

UHL Therapy Research Strategy



This strategy applies to all staff working in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy roles across UHL research infrastructure. This document is released in conjunction with the Nursing and Midwifery Research Strategy. The two strategies complement each other and are implemented as part of a joint multidisciplinary effort to increase clinical academic careers amongst non-medical professionals at UHL.

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Abbreviations used within this document:

AHP: Allied Health Professional

AUKUH: Association of UK University Hospitals

BRC: Biomedical Research Centre

CMG: Clinical Management Group

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

CQC: Care Quality Commission

CRN: Clinical Research Network

CSI: Clinical Support and Imaging

ECMO: Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation

EM CAHPR: East Midlands Council for Allied Health Professionals in Research

F1s: Foundation year 1 (doctor)

GCP: Good Clinical Practice

HELM: Health Education Learning Management

ICA: Integrated Clinical Academic

MSK: musculoskeletal

NIHR: National Institute for Health Research

PCAF: Pre-doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship

PDP: Personal Development Plan

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

RAG: Red Amber Green

R+I: Research and Innovation

RRCV: Respiratory Renal and Cardiovascular

TRASE: Therapy Research Audit and Service Evaluation

UHL: University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust

UoL: University of Leicester

WTE: Whole Time Equivalent

Background:

Clinical academic career structures are well established in medicine but there is currently no established clinical academic pathway for Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). Although only 0.1% of the AHP workforce are currently working as clinical academics, the Association of UK University Hospitals (AUKUH) has an ambition for 1% of the AHP workforce to be in clinical academic positions by 2030 [Association of UK University Hospitals (AUKUH), 2016]. The University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) currently employs 745 qualified AHPs, thus this ambition is not insurmountable. This strategy focuses upon the Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy workforce (hereafter described as therapies) but we anticipate that this strategy can be applied and adapted to the needs of other AHPs in the future.

Current position in therapy at UHL:

A Therapy Research Lead role for Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy was created just over 10 years ago. This lead role totals just 4 hours per week, and has strategic oversight of all therapy research, supported by a band 5 Research Physiotherapist (0.5 WTE), who provides project support for NIHR Portfolio projects.

- ▶ 3 physiotherapists have recently completed NIHR funded PhDs as Clinical Academics. Others have gone to complete their PhDs in other departments (outside of therapy/ CSI) where funding has been secured via industry, charity or fellowship schemes.
- ▶ 2 Physiotherapists are currently completing Health Education East Midlands (HEEM) ICA (pre-masters) awards. Historically, 15 therapists have been supported in these awards.
- ▶ Only 3 Physiotherapists are acting in Principal Investigator (PI) roles.
- ▶ Therapy currently support 10 NIHR portfolio studies, 2 led by a Physiotherapist in the PI role.

Numerous conference abstracts are submitted by therapists each year (>20 in 2018-2019, pre-COVID) and at least 7 papers were accepted for publication in the last year. This dissemination of research findings has been achieved despite a lack of funding, within clinical roles and without dedicated time to pursue this professional development.

Therapy Research, Audit and Service Evaluation (TRASE) groups have been established with the aim of promoting a timely process for approval of audit, service evaluation and research in their section and in conjunction with the Therapy management team. Three groups are running MSK (musculoskeletal): Led by Laura Meadows, RRCV (Respiratory, Renal, Cardiovascular) and Paediatrics: Led by Laura Breach and Medicine: Led by Jane Bowler. All run approximately every 3 months. The Therapy Research lead and the band 5 Research Physiotherapist attends all 3 groups and feeds back to the Therapy management team at quarterly meetings/ via the TRASE reporting template.

We can demonstrate numerous good examples of the impact of research in our own and wider departmental work in terms of improving patient quality (or safety) and generating income (or saving money) for the trust. For example improving care pathways for back pain, validating a measure of clinical frailty in medicine and increasing the therapy provision of those on ECMO.

Despite this, significant challenges for therapies research remain

This includes:

- ▶ Therapy is less well established than other areas within the CSI Clinical Management Group (CMG) in terms of research infrastructure and gaining reimbursement for therapy time on research.
- ▶ Therapy research is primarily conducted within musculoskeletal (MSK) and orthopaedic specialities. Other specialities are less active, but aspire to be as productive.
- ▶ Clinical academic pathways for therapists (e.g, career progression and split post opportunities) are unclear. This can demotivate staff who are keen to pursue research careers but are deterred by organisational barriers.
- ▶ Most research involves therapists providing interventions (as a support service) rather than leading research as the Principle Investigator (the Principle Investigator is usually a surgeon/ medic). Therefore therapists aren't gaining the skills and recognition involved in leading research.
- ▶ Therapists are conducting research in other CMGs, we lack an up to date list of research active therapists in other CMGs.
- ▶ Therapy research lead time is only 4 hours per week with the support of a 0.5 WTE band 5 Physiotherapist.
- ▶ Research income for therapy is used to support clinical budgets to provide time for backfill etc. A separate research 'pot' would be preferable to help 'pump prime' research.
- ▶ Funding for clinical academic roles (e.g. 50% research: 50% clinical) is proving challenging at an organisational level within UHL (e.g. bringing funding in, managing backfill and supporting research activate therapists once they have completed research degrees with bridge funding). This has an impact on staff morale, recruitment and retention. Due to the lack of opportunities for development at UHL, we have lost many highly skilled therapists with research skills/ degrees to Universities or neighbouring trusts who offer substantive clinical academic positions (e.g. Nottingham, Coventry & Warwick).

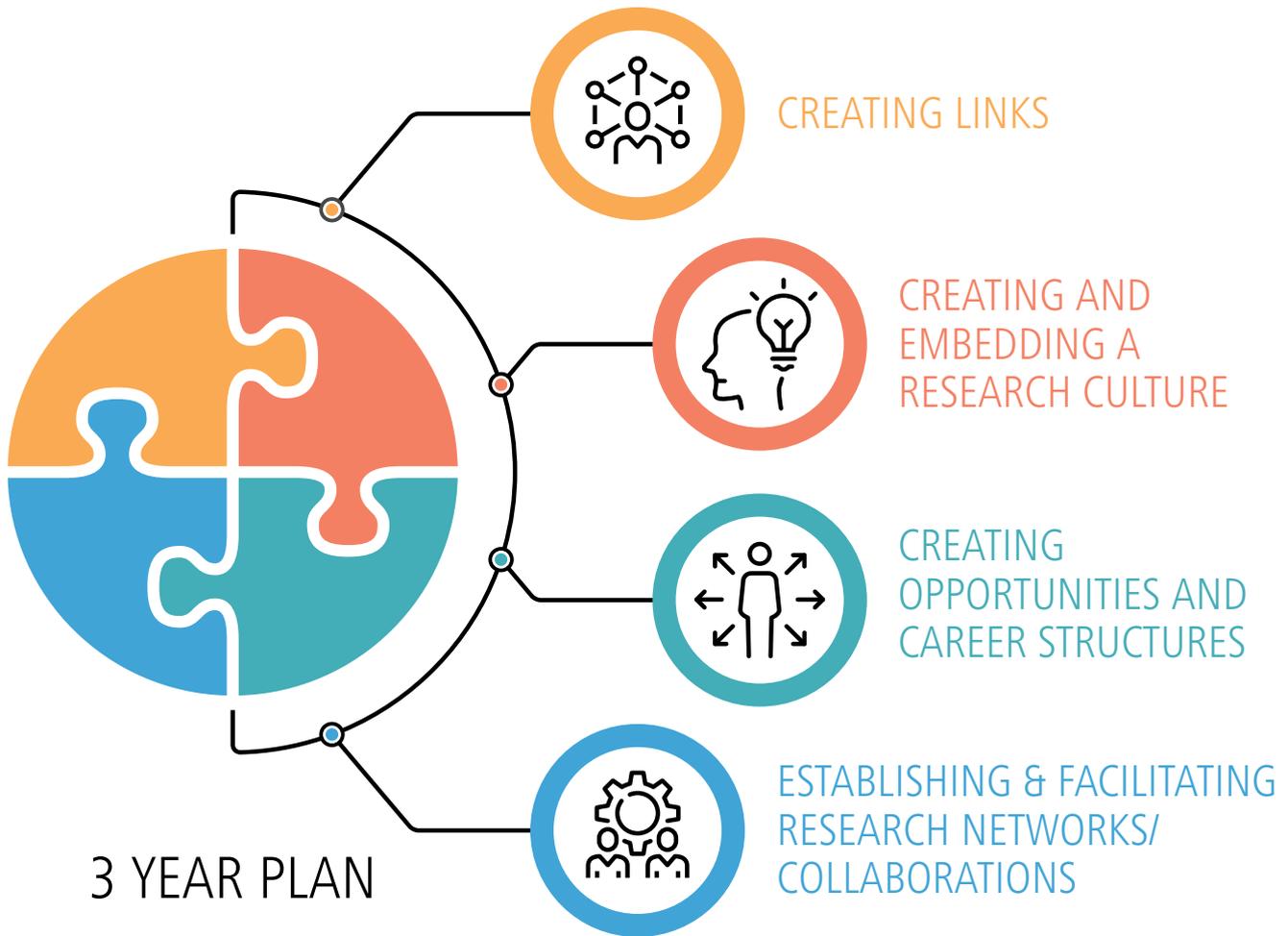
Our aim:

- ▶ The aim of this strategy is to support and build research awareness, involvement, activity and leadership by therapists across the trust, at all levels. This strategy is intended to support the trusts priorities as outlined in the 2019 'Becoming the Best: 3 year strategy and priorities:' to "maximise the opportunities for our patients to benefit from research" and "for research to be seen as core business rather than an adjunct to our clinical services."
- ▶ Our therapy research strategy aims to compliment and extend the Trust's Research & Innovation (R&I) strategy 2019 as outlined at the bottom of this page. This will ensure that the Trust is compliant on the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) well-led questions (CQC, 2018).
- ▶ The strategy is also be embedded in the Trust's Nursing and Midwifery Research Strategy and the Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) Training Strategy (in draft form).

Area	Actions taken	Work in progress	Your actions
Trust's vision and strategy	Research is one of the 5 strands of the corporate strategy	R&I will fully and actively participate in 'Becoming the Best' Revised Leicester's Research website	
Internal reporting, performance management and governance	Board to bedside governance and accountability structure Appointed a Lead Nurse for Research	Research activity dashboards in all wards and clinical areas	Be aware of who your CMG research lead is Ensure research lead reports performance to CMG board on a regular basis
Staff awareness and ability to signpost	Quarterly research newsletter distributed via In The Know	Research in corporate induction slides and new starter pack Non-mandatory eLearning modules on HELM GCP in medical education package for F1s	Host R&I staff member at your team meeting to talk about the service and opportunities Cascade information
Patient, carer and public engagement	Public Research Engagement Panel formed Research champions scheme launched	New signage and visuals in prominent positions to raise awareness of research at the Trust	Identify a research champion for your ward/dept and send nomination to the CRF manager Identify noticeboard space to display information on clinical trials in your area (materials from R&I)

3 Year Plan (2021-2024)

Over the page we set out our plans for therapy, over the next 3 years . This strategic plan for therapy research aims to build on our existing strengths and to develop a research culture within UHL which enables, values and celebrates the impact that therapy research has on patient care. We believe that therapists at all levels and roles can (and should) be involved in research. The implementation of the strategy will be reviewed by the following mechanisms: R+I Executive meeting, Therapy performance and operations meeting, CSI CMG Research meeting and Research Managers Forum on a quarterly basis. We have provided a RAG rating with reference to this action plan, to these groups and ask for their support in driving this strategy forwards.



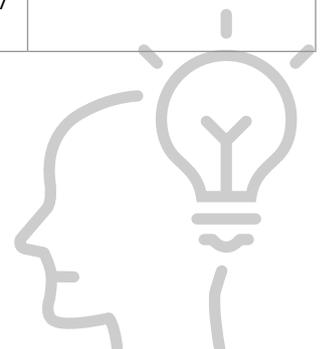
CREATING LINKS

Domain Name and Target Date	Deliverable	Responsible person
To develop links between the Therapy Clinical Academic Strategy group and the lead research nurse for UHL (via the Research Managers Forum). 2021	Therapy Research lead to attend Research Managers Forum at least quarterly (evidenced from meeting minutes).	Therapy Research Lead
Identify a therapy representative to attend key research strategy meetings. 2021	Therapy Research lead to attend identified meetings at least quarterly (evidenced from meeting minutes).	Therapy Research Lead
To develop links with the Clinical Research Network and R&I in order to identify studies appropriate for Physiotherapists or Occupational Therapists as a Principle Investigator. 2021	R+I contracts facilitator and CRN to forward any relevant studies to Therapy research lead to disseminate (evidenced by email trail).	R+I/ CRN and Therapy Research Lead
Align strategy with existing NIHR infrastructure and other UHL strategies (e.g. Nursing and Midwifery, BRC). 2021	Therapy Research Lead to work with representatives from the other strategic groups to align and signpost to existing strategies (evidenced in strategy documents).	Therapy Research Lead and strategy leads
Engage with CAHPR and NIHR research advocates and champions to support development of early researchers. 2022	1 therapist from the 3 core TRASE areas to attend EM CAHPR meetings and events (evidenced from meeting minutes). Therapy Research lead to meet with NIHR champion & advocate quarterly (evidenced from minutes).	TRASE Leads Therapy Research Lead
To appoint research champions in each speciality area of therapy and engage with them regularly (via TRASE groups). 2022	Each speciality area to have a research champion in place (evidenced by champion network list).	TRASE leads and CRF Manager
Establish links with other key research groups, local and regional and with the Leicestershire Partnership Trust's research lead. 2022	Therapy Research lead to attend identified meetings/ groups at least quarterly (evidenced from meeting minutes). Research Champions to link with other disciplines in their speciality area.	Therapy Research Lead Research Champions
Establish links with the University of Leicester to support research placements and student training. 2022	At least one research placement in the 3 core TRASE areas (evidenced by student feedback forms).	Practice Placement Lead and UoL Staff
Continue to establish links with industry sponsors, charities and NIHR to support funding opportunities for research projects. 2024	Generate external funding into therapy budget(s) (evidenced by budget spreadsheets).	Therapy Research Lead and Head of Therapy Services



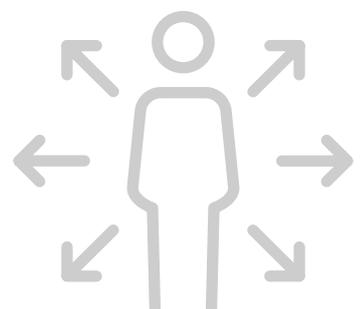
CREATING AND EMBEDDING A RESEARCH CULTURE

Domain Name and Target Date	Deliverable	Responsible person
Create therapy sign off on EDGE to capture therapy activity as a support service for research with associated funding. 2021	Therapy sign off procedure via edge (evidenced by CMG research activity reports).	R+I Head of Op/ Head of Therapy Services
Continue to support TRASE events and encourage engagement from clinical and research staff. 2022	Host annual TRASE celebration event (evidenced by feedback forms).	TRASE Leads
TRASE groups to create annual list of research/ audit ideas that can be developed into student/ funded projects. 2022	List of projects to University (evidenced by emails to University staff).	TRASE leads and University Staff
Develop research activity dashboards in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy work areas. 2022	Research activity boards populated and up to date at all 3 sites to include key contacts, funding opportunities/ deadlines, training events and current studies (evidenced by boards).	Band 5 Research Physiotherapist
Add introduction to research sessions in preceptorship lectures for all band 5s and student interprofessional events. 2022	Introduction to research session included in the preceptorship sessions for all new band 5 therapy staff and student interprofessional events (evidenced by slides/ training logs/ register).	Preceptorship Lead and Therapy Research Lead
Utilise existing HELM e-learning module for research methods for therapy staff. 2022	Encourage staff to utilise existing research champion training module (evidenced by HELM reports).	Research Champions
Promote research activity through established taster sessions for clinical staff. 2022	Encourage new starters to engage in shadowing opportunities for research in their desired area as part of induction (evidenced in induction paperwork)	Research Champions and Team Leads
Ensure research is incorporated into the personal development plan and appraisal process for all band 7s and above. 2023	Personal research (or service development) projects built into all band 7 and up appraisal objectives (and band 6 Clinical Specialist if appropriate) (evidenced by appraisal forms).	Team Leads/ Therapy Speciality Leads/ Therapy Clinical Team Leaders
Improve visibility of research activities through promotion on the trust website and newsletters, link with UHL Research Communications team. 2023	Therapy profile of activity and key contacts to appear in Trust Together, Leicester Research Newsletter and Trust news to disseminate strategy (evidenced by publications and links on Twitter).	R+I Communications team and Band 5 Research Physiotherapist
Develop a mentoring strategy with experienced researchers and early researchers or those looking to engage in research. 2023	Create a database of interested mentors and mentees and pair up based on research interest (evidenced database).	Band 5 Research Physiotherapist
Support the setting up and embedding of journal clubs across departments. 2024	Activity documented in journal clubs at all 3 sites, including presentations from all staff levels. (Evidenced by rota).	Research Champions
Increase hours on therapy research lead role and fixed term contract for band 5 Research Physio. 2024	Increased funding for both roles e.g. Therapy Research Lead at least 0.5 WTE and band 5 up to 1.0 WTE by 2023 (evidenced by income/ budgets).	Head of Therapy Services, R+I



CREATING AND EMBEDDING A RESEARCH CULTURE

Domain Name and Target Date	Deliverable	Responsible person
Therapists to engage with the Leicester BRC for the next round of BRC funding to see where opportunities can be created for training and development. 2021	Ideas to be channelled up through TRASE groups and fed back to BRC executive meeting by Therapy Research Lead (evidenced by Therapy input to BRC applications/ documents).	TRASE Leads and Therapy Research Lead
Encourage research active therapists to attend Principle Investigator essentials training with the CRN and to take up Principle Investigator positions when appropriate. 2022	All research active therapists to attend Principle Investigator essentials training (evidenced by training log).	Therapy Research Lead
Support and provide guidance for applications to fellowship awards. 2022	Encourage staff to attend R+I drop-in sessions/ visit Research Design Service to discuss research ideas (evidenced by applications submitted).	R+I
Signpost therapists to clinical academic career, research development and mentorship events. 2022	Signpost staff to local, regional and national clinical academic events and opportunities (evidenced by CPD folders of staff, registers).	Band 5 Research Physiotherapist and Therapy Research Lead.
Develop a clinical academic post with split funding from UHL and University of Leicester Physiotherapy School. 2024	Create a 50:50 split role between UoL and UHL in any speciality area (evidenced by Job description and staff member in post).	Head of Therapy Services and Head of School for AHPs at UoL
Continue supporting bronze (ICA) award applications from clinical physiotherapists and occupational therapists. 2024	Increase the number of bronze award applications to 8 per year (at least 1 per TRASE group, at least 1 in occupational therapy) (evidenced by applications submitted).	TRASE Leads and Therapy Research Lead
Encourage the application of silver and gold (ICA) awards and aim to achieve 2 awarded grants. 2024	Submit 2 Silver/ Gold award applications per year (evidenced by applications submitted).	TRASE Leads and Therapy Research Lead
Encourage application to NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Awards/ PCAF. 2024	Submit 1 PCAF award application per year (evidenced by application submitted).	Therapy Research Lead



ESTABLISHING & FACILITATING RESEARCH NETWORKS/ COLLABORATIONS

Domain Name and Target Date	Deliverable	Responsible person
Identify mentorship for Bronze and Silver (ICA) awards within the University of Leicester where appropriate. 2021	Therapy Research Lead to identify where staff may be supported by UoL staff for ICA awards (evidenced by mentor application forms).	UoL staff and Therapy Research Lead
Time and support for clinical academics to attend local or regional networking events. 2021	Study leave time (and/ or funding) to be considered if part of individuals appraisal objectives/ PDP (evidenced by study leave forms).	Speciality Leads and Team Leads
Build a database of organisations and sources of funding that can be applied for to support conferences and presentations. 2022	Compile an up to date database of sources of funding for research with application deadlines (evidenced by database).	Band 5 Research Physio and Research Champions
Develop a separate research budget for physiotherapy and occupational therapy research to support extra activities, bridge funding, pump-priming etc. 2022	Separate cost centre set up for Therapy Research activity (evidenced by cost centre / budget report) to be spent according to specified criteria/ application process.	R+I Finance Team/ Head of Therapy Services
Allocate and support funding for conferences and networking events. 2022	Utilise the budget from the point above to support educational costs (evidenced by study leave forms and budget report).	Therapy Research Lead/ Head of Therapy Services
Create a list or organogram of therapists working in research across the trust (from within and outside of CSI). 2023	Organogram created showing the links between therapists working within and outside of CSI and their interrelationships (evidenced by published, up to date organogram).	Band 5 Research Physio and Research Champions
Facilitate student placements and 3rd year dissertation projects within UHL, in collaboration with the University of Leicester Physiotherapy School. 2023	At least one research placement in the 3 core TRASE areas (evidenced by student feedback forms). Provide list of potential 3rd year projects to UoL annually (evidenced by list provided).	Practice Development Lead and UoL staff TRASE Leads and UoL staff
Take part in joint research projects across the region. 2024	Develop joint research proposals with neighbouring trust therapy services to improve the health and well-being of patients across the region.	Therapy Research Lead





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