

Allied Health Professions' Research and Innovation Strategy for England



Art therapist



Drama therapist



Music therapist



Podiatrist



Occupational therapist



Operating dept practitioner



Orthoptist



Osteopath



Therapeutic Radiographer



Physiotherapist



Orthotist



Radiographer



Paramedic



Speech & language therapist



Prosthetist



Dietitian

“Our research & innovation makes a difference.”

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Invited Forewords

**Chief Allied Health Professional Officer England,
Suzanne Rastrick**

“Research and innovation is key to ensuring safe evidenced based practice to support the people who access our services. It enables us to make a difference, whether that is creating new knowledge, enhancing services, improving outcomes or developing our people.

This first ever Strategy focused specifically on AHP research and innovation not only outlines our aspirations as an AHP community, it also seeks to address the role of each individual within this area.

The accelerated rate of innovation and the versatility of the whole AHP community as the result of the Covid-19 pandemic is testament to our collective and individual capabilities. I urge readers to use these experiences together with this Strategy as a springboard to maintain this momentum.”

**Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR) national Strategy Board,
Professor Dawn Carnes (Chair)
Professor Kate Grafton (Vice Chair)
Dr Richard Collings (Vice Chair)**

“CAHPR has contributed to both the consultation phase and the development of the AHP Research and Innovation Strategy. This position statement reflects the current needs and future direction of AHPs in delivering quality research to meet the future health demands of our population.

AHPs' contribution to the health of the nation will be enhanced by this research and innovation plan which highlights raising the AHP profile, optimising evidence informed individualised AHP care delivery and priorities of equity, diversity and inclusiveness in research.

On behalf of CAHPR, we look forward to being an integral part of the implementation of this Strategy. This represents a huge opportunity for AHPs to engage with research, and to develop research for the benefit of people who receive support from AHP health and social care services.”

Scope of the Strategy

This Strategy comprises a definitive collective national reference statement that supports the research and innovation agenda for all Allied Health professionals.

The Allied Health Professions (AHP) in England include all of the following disciplines: Art Therapists, Dramatherapists, Music Therapists, Chiropodists / Podiatrists, Dietitians, Occupational Therapists, Operating Department Practitioners, Orthoptists, Osteopaths, Paramedics, Physiotherapists, Prosthetists and Orthotists, Diagnostic Radiographers, Therapeutic Radiographers, Speech and Language Therapists. Collectively these 14 Allied Health Professions form the third largest workforce in health and care. Whilst this Strategy was commissioned for the AHP workforce in England, it recognises the universal drivers, challenges, influences and common principles.

All 14 AHP associations have research Strategy policies and guidance as a key element of the professional development support initiatives for their own memberships. Other existing regional and organisational research strategies have also been developed to specifically include the Allied Health professions. In addition, some AHPs may access research and innovation development opportunities through their engagement in multiprofessional, cross-sector, and/or specialist research interest groups related to their own field/s of practice.

However, this Strategy directly addresses the need for relevant and appropriately differentiated support and development opportunities to be available to all AHPs, whatever their discipline, professional association membership, or employment context.

Hence, this new strategy comprises a definitive collective national reference statement that comprehensively supports the research and innovation agenda for all Allied Health professionals. It is unique in articulating the united voice of all the professional associations, specialist research support initiatives, and the academic teaching and research communities.

This work was commissioned to identify high level strategic aims for a transformational change in AHP research and innovation reputation, influence and impact on services. This quality improvement agenda encompasses the full breadth of scientific research methodologies across the spectrum from proof of concept, applied health research, implementation science studies, and service evaluations. The adoption of the terminology 'research and innovation' serves to be fully inclusive of all these approaches that contribute towards improvement of care quality, effectiveness and safety. It is also intended to span the historic gap between the spheres of researcher and practitioner communities; since the future vision is to bring together the respective expertise, experience and insights from both perspectives more powerfully than ever before. This will accelerate the cycle of implementation of research evidence into practice to improve health, wellbeing and care outcomes, as well driving practice-led priority setting and authentic co-design of future research and innovation. The Strategy fully complements and supplements the distinctive AHP Quality Improvement agenda that is already being driven forward through the national AHP Network.

The scope of the Strategy covers all the AHP workforce community, inclusive of all career stages, employment sectors and job roles. The strategic aims and objectives have direct relevance to all AHP practitioners, educators, researchers, managers, policy leads, as well as all the key stakeholders who commission, fund, manage and support AHP services.

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The strategic vision statements are bold and far-sighted: the strategic aims and objectives are robust and clearly articulated, innovative and differentiated to address the distinctive needs and contexts of all the AHP professional associations.

The initiation of this Strategy was driven by the recognition of an imperative need to accelerate the pace of growth, stability and sustainability of our collective AHP research and innovation community. There is a time-critical push to align with multiple strategic national agendas, specifically to secure greater visibility, reputation and influence and to achieve proportionate access to investment and infrastructures for the next generation of research and innovation leaders across all the AHP professions, geographies and employment sectors.

The development of the Strategic aims and objectives presented here was achieved through an iterative coproduction approach with the full engagement of all 14 AHP associations, together with the Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR), the Council of Deans of Health (CODH) and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). Consultations included the public voice (Health Education England's Peoples' Advisory Forum), NHS Research and Development Managers and NHS Commissioners, Deans and Professoriate of Higher Education Institutions, and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

The Four Domains



The scope of the Strategy addresses four domains. Each of these aspects are inter-dependent and are all equally important to achieve transformational impact and sustainable change.

- **Capacity** and engagement of the AHP workforce community, to implement research and innovation in practice;
- **Capability** for individuals to undertake and achieve excellence in research and innovation activities, roles, careers and leadership;
- **Context** for AHPs to have equitable access to sustainable support, infrastructures and investment for research and innovation;
- **Culture** for AHP perceptions and expectations of professional identities and roles that “research (and innovation) is everybody’s business”.

The Strategy comprises three vision statements which express a clear intention to accelerate the pace of transformational change. Each of the vision statements is presented in terms of a bold strategic aim, with a number of related strategic objectives. These have been purposefully crafted to be measurable within the framework of appropriate evaluation approaches for quality and impact that have been developed within the scope of this work.

Robust metrics are required that will provide credible indicators of progress, but it is essential for these to be relevant, appropriate, specific and sensitive within each domain; and not to be limited to volume of activities or to the most prestigious successes. Tools and approaches that reflect the visible impact of research will be key to securing commitment from all stakeholders. There is an imperative to demonstrate benefits that meet the strategic priorities of the respective

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stakeholders, specifically including commissioners and provider organisations of health and care services, as well as higher education institutions.

The supplementary resources linked to this Strategy include a selection of case examples that highlight the potential for impact through progress towards these strategic aims and objectives. There are examples of benefits in relation to care quality and service delivery, as well as on staff motivation and retention. These examples also prompt reflection and merit discussion around how the distinctive responsibilities and accountabilities for individuals, teams, employers, service commissioners and sponsors of research and innovation may be addressed.



“I am delighted to have been involved in the development of this AHP Research and Innovation Strategy. This work recognises the importance of creating and using data, evidence, and intelligence to understand population health needs and design effective interventions to improve health and reduce health disparities. I am pleased to see explicit recognition within the Strategy of our impact on environmental sustainability and the health and wellbeing of the whole population.

I commend Health Education England for leading the development of this AHP Strategy which has been co-produced with a wide range of stakeholders. Throughout it has been clear there is expertise, opportunity and ambition within the AHP community to further develop and embed research and innovation into everything we do; and this Strategy provides a plan to achieve that.”

Linda Hindle, Deputy Chief Allied Health Professional Officer and Engagement Lead for the Emergency Services, OHID (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities)

Context of the Strategy

International and National context

Securing and sustaining excellence in research and innovation for the Allied Health workforce is a global priority agenda. The development work for this Strategy is underpinned by an extensive mapping exercise of international publications of relevant capacity and capability building initiatives, within and outwith the Allied Health disciplines and sectors. This included policy statements and professional guidance; empirical evaluation studies were also catalogued. These sources include some AHP-specific initiatives, in addition to many that focused on multi-professional perspectives.

For England, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) agenda directs all National Health Service (NHS) organisations to actively support research activities and to ensure evidence informed practice to improve care quality and outcomes. Research and innovation are also specifically identified in the NHS Long Term Plan as a key driver for all professions to improve future health outcomes. By implication, all staff are accountable to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to apply research within their own scope of practice: a relatively smaller proportion may choose to undertake research and/or innovation as part of their career pathway.

The focus of this new Strategy dovetails with the recent attention to the current and future cohorts of Allied Health practitioners. Recent work led by the Council of Deans of Health has promoted a range of initiatives to enhance the students' exposure and experience of the research environment. Securing support for AHP academic educators to be more research active, as well as increasing research placements and internship opportunities for students will contribute to ensuring the legacy that our next generations of AHP workforce will be more "research-ready".

New roles, routes and careers

The Strategy specifically incorporates an objective to see more AHPs of all disciplines and at all career stages to be appointed in Research Delivery roles, in line with the [Department for Health and Social Care](#) priority for supporting clinical research and enhancing the clinical research environment by participation from "healthcare professionals from all backgrounds". In addition to making a valuable contribution to the Research Delivery workforce, this would generate increased opportunities for AHP practitioners to gain skills, experience, insights and confidence in research processes, that may potentially lead them to explore other research and innovation activities, roles and career routes.

The recent establishment of the Centre for Advancing Practice supports the strategic development of Advanced and Consultant practice roles across the nursing, midwifery and AHP disciplines. These roles have provided development opportunities for experienced health and care staff to hone their expertise in specialist practice, leadership and management, education and research. Collaborative work is underway to further support the research element of these roles through the development of a clear pathway to map out research and innovation activities and roles, plus transition opportunities into more dedicated research career routes in academic or clinical-academic roles.

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Access to support for research careers through internships and fellowships is essential to assure the growth of a sustainable critical mass of research leadership for the future generations of AHPs. This includes support for the workforce to be aware of the range of initiatives (including NIHR Internships, Bridging Schemes and Fellowship opportunities) along with other opportunities offered by Trusts, HEIs, charitable trusts and other third sector organisations. The provision of more effective and efficient signposting for information, support, mentorship and funding opportunities continues to be an essential priority, so that highly talented individuals at any stage of their career may be supported to be successful in these routes. A review of detailed datasets of comparative successes across AHP disciplines in the NIHR competitions for both academic and integrated clinical-academic routes demonstrates that there are significant disparities in successes in these awards across the AHP disciplines. This indicates a priority need to implement strategies that foster more equitable access to targeted and incremental mentorship for the under-represented AHP disciplines: for example, by adopting a collaborative coaching scheme.

The number of Clinical Academic roles and careers has steadily increased over the past decade, where an individual has dual roles and responsibilities in a practice and a teaching and/or research setting. Generally, roles have evolved in response to local drivers and have been tailored around individual contexts, individuals and organisations; leading to a high variability in job roles and contracts, employment security and experiences of competing demands from both employers. There is a need to secure the stability of roles where there is protected time and organisational level support for practice-led research and innovation. The potential for powerful impact on quality of care and on organisational culture are exemplified in our selected case study examples that accompany this Strategy.

Additionally, potential new roles for supporting the development of knowledge translation to facilitate the rapid implementation of high-quality research evidence into practice may be considered. In addition to immediate benefits to teams and services, these roles can provide more role models, champions and mentors. The principle of using rapid evidence syntheses to answer priority practice-based questions also addresses the growing concerns over research wastage and lays the sound foundation for evidence-based research.

There has been a steadily growing familiarity and adoption of Implementation Science frameworks in Allied Health research over the past decade, however there is the need for a clearer recognition that Implementation Science addresses complementary and essential issues to our current evidence base of scientific and clinical research. This is vitally important to support the clinical effectiveness, societal impact and scientific reputation of Allied Health professional practice.

Finally, there remains the pressing need for a systems change to secure more sustainability and contractual security for post-holders, particularly at the post-doctoral stage. This must be driven by a sharper focus and recognition of the inherent value of all these activities, roles and careers to impact on excellence in the quality of research and of care. In the context of pressing organisational priorities for all stakeholders, the mutual benefits of more deeply integrated practice-academic partnerships to impact on quality and on retention of highly experienced and motivated staff is essential. Approaches that focus on alignment with strategic priorities at organisational, local and regional levels will be particularly powerful, as exemplified in some of the first featured case study examples included in the supplementary resources linked to this Strategy publication.

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Research quality

This strategic aim encompasses the agenda for establishing and maintaining the highest quality research evidence base for all the Allied Health professions, not simply for growing the volume of the collective evidence base or the number of research active individuals.

The commitment to authentic codesign and coproduction of research and innovations with the public voice is a fundamental premise. The challenge of inequalities in access to services as well as inequalities in health, wellbeing and care outcomes is also explicitly addressed. The priority driver is for essential expertise from both practice and academic perspectives to inform research agenda setting, as well as throughout all stages of the design and conduct of research and innovation initiatives.

There is explicit reference to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), as the single government exercise related to assessment of research quality, underpinned by sound principles of requiring evidence of real-world impact. This is a highly significant driver for investment in research and whilst there are examples of world-leading research by AHPs across multiple domains in the REF, the distinctive achievements of much Allied Health research has remained opaque. The inclusion of this agenda here is to prompt a reflective and constructive engagement in dialogues that will increase transparency, recognition and reward of excellence for the specific contributions and achievements of research leadership in Allied Health research.

Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR)

The Council for Allied Health Professions Research ([CAHPR](#)) is a UK-wide organisation that comprises a Strategy Committee, a Professoriate and a network of Regional Hubs. The Council was launched in 2014, with a mission to continue the work of former initiatives to develop AHP research, strengthen evidence of the professions' value and impact for enhancing service user and community care, and enable the professions to speak with one voice on research issues, to raise their profile and influence.

CAHPR offers a unique blend of expertise from both research and practice across Higher Education Institutes (HEI), National Health Service (NHS) and wider practice settings. The Hub structure and resources on the CAHPR website have been effective ways of signposting practitioners to support and next steps in becoming research active, and to funding and development opportunities. In particular, CAHPR has undertaken a role in addressing the workforce development challenges arising from a limited research culture in the workplace where research and innovation are not seen as mainstream activity.

CAHPR's enterprise is undertaken largely on a voluntary basis, by highly dedicated individuals. Subscription contributions from the member AHP associations cover only central administration costs and expenses for engagement events run by the regional hub groups. A recent independent review of CAHPR (available on CAHPR's website) affirmed the reputation and impact that CAHPR has achieved to date on this basis, but cautioned about the need to secure greater stability, security and sustainability for the future.

In relation to this Strategy, CAHPR has the unique advantage to contribute to and guide the research and innovation reform agenda to facilitate and maximise AHP research activity, research careers and professional practice. through their well-established national networks of

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practitioners, educators, researchers, clinical academics and university academics. The CAHPR national Strategy Board are committed to an organisational refresh, to further strengthen the strategic focus. In particular, this is re-energising the national Allied Health Professoriate and the Research Champion network scheme.



“Research and innovation are central to the development of our 21st century workforce, delivery of the NHS Long Term Plan and to ensure sustainable health and care services.

So, it is imperative for us to now accelerate the pace, stability and sustainability of research and innovation across all our AHP disciplines, roles and settings.

The Strategy sets out a definitive statement for how research, innovation and quality improvement will be embedded into routine practice across all career stages of our Allied Health workforce. This work builds upon the sound strategic plans from all our AHP professional associations and their superb support initiatives for their own members.

This excellent collaborative project has worked with a wide range of stakeholders to craft the key visions for energising the workforce culture and to ensure equity of development opportunities and careers in research delivery and research leadership roles for all AHPs.”

Beverley Harden,
Allied Health Professions Lead, Health Education England
Deputy Chief Allied Health Professions Officer, England

Development of the Strategy

This statement provides the strategic vision to drive transformational change for AHP research and innovation, specifically for enhanced visibility, reputation, influence and impact on services.

This Strategy is predicated on establishing a consensus agreement on the aspirations and expectations for AHP research capacity and capability, specifically including appropriate and relevant metrics of quality and impact. Indicators of increased research capacity across the wider AHP workforce (active engagement in the research environment for practice) was clearly differentiated from measures of research capability building in individuals (research career routes). The landscape for AHP researchers needs parity with other health professions and must include all the allied health professions, across roles and services, for all those with protected characteristics and across all geographies.

The coproduction process for the research and innovation Strategy ensured iterative input from all 14 AHP association research leads, the HEE People's Advisory Forum, and other key stakeholders (national policy leads, academics, provider organisation commissioners and managers, specialist practitioners and clinical-academic post-holders).

The iterative coproduction ensured that the proposed aims are achievable and sustainable and have the full commitment from all the AHP associations. This collaborative consultation approach with the strategic research leads for all the Allied Health Professional associations as stakeholders generated valuable reciprocal insights and commitment to contribute towards an effective, pragmatic Strategy to build on the AHP achievements to date and to ensure future sustainability. There was unqualified support for the resultant strategic vision statements, aims and objectives.

Strategic Vision Statements

The strategic vision is articulated within three distinctive strands. These express a clear intention to accelerate the pace of transformational change to assure achievement of the highest quality and reputation for the collective Allied Health research and innovation community.

Each of the vision statements is presented in terms of a bold strategic aim, with a number of related strategic objectives. These have been purposefully crafted to be measurable within the framework of appropriate metrics and indicators of quality and impact that was developed within the scope of this work.



Vision Statement One: Transformation of AHP professional identities, culture and roles.



Vision Statement Two: Delivery of excellence in evidence-based Allied Health practice.



Vision Statement Three: National strategic research agendas and priorities are explicitly inclusive of Allied Health research and innovation.

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Vision Statement One – Strategic Aim and Objectives



Vision 1: Transformation of AHP professional identities, culture and roles.

Aim 1.1: A transformational shift in awareness, skills and values for research and innovation across the life course for all AHP workforce communities.

Strategic Objectives:

The legacy of a research-ready workforce is assured through

- dynamic research-informed teaching of future cohorts of student AHPs,
- dedicated time and opportunities for AHP academic educators to engage in research and innovation and scholarship activities,
- opportunities for AHP pre-reg student research and innovation placements and internships,
- optimal value and maximisation of research and innovation skills in the AHP workforce, especially of post-doctoral individuals, to enhance service improvement.

Aim 1.2: Research, innovation and quality improvement is embedded into job descriptions and routine practice across all career stages of the Allied Health workforce.

Strategic Objectives:

The culture for research and innovation in AHP services will enable

- systematic promotion and support for more active engagement with the research and innovation environment by the wider Allied Health workforce,
- skills and confidence to undertake, evaluate and disseminate research, innovation and service improvement activities.

Aim 1.3: A range of research and innovation roles and career routes for AHPs are clearly signposted and well-supported.

Strategic Objectives:

The culture for research and innovation in AHP services will enable

- access for all AHPs to research and innovation responsibilities, roles, pathways, secondments and substantive career routes, including dedicated Clinical Academic posts,
- talent spotting and coaching for research leadership roles,
- access to role models and systematic mentorship for AHPs of all disciplines at incremental levels by academic expertise,
- organisational level support for post-doctoral roles within the AHP workforce.

Vision Statement Two – Strategic Aim and Objectives



Vision 2: Delivery of excellence in evidence-based Allied Health practice.

Aim 2.1: World-leading quality research and innovation for Allied Health practice is co-produced by expertise from the public voice, academics, practitioners and the wider Allied Health Community.

Strategic Objectives:

Capacity building strategies for Allied Health will enable a research and innovation evidence base that will deliver

- a world-leading quality research and innovation evidence base across all AHP professions, co-produced by expertise from the public voice, academics, practitioners, and the wider Allied Health Community,
- transparent recognition through the UK Research Excellence Framework of the distinctive value and impact of AHP research and innovation,
- explicit recognition of health inequalities in access to services and in health outcomes,
- commitment to authentic research priority setting and agreement on relevant outcome measures through collaboration between the public voice, academics, practitioners and the wider AHP community,
- prioritisation of the public voice in the development and evaluation of AHP services,
- commitment to environmental sustainability in AHP research and innovation initiatives.

Aim 2.2: Allied Health practice is underpinned by scientific research and driven by Implementation Science and service improvement models.

Strategic Objectives:

Capacity building strategies for research and innovation in the AHP wider workforce will enable

- active uptake of research evidence sources and related resources, with an explicit focus on implications for practice,
- active promotion and dissemination of research evidence syntheses, rapid reviews and evidence-based guidelines to support practice improvements,
- support systems, value recognition and incentives for implementation of research and innovation in Allied Health practice,
- opportunities for participation in research and innovation activities by AHPs at all career stages,
- access for AHPs of all disciplines and at all career stages to research delivery roles,
- organisational level support for direct engagement between research leaders and workforce teams and services.

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Vision Statement Three – Strategic Aim and Objectives



Vision 3: National strategic research agendas and priorities are explicitly inclusive of Allied Health research and innovation.

Aim 3.1: Allied Health research and innovation directly aligns with and contributes to the priority agendas in national health, care and wellbeing strategies

Strategic Objectives:

The context for research and innovation in Allied Health services will enable -

- recognition of the value of Allied Health research and innovation in relation to strategic priorities,
- AHPs are represented at all local, regional and national level forums for senior research leaders in health, care and wellbeing,
- strategic influencing and systematic resourcing for research and innovation in Allied Health practice.

Aim 3.2: Dedicated investment for substantive and sustainable funding, resourcing and infrastructure to support Allied Health research and innovation.

Strategic Objectives:

The context for research and innovation in Allied Health services will enable -

- sustainable growth for a legacy of leadership in Allied Health research and innovation across all AHP disciplines,
- organisational level support for Allied Health research and innovation activities, roles and careers,
- access for AHPs to research and innovation infrastructures within and across all provider organisations and subcontracted services,
- commitment from HEIs and from care provider organisations to support joint appointments, including substantive Clinical Academic posts,
- access for AHPs to funding across the spectrum from seedcorn projects to career fellowships and programme grants.

Implementation plan

The publication of this strategic vision marks the launch of a coordinated, systematic and sustained campaign to address the stated aims and objectives. With an oversight from Health Education England, the delivery for this Strategy will be driven forwards in a strong coproduction approach across the Allied Health Professional associations. This work will be led through a strategic initiative by a core team from the Council of Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR) national Strategy Board.

CAHPR are working closely with HEE to maximise the strengths and opportunities of their networks of practice and academic expertise to drive forwards a number of dynamic initiatives. These developments will be articulated through a refreshed communication strategy to secure significantly enhanced visibility and impact of the messaging that engagement with and participation in high quality research and innovation is an essential and integral aspect of all AHP practice. CAHPR's work will specifically contribute to advancing roles, career pathways and leadership development in both academic and clinical academic research.

The development of a clear and comprehensive strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for AHP research and innovation is being led by CAHPR. This will ensure that future AHP research and innovation activity is transparently representative and improves access to research support for underserved populations, driving commitment to a fully inclusive culture.

CAHPR will focus on securing stronger partnership working with the key strategic national bodies, funders, decision makers and other stakeholders. The CAHPR network is uniquely positioned to contribute the collective voice of AHP research and innovation, and to represent this EDI agenda on behalf of all AHPs.



“CAHPR are committed to driving forward the strategic agenda for AHP research and innovation. We are delighted to be in a position to collaborate and play a major role in the implementation of this research and innovation plan.”

Strategic initiatives



The Implementation work will drive forward on priority actions to ensure that the impact of this work achieves significant changes, most particularly in strategic visibility, reputation and engagement with key influential stakeholders.

The achievement of impact across the vision statements in this Strategy will be dependent on securing system-wide engagement, specifically for substantive commitment to support collaborative working between all provider organisations and the higher education sector. Alignment with all strategic priority agendas of the NHS Arm's Length Bodies will also be highly influential. This consideration is explicitly encompassed in the strategic aims and objectives.

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Those responsible for leading this implementation work will remain responsive to any significant unanticipated changes or emergent priorities from our key stakeholders. Progress towards the transformational change initiatives encompassed in this Strategy is anticipated to continue over the coming decade, to secure a legacy of a more robust, sustainable and dynamic research and innovation environment for the future generations of Allied Health professionals.

One priority strategic initiative will encompass setting up new support alliances for incremental mentorship, coaching and collaboration, for the immediate benefit of building capacity and capability in research and innovation for organisations and for individuals. The priority is to ensure equitable access of opportunities to support, resources and infrastructures for all the Allied Health disciplines, across all geographies, sectors and work roles; at all career stages and across all protected characteristics. In this regard, the AHP disciplines will work together to specifically support research and innovation capacity and capability building across the most underrepresented groups. The development of new partnership initiatives with the National Institute for Health Research to foster excellence in capability building for research and innovation leadership across all the AHP disciplines will also significantly support and accelerate the progress of this strategic agenda.

A systematic framework for the delivery of this Implementation plan will include a coordinated network approach to optimise communication across national, regional and local levels. This will include mapping of environmental factors and existing support initiatives, both uni-professional and cross-professional. The mapping will explicitly reflect active collaboration initiatives between service provider organisations, academic institutions and research leaders across all the Allied Health disciplines.

The implementation of these strategic aims is further supported by having been fully aligned and incorporated within the upcoming refreshed NHS England Allied Health Strategy. The four new enhanced foundations in that Strategy include the expectation that AHPs commit to research, innovation, and evaluation. The integrated approach to implementation initiatives across each of these significant agendas will support enhanced engagement and impact. Furthermore, the implementation phase will optimise active engagement across the multi-professional arena to forward our collective strategic purposes to secure commitment and investment for research and innovation. We will pursue open collaborative dialogues to optimise equitable access for the mutual benefit across our all respective AHP communities. This will include, but not be limited to, a specific focus on equitable, sustainable and flexible access for all AHP disciplines at all stages of their working lives to new roles, pathways and careers in research and innovation; and to ensure that research and innovation activities are more clearly articulated and securely embedded in job descriptions.

“Continue the Conversation”



To maintain this impetus, Health Education England has committed to oversee the launch of a programme of initiatives that will promote essential ongoing awareness, visibility and engagement in this dialogue. In the first year, this campaign to “**Continue the Conversation**” incorporates a calendar of collaborative consultations, including a suite of interactive open discussion forums to focus on each of the strategic vision statements in turn.

These iterative discussions will provide a forum for in-depth exploration of the strategic objectives and the associated proposals for relevant and appropriate metrics to evaluate progress and impact. This will facilitate all stakeholders to review their current and future needs

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for accurate data, evidence and intelligence for mapping progress from informed baseline positions.

The synergy of these interactive forum events will also generate a wealth of additional exemplars across the four Domains. Within an appreciative enquiry framework, this will contribute towards the collective perceptions of what works well, and how initiatives could be better supported through strategic engagement to become more dynamic and effective in driving care quality for population health and wellbeing. The outputs from these listening events will inform a new national network with high level leadership from key stakeholders to develop innovative responses to address the respective needs for development, support and sustainable infrastructures.

Case Study exemplars



The ethos across all the Implementation initiatives will be to facilitate effective, efficient and energetic dissemination of exemplary systems and ways of working that have demonstrated significant impact across all four defined Domains.

Real world examples are a highly valuable and effective way to disseminate innovative practice, proving insights that may be shared and differentiated accordingly across other contexts. Case Studies also demonstrate powerful illustrations of impact and benefit from a range of stakeholder perspectives. Within the framework of the four specified Domains of this Strategy, this resource bank of scenarios will provide insights with a realist perspective across a wide range of initiatives from cross-sector organisational collaborations to individuals' personal initiatives. Specific examples are also featured of access to valuable support resources and services, including the NHS library and knowledge services. In particular, these examples highlight the importance of access to role models, mentorship and networks to foster a culture of positive engagement in a vibrant research and innovation culture. Many of the selected examples demonstrate impact and benefit across multiple strategic aims and objectives.

During the course of the first year there will be regular updates to the published supplementary resources linked to this Strategy, specifically to add further Case Studies to the initial suite of exemplars. The incremental growth of this resource bank has been purposefully adopted as an important element of the interactive nature of the Implementation phase and will contribute to sustaining and refreshing the dialogue around the Strategy.

Further resources will also be released during the course of the year, including selective Bibliographies of directly relevant policy and guidance documents and research publications linked to the themes of the interactive discussion forums. The resources are particularly intended to be a valuable asset to all the AHP workforce community. The refreshment of these supplementary resources sections will further support the campaign to raise visibility and secure ongoing dialogue on this Strategy.

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Progress reviews

It is anticipated that many proposals for operational level initiatives will be generated across all the domains within the scope of this Strategy. These plans will be carefully managed in a systematic way to ensure that all new initiatives are directly mapped to the Strategy's defined aims and objectives. All proposed operational initiatives will also need to incorporate appropriate evaluation strategies, as well as consideration for differentiation and adaptation of initiatives to most appropriately address the respective support needs of all the professions, sectors and job roles.

A mid-year review point will ensure optimal responsiveness to incorporate consideration of all local, regional, national developments. The first key milestone of the implementation work will be a one-year-on Reflection event. This will be the timepoint for acknowledgement and celebration of the initial engagement with the strategic aims and objectives across all four defined Domains. Further evaluation landmarks will be identified as the implementation initiatives are defined.

Forward view

This Strategy presents the vision and direction to secure accelerated transformational change in the research and innovation culture, professional identity, roles and career routes across the breadth of the AHP community. The strategic aims and objectives specify concrete goals to ensure a vibrant, sustainable and fully inclusive research and innovation culture for all our AHP disciplines, without exception.

Full commitment to more substantive and sustainable collaborative partnership working between service providers and academic institutions will be achieved through demonstration of mutual benefits towards the strategic priorities of all stakeholders. Sponsorship and investment will be secured through the reputation of world-leading researchers in AHP research and innovation. The impact will be manifest through confident system-wide implementation of the highest quality evidence base, that assures excellence in professional practice and care across all AHP roles and settings.

Acknowledgements

The development of this Strategy on behalf of Health Education England was led by Dr Hazel Roddam FRCSLT.

Thanks are due for the contribution of advice and feedback from the project advisory group who supported the project lead:

Robyn Cooke Senior Policy Officer Council of Deans of Health.

Louise Connell Professor of Neurorehabilitation, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust & University of Central Lancashire.

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In addition, we appreciate the generous constructive feedback from many individuals representing a wide range of organisations across health and care sectors and higher education institutions.

The Strategic aims and objectives were coproduced with the designated research leads for all the Allied Health Professional associations and in close consultation with the Council for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR) and the Council of Deans of Health.

British Association of Arts Therapists
British Association of Drama Therapists
British Association for Music Therapy
British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists
British Dietetic Association
British and Irish Orthoptic Society
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

College of Operating Department Practitioners
College of Paramedics
Institute of Osteopathy
Royal College of Occupational Therapists
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Royal College of Podiatry
Society and College of Radiographers



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Publication date: January 2022