exceptional Research Delivery Leadership award on behalf of Dr Anthony Short



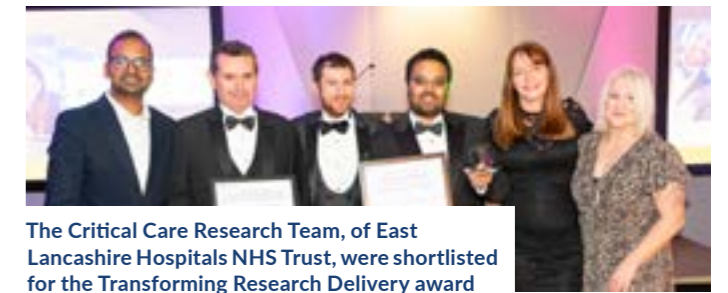
Daisy Pegler was Highly Commended for the New to Research Award



The MSK / Rheumatology Research Team, of Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, were shortlisted for the Transforming Research Delivery award



Some of the finalists from East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust



The Critical Care Research Team, of East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, were shortlisted for the Transforming Research Delivery award



Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust won the Best Public Engagement award



Dr Pilar Rivera-Ortega and her team from Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust won Outstanding Achievement by a Team



The Greater Manchester Regional Engagement Network Development (REND) team were shortlisted for Best Public Engagement



The Bolton REDUCe 2 trial collaborative won the Collaborative Working Accomplishment award



The Clinical Trials Radiographer Team, of The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, won the Transforming Research Delivery award



The Lumi-Nova: Tales of Courage study team, of Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, won the Best Contribution to Research Delivery outside of the NHS award

Register your interest to take part in research

Research for the Future

Research for the Future is a campaign that helps people find out about and take part in health and care research.



Be Part of Research

Create a Be Part of Research account and take the first steps to finding a study that's right for you.



Join Dementia Research

Join Dementia Research enables you to register your interest and be matched with suitable research studies focused on dementia.



Care home research

Care homes interested in getting involved in research can join our Enabling Research in Care Homes (ENRICH) network and access support from our team.



Contact us

For all enquiries about how we can support you to set up and deliver research in NHS, Public Health and Social Care settings in Greater Manchester, East Cheshire and East Lancashire, email our single point of contact address: researchsupport.crngm@nihr.ac.uk

You can also find out more by:

- Visiting our website – <https://local.nihr.ac.uk/lcrn/greater-manchester/>
- Following us on social media: X: [x.com/NIHRCRN_gman](https://twitter.com/NIHRCRN_gman) and LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/nihr-clinical-research-network-greater-manchester](https://www.linkedin.com/company/nihr-clinical-research-network-greater-manchester)

NIHR | Clinical Research Network
Greater Manchester

NIHR Clinical Research Network Greater Manchester
CityLabs 1.0
Nelson Street
Manchester
M13 9NQ

www.local.nihr.ac.uk/lcrn/greater-manchester