**NIHR School for Primary Care Research**

**Annual report feedback for the period 2022 - 2023**

On behalf of the NIHR Coordinating Centre, NIHR Academy, and the Department of Health and Social Care, we would like to thank you for submitting your annual report for the reporting period of 2022 - 23 that presents valuable insights into how the school is striving to make a positive impact in the field of primary care research.

We were particularly pleased to see the successful launch of new funding rounds aimed at early career researchers and underrepresented professional groups as it is an innovative approach that can foster collaborations beyond traditional boundaries. It is noteworthy that these initiatives align with the goal of developing links and collaboration with industry, which is essential for advancing translational research and real-world applications.

We were pleased to see the School’s commitment to building diverse careers and developing talent within the field of primary care research through the recruitment of Primary Care Clinician Career Progression fellows, post-doctoral fellows, and PhD students. The expansion of the internship program by engaging primary care networks outside of traditional disciplines to attract non-medical students is a noteworthy initiative that can contribute to a more diverse research workforce.

We noted SPCR's strong commitment to respond to the needs of individuals with multiple long-term conditions as evidenced by research projects such as the MaPP and the ELOPE-GDM aiming to improve the quality of care and support for those living with chronic health conditions, especially in underserved and disadvantaged communities. It would be valuable for the SPCR to emphasise the dissemination of findings from such studies to healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and the public and we welcome this addition in the future report.

SPCR's ongoing efforts to enhance the foundation of evidence in primary care research is evident in the diverse range of topics explored in the projects chosen across three commissioning rounds. We were delighted to find that out of the 156 funded projects, approximately 70% (both in terms of numbers and funding allocated) are collaborative in nature. Moreover, these projects demonstrate a well-balanced distribution of leadership among the school's nine members.

We were pleased to see the school's focus on bringing clinical and applied research to underserved communities through initiatives like the highly successful internship program and engagement with the Community Nursing Research Community of Practice. These efforts have the potential to create lasting positive effects by encouraging research participation from underrepresented groups and by directly addressing the healthcare needs of underserved communities.

Notably, the appointment of an Academic Lead for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion reflects a commendable commitment to fostering an inclusive research environment and is a significant step in advancing EDI within the school. The actions taken, such as anonymous data capture, workshops, and guidelines for public contributor payments, are steps in the right direction and encouraging to see. The effort to engage with the NIHR Research Inclusion Strategy aligns well with the broader national and international efforts to promote diversity and inclusivity in research.

To further enhance this aspect, the school could consider conducting regular surveys or assessments to measure the impact of its EDI initiatives and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, the proposed appointment of an independent EDI consultant could provide valuable insights and recommendations for advancing EDI practices within the school and we look forward to witnessing the evolution of these initiatives and the positive impact they will have.

The school has demonstrated its commitment to embedding the UK standards for Public involvement through their 6 strategic aims. Some good examples of this included in this report are; providing a PPI budget to members and monitoring the use of these funds via reports from the members, involvement of the PPI funding group in their funding processes and the facilitation of a PPI peer support network. It was great to read that the school has recently embedded a voice for PPIE within their governance through the appointment of a new member as Academic Lead for PPIE. Running a competition for provision of funds for researchers to enhance their involvement and engagement work focusing on novel methods and/or outreach to under-served communities. In next year’s report it would be helpful to include some updates specifically linked to the “programme of actions” in the submitted PPIE strategy. “The first of four papers commissioned from the school by the European Journal of General Practice has been submitted for publication.” Please keep us updated with this - if it is published it would be great to read it.

Overall, it’s been a strong year for this fourth phase of SPCR. The added value examples nicely illustrate the school’s ongoing contribution and positive impact to the field of primary care research. We greatly appreciate the school's efforts and initiatives aimed at creating a positive change.

**Feedback on research capacity activities**

Thank you for providing this feedback on research capacity building within the SPCR Annual Report.

* We welcome the work undertaken by the schools Academic Capacity Development Leads to raise awareness and reach across a range of professional groups/disciplines and 'wider primary care' professions; resulting in two awards to pharmacists. We look forward to seeing how these develop and would also be interested in hearing more about your wider plans regarding engagement and recruitment from these professions (in particular health visitors, optometrists, dieticians etc.) and how the new research award you are planning to encourage participation from underrepresented professions will complement this.
* We were pleased to read about the schools focus on supporting some of the broader academic career development competencies, in particular the recent ‘writing retreat’; allowing PhD fellows to start to put together their own “toolbox” of writing skills, as well as developing skills in communicating ideas and receiving constructive feedback in a supportive environment. We look forward to hearing more about the writing retreat and how fellows have found this recent initiative in the next report and whether the school plans to establish this as a regular offer going forward?
* We note the impressive number of Internship applications (179 applications in 2022, with each member ring fencing one post for non-medical students) and the level of interest and engagement in these from outside the schools membership, inspiring people early on to think about primary care academic careers. We look forward to hearing more about your plans for expansion. We would be interested in hearing whether the school has considered whether their PhD students and ECRs could be actively involved in the recruitment and supervision of the schools interns; providing a beneficial development opportunity?
* We were particularly interested to read about the schools proposal to develop two new research funding rounds. In particular the dedicated development fund for ECRs will provide a really valuable career development opportunity for them to gain experience of developing and leading their own research project, and we look forward to hearing initial feedback on the impact this fund has on its recipients as this evolves.
* We were particularly pleased to read of the progress the recently established ‘Community Nursing Research Community of Practice’ has made, providing valuable peer to peer support, networking and training opportunities and the high level of engagement in this initiative (with the reach of each masterclass approx. 130). Please do continue to highlight and signpost to complementary NIHR Academy schemes (e.g ICA Programme, Local Authority Academic Fellowship Programme etc) and let the NIHR Academy know if the school has any future masterclasses planned where it might be beneficial to have a member of the team present.
* We were interested to read about your approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the key activities you plan deliver (noting the welcome appointment of Dr James Sheppard - SPCR Academic Lead for EDI) and will be interested to hear more about how you plan to engage different groups, professions and those that you do not typically see apply for research funding. Please do let us know if it would be helpful to open a further conversation with our NIHR Research Inclusion team and any support you may need as your plans take shape.
* Many thanks for submitting the schools NIHR Academy member data sheet for 2022/23. We welcome the mechanisms the school has put in place to now include data for some of the additional fields featured in the data sheet, that you were not able to include previously (e.g ORCID IDs etc.) and the benefits of this going forward in order to measure impact. However, we note there are still a number of NIHR Academy members who’s ‘Plain English Summaries’ are missing from the data sheet and would be grateful if this information could be captured from members going forward.
* We note a number of NIHR Academy members have now completed their career development awards and wondered whether the school had considered any plans to establish an engaged and supportive alumni network going forward?