Shaping
Better
Practice
Through
Research:
A Practitioner
Framework

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Shaping Better Practice through Research: A Practitioner Framework

Research and Allied Health Professions

Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) make up a third of the NHS workforce with over 65,500 qualified staff and 13,500 support staff registered in 2018 [1]. They play an important role in the delivery of care throughout the lifespan and across many health and social care systems. This places them in an ideal position to transform the health and wellbeing of our changing population [2].

Research informed practice is a core principle across the disciplines of allied health and social care, and is a key component of pre-registration training [3-5]. The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Network's AHPs Strategy 2018-2020 [6] recognises that realising the potential of AHPs is core to delivering the NIHR's mission "to provide a health research system in which the NHS supports outstanding individuals, working in world class facilities, conducting leading edge research which is focused on the needs of patients and the public".

There are many benefits to engagement in research and research-informed practice across health and social care systems.

At an organisational level, health and social care organisations that engage in high quality and personcentred research activity have demonstrated;

- higher rates of patient satisfaction,
- reduced mortality,
- improved CQC performance,
- improved organisational efficiency

At a departmental level, a strong research culture is associated with;

- reduced staff turnover
- translation of evidence into practice

At an individual level, it is recognised that research activity can lead to;

- increased perception of skills and confidence in practice
- improved job satisfaction [7-10]

The promotion, conduct and use of research in health and social care practice is high on the national agenda in the United Kingdom and reflects many attitudes and beliefs worldwide. The NHS Constitution for England recognise the value of research to support "the highest standards of excellence and professionalism" within their core principles [11] and the Department of Health and Social Care recently set objectives to "support research and innovation to maximise health and economic productivity" [12]. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) who, as part of their national have developed research indicators to examine the level of high quality, patient-centred research happening in hospitals. The Allied Health Professions into Action strategy [2] emphasises that NHS leaders need to support AHPs in research

engagement, and research activity is recognised as one of the four pillars of advanced clinical practice in health and care practitioners[13].

It is well accepted that use of, and engagement in research activity results in benefits to service-users, staff and organisations, and that AHP researchers play a vital role in the generation of new knowledge, translation of evidence into practice, and in research leadership and training [6, 7, 14-16].

What is the CAHPR Research Practitioner's Framework?

The Council for Allied Health Professions in Research (CAHPR) research framework was developed through a collaboration with National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care Yorkshire & Humber (NIHR CLAHRC YH).

It is a competency framework that describes the integrated knowledge and skills that an AHP needs in order to perform applied research within a range of practice settings and at different levels of complexity. As such it includes basic competencies that all practitioners might be expected to acquire and use in order to make research 'core business' for practice. It also includes a range of competencies that are applicable to, and operate up to research leadership and advanced levels. In this way the framework supports AHP's contribution to the basic research endeavour, whilst also forging pathways and career progression for them to become leaders in the field of applied health research.

The Research Practitioner's Framework aims to support practitioners, managers, educators and leaders to review and plan practitioner roles, activity and support systems within a range of practice settings. It helps to structure conversations to plan clinical academic careers for AHPs

The framework was developed using a blend of expert knowledge through consultation within the CAPHR network, and the systematic integration of existing research competency frameworks

(See Appendix I for details)

Principles of the CAHPR Research Practitioner's Framework

- I. The generation and application of research should be embedded in health and social care practice in order to improve services, promote health, wellbeing and safety of service users, and to optimise the effective use of resources.
- II. All AHPs should enter their profession with research skills and knowledge at 'Awareness' level.

 This supports the notion of making research 'core business' to practice.
- III. The framework can be used to plan the research element in health and social roles in a range of contexts.
- IV. Additional competencies unique to each professional may need to be developed to complement this consolidated framework, and to maximise their contribution to the research endeavour.
- V. The framework portrays linear development but acknowledges that individuals, and the context within which they work, will offer different opportunities for progress across different domains and at different rates.
- VI. The framework should be used flexibly to plan workforce developments, profession career progression, and support systems needed to help embed applied research into organisational systems, for example through job descriptions, work plans, appraisal, mentorship and review systems.
- VII. This framework has been developed to meet the needs of AHPs, however it is not excusive to them and may be relevant to other professional groups.
- VIII. Research takes place in multi-professional and multi-disciplinary teams in a wide variety of health and social care settings. Many of the skills which support effective teamwork will also support research activity and are likely to maximise impact.

How to navigate the framework

This framework is divided into eight domains to represent different components of practitioner research knowledge and skills applied in practice. The domains are as follows;

Domains

	Career development
	Research methodology and methods
ĖTĖ.	Research delivery
	Research-informed practice, dissemination and impact
	Working with others and collaborating in research
	Research education and training
<u> </u>	Research management and leadership
¥= *;=	Research strategy and planning

Stem statements and entry level of competency

Each domain has a series of 'stem' statements describing an applied research competency which is written in bold. Alongside each stem statement is a suggested 'entry level' or minimum level when this knowledge, skill or behaviour might be expected to operate.

There are four potential levels of operation within this framework that reflect those detailed in the NIHR CRN Integrated Workforce Framework [17]. The levels are: awareness, core, intermediate and advanced (see figure 2 for more detail). Some stem competency statements only operate at the intermediate or advance levels that are applicable to senior applied researchers.

Although progression through these levels is presented here in a linear fashion, (i.e. progressing from awareness to advanced with increased responsibility and expertise), progression through levels within each domain are likely to differ depending on the particular role, context and opportunity afforded to the individual. Not all roles will include the same level of competency in all the domains, but a patchwork of levels of activity is likely.

Figure 2: a description of levels at which competency might operate

Awareness	Awareness of the applied research context and who/where to go to if xyz happens. Demonstrate understanding of how your work fits within this context.	e.g. Junior Practitioner
Core	Have working knowledge and skill within your working area. i.e. not assumed to be transferrable; can be learnt even if technically tricky where the context is predictable. Able to support Awareness level. Work under guidance and within defined parameters and make judgements between a predefined range of options.	e.g. Established Practitioner
Intermediate	Able to transfer/adapt knowledge and skill to different areas/topics that may be unpredictable. Able to support the Core and Awareness levels. Prioritises own work/activities, demonstrates experience of working in a complex environment and shows creativity in developing solutions by determining the options.	e.g. Clinical Researcher Advanced Clinical Practitioner Advanced Specialist Practitioners
Advanced	Able to apply knowledge and skill in highly complex and unpredictable research areas and contexts. Able to support all other levels. Provides leadership and takes overall responsibility, making complex or highly complex judgements. Conceives, designs develops and adapts solutions through critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis.	Advanced Specialist Practitioners Consultant Practitioner Professor of Clinical Research/ Practice

The entry level can also be considered the start of a spectrum of competencies linked to the stem statement. In practice subsequent levels will build on the entry-level competency. So for some stem statements the spectrum will be from awareness to advanced, whilst others, the spectrum will be from intermediate to advanced levels.

Examples are given below.

Stem statement: research, audit and service evaluation		
Awareness	Able to differentiate between research, audit and service evaluation.	
Core	Able to plan and deliver audit and contribute to service evaluation projects.	
Intermediate	Able to plan and deliver audit, service evaluation and research projects.	
Advanced	Uses service evaluations to promote service change and prepare for research grant proposals.	

Stem statement: Research networks		
Core	Uses networks to engage with colleagues respond to opportunities.	
Intermediate	Uses networks to share ideas and develop collaboration.	
Advanced	Develops and leads research networks to develop ideas and support knowledge mobilisation and capacity development.	

Due to the constraints of time, we have only included stem statements and the entry level from which the competency should operate. Further work is needed to complete the progression levels for the stem statements.

How might the framework be used?

The framework can be used to embed research careers into the practice workplace by

- Helping managers and their staff to plan applied research careers together during annual appraisals and mentorship sessions.
- Planning research delivery elements within AHP clinical workforce.
- Planning and delivering research sessional time within clinical roles.
- Planning and delivering research elements within more specialised practice, for example the in the research pillar of the Advanced Clinical Practice roles.
- Planning applied research career roles and job descriptions, for example clinical research fellowships, joint appointments within between care organisations and university sector.
- Evaluating and monitoring progress of applied research activity.
- Planning AHP workforce strategically to ensure that the contribution they make to the R&D strategies of the organisation are visible, to support investment and resource.

CAHPR Clinical Research Skills and Knowledge Framework

1. Own Career Development



Career development knowledge and skills	Entry Level
Aware of own abilities and development needs in both practice and academic fields	Awareness
Plans own research development career pathways e.g. Integrated Clinical Academic pathways from NIHR (internship> predoctoral> doctoral> clinical lecturer> Professor) And Staff nurse> Advanced Clinical Practitioner> Consultant	Awareness
Discusses research career development with line manager	Awareness
Develops resilience and skills to deliver research in demanding environments	Awareness
Knows how to contact to get support with career planning e.g. Mentorship, Research Design Service, manager through annual appraisal and other methods.	Awareness
Acquires the relevant research credentials	Core
Sets realistic and achievable research career goals	Core
Demonstrates transferability of skills and experience	Core
Takes advantage of broad range of research employment and professional development opportunities e.g. Training, secondment opportunities, taking on more diverse roles within team (audit lead, recruitment of patients to portfolio projects).	Core
Consolidates and develops specialist clinical skills and expertise to integrate with research skills.	Core

2. Research Methodology and Methods



A. Scientific concepts and application of research knowledge	Entry Level
Broad awareness of knowledge creation processes	Awareness
Awareness of basic theoretical concepts and methodologies in relation to applied	Awareness
research	Awareness
Able to differentiate between research, audit and service evaluation	Awareness
Applies technical language with applied research	
e.g. research participant compared to patient	Awareness
data compare to information	/ (Wareness
statistical significance compared to clinical significance	
Selects appropriate research methods to answer research questions	Awareness
Critiques and selects appropriate outcome measures / tools in research projects	Awareness
Develops research questions by considering research area and 'real-world' affairs	Core
Application of theoretical concepts and methodologies in relation to clinical research	Intermediate
Awareness of relevant research methodological developments in field of interest	Intermediate
Uses multiple sources of evidence (including stakeholder and user involvement / co-	Intermediate
production) in research development	intermediate
Articulates own assumptions and constructs and sustains arguments in a clear,	Intermediate
evidenced and concise manner	Intermediate
Work with stakeholders throughout the research process	Intermediate
B. Analysis	Entry Level
Is aware of appropriate tools and systems in the search for evidence e.g. databases	Awareness
Information Technology (IT) literate	Awaranass
For example, use of Excel, word	Awareness
Understands how to interpret qualitative and quantitative research data	Awareness
Undertakes appropriate data analysis	Core
Uses appropriate tools to collect data and measure outcomes	Core
C. Proposal development	Entry Level
Applies for funding grants and fellowships	Intermediate
Designs research studies using appropriate method for the research question	Intermediate
Writes research proposals that adhere to requirements of funding bodies, ethics and governance processes	Intermediate
Plans and leads detailed research programmes	Advanced

3. Research Delivery



A. Ethics, Safety and informed consent	Entry Level
Understands confidentiality regarding data and patient identifiable data including Caldecott principles	Awareness
Knowledge of ethics and governance approval procedures in relation when to start and deliver research	Awareness
Is able to undertake consent and participant recruitment in an ethical manner consistent with the research protocol (screening, randomization and data collection)	Awareness
Understands adherence to protocols and how this impacts on quality of the research	Core
Knowledge of safeguarding as part of developing research protocol	Core
Knowledge of legal requirements of research E,g. data protection/ mental capacity/ Human tissue acts	Core
Communicates complex information in the context of conducting applied research	Core
Undertakes appropriate risk assessment , reflecting patient safety as part of developing and delivering research protocol	Core
Enables Public and Patient Involvement /Experience (PPIE) in the recruitment and delivery process	Core
Demonstrates ethical performance in the planning of research delivery (inc equity of access, consent and opting out, consent for special groups, on-going consent and cultural variation)	Intermediate
Knowledge of licensing authorities and the licensing of investigational products, medical devices and IMP as applicable to role	Advanced
B. Operation of research	Entry Level
Has an understanding of different communication strategies and how they may be applied to different groups to maximize engagement in research	Awareness
Undertakes Good Clinical Practice (GCP) in relation to direct patient/participant care	Awareness
Is aware of professional responsibilities and potential for conflict with research role	Core
Delivers research activity as part of practice in line with local procedures and national occupational standards	Core
Undertakes clinical care within the research project that is within their scope of practice, or accesses training in order to do this	Core

4. Research-Informed Practice, Dissemination and Impact



A. Translation of knowledge into practice	Entry Level
Uses evidence-informed approaches and a range of evidence sources including	
research, scholarship and continuing professional development to inform	Awareness
practice	
Uses Critically appraised evidence to address problems and issues arising in	Awaranass
practice	Awareness
Critiques / evaluates local practice using a range of techniques including	Awaranass
standardised tools / measures and innovative methodologies	Awareness
Communicates relevance of research findings and best practice to colleagues,	Core
advocacy groups and wider community	Core
Promotes evidence-based practice to improve service user outcome, patient	Core
experience and organisation culture	Core
Works with stakeholders, including patients and members of the public to co-	
produce outputs that are useful to them	Intermediate
e.g. check lists, training materials, decision aids, Patient Reported Outcome	intermediate
Measures	
B. Dissemination of own research	Entry Level
Understands concept of authorship and intellectual property	Awareness
Understands the value of open access publications	Awareness
Familiar with processes for peer review publication	Awareness
Aware of local outlets for dissemination	Awareness
Develops research outputs that reflects the preferred content and	Core
communication method of the target audience	Core
Uses interactive technologies and has an online presence for research.	Intermediate
For example twitter, skype, webchats, webinar	intermediate
Contributes to peer review processes	Intermediate
C. Impactful Activities	Entry Level
Engages with knowledge mobilisation practices	
For example in service training, Communities of Practice; service improvement	Core
methodologies (e.g. 'plan: do: study: act'; micro systems)	
Knowledge of what research impact is and how this can be measured	Core
Develops research outputs aimed at benefiting practice or health outcomes	Intermediate

5. Working with Others and Collaborating in Research



Networking	Entry Level	
Knowledge of local service-user involvement strategies, groups and activities	Awareness	
Awareness of local and national research forums related to clinical research	Awareness	
Networking and relationship building to enhance research opportunities and		
activity	Awareness	
e.g. professional bodies, professional networks,		
e.g. CAHPR, NIHR infrastructure		
e.g. Ambassadors, mentors		
Understands and recognises appropriate stakeholders (academic, professional	Core	
and service users) to develop research proposals	Core	
Plans communication between partners, stakeholders and research teams	Core	
Uses networks to engage with colleagues and respond to opportunities	Core	
Implements and adapts a range of communication tools and channels for the relevant audience	Core	
Develops and sustains service-user involvement networks for research	Core	
Shares networks with less experienced staff	Core	
Establishes networks across boundaries e.g. health and social care systems and	Intermediate	
Higher Education Institutes	intermediate	
Attends and reports at a senior level (e.g. boards, executive committees)	Advanced	
regarding research-related governance, policy and service development	Auvanceu	

6. Research Education and Training



A. Education General (any setting)	Entry Level
Is aware of different learning and teaching styles and techniques	Core
Supports and organises local research and teaching events eg conferences,	Core
journal clubs, study days	Core
Engages in peer support, mentorship and supervision of less-experienced	Core
researchers, to nurture talent and promote empowerment and autonomy	Core
Educates colleagues in audit skills, service development and evidence-based	Core
practice	Core
Educates colleagues in research methodology, methods, and statistics	Intermediate
Contributes to and promotes the professional development of the workforce	Intermediate
in relation to research	internediate
Showcases and uses data/findings from research consultancy/ service	Intermediate
development projects undertaken by staff, students or collaborators	intermediate
Has a unique knowledge and acts as an expert resource for staff	Intermediate
Acts as strategic link between practice, professional bodies research	
institutes and academia to develop and influence research education	Advanced
provision.	
Educates specialist and non-specialist audiences in complex ideas and	Advanced
theories.	Auvanceu
B. Clinical Education	Entry Level
Ensure that pre-registration practice education facilitates research informed	Awareness
approaches.	/wareness
Knowledge of relevant skills frameworks eg professional body frameworks,	Core
vitae, HEE / NIHR etc	Core
C. Academic Education	Entry Level
Uses research informed teaching and learning methods which explicitly draw	Awaranass
upon and use research in the discipline	Awareness
Develops critical appraisal skills in staff and students to understand 'what is	Coro
good research'	Core
Is involved in student assessment and monitors and maintains the quality of	Coro
assessment	Core
Undertakes learning and development research	Intermediate
Provides students and practitioners with opportunities and experience of	Intermediate
undertaking research	intermediate
Devises research-informed learning and development programmes including	Intermediate
specialist research skills training	Intermediate

curriculum development and planning	Intermediate
Knowledge of education requirements at pre-registration level to ir	form
dissemination.	intermediate
Supports students and practitioners through to publication and	Intermediate

7. Research Leadership and Management



A. Leadership and management in research	Entry Level
Has a knowledge of current research leadership frameworks and approaches (e.g. NIHR Leadership Framework, VITAE, NHS improvement themes etc.)	Core
Motivates, encourages and inspires others, maintains own enthusiasm	Core
Identifies and engages relevant stakeholders in research projects	Intermediate
Committee membership related to research (research ethics committees, grant provider committees etc.)	Intermediate
Influences and leads less experienced researchers and builds capability,	Intermediate
creating a culture of creativity and enquiry	
Creates ideas , recognises good ideas and opportunities and acknowledges the contribution of others	Intermediate
Identifies and responds to ethical and professional conflicts	Intermediate
Resilient in the face of challenges, demonstrating self-reflection and striving to develop strengths and address weaknesses.	Intermediate
Awareness of the potential research impact on the professions and service provision	Intermediate
Creates a nurturing and supportive culture	Advanced
Persuades and influences a range of stakeholders to engage with research activity and evidence-based practice.	Advanced
Generates enthusiasm, presents and defends ideas that encourage people to think differently	Advanced
Acts as a role model and makes an identifiable contribution to evidence-based change & development within the profession or service & beyond	Advanced
B. Management and leadership in projects	Entry Level
Research and development coordination role on a site	Core
Understanding and knowledge of principles of management of research project.	Core
Awareness of roles within research project.	Core
Knowledge of local organisational and governance policies e.g. Research & development processes and policies	Core
Awareness of funding constraints and finance processes	Core
Knowledge of staff recruitment processes	Intermediate
Develops research teams and infrastructure appropriate to the requirements of the research project	Intermediate

Develops effective lines of communication between different roles within	
research team (i.e. between sponsor, NHS Research Offices and research site)	Intermediate
and within organisational structures	
Manages Intellectual Property (IP) and copyright requirements	Intermediate
Effectively manages time (self and others), budget and delivers project	Intermediate
component(s) on schedule	
Manages risk in the conduct of research to maintain and improve research	Intermediate
quality	Intermediate
Performance management of research team	Advanced
States clear expectations, clarify goals and negotiates realistic deadlines so that	A.I I
people know what is expected of them	Advanced
Implements procedures for dealing with ethics and professional conflicts	Advanced
Plans and deals with unexpected changes by maintaining a strategic view of	
project	Advanced
Undertakes reporting requirements related to research projects	
Examples include: institutional review boards/independent ethics committees,	Advanced
sponsors, funders and regulatory authorities	
Oversees research across departments and services e.g. multisite projects.	Advanced
	1

8. Research Strategy and Planning



A. Applied research strategy and policy	Entry Level
Knowledge of ethics related to applied research	Core
Understands the value of stakeholder involvement (public, patient, and clinical involvement/engagement) in the selection of research priorities and throughout the applied research projects	Core
Champions the role of applied health and social care research to enhance health and wealth	Core
Has knowledge of advances in own and related research areas in order to recognise gaps in research knowledge	Intermediate
Knowledge of local and national research policy and its relevance to own practice area e.g NIHR, Scottish and welsh equivalent.	Intermediate
Contributes to local and national strategic vision of research in health and social care settings	Intermediate
B. Research project planning and development	Entry Level
Develops research questions relevant to policy and practice	Awareness
Undertakes critical thinking to identify problems and research questions.	Awareness
Has knowledge of a range of study designs and methodologies relevant to applied research in relevant health and social care settings	Core
Understanding of different phases of research process	Core
Knowledge of the requirements for Public and patient involvement/ engagement (PPIE) in applied research	Core
Awareness of regulatory and legal frameworks and their implications for	
applied research design, and in the context range of health and social care settings	Intermediate
	Intermediate Intermediate
settings	
settings Understanding of funding sources .	Intermediate

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Appendix I

How was the CAHPR Research Practitioner's Framework developed?

The CAHPR Research Practitioner's Framework was developed as a pragmatic consolidation of existing research competencies frameworks (see appendix) combined with expert opinion (see figure 1 below)

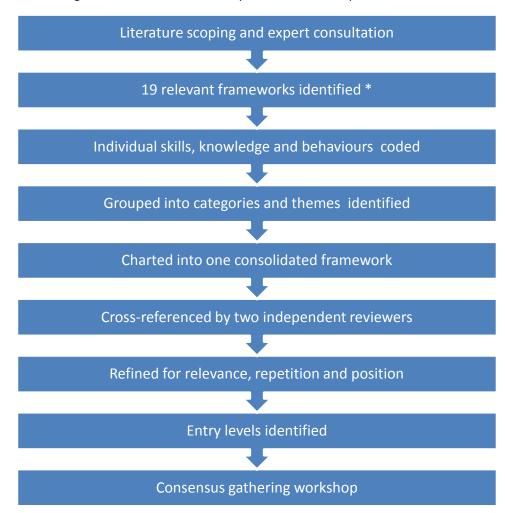


Figure 1 below details the steps taken to develop the framework.

Authors

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