

Research strategy 2019-24

Summary

November 2019



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Summary

Our vision: Outstanding care, every time

Strategic priorities (2019-24)



Organisational objectives



St George's research strategy (2019-24)



Delivering this strategy will mean that in 2024 St George's will be a thriving centre for research

Introduction

Research is core to the purpose of St George's, and is a key part of our organisational strategy for 2019 – 2024.

Through research, we play our part in developing the treatments of tomorrow. But the evidence¹ shows that research-active organisations also attract high-quality staff, and that the pursuit of research positively impacts on the delivery of clinical care.

St George's has a proud history in this field, and is increasingly active in research. This strategy sets out our ambitions for building on that success over the coming five years, working in close partnership with St George's, University of London.

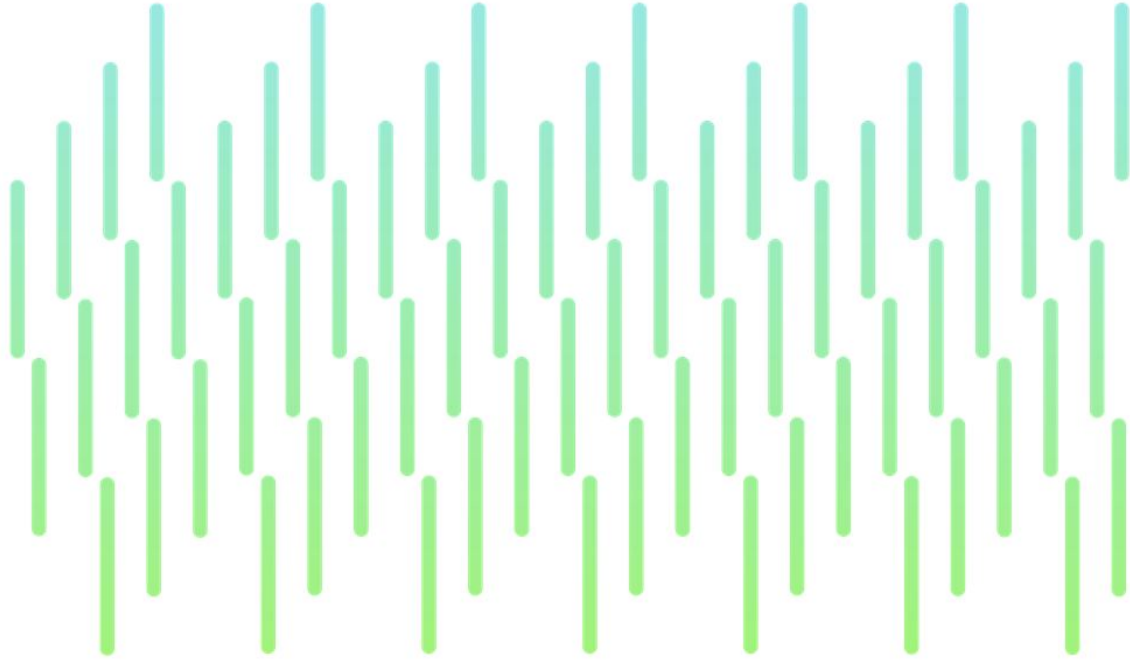
¹ See for instance: Bennett W, Bird J, Burrows S et al. (2012); Ozdemir BA, Kathikesalingam A, Singha S et al. (2015); Boaz A, Hanny S, Jones T, Soper B (2015).

Engaging with our staff and patients

In developing this strategy, we:

- surveyed our staff, receiving over 400 responses
- held staff events with around 250 attendees
- surveyed our members (primarily current or former patients), with around 60 responses
- engaged with a range of staff and patient groups.

The feedback we received helped shape our plans for the future.



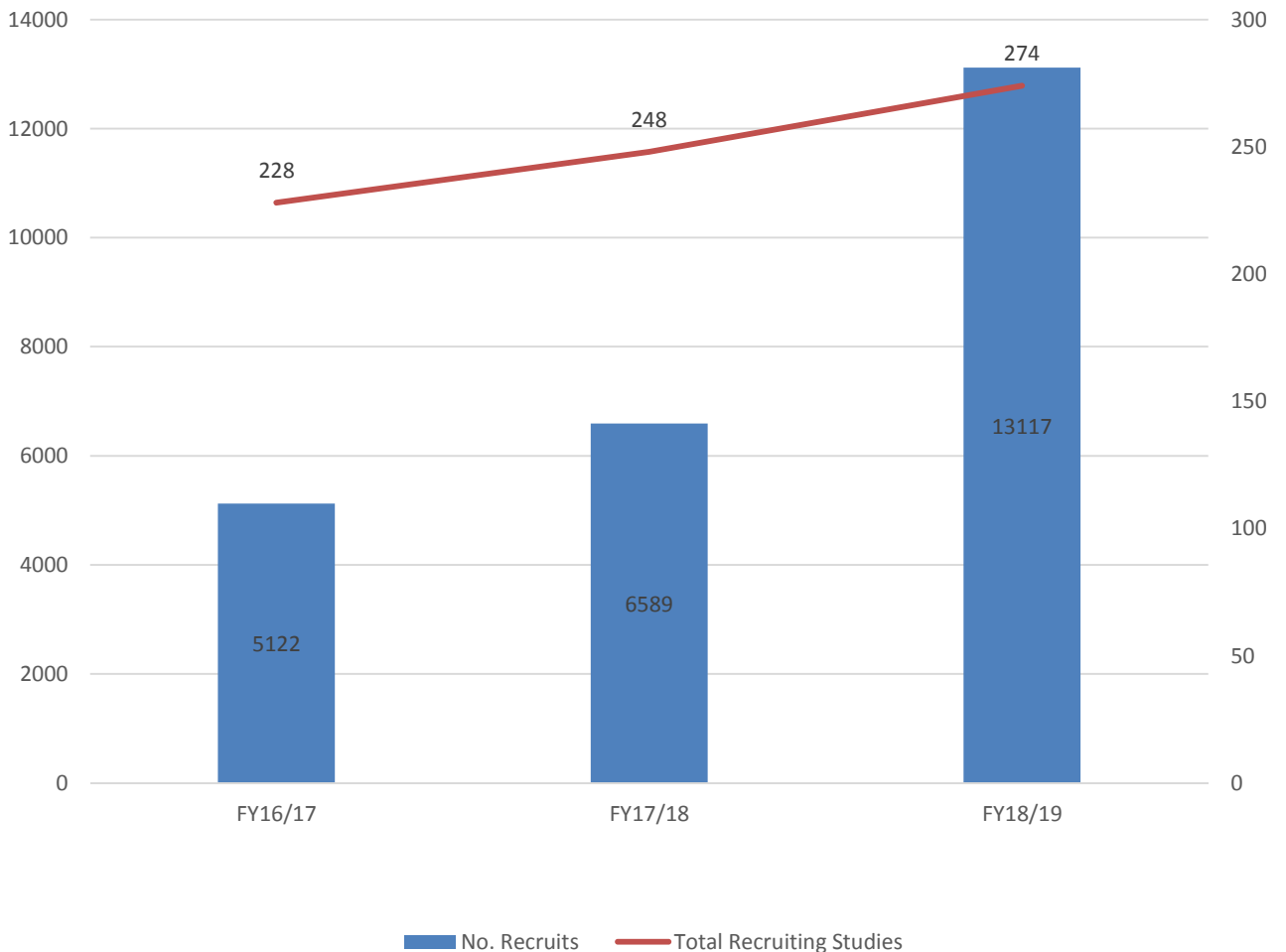
Context

In recent years, we have taken significant steps to improve our research activity.

We have increased income from research networks and grant-giving bodies, seen major improvements in the infrastructure to support research at St George's, and improved joint working between the Trust and St George's, University of London.

We have also seen substantial improvement in clinical trial delivery, almost trebling the number of patients involved in research. This has brought increased research opportunities to our patients as a result of our investigators' efforts.

Total recruits and total recruited to studies vs financial year

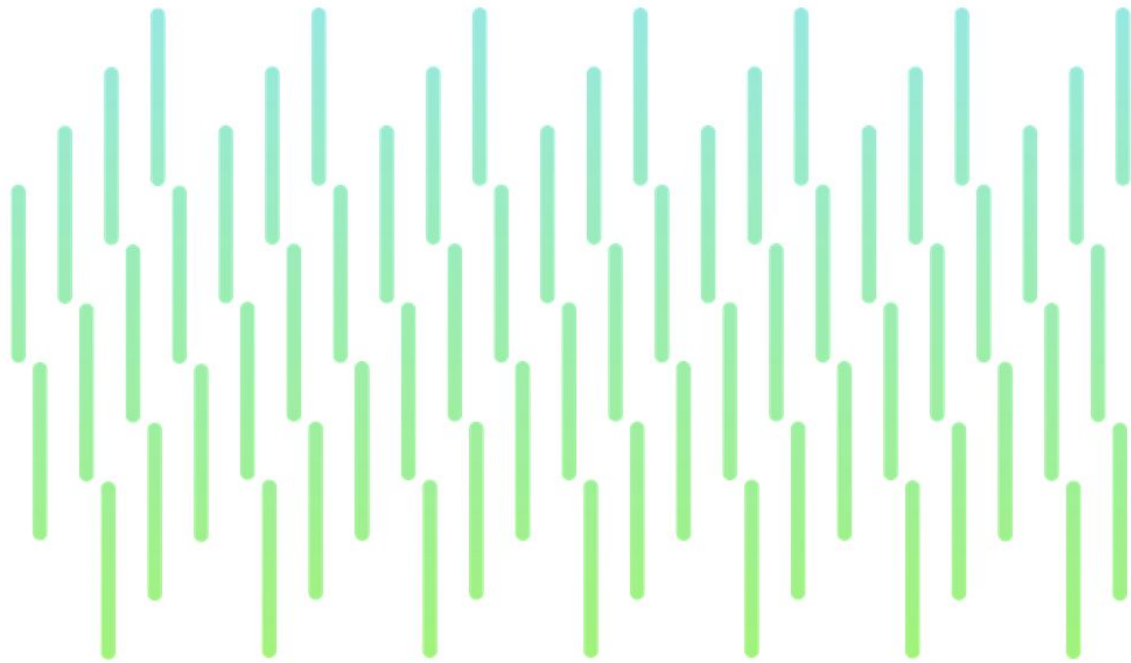


The % of patient recruitment in the South London Clinical Research Network at St George's vs other south London NHS trusts

● Percentage 16/17 ● Percentage 17/18 ● Percentage 18/19



However, our staff are ambitious to do more and we know we have much further to go to realise our research potential. This strategy sets out how we aim to do that.



We will seek NIHR core funding to underpin our ambition

We have seen substantial improvement in clinical trial delivery at St George's, giving thousands more of our patients access to innovative treatments.

We will continue to build on this success over the coming five years, across all service areas.

But in addition to recruiting patients to trials (wherever they may be led), we also want to develop our own academic outputs as an institution, and lead more of our own research.

To do this we will seek core NIHR funding at the next available opportunity (expected to be 2021). Pending the detail of NIHR's call for bids, we expect to bid for Clinical Research Facility funding, focusing on shared areas of strength with St George's, University of London. We will also explore with our partners across the region (including other acute trusts and South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust) the potential for a "partnership bid".

We will establish a St George's Institute of Clinical Research, alongside our existing Clinical Academic Groups

Clinical Academic Groups

A Clinical Academic Group (CAG) is a formal structure designed to bring together academics and clinical academics within St. George's, University of London and clinicians at St George's University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust with a view to increasing and improving research and educational activity in specific areas where both institutions have expertise and critical mass.

The vision is for each CAG to be a local, national and international hub for excellence which provides outstanding and unique research, teaching, and training. We plan to maintain and develop our CAGs in cardiology, neuroscience, infection/immunity, and genetics/genomics. Over time, as research activity develops, we will consider the potential to establish CAGs in other areas.

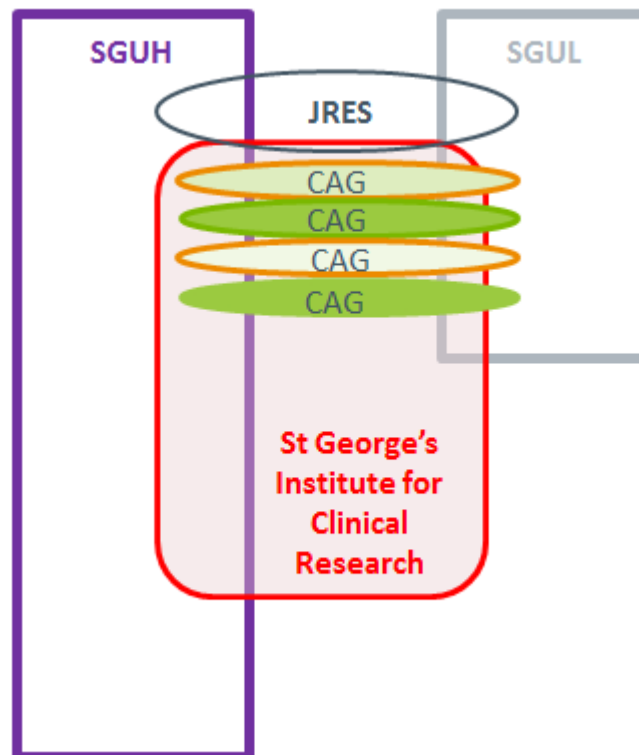
St George's Institute of Clinical Research

Sitting alongside the CAGs, we will establish St George's Institute of Clinical Research. Hosted by the Trust, this will be a joint structure with SGUL to provide critical mass and "esprit de corps" for clinical researchers (medical, AHP and nurses) to collaborate, develop research interests, skills and careers with increased success in grant applications – including those without an obvious 'home' in the university.

It will:

- enable both non-University and SGUL investigators to access resources and seminar series, develop ideas, learn from success, collaborate and grow site specific research

- provide information, training and mentorship to researchers in relation to funding and career development opportunities
- organise to collect data on all research outputs from SGUH and publicise success
- establish a strong and robust governance structure led by an executive (that includes active researchers) to guide and inform future strategic developments.



We will invest in our staff to support their research ambitions

Like the rest of the NHS, St George's is facing a challenging financial environment. But within those constraints, we will invest in our staff, from all professional groups, to give them the time and skills to pursue their research ambitions.

For instance, we will:

- support allied health professionals and nurses by funding training on research skills and methods, and fund 'backfill' to enable those staff to prepare applications for NIHR internships, pre-doctoral clinical academic fellowships, and clinical doctoral fellowships, working with SGUL and/or the Joint Faculty
- provide short-term funding to trainees, to generate pilot data or write formal fellowship applications, working with George's Academic Training (GAT)
- provide finite funding for research sabbaticals for newly appointed consultants, allowing them to prepare grant applications with SGUL or other collaborators, and providing them with mentorship
- we will provide time in job plans for successful researchers, enabling them to build on their achievements either with further research or as mentors.

We will treat research as 'core business'

The demands of running a busy hospital in a financially challenging environment can make it difficult for staff across the organisation to focus on research. But we will treat research as 'core business', and the responsibility of all Trust staff.

At all levels of the organisation – care group, directorate, division and Trust-wide – research will be reflected in planning, objective-setting, and governance arrangements

We will invest in IT infrastructure for research

As the Trust invests in improving its IT infrastructure, we will ensure that it does so in a way that maximises the benefits to research. As a key step, we will ensure that the Trust's new data warehouse can act as a research resource for SGUH and SGUL investigators.

Incorporating linked and searchable clinical, radiological and pathological datasets with associated data management and information governance processes, this powerful resource could enable multiple applications and outputs for site and sector specific research.

We will establish a Bioinformatics Research Group together with SGUL to oversee governance and use of this resource, and will establish the appropriate analytical expertise to support clinical investigators.

We will work with St George's, University of London on areas of shared strength

As outlined above, one issue inherent in our partnership with St George's University is that the research focus of the University does not cover the full range of Trust specialties, including some of these priority areas for the Trust. This leaves many areas of the Trust without an equivalent academic research partner in the University.



These in turn overlap with, but are not fully aligned to, existing clinical academic groups (which reflect areas of common academic strength/collaborative endeavour across the Trust and University) in neuroscience, cardiology, genomics and infection.

Over 2019 – 2024, we will:

- continue to support delivery of research across all specialties within the trust, including priority areas in the Trust's clinical strategy such as cancer and paediatrics
- work with the University, prioritising efforts to lead our own research at St George's in areas where we share existing relative strength: cardiology, neuroscience, infection/immunity, genetics/genomics
- work with the University in establishing the Institute for Clinical Research to grow academic research in smaller areas outside of the Clinical Academic Groups (CAGs).

We will back this strategy with investment and implementation

Like the NHS as a whole, St George's is operating in a challenging financial environment. But we recognise that delivering this strategy will require investment, which will be reflected in annual business plans over the coming years.

An implementation plan will be produced to set out actions to deliver on the ambitions set out in this strategy, and the Trust Board will track progress against the strategy on a regular basis.

On-going patient and public involvement will be a key part of implementing our ambitions.

Delivering this strategy will mean that in 2024 St George's will be a thriving centre for research

Our vision is that by 2024, St George's will be a thriving centre for research, offering opportunities to take part in research to patients across all our clinical services.

We will have an NIHR-funded Clinical Research Facility for early translational research, rank nationally in the top 10 Trusts for research outputs and performance, act as a hub for research in south west London, and boast an international reputation in key areas.

- Clinical research will be fully integrated into the activity of St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and be seen as 'core business' by Trust management.
- Infrastructure, training and support will be available to increase the number of our staff who both lead and deliver research.
- We will be successful in attracting grant funding from all the major grant giving bodies.
- St George's will be regarded as a system leader in research alongside education, training and our clinical services.
- We will be well placed to seize further opportunities emerging in the second half of the decade.