

UHS RESEARCH LEADERS PROGRAMME (RLP)

Annual Report 2023-24

October 2024



Foreword

Dr Karen Underwood

Director of Research & Development, University Hospital Southampton

It has been incredibly inspiring to observe the development of individuals on the programme from its inception in 2021. The growth in confidence of these exceptional individuals as they seek to embody the ethos of a modern healthcare research leader has been truly transformational. I look forward to celebrating the achievements of our first cohort as they complete the RLP in Spring 2025.



Professor Christopher Kipps

Clinical Director of Research & Development, University Hospital Southampton

The RLP is an exemplar of a programme which sought to create sustainability for researchers but has reached beyond its original remit and truly had an impact on research culture. The LaunchPad2Leadership programme, which brings cohorts of individuals from different professional, specialty and research backgrounds together, has helped springboard these individuals towards a step-change in their research careers, empowering them to integrate research in their clinical work, inspire others and support the next generation - truly promoting an inclusive and supportive research culture throughout our clinical areas.



This programme goes from strength to strength. Born out of the desire to give individuals with exceptional promise the opportunity to grow into research leaders, it is fantastic to see the first cohort coming to the end of the programme. But this only marks the beginning of their contribution. These individuals, and those that follow, are enabling the hospital to increase the scale and pace of research, and the diversity of those taking part. Southampton Academy of Research is a proud partner in the vision behind the programme, to realise the full potential of research and make the trust one of the best places in the country to grow people's careers into research.

Professor Alison Richardson

Executive Director, Southampton Academy of Research (SoAR)



Dr Kristin Veighey, SOAR Associate Director and RLP Lead

The Research Leaders Programme

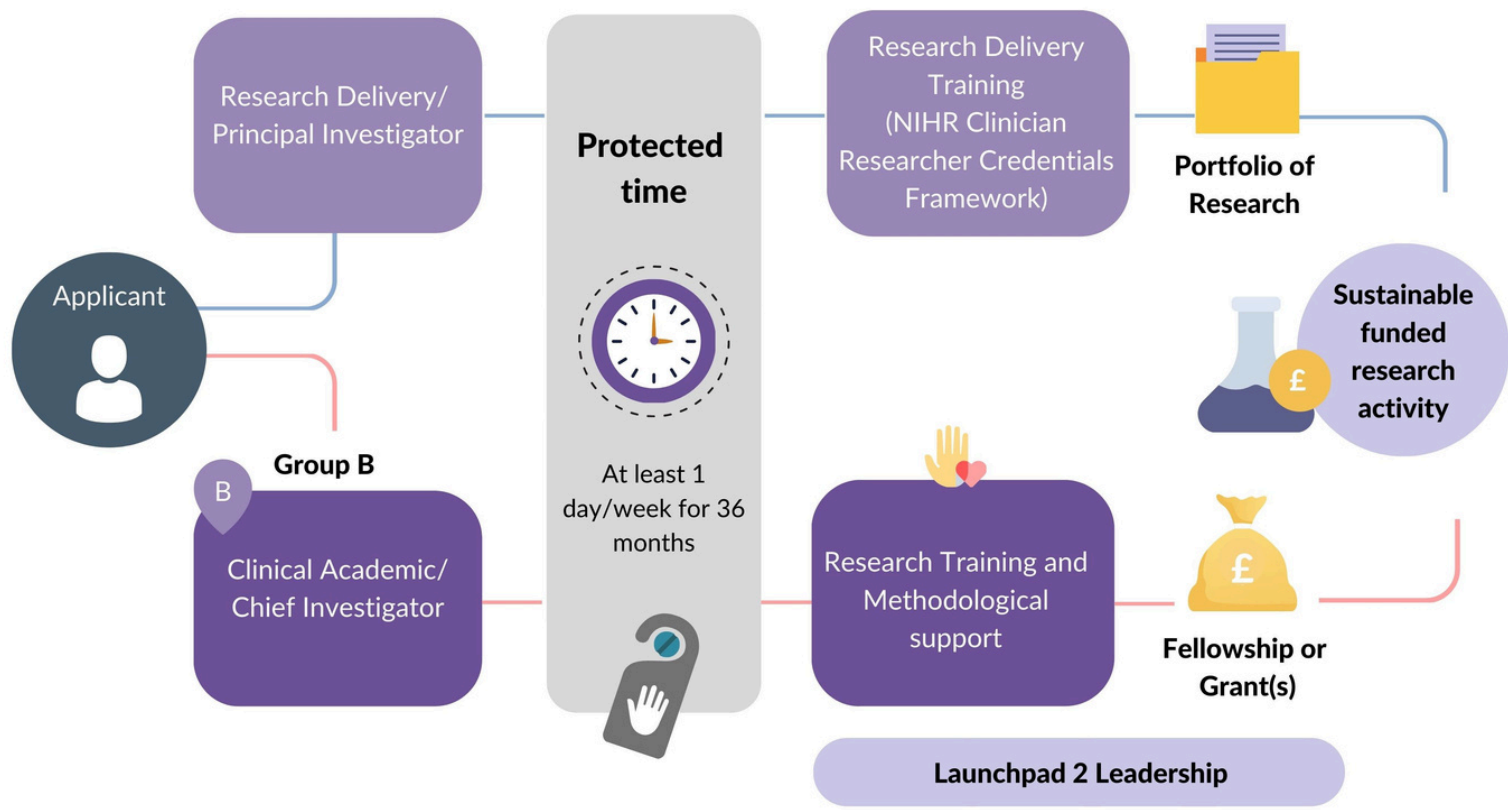
Introduction

The UHS Research Leaders' Programme (RLP) was established in 2021 following a significant investment by UHS Trust Board. The programme seeks to identify healthcare researchers of any professional background who have the potential to be research leaders of the future - and provides them with the time, skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in their agreed research goals.

The programme builds on the aspirations of UHS as a University Teaching Hospital that firmly believes that research active organisations provide better care. The Trust seeks to recruit World Class People to deliver World Class Care - and pioneering research and innovation is a key strategic theme, supporting our mission to together care, innovate and inspire. Our Research Leaders are a key exemplar of this vision, and seek to promote the culture we aspire to within research at UHS - as showcased at WeAreUHS Week in 2023.

It is an absolute privilege, as UHS RLP Lead, to showcase some of their many fantastic achievements in 2023-24, through this second annual report.

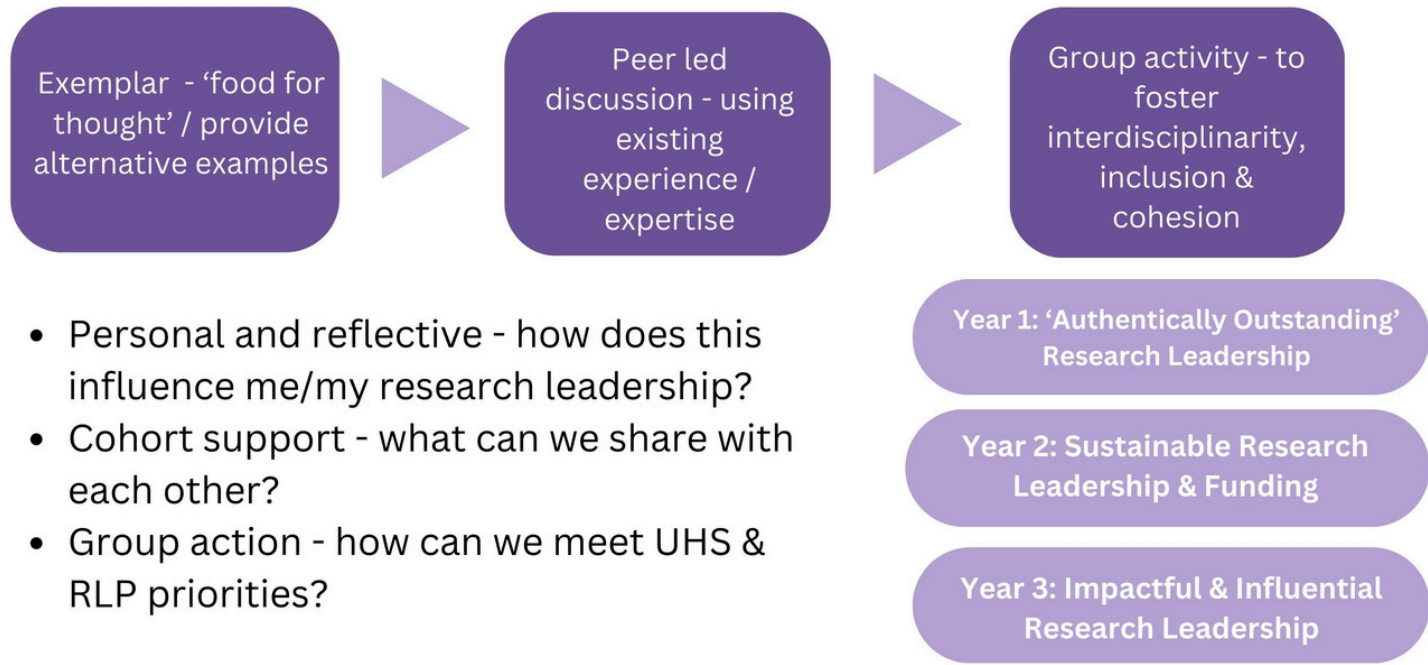
Research Leaders Programme (RLP) Overview



Launchpad 2 Leadership

4 gatherings, 3 conversations & annual themes

Each Leadership gathering has three components or 'conversations'



- Personal and reflective - how does this influence me/my research leadership?
- Cohort support - what can we share with each other?
- Group action - how can we meet UHS & RLP priorities?

Outcomes

2022-2024 (Cohort 1 - 4)

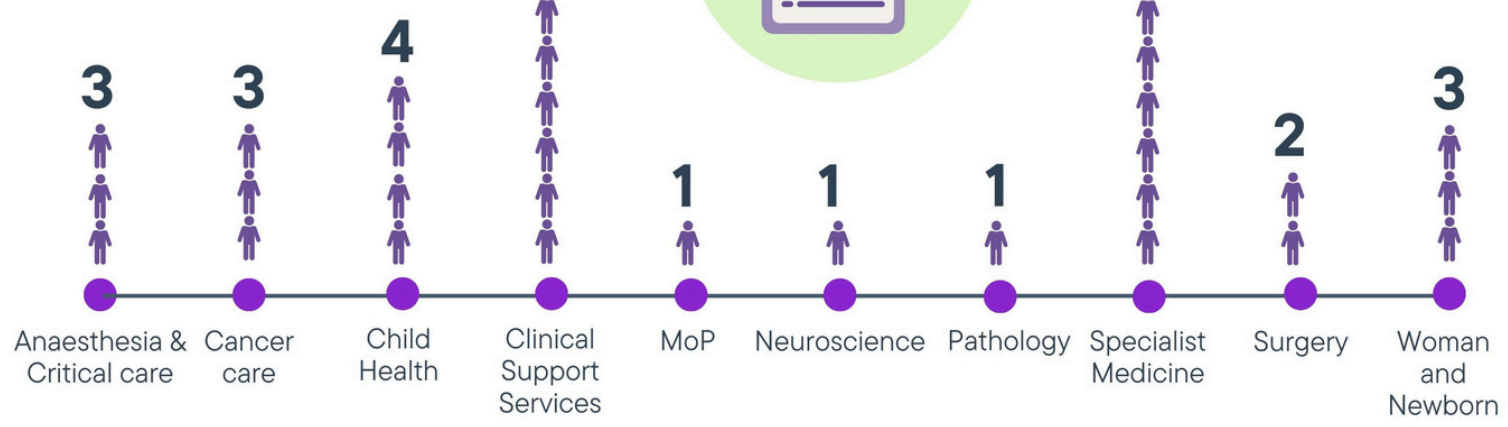
RLP new grants



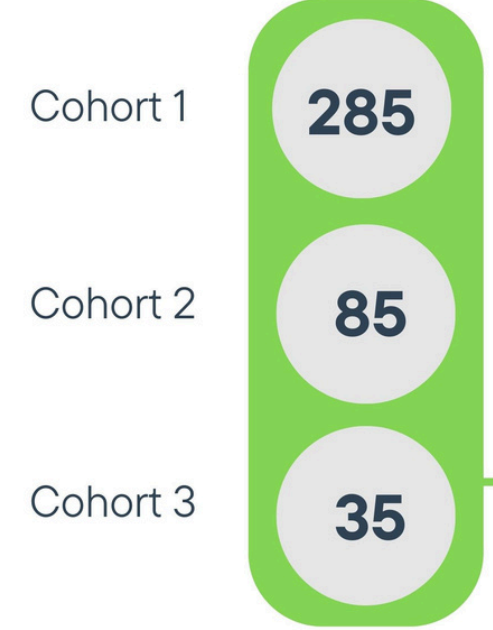
Overall grants income



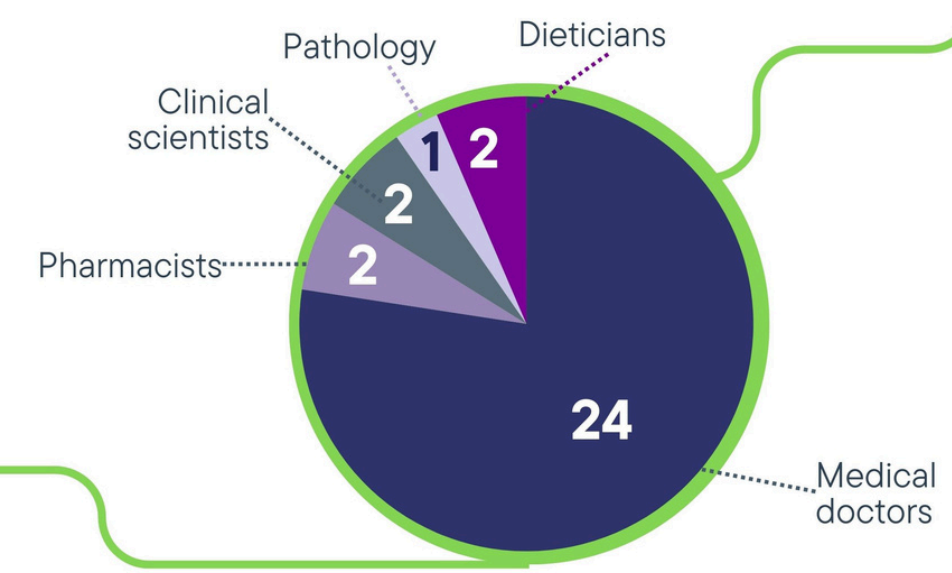
RLP members by specialty



Publications



RLP members by profession



Selected highlights

2023 - 2024



Hitasha Rupani

Cohort 1

- Appointed as Chair of the British Thoracic Society Asthma
- Has led on the development of an app to support patients on biologics



Stephen Lim

Cohort 1

Appointed NIHR ARC Wessex Ageing and Dementia Theme Lead



Sophie Fletcher

Cohort 3

- Awarded Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Southampton
- Sophie and her team were awarded an NIHR British Thoracic Society Clinical Research Network Award



Judith Cave

Cohort 3



Established a Medical Education Research Group



Matthew Stammer

Cohort 2

Appointed as Southampton Emerging Therapies and Technologies (SETT) Centre lead



Prof Bhaskar Somani

Cohort 1

- Brought in £1.3 Million from a NIHR Product Development Funding Award
- Supported clinical nurses who presented at the National Conference



Cathy McKenzie

Cohort 2

- Organised a One Research Conference, jointly hosted at UHS
- Awarded a Professorship at the University of Southampton



Katherine Lachlan

Cohort 1

Became the PTEN Rare Disease Collaborative Network lead



RLP Team Achievements

2023 - 2024

Dr Julie Reeves designs Professional Development interventions across the University of Southampton and University Hospital Southampton (UHS).

She is based in the University's Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP).



Dr Julie Reeves

Dr Reeves plays a pivotal role in the design and delivery of the RLP.

Her work has been recognised and she was awarded the Vitae Impact, Culture, and Engagement Award for Outstanding Contribution to Researcher Development at the Vitae International Researcher Development Conference 2024.



Dr Sarah Robins-Hobden

Dr Sarah Robins-Hobden is an independent Coaching Psychologist and Researcher Developer. She designs and facilitates the Leadership Gatherings for the UHS Research Leaders Programme (RLP).

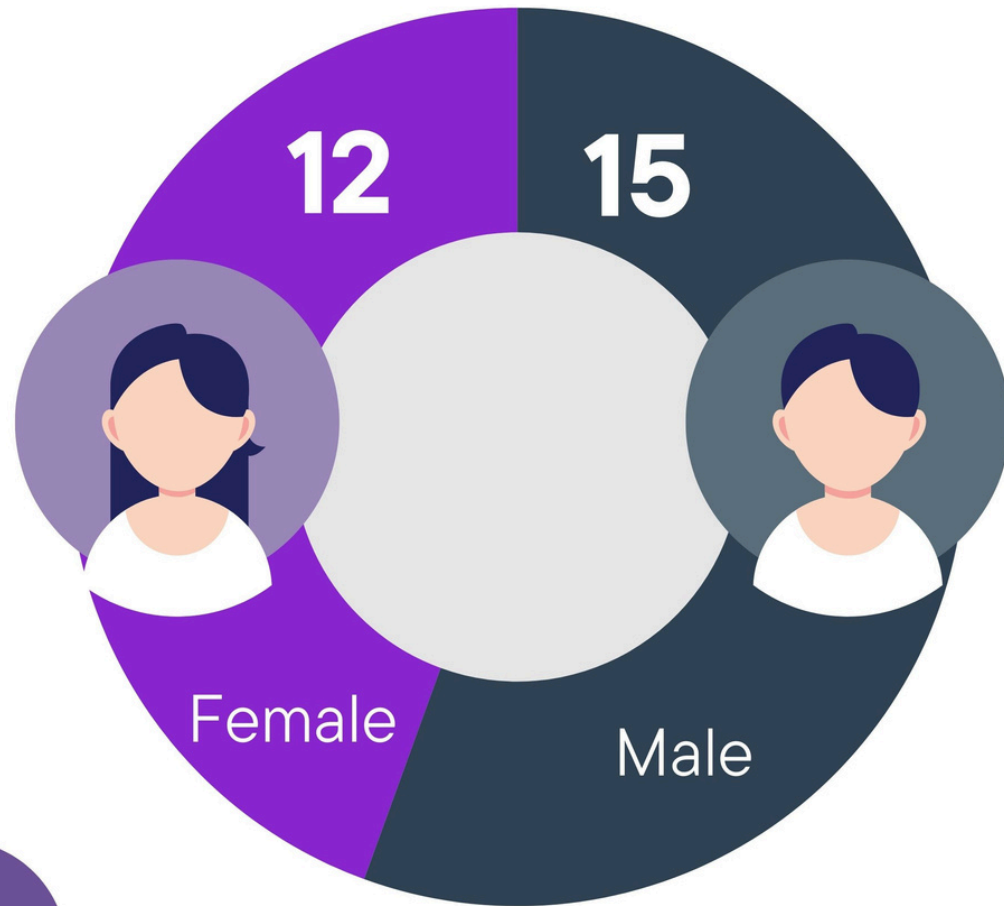
Sarah has become an accredited Master Practitioner for Strengthscope - the evidence-based strengths assessment, rooted in positive psychology.

Strengthscope Leader (360) provides RLP awardees with insight into what energises and motivates them, and how their strengths are seen by their teams and colleagues. By mastering their strengths and reducing performance risks, Research Leaders are better enabled to create and lead a positive, high-performing work culture.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

2023 - 2024 (Cohort 1 - 4)

► RLP demographics



- 19** White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- 1** White European
- 1** Asian British - Sri Lankan
- 1** Asian British - Chinese
- 3** Asian British - Indian
- 1** Mixed - White and Asian
- 1** White - Irish

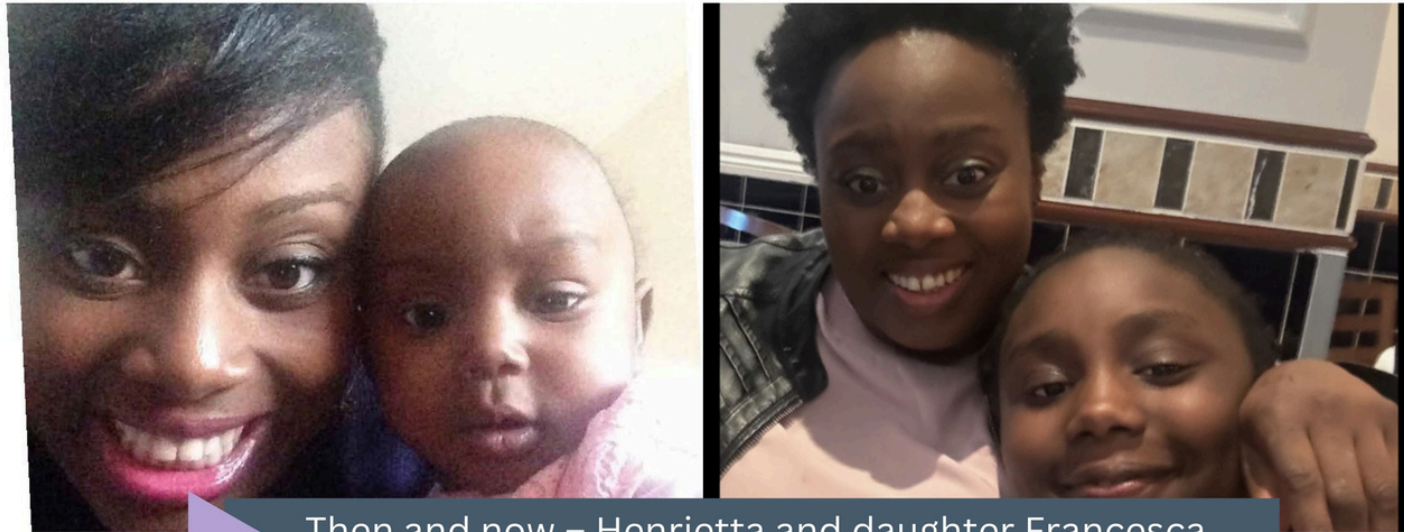
27 responses

Impact Statements



Does children's ethnicity affect their

cancer treatment and survival?



Then and now – Henrietta and daughter Francesca

Parents join experts in search for answers

Henrietta Owusu-Ansah knew something was wrong. Her baby Francesca's eyes were rolling. Her tummy was starting to protrude slightly.

Then she stopped breathing and started foaming at the mouth.

As a mother of three, Henrietta knew to trust her instincts. Although Francesca quickly recovered, they rushed to their nearest A&E. The doctors and nurses said it was probably nothing to worry about, but they kept Francesca in over the weekend. They did lots of tests. Henrietta's fears were right.

"She had a huge tumour that was basically taking over her whole torso," Henrietta explains.

Francesca had neuroblastoma, a rare cancer that affects children. It was advanced, stage four, meaning it had already spread.

"It had spread through her diaphragm, her bones, her skull," says Henrietta. "That's why I could see her eyes rolling, because it was really affecting her all over her body."

Francesca wasn't even one year old when she had a nine-hour operation to remove the tumour.

By the time her cancer was no longer detectable, Francesca had missed many developmental milestones. But she survived, and is now 10 years old.

"She's doing well," says Henrietta. "She has a few learning issues, but generally she's a happy child."

Assessing cancer outcomes

Henrietta wanted to give something back.

She joined the Paediatric Oncology Reference Team (PORT), a group of parents who use their own experience of having a child with cancer to help researchers. That was how she came to be involved in Dr Jessica Bate's research.

Jessica, a Paediatric Oncology Consultant at University Hospital Southampton (UHS), was putting together a proposal for a new national study into children's ethnicity and their cancer outcomes.

She decided to do the project after a study in Yorkshire found that South Asian children with lymphoma had a 15% lower chance of survival compared to non-South Asian children across a 20-year period. She wanted to know if this was true across the UK.

Her aim was to co-produce the study, designing and conducting the study in partnership with parents from the start. Through PORT, she found four parents of children with cancer, including Henrietta.

Each was from a different ethnic group, lived in a different part of the UK, and brought different experiences.

Milan's story

Gita Patel's experience was very different to Henrietta's.

Her son, Milan, was 11 when he was diagnosed with Ewing Sarcoma, a cancer of the bone and tissues. They tried every possible treatment, even travelling to the USA for proton therapy.

"These are very, very harsh treatments," says Gita. "To have to undergo one cycle of chemo is bad enough, but to have 14 cycles of chemo as an 11-year-old... why does it have to be so toxic?"

Yet, despite all they went through, it wasn't enough.

"After three years or so, and lots of different treatments, we sadly lost him," she explains.



Dr Jessica Bate

'Research is the answer'

Gita, Henrietta and the other parents are part of Jessica's research team. Their contribution has greatly influenced a recently submitted Cancer Research UK grant application. It's just the start.

"This is step one of a much, much bigger piece of work," Jessica explains, "which will help us understand more about any inequalities in the treatment pathways and survival in different ethnic groups. If we do find any differences, we will need to think about how best to address them"

Yet she's only had the time, training and confidence to do this because she's part of the UHS Research Leaders Programme.

"I'd never have contemplated doing a study like this three years ago," says Jessica, "to lead an expert team of professionals and parents from across the country to design and plan this important piece of research."

Now, having secured an NIHR Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award that provides 50% protected research time over the next five years, she's well set up. Henrietta and Gita are completely behind her.

"Research is the answer," says Gita, "and the only way you can do that is by giving people like Jessica the time, through initiatives like this programme."



Always improving in our pharmacy



James Allen (left) and Andy Fox (right)

University Hospital Southampton (UHS) is home to one of the largest pharmacy departments in the country.

The teams make sure the medicines our patients take are safe, appropriate and cost-effective.

In UHS, 2.5 million prescriptions are written and 8.5 million doses administered each year. All of the medicines involved are handled by the pharmacy department.

They support between 200 and 250 clinical trials at any given time - but have historically lacked the capacity to develop their own research.

Developing pharmacy research

Andy Fox is a Consultant Pharmacist and Deputy Chief Pharmacist. He is advancing pharmacy research at the trust through the Research Leaders Programme (RLP).

Andy has a clinical background as a paediatric pharmacist, but has long had an interest in research.

In 2018, he completed his PhD at the University of Portsmouth, where he investigated electronic prescribing and paediatric medicines safety.

He is part of the RLP's second cohort. He has two main aims:

1. To set aside some time to develop his own research career.
2. To develop the research capacity, quality and capability of the pharmacy department more broadly.

"I see the RLP as a chance to drive our department's research forward and make a real impact," he says.

He is working closely alongside his pharmacy colleague Cathy McKenzie, who is also part of this cohort, to do this.

Innovative initiatives

One of Andy's proudest achievements is that they've been able to establish an internship programme.

"This initiative creates a structured pathway into pharmacy research," he explains. "It fills a critical gap in the profession where clear entry points into research are often lacking."

They've also set up researcher coffee mornings.

"It's fantastic to have a space for staff to explore ideas and get excited about research," says Andy.

Through the RLP, Andy has grown his network across the country. He's also fostered collaborations with other RLP award holders, including Mark Banting and Judith Cave.

He's working with the University of Birmingham to explore electronic prescribing in England.

His other projects include development of an intervention to co-administer medicines on a children's ward. He's also investigating the confidence and competency of pharmacy staff to undertake final accuracy checks through the FACET study.

Growing achievements

Research successes are gathering momentum in the department.

These include an NIHR doctoral research award and an NIHR Senior Clinical Practitioner Award in the scheme's first ever round.

Two predoctoral fellows are also being supported by the NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre.

In 2023, there were at least 25 publications from the department, including in some high impact journals.



Professor Cathy McKenzie

The critical care pharmacy team is presenting six abstracts of their work at the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine annual congress in Barcelona this autumn.

"I am really proud of our pharmacy's achievements," Cathy says. "None of this would have happened without the support of the Research Leaders Programme."

'An enormous opportunity'

James Allen, Chief Pharmacist at UHS, is an advocate for research within the department. However, workforce constraints have often made it challenging to find the time and resources.

He says the protected time for research that the RLP provides has been a game-changer.

"The programme provides me with the legitimacy to allow my staff to do research," he explains. "It lets us support them without diverting them to other tasks."

James sees the RLP as an "enormous opportunity". He continues: "Being able to lead our own research in the department is key to resolving some of the challenges we face."

The RLP is also paving the way for long-term change in the department.

"We're thinking about how to grow our research capacity further in the next few years," James explains. "People like Andy and Cathy have built significant experience through the RLP. They are now well-equipped to mentor the next generation of pharmacy researchers."

Next steps include developing a PhD programme and staying at the forefront of advances in medicines safety and patient care.

Data saves lives – from rhetoric to

reality



Chris Kipps (left) and Phil Hyde (right)

Around 30,000 people are killed or seriously injured on British roads every year.

These are stark and sobering figures. However for Southampton's Phil Hyde, each number is also a vivid memory. He has witnessed lives lost in the rain and dark from his work as a doctor with Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

He has informed grieving families on tarmac and grass verges about failed attempts to rescue loved ones.

He intimately feels that this intolerable situation must change.

Hope in data

Phil believes that part of the solution lies in data.

"Almost everybody has passed a road traffic collision (RTC) in their lives and worries about those they love being involved," he explains.

"Those patients flow into our major trauma systems and cost the NHS billions of pounds.



Phil with his air ambulance crew

"Having accurate and complete data could provide the information and explanation for significant policy improvement. It could inform a seismic change in care, ideally leading to zero preventable serious injuries or deaths in the UK."

Could such a revolution on the UK's roads ever be achieved?

Thinking big

Phil's conviction in the life-changing potential of linked data extends far beyond Britain's roads.

"We want to use data to improve care delivered to any person in the UK," he says.

"NHS systems improve by providing a service and then, first, working out if it was useful and, second, applying research questions to care. This all requires data."

Phil is leading a team of Southampton researchers behind PRANA, the Pre-hospital Research and Audit Network. Prana is a Sanskrit term that translates to 'life force'.

"There are questions we ask about current care and we can't answer them," he says. "Many were thought to be unsolvable. PRANA is now driving us toward the answers."

"We are empowering data in NHS and non-NHS systems to be linked and analysed with the specific purpose of improving healthcare and preventing disease."

The time is right

The scope of the network is highly ambitious.

It is linking data from ambulances, air ambulances, police, the Department for Transport and coroners, as well as the many interactions flowing through hospitals. This includes emergency care, intensive care, trauma care and rehabilitation registries.

"Surprisingly, this work of linking different data sources has never been done before," Phil says.

"It was thought to be impossible, but every idea has its time. The integrated health leadership from University Hospital Southampton (UHS) and the University of Southampton – and particularly the Wessex Secure Data Environment (SDE) – has been crucial to turn these ideas into reality."

A research leader's journey

Phil was among the first UHS staff to enter the trust's Research Leaders Programme (RLP) in 2022.

He credits the programme for catapulting him forward in his research career and accelerating PRANA toward larger funding bodies.

His work has received over £400,000 from the Road Safety Trust this summer to expand its delivery in the region. The work has also received £30,000 of seed funding from Wessex Health Partners and Wessex Experimental Medicine Network.

The project has been recognised by NHS England and taken on in a core programme advancing Clinical Response to Major Incidents (CRMI).

"The RLP has been transformational for me," Phil explains.

"I have gone from working on this in my own time, and moving forward slowly, to suddenly having dedicated time to go from an idea to a funded concept."

"It is creating an enormous opportunity to leverage data and create positive change to healthcare and society."

Inspirational people

Progress has been a team journey.

The project is supported by a significant multi-disciplinary team of data scientists, clinicians, governance experts, engineers and research managers within Southampton, the Wessex region and around the UK. It requires engagement from a huge number of regional and national colleagues from the police, coroners, road safety partnerships, local council, road safety charities, as well as all the healthcare providers.

"In the RLP, you work with inspired and inspirational people who come from a completely different background and have the same aspirations for human health," Phil says. "I'm loving it."

In particular, Phil has collaborated with Southampton professors Chris Kipps and James Batchelor, co-directors of the Wessex SDE.



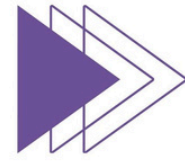
Professor James Batchelor

"It's impossible on your own," Phil says. "I can't speak highly enough of the support I have had."

James adds, "It has been hugely encouraging to work closely with Phil and see him progress through the programme. Together, we can exploit the vast potential of linked data to realise national impact."

Phil concludes, "Improving healthcare in this way is only possible because UHS believed in me and put resource behind these ideas."

Next steps



The first cohort of the RLP is due to finish their 3 years in the programme in Spring of 2025, with Cohort 2 finishing later the same year (subsequent Cohorts were recruited annually in Spring).

The individuals in the first cohort have gone from strength to strength, including securing competitive external research fellowships - which fund clinical activity as an integrated part of the research role. All cohort members have submitted significant grant and/or fellowship applications and are on track to achieve their goals of sustaining their research role as an integrated part of their job plan. They have achieved this alongside publications, conference presentations, and attaining national roles in their specialism. Through these activities, they promote the role of the RLP in helping them towards their goals, and making them feel valued by UHS as an institution which lives its strategy through true investment in its staff.

Recruitment to cohort 5, due to launch in April 2025, is currently underway. The recruitment process aims to both select those with excellent achievements in research - but also to recruit to its values of developing capability and capacity in research and promoting a positive research culture.

We are hoping to further diversify the professional groups represented in our cohorts, allowing us to truly reach into all clinical departments - inspiring all members of staff to engage with research in their day to day jobs at UHS.

Appendices

- Full Biographies available <https://www.soar-southampton.org/research-leaders-programme-award-holders>

Appendix A - Biographies

- Cohort 1



Katherine Lachlan
Consultant Clinical Geneticist



Matthew Wheater
Medical Oncology Consultant



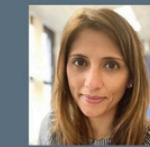
Ahilanandan Dushianthan
Intensive Care & Respiratory Consultant



Bhaskar Somani
Consultant Urological Surgeon



Jessica Bate
Paediatric Oncology Consultant



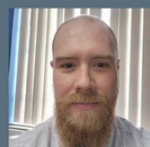
Hitasha Rupani
Consultant Respiratory Physician



Stephen Lim
Consultant Geriatrician



Matthew Guy
Consultant Clinical Scientist



Mark Banting
Palliative Medicine Consultant



Phil Hyde
Paediatric Intensive Care Consultant

Appendices

- Cohort 2



Hannah Markham
Consultant Histopathologist



Cathy McKenzie
*Consultant Pharmacist in
Critical Care*



Sophie Fletcher
Consultant Respiratory Physician



Boyd Ghosh
Consultant Neurologist



Luise Marino
*Clinical Academic Paediatric
Dietitian*



Andy Fox
*Consultant Pharmacist for
Medicine Safety*



Matthew Stammers
*Consultant Gastroenterologist
and Data Scientist*

- Cohort 3



Hazel Evans
*Consultant Respiratory
Paediatrician*



Mark Wright
Hepatology Consultant



Thomas Daniels
Consultant Chest Physician



Linden Stocker
*Foetal Maternal Medicine
Consultant*



Judith Cave
Medical Oncology Consultant

Appendices

- Cohort 4



Rebecca Cusack
*Consultant and Associate Professor
in Critical Care Medicine*



Tracy Coelho
*Consultant Paediatric
Gastroenterologist*



Sofia Michopoulou
*Consultant Clinical Scientist and
Head of Nuclear Medicine Physics*



Peter Cowburn
Consultant Cardiologist



Andrew Flett
Consultant Cardiologist



James Douglas
Consultant Urological Surgeon



Richard Marigold
Consultant Stroke Physician



Caroline Anderson
Paediatric Dietitian



Mark Johnson
Consultant Neonatologist