

To:

- NHS trust chief financial officers
- NHS trust research and development directors
- GP practice managers
- GP partners
- Primary care network finance leads

NHS England  
Wellington House  
133-155 Waterloo Road  
London  
SE1 8UG

29 May 2025

Dear colleagues,

## **Board oversight and staffing of NHS clinical trials**

The NHS has a track record of delivering world-class research, benefiting patients and the public. This includes the NHS [generating vital income](#) from research activity, as well as commercial trials delivering cost savings by funding trial drugs and participant care.

To maximise these benefits, boards should have visibility of their research delivery and income. It is also important research is not impacted by recruitment freezes being applied to Research and Development (R&D) posts that are funded from external sources such as grants, awards and allocations through contracts to deliver priority infrastructure, such as Commercial Research Delivery Centres.

With this in mind, the NHS England Executive has agreed that cost-saving measures at provider level should not imply reductions in research staffing. I'm therefore asking that you:

- comply with the terms and conditions attached to any research income from outside the NHS HM Treasury allocations, and use this funding for its intended purpose, including recruiting to R&D posts and programmed activities
- establish board-level reporting of research activity and income, with scrutiny of the UK Clinical Research Delivery (UKCRD) programme [site level performance metrics](#) for study set-up (NHS England will publish guidance on income and activity reporting later in 2025)
- ensure all commercial trial activities are invoiced in a timely manner
- follow the existing NHS England and National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) guidance on investing capability and capacity income from commercial trials

To support NHS organisations in maintaining a thriving research ecosystem, NHS England is working with system partners in the UKCRD programme to deliver a “do once per study” approach via the new study set-up plan. This will free up workforce capacity to deliver trials.

We will also be running a number of roundtables with R&D directors, chief financial officers and medical and nursing directors to discuss how we can better support the implementation of the current NHS England [research finance guidance](#), particularly in relation to invoicing and cost recovery and how this could be further developed.

Thank you for your support and all you are doing for our patients and the NHS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Vin Diwakar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Vin Diwakar**

National Director, Clinical Transformation

NHS England