



*National Institute for  
Health Research*

# An introduction to NIHR CLAHRC North Thames

**Collaboration for Leadership in  
Applied Health Research and Care  
North Thames**



# Foreword from our Director



NIHR CLAHRC North Thames brings together academics, health and other partners to conduct world leading innovative research, and to support its widespread implementation for direct benefit to patients, the population and the NHS.

We ensure our research addresses pervasive health and healthcare issues – from driving early diagnosis of HIV to improving how asthma is managed in schools; from examining how best to reorganise services for patients with multiple conditions to enhancing timely management of young people with mental health problems; from accurately linking data across health settings to reducing variability across orthopaedic services nationally.

***Prof Rosalind Raine***

*Director*

*NIHR CLAHRC North Thames*

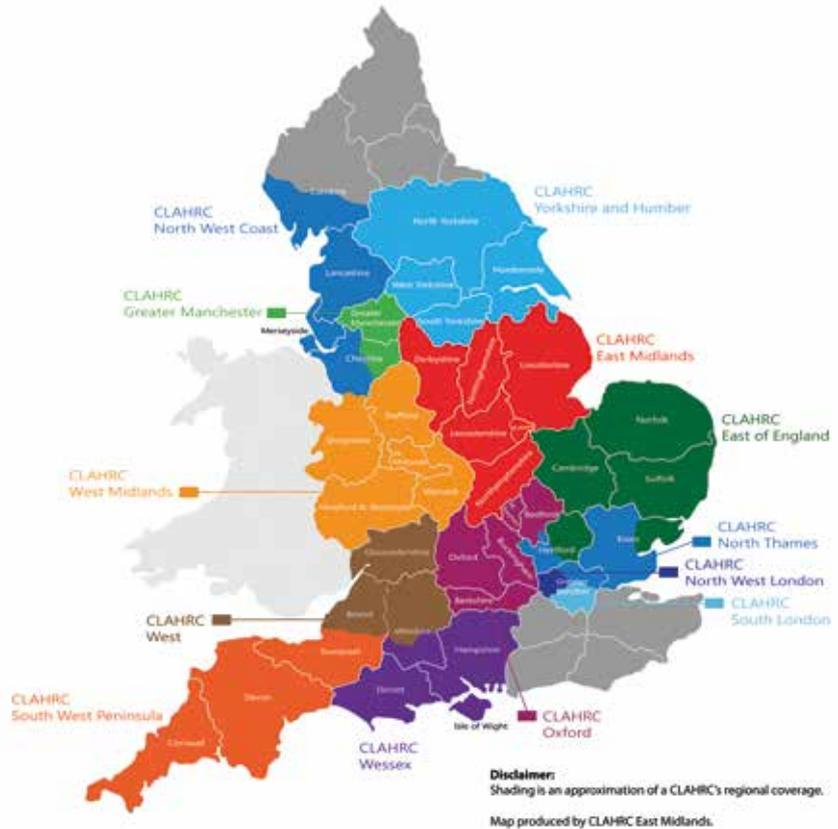


# What is a CLAHRC?

National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) conduct world class applied health research which will have a direct impact on the health of patients with long term conditions and on the health of the public.

CLAHRCs are collaborations between universities, the NHS (local service providers and commissioners), local authorities, industry, patients and the public, the local Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) and other relevant organisations in the region. By working together, CLAHRCs can deliver nationally relevant research that responds directly to the needs and priorities of their region, and increase the speed at which research evidence is put into practice, locally and nationally.

NIHR awarded funding to 13 CLAHRCs across England in January 2014 for five years.



# NIHR CLAHRC North Thames



NIHR CLAHRC North Thames is led by our Director, Prof Rosalind Raine (who is Head of the Department of Applied Health Research at UCL). Hosted by Barts Health NHS Trust, it covers the geographical area of north central and north east London, south and west Hertfordshire, south Bedfordshire and south west and mid-Essex

CLAHRC North Thames has over 50 **partners** including universities, NHS trusts, local authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA), clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), UCLPartners (the local AHSN), industry, and organisations representing patients and the public.

The applied health research we undertake with our partners and in response to their needs is grouped into **five broad themes**:

- Child and adolescent health
- Empowering mental health service users and families
- Innovations in systems and models of health and health care
- Methodological Innovation
- Optimising behaviour and engagement with care

Individual projects in these areas are designed with the close involvement of clinicians, patients and the public, and academics from across our region.

In addition to conducting ground breaking research, the CLAHRC has an important role in training the next generation of healthcare workers and applied health researchers. You can read about our capacity building and training programmes in the Academy section.

# How do we work with people in our area to ensure our research responds directly to their needs?

We work with staff from the NHS and local authorities, members of the public, and leading academics to prioritise CLAHRC research. You can read more about each of these 40+ studies on our website.

New ideas emerge all the time, and our **Research Partnership Team** (a seven strong multi-disciplinary group of researchers) collaborates with our partners to identify and progress new areas for research.

NIHR CLAHRC North Thames has also established successful teams of **'embedded researchers'** in some of our partner organisations. These researchers work in NHS trusts and local authorities to prioritise and carry out relevant and robust applied health research in response to their immediate research needs. This innovative way of working ensures the results of our research can be used by the people who need them without delay.

We involve **patients and the public** in all of our work, to help prioritise research topics and ensure the research questions get to the heart of the issue. Patients are included in the governance of our work, through membership of our advisory and management boards, and as co-applicants in individual studies. Our Research Advisory Panel is made up of interested patients, carers and members of the public who meet three times a year to hear about individual CLAHRC projects and to advise on all aspects of proposed research through to its completion. In addition, our virtual review e-panel provides advice and input on patient facing documents and other study materials.

# How do we work with the other CLAHRCs in England?

The 13 CLAHRCs in England work closely together, providing a collaborative network that allows successful interventions in one CLAHRC region to be rolled out nationally.



We also share our knowledge and experience through specific networks, e.g. in health economics and child public health.

We work strategically together. In 2015, the North Thames CLAHRC led a collaboration of all 13 CLAHRCs with the major UK funders (MRC, The Health Foundation, NIHR HS&DR), Universities UK and Academy Health (USA). We brought together international experts to debate best research methods and future methodological innovations in our field. This led to the publication of an e-book, **Challenges, solutions and future directions in the evaluation of service innovations in health care and public health**, the most downloaded publication (in the time period) on NIHR's website, which has directly informed the MRC's commissioning intentions and is being taken forward by major funding bodies in the USA.

The three CLAHRCs in London work together - jointly organising an annual, highly rated pan-London careers conference, and working on joint research projects (e.g. evaluation of the NHS 111/Urgent Care Patient Relationship Manager system). More information about the research taking place in the other CLAHRCs can be found here:

[www.clahrcprojects.co.uk](http://www.clahrcprojects.co.uk)



# Empowering mental health service users and families



The theme is led by Prof Peter Fonagy (UCL), Prof Stephen Stansfeld (QMUL) and Dr Trudie Russouw (North East London NHS Foundation Trust)

In England, it is estimated that one in six adults suffers from poor mental health and mental health services are under increasing pressure to meet demand for care.

Our mental health theme develops and tests ways to deliver better care with patients, their families and the clinicians who treat them.

Current work includes:

- Development of digital technology (apps and websites) to i) assist young people in the self-management of the problems they experience with psychosis, ii) to support young people with concurrent mental and physical health problems, and iii) to provide support for people with common mental health conditions
- Development of an intervention to improve carers' experiences and involvement with severe mental illness
- Development of information materials to improve care of Black African and Caribbean people with memory problems
- Evaluating the provision of welfare advice in GP surgeries to improve the mental health and wellbeing of patients with complex social and health needs (led by our researcher, embedded in a local authority)
- Investigation of school-based emotional well-being interventions to promote self-management in the context of long term physical and mental health issues
- Exploring differences between how relatives and staff rate the quality of life of people with dementia in care homes
- Describing how care is provided by NHS hospitals across England, for patients who attend Emergency Departments because of a mental health crisis
- Development of a dialogue-based approach to help staff negotiate with patients to avoid the use of forced medication during involuntary psychiatric admission



# Child and adolescent health



The Theme is led by Prof Jonathan Grigg (QMUL), Prof Monica Lakhanpaul (UCL) and David Law (Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust).

Effective interventions for preventing and managing common paediatric chronic conditions, such as asthma, diabetes and obesity, will improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people and their families and reduce inequalities in health and health care.

Our children and adolescent health theme is co-designing and evaluating acceptable, effective and low cost interventions for common conditions in children and young people. Our research responds to the ambition to move care away from hospitals and into community settings. Our studies actively involve children and young people to ensure acceptability, appropriateness and the likelihood of successful uptake.



Research topics include:

- Adaptation and evaluation of the women's group model from resource poor countries to an urban setting in the UK to optimise nutrition in 6-24 month old infants of Bangladeshi origin in East London
- Co-design and evaluation of community-based diabetic services that are responsive to the needs of young people
- Evaluation of the Greater London Authority's Healthy Schools London programme to promote healthy eating and physical activity and prevent obesity
- Examination of a school-based intervention to reduce unscheduled medical attention and improve school attendance and engagement for schoolchildren with asthma
- Impact of air pollution on child health and health services
- Increasing participation by families, and children and young people with life limiting conditions in research



# Innovations in systems and models of health and health care



This theme is led by Prof Naomi Fulop (UCL), Prof Chris Griffiths (QMUL) and Denise Tyrrell (NEL Commissioning Support Unit).



This theme develops and evaluates innovations in systems of health care and public health to improve quality of care and outcomes for people with long-term conditions. We are testing innovations across three dimensions of the system: Pathways of care, Trust-wide quality improvement strategies and Public health interventions. Current projects include:

- Evaluating whether a programme promoting diagnostic testing of HIV in primary care is effective and cost-effective in enhancing early identification
- Re-designing the current chemotherapy pathway to reduce the overall side effects of chemotherapy treatment
- Improving the governance of medication safety
- Evaluating the impact of implementing the QUASER Guide (a tool designed to help senior hospital leaders to develop and implement quality improvement strategies) with NHS Trust boards (iQUASER)
- Studying the impact of rolling out the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) intervention (an evidence-based training programme to improve the primary care response to domestic violence) across general practice
- How health visitors identify and manage child neglect
- Evaluating a quality improvement innovation to improve quality of care for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Evaluating the Getting it Right First Time programme – a programme aiming to deliver improvements in quality and reductions in the cost of NHS orthopaedic care across England
- The role of public and patient involvement in large-scale change in health care

- The use of evidence in decision-making to introduce or diffuse innovations (the DECIDE project)

In addition, our UCLH Embedded Research Team are collaborating with UCLH staff on projects including:

- i) an evaluation of the UCLH exemplar ward programme;
- ii) a review of evidence on the use of nurse specials in acute settings and a rapid appraisal of nurse specialising at UCLH;
- iii) a study to identify and prioritise evidence-based interventions for reducing overcrowding in the emergency department.

The team is also advising on two service evaluations being conducted by UCLH staff:

- (i) a novel perioperative medicine pathway and
- (ii) a complex pain team



# Optimising behaviour and engagement with care

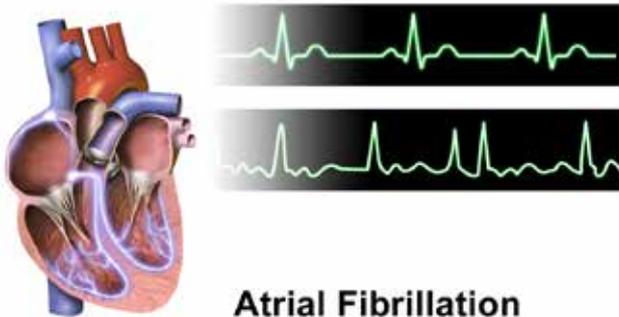


This theme is led by  
Prof Rob Horne (UCL),  
Prof Steph Taylor (QMUL)  
and Daniel Waldron  
(Homerton University Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust)

Behaviour is often the rate-limiting step preventing potentially effective interventions having a positive impact on peoples' health. This theme applies behavioural science to develop and implement interventions that make healthcare more effective, appropriate, accessible and efficient. It does this by examining ways to optimise behaviour at the patient, professional and organisational levels across a variety of long term conditions.

Key research includes:

- Investigating whether supported access to an online intervention to reduce harmful alcohol intake is as effective as traditional face-to-face counselling
- The design and evaluation of pragmatic interventions to improve adherence to medication (e.g. in asthma)
- Examining the effectiveness of pharmacist-led interventions to help patients get the best from essential medicines
- The identification of the best combination of interventions to improve management of atrial fibrillation in primary care
- Development of an e-learning tool to help future doctors make better clinical decisions



**Atrial Fibrillation**

- Full trial of a new tailored, psychological intervention for mild to moderate anxiety or depression in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD): the TANDEM study
- Development and preliminary testing of an online intervention to support people with depression using “positive psychology”
- Improving adherence to treatment in patients with Adrenal Insufficiency (a condition where the adrenal glands do not produce adequate amounts of cortisol)
- Development of a web-based approach to support rehabilitation of patients after knee injuries
- Developing interventions to improve antibiotics stewardship



# Methodological innovation



This theme is led by Prof Jan van der Meulen (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine), Prof Martin Utey (UCL) and Dr Rishi Das-Gupta (University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).

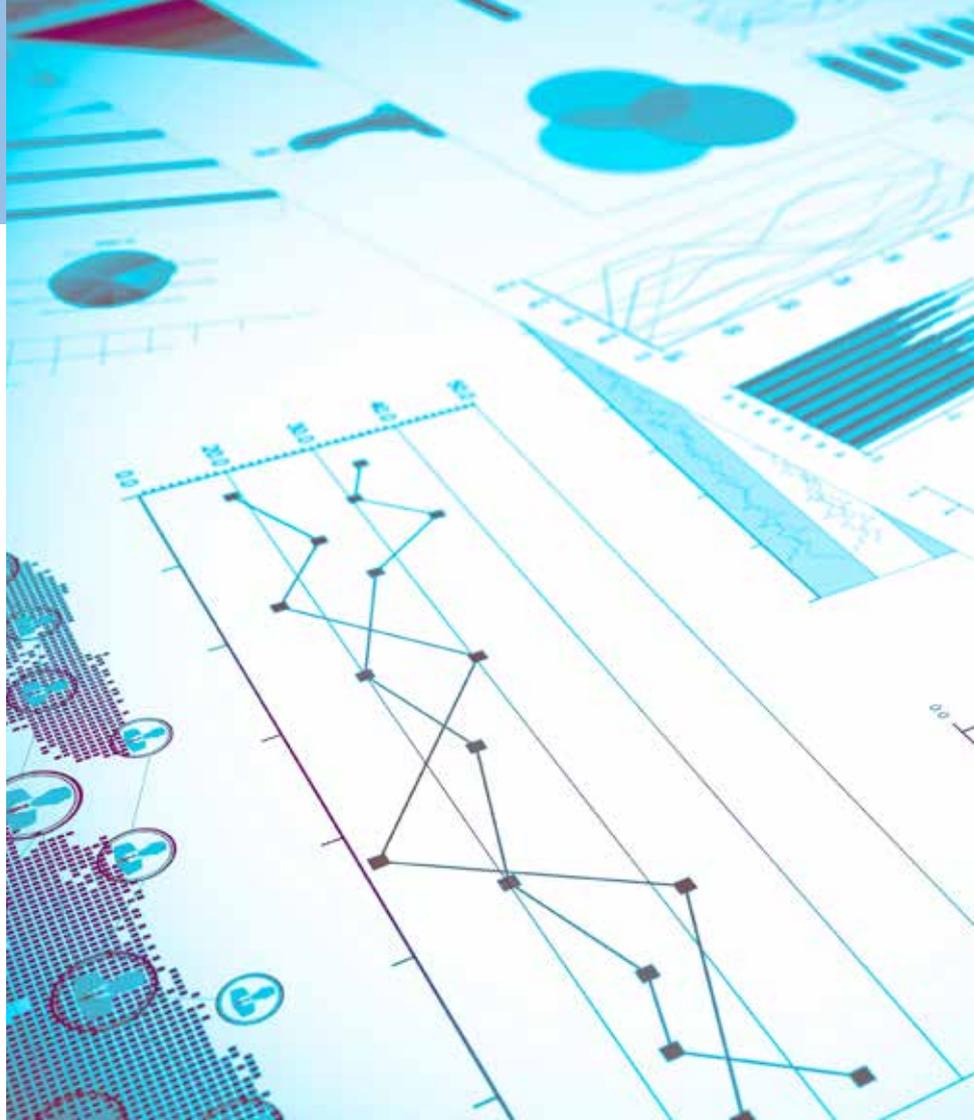
This theme implements methodological innovations – novel ways of carrying out research - to improve the way in which we work, for the benefit of patients, the public and the NHS. By addressing known methodological limitations in the way applied health research is currently carried out, this theme works to develop and test novel methods to enhance the efficiency, timeliness and usefulness of applied health research.



Current research includes:

- Linkage of data to enable investigation of complex patient pathways through different services and settings
- Exploring the culture and practices of evidence use in public health decision-making in local authorities
- Examining the impact of delayed discharges from services
- Exploring how long-term conditions impact on access to and outcomes of health services
- Examination of the impact of multi-sectoral working and financial incentives on health outcomes and health spend
- Improving research consent and recruitment rates (e.g. in children with life limiting illnesses and people with severe mental health problems)

- Incorporating service users as a source of intelligence on priorities, outcomes and experience
- Design of research and decision support processes to ensure the utility of research outputs for commissioning
- Socioeconomic inequalities in health expectation and survival with multiple long term conditions
- Using ethnographic methods for health care improvement
- Comparing patient reported outcome measures (PROMS) to general population norms for evaluating emergency admissions
- Developing a new, digitally-enabled care pathway for patients with acute kidney injury (Streams)





The NIHR CLAHRC North Thames Academy is led by Prof Naomi Fulop (UCL), Dr Helen Barratt (UCL), and Dr Victoria Newton (UCL).

Everyone who works in health and social care has a role in improving patient care and population health through the implementation of applied health research.

In order to speed up translation of applied health research into practice, the CLAHRC Academy builds capacity and capability across the whole CLAHRC community both to co-produce research and to apply its outputs on the frontline.

The opportunities we offer include:

■ **Short training courses for healthcare professionals, service commissioners and local authority staff.** Subjects taught on our one-day interactive workshops include

1. Introduction to evaluation
2. Introduction to economic evaluation
3. Using research in practice
4. Introduction to demand, capacity and flow

These courses are so highly rated and are in such demand that we have designed an online version of the course on Introduction to Evaluation.



- **Fellowships for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals.**

Fellows are seconded to the CLAHRC for four days a week over 12 months to work in a CLAHRC research theme, either on a study of their choosing or on a current CLAHRC project. They remain in their clinical role for one day a week. We have had two cohorts of fellows to date (5 fellows) and we are currently advertising for the third cohort.

- **CLAHRC-funded PhD studentships.**

We have a community of 19 PhD students training in applied health research across the CLAHRC. The Academy provides students with the specific training needed to work at the interface of academia and health services, and augments this with practical experience through shadowing placements in the NHS.



# Partners

## HEIs

London School of Economics and Political Science  
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine  
Queen Mary University of London  
University of East London  
UCL

## AHSN

UCLPartners

## Trusts

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust  
Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust  
Barts Health NHS Trust (Host Trust)  
Basildon & Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust  
Derby Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust  
East London NHS Foundation Trust  
Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust  
Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
North East London NHS Foundation Trust  
North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust  
Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust  
Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust  
Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust  
The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust  
University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust  
The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust

## CCGs

NHS Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge Clinical Commissioning Groups  
NHS Camden Clinical Commissioning Group  
NHS City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group  
NHS Ealing Clinical Commissioning Group  
NHS Enfield Clinical Commissioning Group  
NHS Newham Clinical Commissioning Group  
NHS Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group  
NHS Waltham Forest Clinical Commissioning Group  
Greater London Authority

## LAs

Camden Council  
Enfield Council  
Essex County Council  
Hackney Council  
Haringey Council  
Islington Council  
Newham Council  
Redbridge Council  
Tower Hamlets Council  
Waltham Forest Council

## Industry

Foresight Partnership  
GlaxoSmithKline  
Google  
Legal & General  
SHM Productions Ltd  
Xantura

## School

London Academy of Excellence

## Charities

Doctors of the World UK  
Health Foundation

# Contact

Visit our website to keep up to date with all our research and find out about our courses, opportunities and events:  
[www.clahrc-norththames.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.clahrc-norththames.nihr.ac.uk)

If you would like to sign up to our monthly email updates, or contact us about anything else, please email:  
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