

PUBLIC – Board of Directors
27th January 2026

Report	Agenda Item 18b.	Research Strategy				
Purpose of the Report	Decision	X			Assurance	Information
Accountable Executive	Dr Nigel Scawn			Medical Director		
Author(s)	Dr Peter Bamford			Director of Clinical Research		
Board Assurance Framework	BAF 1 Quality BAF 2 Safety BAF 3 Operational BAF 4 People BAF 5 Finance BAF 6 Capital BAF 7 Digital BAF 8 Governance BAF 9 Partnerships BAF 10 Research			BAF impact is potential inability to deliver the Research and Innovation agenda to exploit future opportunities.		
Strategic goals	Patient and Family Experience People and Culture Purposeful Leadership Adding Value Partnerships Population Health					X X
CQC Domains	Safe Effective Caring Responsive Well led					X X X
Previous considerations	Not applicable					
Executive summary	<p>The Research and Innovation Strategy, Research Matters – Better Care, Brighter Futures sets out a clear vision for embedding research at the heart of everything the Trust does.</p> <p>It aligns with the Trust's vision, purpose and values. The strategy sets out four strategic goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make Research Accessible to All, • Enhance Research Capacity and Capability, • Strengthen Partnerships; and • Focus on working with Life Sciences Sector <p>The strategy includes an implementation plan for each goal.</p>					
Recommendations	The Board of Directors is asked to approve the Research and Innovation Strategy, Research Matters – Better Care, Brighter Futures.					

Corporate Impact Assessment	
Statutory/regulatory requirements	Research and innovation.
Risk	BAF impact is potential inability to deliver the Research and Innovation agenda to exploit future opportunities.
Equality & Diversity	Meets Equality Act 2010 duties & PSED 2 aims and does not directly discriminate against protected characteristics
Communication	Not confidential



Research
matters

NHS

Countess of
Chester Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Research Matters

Better Care,
Brighter Futures

2026-27

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Executive Summary – Chief Executive's

At the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, we believe that **Research Matters** and is integral to delivering outstanding patient care, attracting and retaining skilled staff, and shaping the future of health and care services.

As Chief Executive, I am proud to introduce our new Research and Innovation Strategy, **Research Matters – Better Care, Brighter Futures**, which sets out our vision to become a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-thinking research-active organisation.

Research is not a luxury or a peripheral activity, it is a core function of a high-quality healthcare provider. It leads to better treatments, improved outcomes, and a culture of curiosity and continuous learning. As a district general hospital with a strong reputation for compassionate care and clinical excellence, we are uniquely placed to embed research into our everyday practice and bring opportunities to participate in research to the communities we serve.

Our strategy has been shaped by our clinicians, academic partners, patients, and staff, and is grounded.

This strategy aligns closely with the NHS Long Term Plan, the priorities of our Integrated Care Board, and our commitment to being an anchor institution that improves the health, wellbeing, and life chances of our communities. We recognise that research brings value far beyond the generation of knowledge – it improves care, reduces variation, and brings pride and purpose to our workforce.

The next five years present an exciting opportunity to take research at the Countess to the next level. With strong leadership, clear ambition, and the passion of our people, I am confident we will succeed.



Jane Tomkinson
Chief Executive
Countess of Chester Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Foreword from our Medical Director Nigel Scawn

As Medical Director, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this Research Strategy, which sets out a clear and ambitious vision for embedding research at the heart of everything we do at the Countess of Chester Hospital.

Research is a cornerstone of safe, kind and effective healthcare. It drives innovation, improves clinical outcomes, and ensures that the care we provide is underpinned by the best available evidence. Our patients rightly expect that their treatment is informed not only by current best practice but also by the ongoing pursuit of new knowledge that will improve care for them and for future generations.

At the Countess, we have a proud track record of delivering high quality research across a range of specialties. Our teams have contributed to national and international studies, including urgent public health research during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating the dedication, expertise, and resilience of our staff. However, we now have the opportunity, and indeed the responsibility, to go further.

Our new strategy, **Research Matters – Better Care, Brighter Futures** sets out how we will grow our research culture, capability, and capacity over the next five years. We are committed to ensuring that research is not confined to certain specialties or to a few highly engaged individuals, but becomes something truly embedded in our organisational DNA. Whether you are a clinician, nurse, allied health professional, pharmacist, healthcare scientist, or part of our wider support teams, research should be seen as part of everyone's role.

Equally, this strategy reinforces our commitment to offering more patients the opportunity to participate in research as part of their care. We know that hospitals

with higher levels of research activity see improved patient outcomes and better staff satisfaction. Being research-active is not an aspiration, it is a critical component of delivering outstanding healthcare.

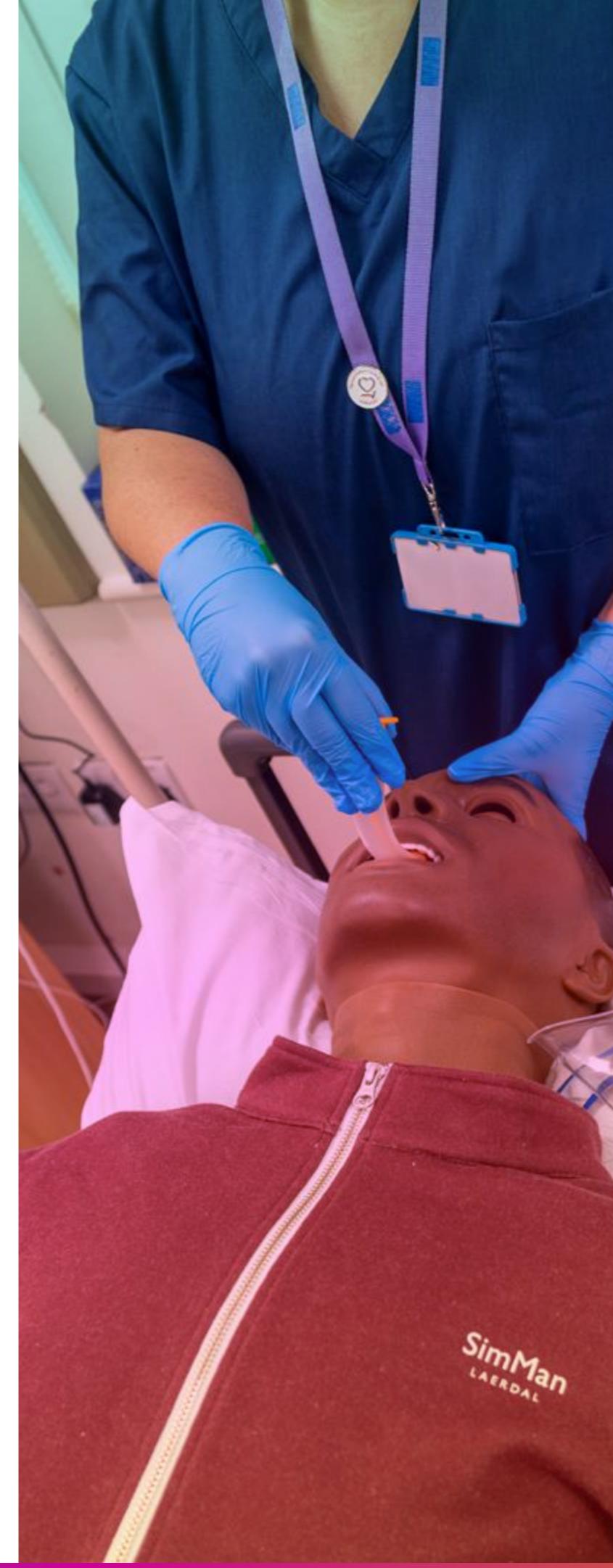
Collaboration will be central to our success. We will work closely with our academic partners, the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System, and colleagues across the region to ensure that research at the Countess complements and contributes to wider priorities. Importantly, we will also engage with our patients and communities, ensuring that research is shaped by what matters most to them.

Finally, we recognise that delivering this ambition will require investment, not just financial, but also in time, leadership, and commitment. As Medical Director, I am fully committed to supporting our clinical and non-clinical teams to develop as researchers, to remove barriers, and to foster an environment where curiosity, innovation, and excellence can thrive.

This is a pivotal moment for research at the Countess. Together, we can ensure that research is not something we do alongside care, but something that is integral to providing the best possible care for every patient, every day.



Dr Nigel Scawn
Medical Director
Countess of Chester Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust



Introduction – Research Matters: Better Care, Brighter Futures

At the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, we want research to be at the heart of how we deliver care, improve outcomes, and shape the future of health for our patients and communities.

Our patients rightly expect care that is informed by the latest research, underpinned by evidence, and delivered with the confidence that tomorrow's treatments are being discovered today.

This strategy **"Research Matters: Better Care, Brighter Futures"** sets out our commitment to embed research more deeply into our organisation, making participation accessible to all, and ensuring that research delivers meaningful benefits for the communities and patients we serve.



Aligning the Research and Innovation Strategy with the Trust's Vision, Purpose, and Values

The Trust's new strategy published in 2024, 'Transforming Care Together', reflects a commitment to delivering outstanding care through innovation, collaboration, and compassion. The strategy is centred around six core strategic goals (see diagram below).



Research Matters – Better Care, Brighter Futures has been written to compliment these goals and is meant as enabling strategy to allow the trust to achieve the objectives specifically outlined in section 5 – actively seeking partnership opportunities.

However, we believe the research strategy will add a positive contribution to the trust across all six strategic goals while also embedding the trusts core values to be safe, kind and effective. This strategy positions research as a core function of care, not a parallel activity, helping the trust to achieve its vision of delivering outstanding care for our patients and families.

It supports safety by embedding evidence-based practice and enabling earlier, more accurate interventions. It reflects kindness through inclusive

research design, community engagement, and a commitment to equity ensuring that all patients, especially those from underserved groups, can benefit from and contribute to research. It drives effectiveness by investing in staff development, digital infrastructure, and strategic partnerships that translate research into real-world improvements.

Aligned with the Trust's emerging Clinical Strategy, the research strategy supports prevention, personalised care, and integrated services. Initiatives such as the Mobile Research Unit, community research hubs, vertical integration of research between primary and secondary care and the potential development of a West Cheshire Research Collaborative extend research beyond our hospital walls

and will help us to reduce health inequalities and improve population health across our region.

By fostering a culture of collaboration, and continuous learning, the strategy strengthens the Trust's role as an anchor institution. Research is a critical foundation for hospitals seeking teaching and eventually university hospital status, as it demonstrates a commitment to evidence-based care, advances in clinical knowledge, and strong academic partnerships that underpin high-quality education and innovation. Our strategy looks to lay the foundation for our future ambition to achieve Teaching and University Hospital status.

Our department can also play a key role in supporting the NHS ambition to reach Net Zero by

2040, by embedding sustainability into research design and delivery, ensuring studies are conducted with minimal environmental impact. Adoption of digital solutions, shifting to remote monitoring, electronic consent, and virtual follow-ups will reduce our reliance on paper, travel, and resource-intensive processes. Furthermore, through innovation and partnerships with industry and academia, we hope to pilot and implement greener technologies, sustainable practices, and new models of care that not only lower the hospital's carbon footprint but also generate learning that can be shared across the wider NHS.

Together, this strategy ensures that research is not just something we do, it's how we transform care, live our values, and shape a brighter future for our patients and communities.

A National Mandate: Research and innovation as a Core NHS Function

This vision aligns with the national direction set by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR Strategy: Best Research for Best Health – The Next Chapter calls for research to be faster, more inclusive, more embedded in healthcare, and focused on improving health and care for everyone. It highlights research as a core function of the NHS, not a luxury or an addition, but fundamental to delivering high-quality care.



The NIHR's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2022–2027) further reinforces our responsibility to ensure that research opportunities are accessible to all communities, especially underserved populations. Our investment in a mobile research unit (MRU) and two regional hubs in Ellesmere Port and Tarporley directly supports this ambition, extending research opportunities beyond the hospital into local communities.

The Lord O'Shaughnessy Review (2023) into commercial clinical trials challenges the NHS to become globally competitive in research delivery, making trials faster to set up, simpler to deliver, and more accessible to patients. This is not just an economic imperative but a patient-centred one. When research thrives, patients benefit from earlier access to cutting-edge treatments and innovations. As a trust we need to position ourselves to take advantage of the evolving research landscape across Cheshire and Mersey to increase our life sciences activity. At the heart of this is the creation of a commercial delivery team, something that will drive research income, allow us to grow our team further and deliver ever increasing opportunities for patients.

The UK Government's 10-Year Health Plan for England, published in July 2025, sets out a bold vision to reinvent the NHS through three major shifts: from hospital to community, analogue to digital, and sickness to prevention. Research and innovation are critical enablers of this transformation. The plan commits to embedding research

into everyday clinical practice, accelerating clinical trials, and harnessing technologies such as AI, genomics, and wearables to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities.

The UK Government has reinforced its commitment to embedding innovation in the NHS through a series of recent policy initiatives. The Life Sciences Sector Plan (2025) outlines a 10-year vision to position the UK as a global leader in health research and innovation, backed by over £2 billion in funding. Complementing this, the Prime Minister's 2025 announcement introduced major reforms to accelerate clinical trials and improve access to NHS data. Additionally, the Life Sciences Transformational R&D Investment Fund supports large-scale research infrastructure projects. Together, these policies aim to drive economic growth, improve patient outcomes, and ensure the NHS remains at the forefront of cutting-edge healthcare delivery.



Harnessing Regional Research Strengths

We are proud to collaborate with the NIHR Research Delivery Network (RDN) North West, which provides the operational backbone to clinical research delivery across the region. The RDN supports the smooth running of studies, ensuring they recruit effectively and meet the needs of both participants and researchers.

We also benefit from strong partnerships with NIHR-funded infrastructures in the Northwest and Wales, including:

- The Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs) North West Coast, which focus on translating research into practice, addressing health inequalities, and driving improvements in population health
- The Health Innovation North West Coast, part of England's wider Health Innovation Network, which supports the adoption and spread of proven innovations in health and care
- NIHR's Cheshire and Merseyside Clinical Research Delivery Centre (CRDC) established to enhance the speed and efficiency of commercial clinical research delivery
- We also need to foster our relationships with research active organisations which sit in close geographical proximity. By integrating resources and expertise across the Countess of Chester, CWP and colleagues in PCN's across West Cheshire, we hope to strengthen collaboration, enhance shared learning, and deliver joint research outputs that are greater than the sum of their individual efforts. This unified approach would not only streamline processes and reduce duplication but also foster innovation and generate wider benefits for patients and the local community.

Our strategy does not stand alone. It is embedded within a vibrant regional and national research ecosystem.



Building on a Strong Foundation

- A new state-of-the-art Clinical Research Unit (CRU) enables delivery of a broad portfolio of clinical trials, providing a much-needed dedicated clinical space for the delivery of research on the Countess of Chester site
- A Mobile Research Unit (MRU) has allowed us to develop a presence in community settings, supporting engagement with research among underserved pockets of our population. It also supports research delivery in non-traditional settings which will help reduce the inequities seen in research participation across West Cheshire
- Two research hubs located at Ellesmere port and Tarporley also expand our footprint beyond the hospital walls. Our aim is to partner and support primary care providers to increase their involvement in research through offering access to these hubs at dedicated site, ensuring estate challenged practices can centre their research offering closer to their patient populations
- Over recent years we have been successful in securing additional infrastructure investment via successive rounds of NIHR Capital Investment calls. These have enabled us to strengthen infrastructure for many of our essential support services, including pharmacy and imaging, and expand access to research in underserved communities. We will commit to continuing the quest to bring the best possible facilities to patients at the Countess of Chester, ensuring we remain at the forefront of inclusive, high-quality research delivery.



A Strategy for People and Patients

Our research workforce are central to the success of the Research Department at the Countess of Chester, driving the delivery of high-quality studies and ensuring patients have access to cutting-edge care.

It is vital that they feel valued and supported through ongoing investment in their professional development, with opportunities to build not only research expertise but also clinical and leadership skills. By nurturing their growth, we can foster a motivated, skilled workforce that is empowered to innovate and shape the future of research within the Trust. Over the next five years we will invest in all members of the workforce; clinicians, nurses, allied health professionals, research practitioners, pharmacists, healthcare scientists, and operational teams, with a clear focus on developing the next generation of researchers through training, mentorship, and career pathways.

Equally vital are our partnerships with Higher Education Institutions in the region, in particular the opening of a new medical school at the University of Chester which offers significant opportunities for our Trust to strengthen clinical partnerships, enhance research and training capacity, and attract a new generation of medical professionals committed to improving patient care for our local communities.



Why Research Matters?



There is compelling evidence that research-active hospitals deliver better patient outcomes, shorter hospital stays, improved survival, and higher patient and staff satisfaction.



Our patients deserve the best care today, and they deserve to know that we are actively working on the treatments, technologies, and interventions that will define the care of tomorrow.



This is the driving force behind **"Research Matters – Better Care, Brighter Futures"** a strategy that ensures research is not something we do alongside patient care, but something that is fundamental to how we deliver care.

Our Strategic Goals

To deliver on our vision of research being a core part of care at the Countess of Chester Hospital, we have identified four strategic goals. These goals will guide our work over the coming years and ensure that research benefits all patients, communities, and staff.



Make research accessible to all



Enhance our research capacity and capability



Strengthen our partnerships



Focus on working with the life science sector

FOCUS

Strategic Goal 1: Make Research Accessible to All

At the Countess of Chester Hospital, we are committed to creating a culture where research is embedded in everyday care. We believe that research should be something every patient, carer, and member of staff can engage with and benefit from. Our ambition is to ensure that research is not only visible and valued but also inclusive and accessible to all.

To achieve this, we will:

- Actively promote research across our hospital and local communities, making it a visible and celebrated part of care
- Increase visibility and representation of research across the divisional structure of the hospital
- Develop and implement a comprehensive Community Engagement and Communications Plan to raise awareness of research opportunities and their benefits





This strategic goal is underpinned by **five** key sub-themes:

1. Embedding Research in Everyday Care

We aim to make research a routine part of clinical practice. This means integrating research into care pathways, encouraging staff to engage with research, and ensuring patients are routinely offered opportunities to participate. By normalising research as a core component of healthcare delivery, we can enhance care quality and innovation

2. Visibility and Community Engagement

Research should be visible, accessible, and relevant to the communities we serve. Through targeted communications, public events, media outreach, and the use of our MRU, we will raise awareness and build trust. Our goal is to demystify research and foster a sense of shared ownership and pride in our research activity. In addition, we need to make sure research is represented at all levels of the trusts management structure. At present this occurs at the Board of Directors and Operational Management Board however the divisional leadership meetings should have research representation

3. Inclusion and Representation

We are committed to equity in research. This means designing studies that are inclusive, removing barriers to participation, and ensuring our research workforce and governance structures reflect the diversity of our population. We will align with the NIHR Research Inclusion Strategy to ensure our work addresses health inequalities and is representative of all communities



4. Public Partnerships and Patient Involvement

We recognise that meaningful public involvement is essential to high-quality research. We will seek out feedback using the NIHR Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) to understand where we can improve our performance, and ensure patients get the best experience when they participate in research at the Countess of Chester

We will work in partnership with patients, carers, and the public, valuing their insights and experiences. This includes involving them in research design, delivery, and governance, and supporting their participation through training, feedback mechanisms, and transparent communication

5. Research for Population Health Impact

We will endeavour to support research that is designed to address the most pressing health challenges facing our region. Guided by national priorities, we will focus on life sciences research, prevention, early intervention, and reducing health inequalities. By leveraging the NIHR Research Delivery Network and the Cheshire and Merseyside CRDC, we will expand access to innovative treatments and ensure our research delivers real-



Strategic Goal 2: Enhance Our Research Capacity and Capability

To become a leading research active organisation, we must invest in our people, infrastructure, and systems that enable high-quality research delivery. This goal focuses on growing our internal capacity, supporting staff development, and expanding the scope and scale of research across specialties and settings.

To achieve this, we will:

- Invest in time, people, skills, and infrastructure to grow our research capabilities
- Appoint of an Innovation Lead and establish an innovation function in the department
- Create clear pathways for clinical and non-clinical staff to pursue research and innovation careers
- Expand our research portfolio across a broader range of specialties and care settings
- Strengthen leadership, capability, and opportunity across all professions
- Ensure our facilities and digital infrastructure support complex and innovative research
- Ensure we have a governance structure that related to the activity we are undertaking and is reviewed regularly to ensure all evolving regulations are followed.



This strategic goal is underpinned by **six** key sub-themes:

1. Workforce Development and Career Pathways

We will nurture the next generation of researchers by creating inclusive and accessible career pathways for all staff. This includes:

- Development of a research leadership structure within the Countess that is resilient and fit for purpose
- Developing structured routes into research for clinical and non-clinical staff
- Supporting talent acquisition, retention, and progression through training and mentorship
- Promoting IAOCR accreditation for individuals and other professional development opportunities
- Development of our leaders and our future leaders by identifying development needs, appropriate training opportunities and real-world experience
- Having appraisal processes that reflect these ideals and ensure that progression in skills and developing experience are the cultural norm of the department.

2. Infrastructure and Technology

Modern, well-equipped facilities are essential to delivering high-quality research. We will:

- Invest in our Clinical Research Unit (CRU) and digital platforms
- Pursue Good Clinical Science Accreditation (GCSA) to demonstrate excellence

- Integrate technologies such as electronic health records, data analytics, and telemedicine to enhance research delivery and data quality
- Fully utilise EDGE and other digital platforms to ensure optimal efficiency in research governance, delivery, financial modelling and reporting of research activity.

3. Expanding Research Across Specialties and Settings

We aim to broaden the scope of research across departments and into the community. This includes:

- Creating research working relationships between primary and secondary care to support innovative trial delivery methods
- Engage with the Cheshire and Merseyside CRDC to ensure pipeline of commercial/life sciences projects for specialties
- Supporting new medical and surgical specialties to engage in research
- Offering roles in our clinical research unit and community-based research via the MRU.
- Promoting research in underserved areas and across diverse care settings.

4. Staff Wellbeing, Recognition, and Retention

A thriving research culture depends on a motivated and supported workforce. We will:

- Ensure up to date SOPs relating to research governance and delivery
- Ensure handbooks and SOPs available for the CRU, MRU and community hubs
- Aiming for GCSA accreditation as a unit with excellent processes in place.

working from home where appropriate and provision of self development workshops

- Celebrate achievements through annual awards and spotlight features
- Foster a culture of appreciation and recognition at all levels.

5. Staff Wellbeing, Recognition, and Retention

Collaboration and investment are key to sustainable growth. We will:

- Formalise academic partnerships to support joint projects, placements, and knowledge exchange
- Seek funding from government, industry, and philanthropic sources to support research and innovation
- Explore regional opportunities in commercial and cancer research through NIHR Cheshire and Merseyside CRDC and C&M ICB structures.

6. Staff Wellbeing, Recognition, and Retention

Collaboration and investment are key to sustainable growth. We will:

- Ensure up to date SOPs relating to research governance and delivery
- Ensure handbooks and SOPs available for the CRU, MRU and community hubs
- Aiming for GCSA accreditation as a unit with excellent processes in place.

Strategic Goal 3:

Strengthen Our Partnerships

Collaboration is fundamental to delivering impactful, inclusive, and sustainable research. At the Countess of Chester Hospital, we are committed to building and strengthening partnerships across the health, care, academic, voluntary, and commercial sectors. These relationships are essential to expanding our research capacity, aligning with national priorities, and improving health outcomes for our population.

We will:

- Deepen our collaboration with the higher academic institutions including increasing the number of academic joint appointments at the trust
- Pursue Teaching Hospital status and begin the development of a plan to work towards University Hospital status
- Work closely with regional and national research infrastructure, including the NIHR Research Delivery Network and Cheshire & Merseyside ICB
- Establish a West Cheshire Research Collaborative to unify and amplify local research efforts
- Baseline mapping of potential sustainability-focused innovation partners, including universities and industry
- Engage with the voluntary, community, social, faith, and enterprise (VCSFE) sector to ensure research is relevant and accessible.



This strategic goal is underpinned by **three** key sub-themes:

1. Academic and Institutional Partnerships

Our partnerships with local universities and other regional stakeholders will be central to our research ambitions. together, we will:

- Establish a formalised and closer working relationship in the form of a memorandum of understanding ensuring seamless collaboration and data sharing
- Ensure clear lines of communications with the potential development of cross institutional oversight committees to bring together the research, education, innovation and sustainability agenda
- Pursue teaching hospital status, integrating research and education into clinical practice through joint appointments, student engagement, and shared curricula
- Deliver collaborative research projects that align with national or regional health priorities and use the combined strengths of both institutions
- These efforts will enhance our academic profile, attract talent, and position us as a centre of research excellence in West Cheshire
- Develop a longer-term plan to work towards university hospital status in the next 5-10 years.

2. Establishing a West Cheshire Research Collaborative

The Countess of Chester Hospital's research department will support the establishment of a West Cheshire Research Collaborative, bringing

together all nine West Cheshire Primary Care Networks (PCN's), Secondary care providers, Academic institutions and allied organisations such as Local Health Authority, charities and the voluntary sector. This collaborative would be uniquely tailored to the needs of our local community, ensuring that research initiatives are both relevant and impactful. Members would be able to explore the potential to collaborate and share resource through the development of synergistic partnerships. By engaging local clinicians in the design and delivery of research, the collaborative would ensure that the outcomes directly benefit the community.

3. Integrated Health and Community Collaboration

We will expand our partnerships across the Chester Health Campus and Cheshire West to create a more connected and responsive research ecosystem. This includes:

- Developing our West Cheshire Research Collaborative that links primary and secondary care, public health, and the voluntary sector
- Designing Community-Driven Research that reflects local needs and priorities, ensuring our work is meaningful and impactful
- Collaborating on Project Design and Delivery with local health partners to address pressing health challenges and improve outcomes
- These partnerships will help us deliver research that is grounded in real-world needs and accessible to all.

Strategic Goal 4: Focus on Working with the Life Sciences Sector

To accelerate our Research and Innovation portfolio and to improve patient outcomes, the Countess of Chester Hospital is committed to strengthening its relationship with the life sciences industry. Our aim to bring cutting-edge therapies, diagnostics, and technologies to our patients while contributing to the UK's national ambition to lead in life sciences innovation. Our strategy aligns with the NIHR goals to deliver commercial trials at pace while contributing to increasing our global competitiveness to deliver commercial trials.

We will:

- Play an active role in the Cheshire and Merseyside Commercial Research Delivery Centre (C&M CRDC)
- Endeavour to integrate commercial research across primary and secondary care through vertical integration between organisations, and engagement with Cheshire and Mersey Primary Care Commercial Research Delivery Centre (C&M PC-CRDC)
- Proactively engage with Contract Research

Organisations (CROs), MedTech firms, pharmaceutical companies, and biotech innovators

- Invest in infrastructure and systems that support commercial research delivery
- Generate income through commercial partnerships to reinvest in research capacity
- Align with national priorities, including the recommendations of the O'Shaughnessy Review and the UK Life Sciences Sector Plan to make the UK a global leader in commercial clinical trials.



 This strategic goal is underpinned by **three** key sub-themes:

1. Building Infrastructure for Commercial Research

To attract and support commercial partners, we will invest in the facilities, technologies, and systems needed to deliver high-quality, industry-sponsored research. This includes:

- Expanding our clinical trial capabilities and digital infrastructure
- Enhancing data management systems to meet regulatory and sponsor requirements
- Pursuing accreditations and quality standards that demonstrate our readiness for commercial collaboration
- Development of a commercial delivery team within the department
- Engage with the Cheshire and Mersey CRDC including use of agile workforce
- Expand the use and functionality of our

Clinical Research Unit and Community Research Hubs.

2. Strategic Engagement with Industry Partners

We will actively build relationships with life sciences organisations to increase the volume and diversity of commercial research. Our approach includes:

- Engaging with CROs and the NIHR Research Delivery Network (RDN) to identify and pursue commercial opportunities
- Engage with the CRDC expression of interest group to identify new trial opportunities
- Build relationships with Primary Care CRDC to increase opportunities for partnership and collaboration
- Develop a communications strategy which showcases our clinical expertise, research capabilities, and commitment

to innovation to attract new partners

- Participating in multi-centre trials and national initiatives that raise our profile and expand our research portfolio.

3. Driving Value and Impact Through Commercial Research

Commercial research offers significant benefits for patients, staff, and the organisation. We will:

- Ensure patients have early access to innovative treatments and technologies
- Generate income that can be reinvested into building research capacity
- Contribute to national goals for life sciences growth, supporting the UK's position as a global leader in clinical research.



Implementation Plan

Strategic Goal 1 Make Research Accessible to All			Strategic Goal 2 Enhance Research Capacity and Capability		
Milestone	Actions required	KPI / Measure	Milestone	Actions required	KPI / Measure
Launch Community Engagement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from Communications team, secure RRDN strategic funding, embed engagement activity within R&D department job plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5+ events a month targeting health campaigns e.g. World Diabetes Day. Engagement with schools, careers events etc 	Study volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with all clinical teams to maximise PI engagement, API involvement, Allied Health Professional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of staff trained for research delivery Ensure all staff up to date with GCP Aim to increase number of studies open by 10% year on year Increase number of study recruits by 10% year on year (particularly life sciences)
Expand MRU outreach to underserved areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRU operational funding and staffing with a sustainability plan developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase signups from within the West Cheshire area to 'Be part of Research' Identify at least one study per year that can be delivered in full or in part on the MRU 	Improve study delivery performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processed aligned to delivery of 150 days NIHR targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of studies being delivered to time and target
Embed research into care pathways across all specialties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with support specialties to establish effective partnership working. Sustained program of engagement across the hospital 	<p>All Departments / divisions have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research presence at divisional board level All specialties have a research lead and appropriately funded time for research Active API program across all specialties Involvement of non-medical API and PIs e.g Pharmacists, Physician Associates 	Launch structured research careers pathways within research team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from University of Chester and Postgraduate Education team Training/mentorship programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in Medical Associate PIs/PIs Increase in engagement across allied health professional – Non medical APIs and PIs
Evaluate inclusion and diversity in research participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link with local NIHR infrastructure to utilise local EDI training and support packages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that demographic data is being collected as part of Edge system to gather baseline data Increase representation of participants in research to under represented groups by 25% above baseline 	Ensure governance processes fit to meet NIHR objectives Achieve GCSA accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process map and standardisation of governance processes Accreditation, consultancy and compliance support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fully integrate governance processes within research data program (EDGE) CRU fully operationalised with team achieving GCSA accreditation
Evaluate			Expand digital infrastructure for trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased utilisation of the research data management platform EDGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider research addition for EPR platform to better integrate research with clinical pathways Increased use of EDGE to report on KPIs and metrics of success
			Evaluate workforce development impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular surveys Development and career conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20% increase in research staff retention rates Progression of staff into senior roles

Implementation Plan

Strategic Goal 3			Strategic Goal 4		
Strengthen Our Partnerships			Work with the Life Sciences Sector		
Milestone	Actions required	KPI / Measure	Milestone	Actions required	KPI / Measure
Operationalise West Cheshire Research Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder engagement and facilitation resources Pursue strategic NIHR funding for collaborative working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially engagement of 9 PCNs Progressing to wider engagement with other partner organisations Vertical integration of research between primary and secondary care Operationalisation of research hubs for community research activity 	Develop a streamlined pathway for industry sponsors incorporating CRDC bids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure process map for trial setup, mapped to 150 days NIHR targets Development of a commercial research team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double the number of commercial studies open at COCH within 12 months
Collaborate with Primary and Secondary Care CRDC's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue engagement with secondary care CRDC Establish Ellesmere Port Hub as a PC-CRDC centre for life sciences research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased pipeline of commercial studies delivered at Countess Commercial delivery at Ellesmere Port hub in partnership with Countess and PC-CRDC 	Communication strategy to market new facilities to commercial partners Achieve GCSA accreditation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop sponsor ready facilities Marketing and engagement materials and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doubling of commercial income which can be made available to sustainably increase staffing levels and reinvest in infrastructure Achieve GCSA accreditation
Develop a formal MOU with University of Chester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need bilateral engagement and commitment to working together and formalise agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of relevant committees for oversight 	Increase access to diverse patient populations via community hubs, use of MRU for research and community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of commercial studies outside of the hospital through vertical integration with primary care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple trials being conducted collaboratively across primary and secondary care Recognition of regional hub and MRU as research active sites – including development of team capable of delivering research studies out in the community
Develop co-supervised PhD and MSC projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify interested departments and clinicians to work with teams at Chester University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 projects underway within 2 years 	Publish commercial research impact report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial governance with dedicated research accountant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate the impact to our local communities by increasing access to novel therapeutics and by demonstrating the impact on re-investment to building research capacity within West Cheshire.
Joint research and teaching programmes with University of Chester		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal designation as a Teaching Hospital Working towards University Hospital Status 	Reinvestment of commercial income to grow workforce and develop sustainable model for life sciences research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of forecasting to predict income Investment in permanent commercial delivery team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of income reinvested into workforce/infrastructure projects
Expand VCSFE sector engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of MRU to engage communities and charities etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder engagement with multiple organisations Collaborative working with these organisations – development of formal partnerships 			

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