



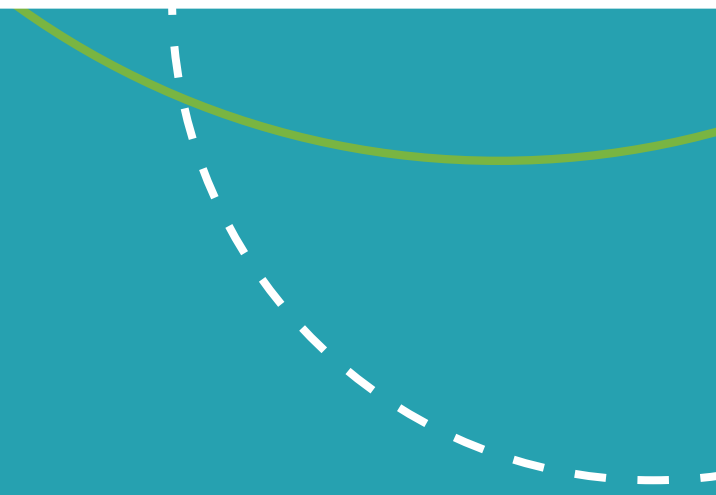
**Birmingham
Health Partners**

Collaboration. Innovation. Application.



Birmingham Health Partners

Report of activity
2023-2023



Contents

03 [Introduction](#)

04 [About us](#)

05 [Our strategy](#)

06 [Summary financial information](#)

08 [Our work in 2022/23](#)

08 [Women's health](#)

09 [Mental Health](#)

10 [Health data and its use](#)

11 [Creating an optimal environment to conduct Clinical Research](#)

12 [Case study: Improving cancer outcomes: Francesca's story](#)

12 [Case study: Cancer vaccine trials](#)

13 [Supporting economic growth](#)

14 [People](#)

15 [Case Study: BHP Fellowships - employer's view](#)

16 [Case Study: BHP Leadership Programme](#)

17 [Case Study: Partnership Funding: Metchley Park Medical Society](#)

18 [Case Study: BHP Clinical Academic Research Partnerships Professor Will Bradlow](#)

19 [Convening and commissioning in 2022-2023](#)

20 [Our shared future](#)

21 [Appendix](#)



Introduction

“

We seek to combine capabilities across the member organisations to create an impact

The BHP Board is committed to an Annual Report to our Partners and wider stakeholders and we are pleased to issue this report summarising the work of Birmingham Health Partners for the period from 1st September 2022 to 31st August 2023.

We are delighted to welcome Aston University and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust to our membership during the year. We now comprise two universities and five NHS Trusts as well as the West Midlands AHSN. Our collaboration between such significant partners allows us to focus on research, innovation and health care capabilities to deal with important health issues in the region and indeed beyond through wider partnerships. We seek to combine capabilities across the member organisations to create an impact from collective working throughout the health economy. It is recognised that addressing health and health inequalities is essential to support the Region's citizens but also to demonstrate its value for driving economic activity and attracting investment.

The key activities for BHP over the last year have been a focus on women's health, improving the environment for clinical research fellowships and our forward strategy and are set out in this report. We have a clear strategy for the next 5 years which has been approved by the BHP Board and is focussed on delivering real value to the region from collaborative and skilled contributions which, in the prioritised areas, would be less effective than those from single organisations. This strategy and the key priorities are set out in this report.

The Board is grateful to all of the participants in the BHP collaboration and to the important Executive group which is responsible for developing the strategy and executing on the priorities with their colleagues across the member organisations.

After over three years as Chair, I have decided that the time is right for a new chair to take forward BHP and I am delighted that Jonathan Pearson has been appointed by the Board as Chair in autumn 2023. It is also with sadness but huge gratitude that Professor David Adams has retired from the University of Birmingham and therefore as Director of BHP. David has been a superb advocate for BHP, and we all wish him well in his next career. A warm welcome to Professor Neil Hanley, who takes up the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences at University of Birmingham. Professor Lorraine Harper has been appointed as Interim Director by the Board.

In closing and inviting you to read the Annual Report, we wish to thank our excellent core team at BHP, our superb External Advisory Board chaired by Prof Sir Robert Lechler and all those who, in their busy jobs and busy lives, contribute to the advancement of health outcomes to the people of the West Midlands.

On behalf of the Board,

Ed Smith
Chair
Birmingham Health Partners



About us

What is Birmingham Health Partners (BHP)?

We are a group of organisations that share a deep commitment to ensuring that the work that we do delivers impacts that can be felt locally, nationally and globally.

Our Board has committed to supporting and enabling our people to unlock the research and innovation capabilities of our institutions by enhancing collaborative working across our organisations and the wider region.

We believe that this approach will allow us to better address the major health and economic issues faced by communities everywhere.



Membership and governance

We are a purpose led collaboration underpinned by a shared set of principles that focus on delivering health and economic benefits to the city/region and beyond.

As our work has become increasingly visible, we have been approached by a number of organisations seeking to become part of BHP.

We have, in the last 12 months, undertaken a governance review to understand how to evolve our structure to accommodate growth. This work has been informed by a careful consideration of our purpose and objectives, our desire to be agile in our actions, our focus on delivery and a need to avoid duplicating existing regional structures.

The outcome of the review has supported the case for further expansion, and we have put in place changes that will help enable BHP to evolve over coming years.

What we have done

- We have retained an independent Chair and an independent NED who chairs our External Advisory Board. We have agreed organisations will continue to be represented by the Chair and CEO (and equivalent for Universities)
- We have strengthened the BHP Executive with representation of key individuals for partner organisations who have the authority to deliver on the Board's agreed actions.
- We have learned from the considerable expertise of our External Advisory Board, chaired by Prof Sir Robert Lecher, to advise on and scrutinise our work.
- We have agreed a process for the future appointment of the Chair and appointed Jonathan Pearson
- We have welcomed Aston University and BSMHFT to be members of BHP

We will continue to review our structures and governance to ensure that we are well place to respond to an evolving external landscape.

Our current membership can be found in appendix 1.

Our strategy

Since our last report there have been significant changes to the external landscape in which we operate.

Examples of change include a new Government department focused on supporting science, innovation and technology, significant regional investments by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), and a number of Government initiatives intended to 'level up' and create opportunities for BHP and the region we serve. The introduction of Integrated Care Systems offers new opportunities for regional partnership working that BHP can facilitate.

To position BHP for the future we have undertaken a significant piece of work involving all our partners to develop a strategy that outlines how, as BHP, we will contribute to the transformation of health care across our region by deploying our collective strengths as clinical and technological innovators, researchers, and educators.

Backed up by a robust delivery plan we will work to ensure that over the next 5 years:

- Our communities will have benefitted from the latest research informed health care.
- Our region will have benefitted economically from a vibrant health and life sciences business sector underpinned by new start-ups and increased inward investment.
- We will have a highly skilled workforce to engage with and carry out research, identify and deliver innovations to transform care pathways. This will include a new generation of health and life sciences entrepreneur.
- Our health and care systems will be improved, and our universities energised by delivering high impact and visible research.

We will publish our strategy and delivery plan in the Autumn of 2023.



Summary Financial Information

We have developed a shared cost model that reflects our common purpose and commitment to BHP's mission. We have put in place a lean and efficient structure, keeping the core BHP team small, and maximising our use of existing resources. We have benefitted from in-kind resource and input from across the partnership to work at pace and scale. It is acknowledged these resources have an indirect cost to partner organisations.

The table provides a summary of the direct income we have received for BHP led activity, additionally we summarise the indirect income that has accrued as a result of our convening and engagement work.

| Funding source | Activity | Value |
|---|---|----------------|
| New direct income 2022/23 for BHP led activity | | |
| BWC | Evaluation of Sparkbrook Early Intervention project | 148,000 |
| UHB | Additional funding for Virtual Wards evaluation project (Health Ecomist) | 50,000 |
| UHB/Metchley Park Medical Society | Funding for 2 BHP CARP Fellows post doc and 1 BHP Starter fellow per year (for 5 years) | 200,000 |
| BWC | Funding for 1 BHP CARP Fellow and 1 BHP starter fellow | 140,000 |
| UoB | Funding for 1 BHP CARP fellow and 1 BHP Starter fellow | 140,000 |
| UoB/British Heart Foudation | 2 BHP CARP Fellows | 120,000 |
| CRN | Clinical Scholar Funding 0.2FTE for BHP Evaluation project | 60,000 |
| UoB Impact fund | Funding for a BHP research career development package | 87,000 |
| UHB/BWC | BHP Leadership Training (cohort 2) | 15,000 |
| UHB/BWC | BHP Leadership Training (pilot cohort) | 24,000 |
| Total | | 960,000 |

Continued overleaf..

Summary Financial Information

| Funding source | Activity | Value |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| New indirect income to the wider partnership 2022/23 | | |
| NHS E | Sparkbrook Implementation project | 300,000 |
| NIHR | Patient Safety Research Collaboration | 2,200,000 |
| NIHR | CRF Capital Bid | 4,000,000 |
| NIHR | Mental Health Mission | 9,900,000 |
| Levelling Up Funding | WCMA Innovation Accelerator | 624,000 |
| Total | | 17,024,000 |
| Partner Direct Contributions* | | |
| UHB, BWC, SWBH and UoB | Core team costs | 286,000 |
| All partners | Non pay costs | 14,000 |
| Direct costs to each BHP partner organisation in 2022/23** | | |
| N/A | Core costs of BHP team | 72,000 |

* Only partners which were members for the full period were invoiced. The first year is not charged to those joining part way through.

** In 22/23 non pay costs were not recharged to partners. Costs were met by UoB as the hosting organisation.

Our work in 2022/23



Women's health

Women's Health is a strategic priority for Birmingham Health Partners, a reflection of the strength of our research community who are delivering ground-breaking research with global reach and the priorities identified by our local health systems.

We are developing a Women's Health Strategy that will for the first time bring together our community of researchers and practitioners to unlock more opportunities to translate their work into practice changing interventions.

Our research reaches from the 'bench' to large scale global clinical trials. But it also includes impactful policy work that seeks to address critical gaps in the research and regulatory environment. In 2021 BHP published a report , ['Safe and Effective Medicines for Use in Pregnancy: A Call to Action'](#) that highlighted the absence of research and information on the safety of medicines in pregnancy. Our work did not stop there. BHP is committed to delivering change and to that end we convened a Policy Commission that brought together a broad range of stakeholders including patient groups to explore in more detail the scale of the problems that are preventing the evaluation and development of safe medicines for use in pregnancy.

Their recommendations have now been published "[Healthy Mum, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future.](#)" Amongst a number of recommendations, the following stand out - widening participation of pregnant women in clinical trials, incentivising industry to develop pregnancy specific medicines, establishing a UK-wide network of research centres, and appointing a UK steering committee to deliver these recommendations.

"We cannot allow another 40 years to pass by with no new medicines for pregnant women"

Professor Katie Morris reflects on BHP's Pregnancy Policy Commission and its work since the publication of the Healthy Mum, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future report.

Our work continues with the establishment of a steering group to drive forward change.

The de-prioritisation of women's health, and particularly pregnancy, by industry and in the delivery of clinical trials related to workforce and capacity cannot be allowed to continue and BHP will continue its advocacy work alongside other stakeholders to bring about change.



Our work in 2022/23



Mental health

Birmingham Health Partners has underlined its commitment to delivering research that addresses a major local and national priority by welcoming Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (BSMHFT).

One of the largest mental health trusts in the country BSMHFT has a national and international reputation for research, with a portfolio that includes studies focused on dementia, eating disorders, addictions, mood disorders and perinatal mental health.

Roisin Fallon Williams, Chief Executive of BSMHFT, *'We believe passionately that research is complementary to service delivery, rather than surplus to it, and BHP's ethos of embedding research into all stages of clinical care is a perfect fit with our own culture.'*

Building on our collective strengths we have been able to attract significant inward investment to from the UK Government's Mental Health Mission – an initiative that aims to improve the speed and accuracy of diagnosis and increase the use of new technologies, as well developing novel and targeted treatment approaches for those with mental illnesses.

Our work with the young people at Forward Thinking Birmingham (FTB), the Birmingham's 0-25s Youth Mental Health Service while help accelerate the benefits of research into practice. Birmingham's share of the funding - £9.9 million – has enabled the establishment of the Midlands Translational Research Centre of Excellence, co-led by the University of Birmingham with Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospitals and Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, with reach across the Midlands.

Our research will focus on increasing recruitment to new studies to test and validate treatments in early psychosis, depression in children and young people. Our work will be shaped by people with lived experience to help understand the best way to test novel treatments.

Reflecting BHP's commitment to develop the next generation we plan to train and support a network of new researchers, partners, NHS staff and young people across the Midlands.

Professor Rachel Upthegrove, Professor of Psychiatry and Youth Mental Health at the University of Birmingham and Mental Health Research and Development Lead at Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust, said, *"The Centre will put research where we need it most, focusing on young, superdiverse, and deprived populations, which may be unfairly missing out on access to research."*



Our work in 2022/23



Health data and its use

BHP provides a focal point for our regional strength in the use of health data. University Hospital Birmingham along with University of Birmingham have led the development and implementation of the Health Data Research UK Midlands Site laying the foundation stones for a region wide approach to health data.

We have established a BHP Centre for Health Data Science and Digital Epidemiology that will enhance our shared approach and will be one of the building blocks that will help to harness the full potential of BHP's health data science capabilities.

The establishment by Aston University of the Aston Digital Futures Institute, an innovative interdisciplinary environment offers additional opportunities for our Partners to collaborate and further enhance the opportunities for Birmingham in this space.

Our collaborative approach has enabled funding to continue to flow into our partner organisations, this support has allowed Birmingham to continue its leadership role both regionally and nationally.

The renewal of funding to host the Health Data Research UK (HDRUK) Midlands Regional Network unites healthcare and data science communities across the Midlands.

Working together will allow the wider Midlands to benefit from better quality of health-related data, which will accelerate the development of new tools and technologies that will enable our frontline healthcare staff to deliver excellent care.

Professor Alastair Denniston, of the University of Birmingham: *"We're delighted that the HDRUK Midlands Region Network has been funded for a further five years. This endorsement to continue our work will allow us to expand the network further, and to upskill and improve the knowledge and capabilities of our health and data communities, by enabling us all to learn from each other."*

Our regional health data leadership has been further strengthened by the award of pilot funding to establish a West Midlands Secure Data Environment (SDE) as part of a national SDE Programme that supports the creation of platforms that give authorised, trained researchers the ability to analyse health and social care data.

Our researchers continue to use health data to ask important questions and this has resulted in support in a number of areas including MumPredict mumpredict.org a collaborative project to study and improve maternity for women who are managing two or more long term health conditions, and Standing Together datadiversity.org a project will develop standards that ensure datasets for training and testing AI systems are diverse, inclusive, and promote AI generalisability and Medicines in Acute and Chronic Care Driver Programme.



Our work in 2022/23



Creating an optimal environment to conduct Clinical Research

Over the last year BHP has begun a major piece of work focusing on how to develop a more effective and efficient collaborative approach to clinical research delivery.

We seek to drive a step change in BHP's ability to engage effectively with potential partners and explore future development opportunities making BHP one of the most efficient places in the UK to deliver clinical research.

We will focus on the mechanics of delivering clinical research by streamlining clinical trial grant development and setup processes.

Our work aims to reduce delays and the misalignment of expectations that can be encountered when determining the costings required for a clinical trial grant submission and delivery of the trial within the NHS.

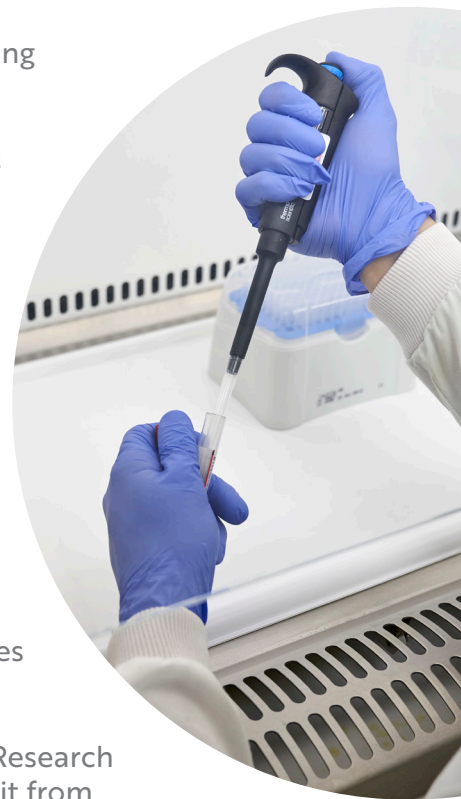
To drive the significant cultural and operational change needed to achieve this ambition, within each organisation, BHP Board members have committed their organisations to the principles of reducing clinical research bureaucracy.

Delivering a streamlined research system will enhance Birmingham Health Partners ability to deliver impactful patient focused research via its clinical trials units [Birmingham Clinical Trials Unit \(BCTU\)](#) and the [Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit \(CRCTU\)](#). Hosted by the University of Birmingham, both units collaborate with clinician investigators driving cutting-edge research, with a focus on treatments that will change outcomes for people.

Core funding is essential to their work and a new £10m grant from Cancer Research UK will help ensure that adults and children with cancer continue to benefit from world-class clinical trials led by Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit (CRCTU).

Professor Pamela Kearns, Director of the University of Birmingham-based CRCTU unit and children's cancer expert, said, *"The renewal of funding for cancer trials in Birmingham is a major boost for our research here and we are delighted to continue working with research teams and patients to find new solutions in cancer care."*

"As a paediatric oncologist, I am particularly pleased this funding will allow our unique Children's Cancer Trials Unit at Birmingham to continue to design and run clinical trials to improve the care of children with cancer."



Our work in 2022/23

Case study: Improving cancer outcomes: Francesca's story

Cancer survivor Francesca Williams was one of 640 patients across Europe to benefit from a trial led by the Birmingham centre that has significantly improved outcomes for children and adults with Ewing Sarcoma. Diagnosed with a tumour in her rib bone just weeks after her 27th birthday in July 2017, Francesca had 15 sessions of chemotherapy and five weeks of radiotherapy back-to-back over ten months. This was followed by major surgery at Heartlands Hospital in April 2018 to remove the remainder of her tumour and rebuild her chest wall using muscle from her back.

Despite going through medically induced menopause and having no time to store any eggs for fertility treatment, Francesca is expecting her first baby in July. *"I feel so lucky to have been part of the trial,"* said Francesca, a 32-year-old English teacher who now lives in Austria. *"The worst thing for me was thinking I wouldn't be able to have children so to find out I was pregnant last year was incredible. I'm really excited about becoming a mum."*

The European-wide trial EE2012, run by the University of Birmingham's Cancer Research Clinical Trials Unit, tested the standard chemotherapy treatment plan against a new experimental treatment plan in children and adult patients from ten European countries.

The trial – a shorter treatment than the previous standard – found that six per cent more patients were cancer-free after three years, with fewer toxic side-effects. Results were so conclusive that the trial finished early in 2019 and the new treatment adopted as standard across Europe.

"I was very dubious about the trial to begin with but I'm so glad my dad persuaded me to go for it," said Francesca. *"I had no sickness from the chemotherapy so it's great to hear that the treatment is now being offered as standard. That's why I feel so passionately about supporting research. Without improvements like this I wouldn't be here now."*

Case study: Cancer vaccine trials

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) has become the UK's first site to launch the BioNTech Messenger RNA (mRNA) cancer vaccines trial which aims to recruit 10,000 people across the UK.

Launching within BHP's NIHR Clinical Research Facility (CRF) at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, mRNA vaccines are one of the most exciting experimental developments to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic – with strong indications that they could become powerful anti-cancer treatments.

mRNA trial will recruit patients with high-risk stage II and stage III colorectal cancers where there is no standard of care treatment to offer the patient following surgery. Each mRNA vaccine delivered will be personalised to the individual patient. It is the 4th most common cancer in the UK. In Birmingham and Solihull alone, almost 700 people are diagnosed with a colorectal cancer each year. Dr Victoria Kunene, Consultant Oncologist and Principal Investigator for the trial at UHB, said: *"We are proud to have an impressive team aptly capable of safely delivering these studies here in Birmingham"*

Our work in 2022/23



Supporting economic growth

BHP is a critical driver of the Birmingham region's aim to make a significant contribution to the delivery of the UK's ambition to be a health and life sciences 'superpower'.

We continue to support the development of major initiatives – through our strengths in healthcare data, genomics medicine and diagnostics, medical technologies and clinical trials – to ensure that opportunities for transformative collaborations between businesses, the University and NHS partners are created.

PHTA the University of Birmingham (UoB)'s flagship life sciences research accelerator, where entrepreneurs, start-ups and scale-ups collaborate with clinical-academic specialists with the aim of rapidly translating and commercialising cutting-edge therapies and technologies <https://phta.co.uk/> develops a pace, and is due to open in early 2024.

The campus is already creating opportunities for inward investment via collaboration with Oxford Science Enterprises <https://phta.co.uk/news-and-events/phta-and-oxford-science-enterprises-join-forces-to-accelerate-innovation/> .

The launch of the [Industry Trials Hub \(ITH\)](#) offers industry partners a new way to work with Birmingham's UKCRC-accredited clinical trials units to answer questions of unmet medical need, while also generating data that can contribute to the licencing of a medicine or regulatory approval of a device.

Our initial work to develop a business model for a BHP Diagnostics Demonstrator offers another example of how the wider BHP ecosystem creates opportunities – in this case through collaboration with the [Clinical Immunology Service](#) (a one of a kind service embedded within an academic environment, that offers an ideal interface between translational and clinical research groups, the NHS, and the pharmaceutical and bio-diagnostic industries) growth.

BHP has supported the development of the West Midlands Combined Authority Health Tech 6D Innovation Accelerator which was recently awarded £16m by designing a rapid validation testbed theme.



Our work in 2022/23

Supporting economic growth (continued)

Led by the University of Birmingham the 6D Innovation Accelerator project, brings together key stakeholders (universities, hospitals, industry and government-funded 'Catapults' for manufacturing innovation) to supercharge the region's ability to accelerate new health and medical technologies. Its aim is to deliver a streamlined programme to help companies navigate "pinch-points" in the process of medical translation.

Professor Liam Grover, of the University of Birmingham's Healthcare Technologies Institute, said: *"Taking health and medical technologies into the market place can be a minefield of regulatory, funding and management issues. We aim to develop clear processes that will help companies navigate the obstacles and deliver marketable products that will enhance people's lives."*

The alignment of our partners, infrastructure and capabilities exemplifies the importance of the wider, collaborative BHP ecosystem in creating opportunities for growth.



People

BHP, through its facilitatory approach, is well placed to attract the inward investments needed to accelerate the development and adoption of healthcare innovations thereby transforming the health of our citizens, in Birmingham and beyond.

Enabling and supporting educational development and training of our workforce is one of the central building blocks of the Birmingham Health Partners.

If we are to address the problems facing us, we need a flexible, highly trained workforce that includes those with research and entrepreneurial skills as well as outstanding clinical abilities. We are committed to supporting training with the ultimate aim of increasing the capabilities of our workforce to undertake research, identify and deliver innovations to transform care pathways.

Our work will lead to the development of a new generation of health and life sciences entrepreneur and clinical leaders of the future. birminghamhealthpartners.co.uk/education

BHP's bespoke set of tools supports multiple professional groups, and over the course of the last year we have continued thanks to the generosity of our Partners, local charities and national funding bodies to grow our activity.



Our work in 2022/23

Case Study: BHP Fellowships - employer's view

Dr Fiona Reynolds is a Consultant Paediatric Intensivist and was appointed Chief Medical Officer at Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust. We spoke to Fiona about why fellowship schemes are so important to NHS employers.

It's well known that outcomes for patients are better when they're looked after by a unit that is research active, and this is true even if the patient isn't actively involved in a clinical trial themselves. This is partly due to the fact that clinical guidelines are more closely followed when the care team are research active – but research also shows that patients are more confident in the staff caring for them, and are better informed about their condition and medication – when a culture of research is embedded in care.

By bringing Birmingham together clinically and academically, BHP has made Birmingham stronger on the research stage – there's now a single point of contact and a strong network of individuals who may otherwise be in competition for opportunities. BHP's fellowships mean we get the best of Birmingham clinicians and NMAHPPs applying and working together across a ready-made network, which both challenges and supports everyone undertaking research. We've certainly seen that better ideas come from wider representation – individuals from different institutions and backgrounds supporting each other to hone ideas and fine tune projects.

The advice I'd give to any healthcare professionals considering applying for BHP training programmes is to talk to your line manager and seek out your local R&D Director or Manager too – there are people and groups in all BHP organisations who are there to support new researchers.

We need to continue to develop great talent in Birmingham and enabling staff to undertake research fellowships is a great way of investing in your teams, so I'd strongly encourage all our line managers to support staff with their

research aspirations.

A significant recent success has been the renewal of the NIHR Integrated Academic training Programme 29 NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF) posts and 17 NIHR Clinical Lectureship (CL) posts for 2024/25.

The feedback received spoke to the strength of our leadership and the support offered to trainees noting our strong track record of attracting, retaining and progressing of academic trainees at ACF and CL levels, with fill rates, completion and academic retention above the national average. Multiple appointments have been made over the course the year to BHP sponsored schemes at every career level.

BHP has launched thanks to partnership funding from UoB/NHS a clinically agnostic intermediate clinician scientist – 1 fellow was appointed in 22/23 with agreement in place for 3 funded posts in 23/24. BHP has supported the recruitment of an acute care associate professor who will be appointed in 2023 - funded has been provided by UHB

BHP is supporting the recruitment of 3 new associate professor paediatric posts over the course 23/24. Linked to UoB/BHP research priorities the posts have been part funded part by UoB/BWC

BHP is supporting the University of Birmingham BSc Business Management programme which will from October 2023 see students offered paid internships at ROH as part of the students' year out in industry. The first intake is a pilot and UHB have also offered a number of paid internships for 2024-25. We are exploring the possibility of University of Birmingham Social Policy BA students also being offered the opportunity to spend a year out in a management placement within local NHS trusts. BHP has worked with from UoB to develop a bespoke Clinical Leadership development programme that has been taken up by a number of our partner NHS trusts. 4 cohorts comprising some 100 senior clinicians have participated in the programme which is now being formally evaluated. The programme was supported by funding from the NHS.

Our work in 2022/23

Case Study: BHP Leadership Programme

Jennifer Pinney is a Consultant Nephrologist at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) and took part in the first cohort of the BHP Leadership Programme – a scheme for department leaders, deputies, and those aspiring to clinical leadership roles. Here she shares her reflections on the experience.

As clinicians and doctors, we go through many, many years of medical training – but generally there's little leadership or management training for those who take on those positions. The BHP Leadership Programme pilot opened at a time in my career when I was beginning to be more involved in leadership and so I was put forward to join around 20 colleagues from both UHB and Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospitals on the first cohort.

The programme was facilitated by experts from the University of Birmingham, which gave us an impartial and confidential environment in which to explore our personal leadership styles and identify areas to adjust or improve our performance. Initially I thought the programme might be about more operational aspects of leading a department or team, such as writing business cases or specifics about navigating our own Trusts, but it was much more about us as individuals and how we manage situations.

There were four full-day sessions in total, and at each we would split into smaller groups to work through how we would tackle different problems – having space to reflect with others on our different approaches to situations and gain advice and guidance from both the facilitators and each other was very useful. We had the opportunity to think about how to help our teams to fulfil their potential and grow their skillsets, as well as how to move projects along efficiently.

Having dedicated time for self-reflection is always invaluable and I think that both people in existing leadership roles and budding leaders alike will gain a lot from taking part. Sharing the understanding and knowledge of people who are already doing the job and being able to learn from their experiences was very useful, but even for those not specifically in leadership roles already – as doctors we are leaders in lots of different ways and everyone would be able to take something away from the programme to relate to their professional practice.

Charity support has allowed us to fund a further 6 BHP starter fellowships and 9 BHP post-doctoral research support fellowships - we are grateful to the Metchley Park Medical Society and BWC Charity for their support.

Our work in 2022/23

Case Study: Partnership Funding: Metchley Park Medical Society

Jon Townend is Professor of Cardiology and Consultant Cardiologist, working across BHP founder-members the University of Birmingham and University Hospitals Birmingham. Alongside his clinical and academic commitments, he is currently a Trustee of the Metchley Park Medical Society – a charity which supports BHP through funding workforce education and training. We spoke to him to find out more about the partnership.

MPMS was originally set up many years ago to fund postgraduate educational activity and was funded by subscription and donation – accumulating a large capital sum and generating investment income each year.

When the present trustees took over in around 2017, we felt that the fund was underused and not well known, and so changed the charter to focus on the advancement of medical research within UHB.

We believed many middle-grade medical staff who had chosen full time medical training would still want to gain experience in research, and that a few might even be lured into an academic career. Our initial aim was to provide funds predominantly for a registrar level 'out program', allowing medical staff to undertake research full time for 12 months to generate pilot data and enable successful applications for full PhD funding. We worked together with BHP to kickstart this project and have been delighted by the results. We've also been pleased to use our fund to leverage further funding from the university and trusts, and award four of these posts per year. 60% of the fellows to date have successfully obtained further funding and a few have even gone on to secure senior academic posts, which we consider a huge success.

We also felt that many consultant staff within the trust were academically ambitious and wished to pursue research but were time poor. We were able to fund two consultant grade posts per year providing 2PAs (one day) each week to pursue their research ambitions. These posts have mentorship available and are often linked to academics within the University of Birmingham or elsewhere. It's very early days and too soon to claim success for this scheme but we have had some strong awardees who are now busy developing their research. Our hope is that these individuals will also be able to submit successful applications for major external funding from bodies such as the NIHR, research charities and research councils.

The current trustees are coming to the end of their tenure, but we hope to be able to hand over a flourishing charity which continues to help colleagues across BHP to pursue research.

A further opportunity for BHP to support the development of a consultant led research has been the creation of a new consultant research opportunity pilot – 0.2fte funded support for new consultants appointed within 18 months -this has been underpinned by support from UoB.

Our work in 2022/23

Case Study: BHP Clinical Academic Research Partnerships Professor Will Bradlow

Mr William Bradlow, Cardiology Consultant at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, leads the Trust's Heart Muscle Disease Service, caring for a large population of patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy – a disease where the heart muscle becomes thickened.

William is part of the first cohort of the BHP Clinical Academic Research Partnership (CARP) scheme, a new post-doctoral fellowship programme for clinically qualified staff who currently do not have time allocated within their job plans for research, and we spoke to him about his experiences so far.

My clinical interest is in patients with inherited heart disease who are at risk of sudden death, atrial fibrillation and stroke, and aiming to improve care delivery for these patients. We know that evidence for screening patients is weak, and so I was keen to explore the use of routinely-collected clinical data to assess the effectiveness of screening. I was inspired to apply for the CARP scheme because it gave me the protected time to devote to this research, rather than fitting it piecemeal around clinical work as I'd been doing previously.

Applying was very interesting as it forced me to challenge myself to think like a researcher and inject some academic rigour into my application and interview, which is great experience for future grant applications and paper submissions.

Now that I'm able to devote a day to research each week, I've benefited from a wide range of support which, while not strictly provided by the CARP scheme, would have been impossible to secure without it. For example, as my project is data-related, I've been able to draw on professional project management support from the Trust's R&D department which is very valuable. Without this, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to work with an industry partner to work on a predictive algorithm within our data sets. We're also beginning to use text mining of clinical documents to uncover the potential for how we can use this technique in future. Overall this project has huge potential to both improve routine care and as a platform for future research and grant applications.

Another important outcome of my CARP experience to date has been the ability to apply for – and achieve – seed funding from the British Heart Foundation to explore if current screening is adding value, or if not, how it can be changed. The funding has allowed us to complete a pilot scheme and collect data collaboratively across six centres, which is groundwork for future multicentre studies.

My advice for future CARP applicants would be to have a strong focus and research partner in mind and to work with academics up front to explore the credibility of your research proposal.

In Birmingham we're so fortunate to have such a large and diverse population which means as clinicians, we're seeing more patients than our counterparts elsewhere in the country. It's our responsibility to see how we can turn this real-world clinical experience into research to improve care, and the CARP scheme enables that.

I feel it's given me the time and space to reach out and develop relationships across the country – for example with dedicated screening experts – and it's difficult to see how I could have done that without taking part in the CARP scheme.

Convening and commissioning in 2022-2023

We continue to build a pipeline of shared activity that is delivering benefits that extend beyond our members. These includes the following activities:

BHP Evaluation Service / BHP Research First

Our innovative evaluation service launched last year is building a portfolio of funded activity. There are currently 2 active funded projects one focusing on virtual wards and another looking at community health engagement to reduce avoid-able paediatric emergency department attendances. The initial BHP [evaluation study of the use of remote outpatient consultations during and beyond the pandemic](#) has been published. A second phase of this evaluation, focusing on clinicians' views of remote consulting, was published in September 2023.

Additional funds have been leveraged from NHSE to expand the evaluation service and from the CRN to support a clinical scholar at consultant level. BHP Research First support for non-CTIMP research studies in Trusts is also growing supported implementation of REDCAP, research data-base, to UHB and a further 10 clinical studies: birminghamhealthpartners.co.uk/our-research-first-service

BHP co-ordinating of activity across our partners

BHP continues to facilitate and co-ordinate activity across our Partners. Examples of our work over the last 9 months include supporting the development of a BHP cancer research strategy by facilitating a meeting of researchers and clinicians from across the partnership; sponsoring a BHP rare diseases sandpit that led to a successful bid for funding from the MRC and the LifeArc charity.

We have supported the convening of BHP perinatal and maternal health group and have initiated working group for NMAHPs research strategy, with support being provided by NHSE and the ICB.

BHP Events and Seminars

Following a successful seminar series in 2022, we have increased the numbers of events, seminars and CPD offers to raise the profile of BHP with both internal and external audiences. Examples of our offer include lectures and visits by Professor Mary Dixon Woods Cambridge University, Professor Lucy Chappell Chief Scientific Officer DHSE and the establishment of a series of inaugural lectures of honorary professors.



Our shared future

BHP has over the last year demonstrated the benefits of collaboration across our organisations. The addition of new members and the emergence of integrated care systems together with changes in the funder landscape offer new opportunities for BHP to continue to develop and promote our collaborative purpose.

The year ahead will see us welcome a new Chair, new leaders at some of our Partner organisations and the publication of a strategic framework and delivery plan that reflects our ambitions for the region.

We have in our hands the tools that we need to succeed, the onus is on us to put them to work to ensure Birmingham is seen as the place where innovative research translates into improved health and economic growth.



Appendix

Birmingham Health Partners Board

| Member | Role |
|--------------------------|---|
| Ed Smith | Chair |
| Prof Adam Tickell | Vice-Chancellor UoB |
| Prof Aleks Subic | Vice-Chancellor Aston |
| Dame Yve Buckland | Chair, UHB |
| Prof Sir Bruce Keogh | Chair, BWCH |
| Prof Michael Sheppard | Chair, WM ASHN |
| Prof Sir David Nicholson | Chair, SWBH |
| Philip Gayle | Chair, BSMHFT |
| Tim Pile | Chair, ROH |
| Prof Sir Robert Lechler | Non-Executive Director |
| Prof Neil Hanley | PVC and Head of College Medical and Dental Sciences |
| Prof Anthony Hilton | PVC and Executive Dean of College of Health and Life Sciences Aston |
| Matt Boazman | Chief Executive, BWCH |
| Jonathan Brotherton | Chief Executive, UHB |
| Richard Beeken | Chief Executive, SWBH |
| Jo Williams | Chief Executive, ROH |
| Roisin Fallon Williams | Chief Executive, BSMHFT |
| In attendance | |
| Prof Lorraine Harper | BHP Interim Director |
| John Williams | BHP Managing Director |
| Sarah Turner | Secretariat |

Appendix

Birmingham Health Partners Executive

| Member | Role |
|----------------------|--|
| John Williams | BHP Managing Director and Chair |
| Prof Lorraine Harper | BHP Interim Director/ Director of Research, Innovation and Health Impact |
| Prof Judith Smith | BHP Director of Health Services Research |
| Prof Anthony Hilton | PVC and Executive Dean of College of Health and Life Sciences Aston |
| Prof Stephen Jarvis | Provost UoB |
| Tim Jones | Chief Innovation Officer UHB |
| Fiona Reynolds | Medical Director, BWCH |
| Tony Davis | Chief Officer, WM-AHSN |
| Mark Anderson | Medical Director, SWBFT |
| Matthew Revell | Medical Director, ROH |
| Fabida Aria | Medical Director, BSMHFT |
| Clara Day | Medical Director, BSoL ICS |
| In attendance | |
| Sarah Turner | Secretariat |
| Karen McNaughton | Secretariat |

Birmingham Health Partners External Advisory Board

| Member | Role |
|-------------------------|---|
| Prof Sir Robert Lechler | BHP Non-Executive Director and Chair |
| Larry Turka MD | Chief Scientific Officer, Rubius Therapeutics |
| Prof Ibrahim Abubakar, | Director of UCL Institute for Global Health |
| Prof Andrew Morris | Director HDRUK |
| Prof Anita Charlesworth | Director of Research, The Health Foundation |
| Prof Reza Razavi | Vice-President and Vice-Principal King's College London |
| In attendance | |
| John Williams | BHP Managing Director |
| Sarah Turner | Secretariat |

Appendix

Glossary

| Term | Meaning |
|----------|--|
| ACF | Academic Clinical Fellow |
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| BA | Bachelor of Arts |
| BCTU | Birmingham Clinical Trials Unit |
| BHF | British Heart Foundation |
| BHP | Birmingham Health Partners |
| BSMHFT | Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust |
| BSol ICS | Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System |
| BWC | Birmingham Womens and Childrens NHS Foundation Trust |
| CARP | Clinical Academic Research Partnership |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CL | Clinical Lecturer |
| COVID 19 | Coronavirus |
| CPD | Continued Professional Development |
| CRCTU | Cancer Research Clinical Trials Unit |
| CRF | Clinical Research Facility |
| CRN | Clinical Research Network |
| CTIMP | Clinical Trial of an Investigational Medicinal Product |
| DHSC | Department of Health and Social Care |
| FTB | Forward Thinking Birmingham |
| fte | Full Time Equivalent |
| HDRUK | Health Data Research United Kingdom |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |

| Term | Meaning |
|--------|--|
| ICB | Integrated Care Board |
| ITH | Industry Trials Hub |
| MPMS | Metchley Park Medical Society |
| mRNA | Messenger Ribonucleic Acid |
| NED | Non Executive Director |
| NHSE | National Health Service England |
| NIHR | National Institute for Health Research |
| NMAPS | Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals |
| PA | Programmed Activity |
| PhD | Philosophiae Doctor |
| PHTA | Precision health Technology Accelerator |
| PVC | Pro Vice Chancellor |
| R&D | Research and Development |
| REDCAP | Research Electronic Data Capture |
| ROH | Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust |
| SDE | Secure Data Environment |
| SWBH | Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust |
| UHB | University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust |
| UKCRC | United Kingdom Clinical Research Collaboration |
| UoB | University of Birmingham |
| WMAHSN | West Midlands Academic Health Science Network |
| WMCA | West Midlands Combined Authority |
| MPMS | Metchley Park Medical Society |

