



The Research Delivery Network: helping research deliver

An introduction to the RDN

Once a research study in the UK is approved and funded, what happens next?

How does it reach the right places and people to make it happen? How does it harness the UK resources in the best way to deliver the best outcomes?

That's where the Research Delivery Network (RDN) comes in. Part of NIHR, funded by the public, for the public.

We invest in the UK's health and care workforce and infrastructure, building up its capacity and expertise to deliver life-changing research across the nation.

This means we help each study to get into the right region and site, with the right staff and facilities. We enable each study to recruit the right participants, from communities who will benefit the most. And we offer studies the right support to deliver on time and on budget.

Combining a broad national overview with deep local insight, we offer a one-stop shop for researchers and companies.

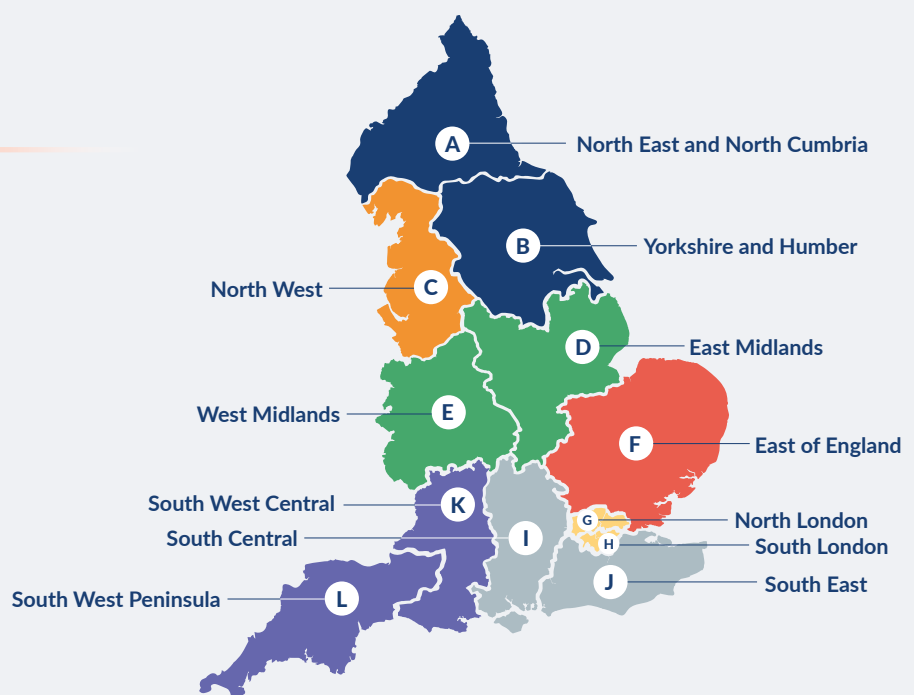
We believe that better support enables better science, which leads to better care.

So we don't just help deliver research. We help research deliver.

Who we are

We're made up of 12 Regional Research Delivery Networks (RRDNs), and the Research Delivery Network Coordinating Centre (RDNCC).

Together, we operate as one Network so wherever you are in the country, you'll get the same high-quality experience.



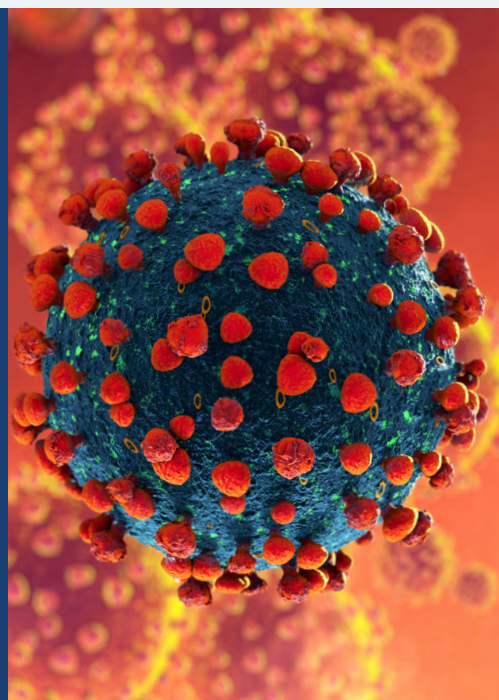
Our mission is to enable the health and care system to attract, optimise, and deliver research across the nation.

The RDN in action

A faster way to fight COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we needed answers—and we needed them fast. The **PANORAMIC trial** was created to test a new therapeutic agent for the virus. We played a crucial role in making it the fastest and largest trial of its kind in primary care by:

- helping to search GP databases to quickly find potential participants
- evolving the GP “hub and spoke” model to streamline operations and reach more people
- providing dedicated support to ensure the trial met its ambitious recruitment goals



What we do



We connect research to the right regions, populations and facilities, giving studies the best chance of success.



We provide tools to plan resources and costs, alongside advice on novel delivery approaches.



We support participant recruitment, including through Be Part of Research — the UK's first national volunteer registry.



We offer on-demand study support, tailored advice, and skilled frontline staff trained to the highest standards.



We help community organisations run research, supporting the NHS's shift from hospital care to prevention in the community.



By acting as a one-stop shop for set-up and delivery advice, we make the UK an easier, more attractive place for research.

How we help companies and researchers

We work with delivery organisations nationwide, streamlining contracts, pricing and excess treatment costs.

Our data helps identify the best regions and facilities for your study.

We fund, train and support organisations to build the workforce needed to deliver your research.

A simple test that saves lives: The “sponge on a string”

Oesophageal cancer is often caught too late, but a new, simple test—the **“sponge on a string”**—is changing that. It’s a quick, accurate, and low-cost alternative to invasive endoscopies, making early detection much easier.

We were essential to the success of the **BEST3 trial**, which proved the test’s effectiveness. Now, in the follow-up **BEST4 study**, we’re helping to recruit 120,000 at-risk patients through NHS text messaging. This support is helping to prevent cancer deaths and paving the way for the test to be rolled out widely in GP clinics.



Reaching beyond the clinic

Most health and care conditions are managed outside hospitals. To reach more people, research must go where the public are.

We help deliver studies in diverse settings such as GP surgeries, care homes, schools, pharmacies, ambulance services, hospices, the criminal justice system and people’s homes. This enables access to participants at key points in their care pathway — from diagnosis through to long-term management.

We help you take research beyond the hospital so it reaches its full potential.

Getting the right people on board

Sometimes a study hits a roadblock, and that's what happened with the **Nero study**, which was investigating a new treatment for high blood pressure. Initially, they couldn't recruit anyone because of the very strict eligibility criteria. Our **Study Support Service** stepped in and helped the team amend the protocol, allowing them to include a more representative patient group and recruit from local GP practices. This change turned things around immediately, and the study was able to meet 98% of its recruitment target. It's a perfect example of how our expert support can make a study's success possible.



How we help delivery organisations

We invest over £300m NIHR funding per year so you can fund staff and generate income through research delivery.

We bring projects and funding to your region, helping staff build skills and capability.

We offer insights into the wider system to monitor or compare performance within the system.

And we simplify processes for contracts, pricing and treatment costs — freeing you to focus on delivery.

Building an agile research delivery approach

Our Agile Research Delivery Teams are skilled, flexible staff who make research more inclusive and accessible — from remote and hybrid trials to mobile units.

With 12 regional teams, we support organisations new to research and those needing flexibility.

We can:

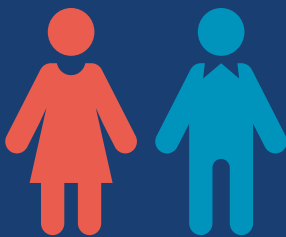
- Deliver study activities such as set-up, recruitment, consent, data management and follow-up
- Support decentralised and hybrid study designs
- Provide governance in wider care settings without existing capacity

We make research accessible, inclusive and convenient for participants.

| Our impact in numbers*



we supported nearly **6,000 open studies**



over 640,000 people have registered their interest in taking part in health and care research through the Be Part of Research service



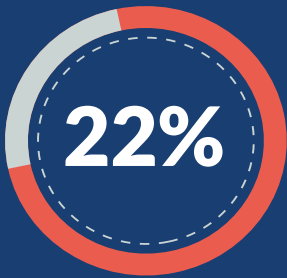
nearly 40,000 participants were recruited into commercial studies by delivery organisations supported by us. This leveraged **£1.2 billion income for the NHS**, an average of **£31,259 per participant** in income for the NHS



more than 1million participants took part in health and care research delivered by the NHS and social care sector, supported by us. These studies covered major health concerns like cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke, dementia, and depression



delivery organisations achieved **53 international firsts in participant recruitment** to international studies



almost 64,000 learners completed the Good Clinical Practice (GCP) course whilst other RDN capacity building schemes, such as the Associate Principal Investigators (PIs) Scheme, contributed to a **22% reduction in set-up times for commercial studies**, fostering a research-active workforce



more than 100,000 **participants in England were recruited to studies we supported within GP practices**, for conditions including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and infections



over **4250 health and care** organisations expressed their interest to take part in over **280 new commercial** research opportunities, helping to spread out access to research for the UK population



implemented RDN initiatives that reduced commercial study set-up times by almost 40%. We are helping delivery organisations further reduce the average set-up time for all studies to **150 days by March 2026**

Contact us

To find out more about how we can support you and your organisation please visit:

rdn.nihr.ac.uk |



Find out more about the NIHR by reading our latest annual report.

nihr.ac.uk