

RD&I

Research Development and Innovation Strategy

2023-2028



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1. Foreword

Welcome to the 'Research, Development and Innovation Strategy 2023-2028.'

Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust has a long history of supporting high quality research. By combining research with excellence in clinical practice and teaching over many years, the Trust has become one of the world's leading authorities in the healthcare of women, babies and their families. For this position to be maintained and enhanced, a refreshed strategy for research must now be adopted by the Trust. The strategy will strengthen the place of research at the centre its clinical and educational activities. Ultimately, it will result in research being one of the drivers for improvement in clinical standards and outcomes for women, babies and families locally, nationally and internationally.

Healthcare institutions that embrace research demonstrate better outcomes for the people that they serve than non-engaged institutions. This may be because research activity provides patients and service users with direct physical and mental benefits, the research creates an environment in which clinical staff function more effectively in their clinical work, and the institution can attract and retain higher quality doctors, midwives, nurses and allied health professionals as its employees.

In creating this strategy, the Trust has recognised the healthcare challenges of its own population, which are strongly associated with social and economic disadvantage. It has also recognised the great strengths that it has in its present research portfolio; the value of co-operation between medical and non-medical professionals, clinical specialties, disciplines and institutions.

The strategy has been developed through an extensive consultation exercise, involving our staff, our service users, our governors and our external partner organisations. This approach has enabled us to gain a clear understanding of our current situation and our priorities over the next five years.

The strategy comprises a series of principles and aims which are aligned to five overarching components: People, Potential, Project, Partners and Place. This document assesses where we are now, outlines where we want to be through the development of priorities for each component and details how they are going to be achieved.

We hope you will read the strategy with interest and we welcome all feedback as we move forward in the delivery of our plans.



Lynn Greenhalgh, Medical Director



Kathryn Thomson, Chief Executive

2. The RD&I Landscape

National Research Context

“Women’s Health Strategy for England” updated August 2022, recognised that there is limited research into women’s health issues and calls for more research into health issues specific to women, such as the menopause, fertility, pregnancy and gynaecological conditions.

This includes research into causes and treatments of conditions, and into women’s experiences of health conditions and health services; the relationship between women’s health issues and other health issues or conditions – for example, COVID-19 infection and ‘long COVID’, and menstrual cycles and menopause.

It has also been recognised that historically women’s participation in research studies has been underrepresented, as is women working in senior research roles.

“Saving and Improving Lives: The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery”, published in 2021, is the national vision to unleash the full potential of clinical research delivery to tackle health inequalities, bolster economic recovery and improve the lives of people across the UK.

The *“UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research”* sets out principles of good practice in the management and conduct of health and social care research in the UK.

These principles protect and promote the interests of patients, service users and the public in health and social care research, by describing ethical conduct and proportionate, assurance-based management of health and social care research, so as to support and facilitate high-quality research in the UK that has the confidence of patients, service users and the public.

The *“Making research matter: Chief Nursing Officer for England’s strategic plan for research”* sets out the ambition to *“create a people-centred research environment that empowers nurses to lead, participate in, and deliver research, where research is fully embedded in practice and professional decision-making, for public benefit”*.

This plan complements the ambitions set out in *Saving and improving lives: the future of UK clinical research delivery* and will form part of NHS England and NHS Improvements contribution to the delivery of this vision.

The Royal College of Midwives *‘Research and development strategy 2021-2024: Building capacity, sharing knowledge, improve care’* sought to provide a framework for the College and its members to embed research-mindedness throughout the profession and to fit with the aspirations of the new Nursing and Midwifery Council future midwife standards (2019).

The National Institute for Health and Social Care Research (NIHR) was established in 2006 under the government’s health research strategy *“Best Research for Best Health”*. Its goal was to create a health research system in which the NHS supported outstanding researchers, working in world-class facilities, conducting leading-edge research focused on the needs of patient and the public.

“Best Research of Best Health: The Next Chapter” recognises the changing research landscape, sets out current operational priorities and highlights the areas of strategic focus that will underpin a forward-looking strategy.



Local Research Context

The Trust is part of a wider health and social care services, research, and innovation landscape.

Strong collaborations exist with health and social care services partners working across Liverpool, including but not limited to:

- Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Foundation Trust
- Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust

External partners within this landscape also include a number of Higher Education Institutions, including:

- The University of Liverpool
- Liverpool John Moores University
- Edge Hill University
- The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

The Trust is a key collaborator in a variety of networks including:

- The National Institute for Health Research North West Coast Clinical Research Network (NIHR NWC CRN)
- Liverpool Health Partners (LHP)
- The NIHR NWC Applied Research Collaboration (ARC)
- The NHS Innovation Agency (part of the NWC Academic Health Sciences Network (AHSN))
- Women's Health and Maternity Programme (WHaM)
- Integrated Care Boards (ICB)



3. Liverpool Women's 'Our Strategy'

Our Vision - to be the recognised leader in healthcare for women, babies and their families

Our shared vision at Liverpool Women's is simple and has withstood the test of time. It is underpinned by a shared set of values based around the needs of our people. We encourage these behaviours in all our staff, partners and volunteers to make sure our values are delivered in the same way, every day, to every person we care for.



We have a set of five strategic aims which are central to all of our strategies and plans, and through working with patients, service users, staff, governors and our partners we have developed a series of ambitions to push those aims one step further, helping us create the mind-set we need to achieve our vision and be outstanding in everything we do:

Our aims	To develop a well led, capable, motivated and entrepreneurial workforce.	To be ambitious and efficient and make best use of available resources.	To deliver safe services.	To participate in high quality research to deliver the most effective outcomes.	To deliver the best possible experience for patients and staff.
Our ambitions	We will be an outstanding employer.	We will deliver maximum efficiency in our services.	Our services will be the safest in the country.	Outcomes will be best in class.	Every patient will have an outstanding experience.

Our five strategic aims demonstrate our intention to provide outstanding care across Liverpool and beyond, an organisation that patients, service users, families and carers recommend and staff that are proud to be part of.

This includes a strategic objective to *'progress our research strategy and foster innovation within the Trust'*, with specific targets to provide clear evidence of senior nursing and midwifery research leadership, and to *'increase the number of staff from across the multi-disciplinary workforce who hold a substantive university contract'*.

Supporting Strategies and Plans

The RD&I strategy forms part of a suite of strategies in place at Liverpool Women's which form a cohesive approach to deliver our aims and ambitions. The Clinical and Quality Strategy, and Future Generations long term strategy have all been key influences in developing the overall Trust plan for the future.

These strategies, along with this strategy and other enabling corporate strategies work in harmony to achieve the overall Trust vision.



Developing our Research and Innovation Strategy

This strategy has been developed through an extensive consultation exercise, involving members of the RD&I Sub-Committee, the Board of Directors, the Trust Governors, external stakeholders, service users and all Trust employed members of staff.

This approach has enabled us to gain a clear understanding of our current situation and our priorities over the next five years. We have set ourselves objectives in each of these core areas and explain our plans to achieve them.

Over the past five years we have sustained contribution to a broad portfolio of research and have increased our research active workforce. During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic we have the opportunity to expand the scope of our delivered research.

In order to develop a challenging and yet achievable strategy for the next five years, recognition of the successes that have already been achieved and the challenges that remain need to be understood. We will then be able to fully articulate our aspirations to develop a strategy that will support our staff, patients and the community.



4. Key Achievements: 2018–2023

Our previous strategy featured eight strategic principles that focussed our work in improving the way we deliver research for our patients, service users, staff and our community.

These are just some of our key achievements over the past five years:

- Continued demonstration of research strengths in the areas of obstetric haemorrhage, preterm birth prevention, neonatal pharmacology and nutrition, endometrial disease and related stem cell research. The success of this research has been due to support from colleagues within the clinical community and health education institutes. Efforts have also commenced in identifying and nurturing talent and providing mentorship as part of the succession planning process.
- Excellent support from the Trust's clinical staff can be demonstrated in all areas. Although their day to day working lives revolve around the provision of direct clinical care, their positive engagement with research staff continues to be maintained. Clinical staff demonstrate enthusiasm to undertake research study specific training relevant to their role and are often extremely proactive in the identification of potentially eligible individuals for research.
- Obstetrics, gynaecology and neonates continue to provide international research leadership in the form of the Trust's senior clinical academics. Proof of concept research has been translated into research and innovation projects within low and middle income countries which has led to direct changes in clinical practice.
- Excellent support continues to be provided to medical staff in identifying and nurturing talent, ensuring projects suggested by new researchers are feasible and of high quality and establishing mentorship for individuals who wish to have a research component as part of their future career. The Trust in-house research management infrastructure continues to operate in a robust and efficient manner. Its performance can be demonstrated via various internal and external reporting mechanisms.
- Following the implementation of the strategy, efforts to include research PAs within Consultant job plans have come to fruition. All Consultant Nurse / Midwife appointments also have research responsibilities contained within the job descriptions.
- Development of a speculum to assist in the diagnosis of urogenital atrophy for use in both primary and secondary care. The validation of this objective method of diagnosing urogenital atrophy and assessing response to treatment will facilitate ongoing research in relation to this condition.
- Development of an idea for a new parenteral nutrition product that comprises a specific amino acid formulation concentration that offers improvements over existing formulations for addressing arginine deficiency in pre-term infants. An international patent was obtained which allowed the team to publish the preliminary data without other parties using the information for commercial gain whilst additional scientific analysis was undertaken. Further work to examine changes in gene expression present in arginine supplemented infants is continuing.

Key Achievements: 2018-2023 (continued)

- North West Coast Research and Innovation Awards:
 - **2019:** Winner of the *'Taking Research into Practice'* award: Following collaboration on the WOMAN Trial, the Trust became an early adopter of the use of tranexamic acid as a first line treatment for post partum haemorrhage.
 - **2020:** Finalist of the *'Excellence in Commercial Life Science Research'* award: participation in a clinical trial researching effective treatments for premenstrual dysphoric disorder.
 - **2022:** Winner of *'The COVID-19 Research and Innovation Award'*: A collaborative group led by Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine worked tirelessly recruiting the highest participant number in the UK to Oxford/AstraZeneca's novel COVID-19 vaccine trial. The City-wide response truly demonstrated a willingness to pool and manage collective resources for the benefit of all.
- A new collaborative world-leading programme of research focused on improving the health and wellbeing of children and their families within the Liverpool City Region (LCR) was been awarded funding from the Wellcome Trust. The *'Children Growing-up in Liverpool (C-GULL)'* research study led by Professor Louise Kenny, will be the first newly established longitudinal birth cohort to be funded in the UK for almost 20 years. It will provide important evidence for policy, practice and research that will ultimately help improve child health and development in the area.
- Approximately 11,000 individuals have been recruited into clinical research studies at Liverpool Women's since 2018.
- In response to a surge in COVID-19 research activity in Liverpool, the Trust became actively involved in supporting the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine with the delivery of the COV-002 (Astra Zeneca / Oxford) and the COMCOV II vaccine trials. Support continued to be provided for all of the follow up studies resulting from these important trials through to the end of 2022. Research nurses were also deployed to other Trusts in order to provide mutual aid and support to interventional COVID research trials.



5. Our focus for the next five years

Liverpool Women's vision is to be the recognised leader in healthcare for women, babies and their families. To achieve this vision, we aim to foster a research culture, to support existing strengths and to explore new opportunities.

The following five themes have been devised:

People

- **Provide equitable support for research amongst all staff:** provide a range of services to support all staff tailored to where they are on the research career pathway, taking into account their professional group.
- **Professional development of research delivery staff:** ensure alignment with local and national training programmes to develop the skills, capability and knowledge within our team of substantive research staff.
- **Continued support for existing cohort of researchers:** recognise where individuals are placed in terms of their research experience and expertise, and continue to provide the appropriate support and guidance.
- **Clear leadership for nurses, midwives and allied health professional research:** development of a framework to enable a seamless translation through each stage of a research related career, addressing barriers to progress.
- **Development opportunities for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals:** establishing and embedding a clear research career pathway, in collaboration with clinical practice, that provides opportunities for the entire workforce – whoever they are, wherever they work.
- **Ensuring that research is a core component of everyone's role:** enabling staff to recognise that research is essential to the provision of excellent healthcare and accept that clinical research and innovation forms a part of their role.



Our focus for the next five years (continued)

Potential

- **Develop an innovation service in collaboration with external partners:** establish a well-resourced process that engages with staff effectively and guides them through the regulatory, methodological and legal aspects whilst developing mutually beneficial collaborations with external partners for advice and support.
- **Unlock hidden potential of all staff:** to facilitate opportunities which will enable all staff to unlock the potential to undertake improvements that will have a beneficial impact on their work and the lives of the women, babies and their families using their services.
- **Create sustainable growth in research and innovation through investment:** investment in the research and innovation infrastructure – dedicated research unit and research clinic facilities – and its staff – research governance team, research clinical leads, nursing, midwifery and allied health professional leadership.
- **Promote the implementation of research findings into practice:** develop organisational approaches that allow for rapid review and implementation of research findings into practice and subsequent evaluation of service changes.

Project

- **Patients and service users in all clinical areas will have access to research relevant to their situation:** ensure that all patients and service users have equal access to high quality evidence based care, acknowledging that their participation is valued and their input has contributed to new knowledge and potentially new forms of treatment.
- **Increase research activity according to population health needs:** a greater understanding of conditions that affect women and children and how research into these issues can meet health needs, particularly in the context of health inequality and social deprivation.
- **Support local, national, international leaders in the development of women and child's health research:** support and encouragement must continue to be given to individuals who wish to engage with local, national and international bodies relevant to the research agenda for women and children's health.



Our focus for the next five years (continued)

Partners

- **Increase the number of staff from across the multi-disciplinary workforce who hold a substantive University contract:** in collaboration with our Health Education Institutes, identify and nurture high calibre academic researchers ensuring succession planning is factored in.
- **Continue to develop and strengthen our working relationships with external partners and stakeholders:** work collaboratively with the wider system to provide opportunities for our patients, service users, staff and the public, including but not limited to: Trusts, Allied Research Collaboration North West Coast, Clinical Research Networks, Liverpool Health Partners, Health Educations Institutes, commercial partners, social care and community agencies and networks.
- **Synergise working relationships with the Harris Centre:** continue to build on the strengths of existing effective working relationships for organisational mutual benefit in order to facilitate the delivery of high quality and impactful research.

Place

- **Continue to deliver high quality research within existing resources:** ensure we enhance our reputation and build on existing good practice by increasing the research portfolio to enable opportunity for more patients and service users to benefit from an improved experience and treatment outcomes.
- **Streamline RD&I processes to free up capacity for nurturing project development:** build upon current strengths, and develop and embed an agile service to enable greater support for researchers and in nurturing project development.
- **Patient and public involvement in research design and conduct:** ensure that research priorities reflect the health needs and diversity of our local population by appropriate engagement.
- **Making research and innovation visible:** raising awareness of research opportunities available to patients, service users, staff and the public; ensuring communication of research outcomes and celebrating success.
- **All departments proactively support research and innovation:** seek to reduce the barriers to research contribution and promote a culture of collaboration and integration, recognising that this can be achieved without huge changes being made to the realities of working life.



6. Implementing our plans and monitoring progress

To ensure compliance with the commitments detailed in this strategy, that consistent and sustained progress is being made, and that the outcomes are effective, a delivery plan will be developed in order to monitor expectations against achieved outcomes.

The implementation of the strategy will be directly overseen by the RD&I Sub-Committee reporting to the Quality Committee and subsequently the Trust Board. The strategy sets out a five year plan, progress against each of the themes will be formally reported bi-annually and also detailed within the RD&I Annual Report.

The strategy, the delivery plan and its achievements will be reviewed in detail at the three year point by the Head of RD&I, Director of RD&I and the Medical Director.





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