

NIHR School for Primary Care Research

Annual report feedback for the period 2024 - 2025

Thank you for submitting your 2024-25 annual report. On behalf of the NIHR Coordinating Centre, NIHR Academy, and the Department of Health and Social Care, we appreciate the valuable insights it provides into the school's efforts to positively impact primary care research.

We would like to acknowledge the continued strong commitment of the School to strengthening the evidence base in primary care research, as demonstrated through the diverse topics funded through the commissioning rounds. We commend the balanced portfolio achieved across School members, which addressed a broad range of crucial primary care research areas. We particularly note that several projects extend beyond general practice, with four specifically investigating how community pharmacies can contribute to reducing health inequalities, facilitating early diagnosis, and enhancing collaboration and safety in primary care. This variety of work also reflects a well-distributed leadership across the School's nine members, ensuring that contributions and expertise are drawn from the full breadth of the organisation.

We acknowledge the SPCR's clear focus on addressing priority health challenges in line with the changing needs of local populations and the wider health system. Funded studies are tackling key inequalities and support earlier, more personalised care for a range of conditions, while also strengthening research capacity, fostering innovation and ensuring services better meet the needs of diverse communities.

Thank you for submitting three case studies on recent projects that have been undertaken in SPCR. The work on how successfully to improve rates of MMR uptake is particularly important. Likewise, the work on modes of consultation in general practice which aligns with health service shift from analogue to digital shows promising impact, though ideally we would wish to see evidence of this informing change. In future, you could consider providing examples where impact is more mature, and where change has occurred as a result of the research, e.g. it has already influenced policy or guidelines, or changed how care is provided. These are the most useful examples for spending review activities, as they best demonstrate the impact of public funding. For example, these previous case studies would be more akin to what is required:

[Improving the quality of gout care](#)
[Anticholinergic drugs](#)

We are pleased to see the breadth of the portfolio outlined in the report, which demonstrated the School's influence beyond direct clinical practice. We note that the community pharmacy research will make a valuable contribution towards tackling health inequalities by improving access to care in the underserved populations, while also supporting national priorities to

shift services from hospitals to community settings and deliver more preventive, personalised care. We also recognise the School's success in leveraging funding from NIHR and other external funders to extend the reach and impact of funded work.

We were pleased to learn that of the 233 projects funded, the majority, around 65%, involve collaboration between a lead and at least one other organisation. While academic partners are the most common collaborators, nearly half of the projects involve NHS organisations, approximately 15% include charities and international partners.

We also welcome the update on the Wellcome-funded programme, which demonstrates a strong multi-professional commitment to clinical academic development in primary care, by funding GPs, physiotherapists, and other allied health professionals.

We also value well documented dissemination of findings, knowledge transfer initiatives, and enhancing the School's profile within the primary care sector. This is clearly evidenced by the wide range of publications addressing clinical, public health, and service delivery issues, with a strong emphasis on patient-centered care. Recurring themes in these outputs include improving outcomes, reducing inequalities and strengthening integration between healthcare and communities.

We acknowledge the clear and well-documented progress since the midterm review in embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across the School's work. This is exemplified by the diversity of public partners involved in governance and decision-making, as well as the Research Inclusion Strategy. We particularly commend the School's commitment to public involvement and the active steps taken to increase the diversity of public partners. The visual representations of key activities and outputs over the past year are particularly effective in conveying progress. These efforts align closely with broader national and international goals to promote diversity and inclusivity in research.

Feedback on PPI

The report details significant progress across six strategic aims for PPIE, including early involvement, strengthening funding processes, leading by example, supporting member departments, encouraging inclusive activities, and sharing learning. We are pleased to see that the SPCR have also addressed previous year's feedback, outlining improvements in PPIE monitoring, focus on underserved communities, broader collaborations, and a stronger public voice in governance. They are championing UK Standards of Public Involvement through inclusive opportunities provided for public contributors, engagement with underserved communities, public involvement in governance, collaboration with stakeholders, and training and development for both staff and public contributors. SPCR has overcome the challenges around variable impact reporting, difficulties for public partners at Board level, and inconsistent demographic data by working with other organisations and developing practical tools.

Two members of the SPCR Public Steering Committee were added to the SPCR Board, showing a continued effort to embed the public voice in governance. A Board-led EDI working group was formed to write a new EDI strategy, which is welcomed. Cultural

competence training was provided to the PPIE leads which is a great way to support with training public contributors. Additionally, PPIE training was provided to early career researchers to ensure that researchers understand and embed meaningful public involvement in their work from design to delivery of their research plans. The testimony of this is the feedback from practitioners involved in EMPATHICo communication training in the TIP2 project, where improvement in patient communications was reported. The "Black in Primary Care" project led by SPCR researchers explored representation and progression barriers for Black heritage research, which is positive to read.

Feedback on research capacity activities

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

We would like to acknowledge the significant work that Georgina, Jess and Steph have undertaken in this period, working within tight timeframes in refining the Schools capacity building offer to align with the one year contract extension, as well as their responsiveness to take on additional activities in line with DHSC priorities. Their approach and commitment has been key to successfully operationalising the programme of work focussed on increasing research capacity and capability in commercial research in primary care. We look forward to seeing how this new programme of work evolves and please continue to reach out where it might be helpful for us to connect you with any relevant NIHR centres or colleagues.

It was excellent to see the approach the School is taking in fostering collaborative and jointly funded PhD studentships with other parts of the NIHR (e.g. GM PSRC). Not only leveraging funding and maximising investment, but also amplifying collaborations and the mutually beneficially elements of the partnership; including broadening awardees' professional networks, their exposure to future research opportunities and collaborations and enhancing their research training experience and career development.

The School now has a well-established and comprehensive research training and academic career development programme (e.g writing retreats, annual residential trainees event, masterclass series etc) and its pleasing to read the positive feedback and impact this is having on your awardees.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable development experiences that you have made available to your trainees (e.g. ECRs actively involved in the mentoring and supervision of the Schools interns, as well as opportunities for awardees to undertake bespoke placements; including both policy and international focussed opportunities).

It is pleasing to see that 15 out of the 26 funded post-doctoral fellowships were awarded to 'wider primary care' professions and the ongoing work the ACD Leads and School continue to take to actively promote and raise awareness amongst under-represented disciplines and professions.

We welcome the investment the School is making around capturing the broad range of impacts SPCR fellows have had. The 'Catalysing careers in primary care research' report is

a great example of this and provides a really valuable visual overview; showcasing the variety of benefits and impacts the Schools awards are having on individual research careers, as well as the variety of pathways researchers in primary care can take.

Many thanks for submitting the Schools NIHR Academy member data sheet for 2024/25. We note that some of the NIHR Academy members don't appear to have ORCID ID's associated with them? As part of NIHR's ongoing work to enhance our ability to track awardee impact, we would be grateful if you could include ORCID ID's for all SPCR NIHR Academy members going forward.

Overall, it has been a strong year for the NIHR School for Primary Care Research. The added value examples clearly illustrate the School's ongoing contribution and impact to the field of primary care research, particularly in capacity building and support offering for researchers at different stages of their careers. We greatly appreciate the efforts and initiatives aimed at creating a positive change, and commend the coordinating team on an ambitious and varied programme.