

NHS Research Scotland
Mental Health Network
Strategy 2023



Creating and maintaining the best environment for mental health research across Scotland

ABOUT THE NETWORK

Mental Health is one of the major public health challenges in Scotland. Around one in four people are estimated to be affected by mental ill-health in any one year.

The NHS Research Scotland Mental Health Network supports an active mental health research community across Scotland, leading research in areas such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, autism, depression, addictions, and psychosis.

The Network is primarily based in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, with Network funded staff based in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, the University of Glasgow, NHS Lothian, the University of Edinburgh and NHS Tayside.

The Network is managed by **Catherine Deith, Network Manager** and **Dr Donald MacIntyre, Network Director**; with a Management group which supports the strategic direction of the Network, including members from a diverse range of backgrounds across Scotland.

- Professor Andrew Gumley, Professor of Psychological Therapy, University of Glasgow
- Dr Michael Smith, Consultant Psychiatrist and Research Lead, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
- Professor Liz Hughes, Professor of Substance Use Research, Glasgow Caledonian University
- Dr Ashleigh Duthie, Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry, NHS Tayside
- Ms Suzy Syrett, Peer Researcher, University of Glasgow
- Dr David Hayward, Consultant in General Adult Psychiatry, NHS Lothian
- Dr Ania Zuballa, Research Fellow, University of Highlands and Islands
- Dr Mallika Punukollu, Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

"We are excited to publish our new strategy in advance of our 2023 annual conference. In preparation we consulted with the public, clinicians, academics, and industry; this helped us recognise the important role the Network can play in advocating for public and NHS research priorities, and supporting diversity in research and innovation."

**Dr Donald MacIntyre, Network Director,
NRS Mental Health**



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Network is to create and maintain the best environment for mental health research by:

- Delivering increased participation of patients and clinicians in research
- Developing increased and sustained research activity across Scotland
- Diversifying the network and its portfolio and communicating effectively with our stakeholders

PRINCIPLES

NHS Research Scotland Mental Health Network will aim to:

- Prioritise financial and professional support for projects which are aligned to our strategic objectives
- Engage with the public and respond to needs and opportunities identified in partnership with service users, clinicians, Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs)
- Maximise user-participation, diversity and equality in our work as a crucial means to develop insight, productivity and impact
- Encourage and support research that addresses disparities and amplifies lesser heard voices to improve health and quality outcomes



THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

1. DELIVERY

Our core activity is as delivery partners for Commercial and Non-commercial Studies

The Network will:

- Maximise reinvestment in its own budget – including income from commercial sponsors
- Aim to flex its staff numbers for specific research projects
- Offer a recruitment design service to CIs to help them plan to meet their recruitment targets
- Supporting researchers at the early stage of project planning
- Tailor recruitment support where studies run into unexpected difficulties
- Fairly estimate and recoup non-recruitment costs from eligibly funded studies
- Provide clarity to all Clinical Investigators (CIs) about what type of support the Network can offer (more information can be found on our website)
- Continue to seek early engagement with potential commercial partners with a view to increasing research investment in Scotland

2. DEVELOP

The Network's role extends beyond supporting or delivering on research projects designed and funded by outside partners. Development and Innovation are essential to adapt to change. The Network will be:

- Supporting early and mid-career researchers through travelling fellowships, poster competition, and project development groups
- Providing outreach/training and support for people with lived experience who would like to work with us
- Maintaining and developing appropriate skills and training for researchers, in partnership with other NRS Networks where this is appropriate
- Developing Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) activity and the role of the peer researcher in line with our current PPI strategy
- Actively seeking to involve higher trainees, for example by promoting the sub-I role
- Engaging with clinicians such as mental health nurses, psychologists and other allied health professionals who can play a vital role in assisting recruitment
- Raising awareness of research and encourage a wider responsibility for recruitment within the broad clinical community
- Exploring the utility of 'consent to contact' pathways
- Exploring options for embedding quality improvement and evaluation within the network
- Promoting the [NIHR Associate PI Scheme](#) and [NIHR Clinical Research Practitioner Scheme](#)

Supporting Innovation by:

- Identify innovation potential as part of service and policy developments (e.g. new pathways, digital, responses to environmental changes)
- Identify unmet needs in relation to service user and provider perspectives
- Support national and regional innovation initiatives

3. DIVERSIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Network recognises that fostering a culture of meaningful clinical research requires the inclusion of greater geographical and cultural diversity within the network. To achieve this we aim to:

- Engage with user groups
- Foster new roles within the Network that align with our objectives, such as Clinical Studies Officers, Peer researcher, and recruitment and engagement coordinator
- Broadening the diversity of the network management group
- Strengthening our Annual Scientific Meeting by using the ASM to showcase network activity
- Creating a digital network linking academics, clinicians, and experts by experience
- Make better use of social media to increase awareness of ongoing mental health research in Scotland and opportunities for participation as well as communicating with a larger and more diverse population
- Develop the mental health research landscape in health boards where it is not currently strongly represented
- Consider social media campaigns to encourage more clinicians to take on the clinical research roles



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2022

- ✓ We established PPI representation on our management committee. Our first PPI representative is Suzy Syrett, Peer Researcher
- ✓ We appointed three new regional leads to our management committee – Professor of Nursing, Liz Hughes, Napier University. Dr Ania Zubala, Arts Therapist and Research Fellow, University of the Highlands and Islands, and Dr David Hayward, General Psychiatrist, St John's Hospital
- ✓ We presented this strategy at our hybrid Annual Scientific Meeting in November 2022 and sought feedback from the in person and virtual audience
- ✓ We established our online MS Teams community

2023

- ✓ We are seeking feedback from our Teams community on this document
- ✓ We advertised and recruited for two new Clinical Studies Officer roles in Lothian
- ✓ We are funding a 'research liaison nurse' post in NHS GG&C in a bid to boost recruitment across the portfolio
- ✓ We are working with NHS Boards to develop job plans with research time during core hours
- ✓ We will formally publish this strategy later in the year
- ✓ We intend to announce Travelling Fellowship and Protocol Development Group funding opportunities early this year

FIND OUT MORE

Find out detailed information on our work on our website:

 www.nrs.org.uk/mentalhealth

If you would like further information, or have a question please email:
Catherine.Deith@ed.ac.uk

Follow our social channel for the latest news and updates:

 **@NRS_MH**

