

Response to the Cooksey Review of UK Health Research by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Research Capacity Development (NCCRCD)

The Department of Health funds, as one of its National R&D Programmes, the Research Capacity Development (RCD) Programme. This is managed by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Research Capacity Development (NCCRCD) on behalf of the Department. In responding to the review the NCCRCD wishes to emphasise its role in supporting the research training needs of the NHS.

1. Personal Awards

- The RCD Programme makes research training awards to individuals whose research is people or patient-focussed and who show the potential to become research leaders in their particular field. Basic research or research involving animals is not supported.
- The training schemes have evolved since the Programme was initiated in 1999 but in general terms, awards have been made at three levels – Researcher Development (PhD training); Post-Doctoral and Career Scientist (senior fellowships).
- The outcome of the selection process for this year is, as yet, incomplete but the numbers of awards made at each of the three levels has been:-
 - PhD: 91
 - Post-Doctoral: 86
 - Career Scientist: 49
- The Programme currently makes awards worth approximately £13M each year.

The particular strengths of the DH RCD Programme include:-

- The focus on patient and people-based research has allowed the Department to develop individuals whose interests cover clinical specialties, social care, health services research, health economics and statistics.
- Individuals from extremely broad professional backgrounds have been supported (for example: doctors, dentists, nurses and AHPs, social scientists, basic scientists, economists and statisticians).
- The awards, whilst looking to fast-track researchers with real potential, allow award holders to maintain some clinical or professional practice to ensure and encourage the research to be both relevant to and embedded within health and social care services.
- The Clinician Scientist Scheme, supports talented individuals who wish to combine post-doctoral research training with completing their specialist training. The Clinical Scientist Schemes form an important part of the Walport Integrated Academic Training Pathway. DH has funded 36 individuals from this scheme.
- The coherent and stepped nature of the DH awards has retained and developed individuals within the overall scheme.

- It is operated in partnership with the Devolved Administrations which allows consistency of approach and opportunity, nationally.
- It has been possible to hold a national conference for all award holders which encourages and enables award holders across different disciplines and professional backgrounds to network and offer each other support and advice and has fostered collaborations.
- The NCCRCD has developed assessment criteria to support high quality applications in health research which accommodates the complex methodologies associated with clinical research. For other funding organisations, the assessment criteria are often too restrictive and clinical research appears less competitive than basic science.
- The award schemes administered by the NCCRCD have successfully developed a cohort of research leaders working in applied and patient orientated research. This has contributed to research capacity in fields such as primary care. Without these awards primary care would not have developed the critical mass to support new initiatives such as the NIHR Faculty and the new primary care arm of the UKCRN.

2. Academic Careers

- The Report of the Sub-committee of Modernising Medical Careers (MMC) and UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) (Walport Report) highlighted the decline in academic clinicians in recent years and identified deterrents to a clinical academic career in medicine and dentistry. This included a lack of both a clear route of entry and transparent career structure, a lack of flexibility in the balance of clinical and academic training and in geographical mobility and a shortage of properly structured and supported posts upon completion of training.
- For nurses in clinical research, similar deterrents to a clinical academic career exist. The Finch Report, following Walport, aims to set out recommendations to support career structures for nurses in clinical research.
- The RCD programme takes a lead role in the implementation of the Walport recommendations and aims to provide similar support for the Finch Report. So far it has developed an Integrated Academic Training (IAT) Pathway. The first round is now complete and has identified suitable organisational partnerships to host the training programmes to support Academic Clinical Fellowships (ACFs) and Clinical Lectureships (CLs). Following the two rounds, up to 250 ACF and 100 CL training opportunities will be created per year.
- The Academic Clinical Fellowship programme is the first phase of the integrated clinical academic training programme. It is designed to provide support for those in specialist training. 104 programmes have been identified for funding (597 ACFs over 5 years) for England and Wales.
- The Clinical Lectureship training is the second phase and provides opportunities for post-doctoral research career development or higher educational training and attainment of the Certificate of Completion of Training. 101 programmes have been identified for funding (303 CLs over 5 years).

- The second round aims to target specialties that are endangered in terms of clinical and academic capacity as well as geographical gaps identified following the first round.
- The NCCRCD has developed close working relationships with its partners to deliver the IAT scheme including MMC, NHS Trusts, universities, deaneries, CHMS and PMETB.
- The IAT scheme demonstrates where partnership between the NHS and University sectors can be successful. This is crucial if the research and training needs are to be addressed. NCCRCD's current institutional arrangements (hosted by an NHS organisation) supports working across this important interface.
- The NCCRCD has experience in tackling the issues and challenges faced in undertaking research alongside the delivery of healthcare and understands which strategies can successfully be employed to develop research capacity.
- The RCD programme remains an important player in the new NHS R&D Strategy 'Best Research for Best Health' attracting, developing and retaining the best research professionals to conduct people-based research.