



Department
of Health &
Social Care



39 Victoria Street
London
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17 November 2025

Dear colleagues,

Supporting National Ambitions for Life Sciences Research and the 150-day target on set-up of clinical trials

The UK government is determined to make the UK a global leader in clinical research. This is essential to ensure patients receive and have access to new novel treatments and healthcare, as well as supporting growth as part of our economy. We are expecting everyone in receipt of National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funds to show leadership in delivering the key 150-day (or less) target for setting up clinical trials and ensuring all commercial income is recovered.

As announced by the Prime Minister in April 2025, our goal is clear: **all clinical trials must be set up within 150 days by March 2026**. This is a headline action in the 10 Year Health Plan for England, reinforced in the Life Sciences Sector Plan. It is now a requirement in the new [‘Medium Term Planning Framework – delivering change together 2026/27 to 2028/29’ \(page 24\)](#).

We are expecting that every NHS Trust, particularly those receiving significant NIHR infrastructure funding or research capability funding (RCF), to deliver this target, as well as ensuring all commercial income is recovered, or face reductions to NIHR funding in the future. This aligns with expectations for performance-related funding under the NIHR Research Delivery Network (RDN) funding model for 26/27, where 20% of an organisation’s funding model allocation will be based on achievements against key performance indicators, including set-up within 150 days. Final NHS Trust allocations will be released in early 2026, based on data over the 12-month period ending 31 December 2025. This will allow organisations to improve data quality and performance, submitting the most accurate and up-to-date data possible to inform their allocations for next year.

We must work together to show the world that the UK is one of the most effective and efficient places to conduct clinical trials. As part of this commitment to set-up clinical trials within 150 days:

- there is an accompanying policy expectation that all participating sites for a study must complete their set-up activities within 90 days.

- this means that sites in England must recruit their first participant for a study within 90-days of a study receiving regulatory approval, or the site being selected to take part, whichever comes later. There are a small number of exceptions e.g. for rare diseases studies. The [latest Policy Statement](#) sets out exactly what is expected of NHS Trusts in delivering this ambition.

We appreciate the importance of research staffing in achieving this target. Please be reminded that posts that are funded by external research funding sources, including but not restricted to any NIHR funding streams, research councils, medical research charities or commercial organisations, are NOT affected by NHS recruitment freezes as they are externally funded, and as such should not be included in a Trust's staff headcount.

NHS Trusts are expected to:

- **Monitor performance** against the government's 150-day clinical trial set-up target, with a particular focus on commercial interventional trials.
- **Embed monitoring into routine governance:** Ensure regular Board-level review and presentation of data, holding to the organisation to account and ensuring effective intervention and support
- **Take immediate action:** Boards should actively use the data to drive improvement.

We will be monitoring progress on this important area, and the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health Innovation and Safety, Minister Zubir Ahmed, has asked for frequent reports.

If you require any support, or would like to discuss with us, please do contact UKCRDprogramme@dhsc.gov.uk copying in england.research@nhs.net and we would be more than happy to assist.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to this national priority.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Lucy Chappell

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Professor Meghana Pandit

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