

# A process to implement accredited registration for Clinical Research Practitioners

Position paper for the initiative

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Executive Sponsor: Nick Lemoine

Business Change Lead: Fiona O'Neill

Project Delivery Lead: Janice Paterson

## Document Control

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### Table of Contents:

Purpose of the initiative	3
Summary of the approach	3
Background	3
CRP Directory	4
Benefits of the CRP Directory for individuals	4
Indicative timelines	4
CRP Registration	5
Draft Scope of Practice and Standards	5
Eligibility to Register	5
Benefits	5
Immediate benefits	5
Longer term benefits of the staged approach	6
Key Contact	7

## Purpose of the initiative

The purpose of this project is to establish a process that will deliver an Accredited Register for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs). The project will be led by the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) and delivered in collaboration with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS). Under the AHCS Accredited Registers programme, practitioners on the register are able to display the Accredited Register quality mark of the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) to show that their robust standards have been met.

The difference that accredited registration will make for Clinical Research Practitioners is that their skills and expertise can be assured to patients, service users in social care, participants in other settings, and the public. In addition, the skills and expertise of individual Clinical Research Practitioners can be better valued and developed and, as a group, the professional identity of Clinical Research Practitioners can become recognised within the delivery of research and the health and social care workforce.

## Summary of the approach

### Background

A proposal outlining the process and value of establishing accredited registration for CRPs was reviewed initially by the Department of Health, December 2017 and received approval from the CRN Executive to proceed.

The proposal described a staged approach for progression towards an accreditation process for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs). The proposed actions are aligned with current policy and practice in professional standards and the development of professional identity in comparable occupational groups, particularly those that are part of the Healthcare Scientists Careers Framework.

The research delivery workforce is expanding and evolving in response to rapid change across the NHS and wider health and care research landscape and Clinical Research Practitioners form a valued and essential part of this workforce. The term Clinical Research Practitioner (CRP) serves as an umbrella title for a family of roles in research delivery that have a patient-facing element and where the post holder isn't currently registered to a healthcare profession. The post holder will often be a degree graduate, though not always, who may be working to deliver research in a variety of different settings, including community and social care environments and as part of public health initiatives.

## CRP Directory

The CRP Directory was launched in September 2018 and is administered by the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS). The CRP Directory offers infrastructure to a workforce community that is growing and is committed to developing their professional identity in clinical research delivery. Those applying to join the CRP Directory are asked to confirm that their role involves direct contact with study participants and activity in clinical environments and other health and social care research settings. . The CRP Directory has been established primarily to bring together those in research delivery who are not currently registered professionals but who may be interested in becoming a registered professional. The £10 annual joining fee supports this infrastructure as a platform for coordinated communication with this dispersed virtual community and will be deductible from the fee to become registered (when established), which would then be £20 rather than £30 for the first year.

## Benefits of the CRP Directory for individuals

Being listed on the CRP Directory means being directly informed and involved in how this research delivery profession is being defined as part of the initiative to establish CRPs as a registered profession, accredited by the Professional Standards Authority and regulated by the Academy for Healthcare Science. Tangible benefits for individuals listed on the CRP Directory are intended to support this focus on developing the professional identity and currently include:

- public visibility of your listing on the Directory, which is searchable by name and Town/City of current employer
- identify other CRPs to network locally/regionally
- receive newsletters and invitations to participate in surveys
- Notification of meetings/workshop activities and updates from these
- direct consultation on the development of scope and standards for accredited registration, including criteria to become registered and ongoing practice
- blogs on relevant topics, including the value of professional identity, professional regulation in healthcare, changes in the clinical research landscape and enhancing the visibility of roles in the research delivery team

Pending approval from the Professional Standards Authority for a registration process, it is anticipated that the CRP Directory will continue to exist alongside the register, serving as a platform to support those working towards an application and/or looking to develop their professional identity in clinical research delivery more generally. Those listed and maintaining intent to register are therefore encouraged to proceed with the renewal process.

## Indicative timelines

Summer 2019 - Directory renewals begin, continue communications for new joiners  
 Autumn 2019 - Pilot of application process begins with early adopters seeking registration  
 Autumn 2019 - Proposal being put forward to the Professional Standards Authority (PSA)  
 Early 2020 - provisional - Accredited Registration for CRPs is agreed and operational

## CRP Registration

### Draft Scope of Practice and Standards

Workshop activities have contributed to the iterative development of a draft scope of practice and standards of proficiency for Clinical Research Practitioners, which articulate both the expectation of registered individuals and the distinct knowledge and skill set that identifies the emerging profession. Survey of the CRP Directory Community has provided insight on education, training and experience and helped to define the requirements for registration and the expectations of clinical knowledge and skills that are captured within the scope of practice.

The draft scope and standards documents are available via the CRP Directory website and return of feedback via the consultation form is invited from all interested parties.

### Eligibility to Register

Threshold requirements to be met by applicants seeking registration are currently being defined as part of a Quality Assurance Framework for the CRP Register, to be implemented locally through a standardised process. In outline, the requirements will include essential education and training together with a portfolio of evidence to be submitted for assessment by the Academy for Healthcare Science. The portfolio of evidence will include up to 5 specified reflections and documented assurance of competence with respect to an organisational competency framework that is aligned with the [NIHR Integrated Workforce Framework](#). Registrants will be asked to declare annually at renewal of their registration that they continue to meet the Standards of Proficiency. The requirements necessary to evidence for revalidation of registration at 3 years are also being defined at the present time.

## Benefits

Establishing accredited registration for Clinical Research Practitioners (CRPs) is expected to deliver an initial set of benefits that will provide a firm foundation of expectations and standards that demonstrate a commitment to public safety and promote public confidence in CRPs as a professional group.

A right-touch (proportionate) benefits management and realisation approach will demonstrate success by specific measures for the immediate and longer term, within the clinical research delivery environment and the wider health and social care context.

### Immediate benefits

1. The initiative is expected to deliver an accredited register for CRPs and enable individual practitioners to articulate the scope and standard of their expertise
2. This register will precipitate a step change in assurance, professionalism and workforce development focus
3. CRPs will become more visible as a distinct group within the wider healthcare science workforce

## Longer term benefits of the staged approach

1. Quality assurance of across the research delivery workforce to agreed standards meeting PSA accreditation
2. Promotion of a professional NIHR Clinical Research Delivery workforce to the Life Sciences Industry
3. More effective educational provision for CRPs
4. Mechanism to standardise role descriptions and training
5. A platform for the development of other roles within the research delivery workforce
6. Improve future workforce supply and security

# Key Contact

## **Project Delivery Lead**

Dr Janice Paterson, Workforce Intelligence Manager  
NIHR Clinical Research Network National Coordinating Centre  
21 Queen Street, Leeds LS1 2TW

t. +44 (0)113 343 0083 | e. [janice.paterson@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:janice.paterson@nihr.ac.uk)

**NIHR** | National Institute  
for Health Research

Clinical Research Network  
National Coordinating Centre  
21 Queens Street  
Leeds  
LS1 2TW

**Tel:** 0113 34 32314  
**Email:** [crncc.info@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:crncc.info@nihr.ac.uk)  
**Web:** [www.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.nihr.ac.uk)