



Making research matter

Chief Nursing Officer for England's strategic plan for research - Summary

19 November 2021

The Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) for England's strategic plan for research is for: all nurses working in health and social care (whether they are thinking about, or already are, involved in research), colleagues in academia, the third sector, and all those who support research. It has been developed in partnership with stakeholders across the health and care system including the Innovation, Research and Life Sciences Group within NHS England and NHS Improvement specifically to ensure alignment across the organisation.

The plan sets out the CNO's 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.

Fulfilling this ambition will strengthen and expand nurses' contribution to health and care research of global significance. This provides the scientific basis for: the care of people across the lifespan, during illness and through to recovery and at the end of life, preventing illness, protecting health and promoting wellbeing. Research is necessary in any professional field to advance and improve practice. Research led and delivered by nurses, and the contributions they make as members of multidisciplinary research teams, can drive change. Evidence from research influences the nursing profession, and informs and underpins policy, professional decision-making and nursing actions. Above all, the nursing profession cannot sit still, to plan and deliver consistently excellent care, in partnership with the public and in support of the [NHS Long Term Plan](#), it must continue to adapt to the complexities of modern healthcare.

There are **5** themes underpinning our vision:



- 1. Aligning nurse-led research with public need -**
so the portfolios of relevant funders reflect the research priorities of patients, carers, service users, residents, the public and our profession.



- 2. Releasing nurses' research potential -**
to create a climate in which nurses are empowered to lead, use, deliver and participate in research as part of their job, and the voice of the profession is valued.



- 3. Building the best research system -**
so that England is the best place for nurses to lead, deliver and get involved in cutting-edge research.



- 4. Developing future nurse leaders of research -**
to offer rewarding opportunities and sustainable careers that support growth in the number and diversity of nurse leaders of research.



- 5. Digitally-enabled nurse-led research -**
to create a digitally-enabled practice environment for nursing that supports research and delivers better outcomes for the public.

Strategy and plans for delivery

We have identified actions related to each of these themes to realise the vision and bring about sustainable change.

1. **People-centred research.** This includes establishing a process to identify and prioritise the next decade's most pressing areas for research. Funders will need to know what the key challenges facing health and care and the most pertinent issues to the practice of nursing are. We will also develop systems and processes that give nurse researchers access to demand signalling and horizon scanning information.
2. **Releasing research potential.** We are engaging with the profession to build a common purpose and commitment to the plan. We will concentrate on developing fair and diverse ways for all nurses, whatever their role and setting, to participate in research. We will also support health and care organisations to understand the benefits of giving nursing staff time to lead, deliver and implement research; embedding the idea that research is an essential and rewarding part of effective nursing care.
3. **Coherent systems underpinning transformation.** This includes developing a co-ordinated and consistent England-wide approach to building nurse-related research capacity and capability – from pre-registration to professorial level. This will help tackle variation and inequalities across the country and require working with partners to develop national and regional infrastructure. It will also involve fostering practices and processes that help accelerate change in nursing practice based on research findings.
4. **Sustainable and supported careers.** This includes raising awareness of the breadth of opportunities for nurses to become involved in research – whoever they are and wherever they work. We will design a framework to enable seamless transition through the stages of a research-related career. This also means increasing opportunities during pre-registration nursing programmes so students can experience the variety of research-related roles available to them throughout their careers.
5. **Digital capability.** Working with NHSX we will foster a digitally enabled environment that supports nurse-led research and nursing-related digital innovation; one that boosts nurses' confidence in using data to support and conduct research. We will need to develop research leadership in digital technologies and data science, and take steps to ensure relevant research expertise is visible, embedded and valued across the profession.

Next steps

This plan will be delivered in three phases: **discover**, **build** and **sustain**. A detailed implementation plan (which has developed with the profession, our partners, and the public), will follow this strategic plan in Spring 2022, and set out what we will deliver in 2022 and 2023.

Together we can work towards a future where research led by nurses is business as usual in health and care settings. We are determined to: increase the involvement of the nursing profession in decision-making about research-related developments, prove that the benefits of high quality research led by nurses are beneficial, and strive for an environment that encourages nurses to pursue a career that involves research.