

VPAG Investment Board - GP Commercial Clinical Trials Training Fellowships

Guidance Document

Aim

This scheme is providing training fellowships for GPs across the country. The primary aim of these fellowships is to develop new capacity for delivering commercial research in out-of-hospital settings, particularly by increasing the number of general practices participating in commercial research. They will also foster sustained collaboration between general practitioners and key commercial research partners.

This approach will be underpinned by a commitment to clinical quality, partnership with secondary care, and integration into Scotland's wider commercial clinical research ecosystem. This will allow the fellows to benefit from peer-to-peer learning from existing NHS Research Scotland expertise to support their development as future leaders of primary care commercial research delivery.

There are 8 fellowships available and these will be located across Scotland with 2 in each of the 4 NHS Research Scotland regions. Each position will be linked to VPAG infrastructure and Mentorship set up both for primary and secondary care to allow access to training and ongoing trials.

Each Fellowship will provide protected research time for up to 3 sessions a week for 2 years.

Role

As a Clinical Trials Fellow, you will play a pivotal role in strengthening Scotland's primary care research infrastructure and supporting the delivery of high-quality clinical trials in the NHS. Working within a multidisciplinary academic and clinical environment, you will:

- Build personal expertise in clinical trials methodology, regulatory processes, and research delivery
- Partake in a programme of professional development activities that build your skills and expertise in research delivery
- Work closely with academic partners and research networks to reduce barriers to commercial trial participation
- Engage with local communities and patients to encourage research participation – particularly in underrepresented groups.
- Support the engagement of general practices in commercial research including supporting the new PERUs (Practice Embedded Research Units).
- Support individual practices to develop innovative, scalable models for commercial trial delivery in the community
- Contribute to outputs aligned with national priorities, including reports, publications, and funding development

Eligibility

- You must Hold full GMC registration and be on the GP Performers List
- You must be working as a GP in Scotland
- You should have an interest in clinical trials, research delivery, or research leadership
- You should be motivated to support commercial research in primary care and community settings
- You should value collaboration across academic, clinical, and industry partners

Previous research experience is welcome but not essential; enthusiasm, curiosity, and commitment to improving research access in the community are key.

The fellowship will provide ringfenced time and access to training in a supportive environment. Candidates will need to show that they will be able to use this to develop the skills to become a Principal Investigator (PI) on commercial clinical trials within primary care.

The Closing date for applications is Tuesday 15th September 2026

It is expected that interviews will be held in October/November

Fellows will be expected to start by in Jan 2027

Applications should be made on the CSO Grants Management

[Login - Chief Scientist Office](#)

<https://cso.flexigrant.com/startapplication.aspx?id=16962>

Fellowship Positions

The locations of the Fellowship positions around the country are listed below with potential mentor details. Prospective candidates are encouraged to contact their preferred location to discuss their applications.

North Node (Grampian/Highland)

Commercial Research Delivery Centre – 2 positions

Exact location can be agreed with the successful fellows

If you wish to discuss a position in this node, please contact - gram.vpag@nhs.scot

Primary Care mentorship provided in the North node by Professor Peter Murchie

Potential mentors include

Professor Seshadri Vasan: Director of R&D

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Infectious diseases, virology, public health data science.

Dr Robert Lockhart - GP Maryhill, Elgin

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Diabetes and rural healthcare.

Professor Roy Soiza - Consultant Geriatrician

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Geriatric medicine, infectious diseases, vaccines.

Professor Sam Philip - Consultant Physician Diabetes and Endocrinology

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Diabetes, endocrinology, screening programmes interfacing diabetes and multiple co-morbidities.

Dr Ashis Mukhopadhya - Consultant gastroenterologist

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Hepatology, gastroenterology, screening programmes interfacing MASLD and multiple co-morbidities.

Dr Stephanie Stone: Consultant Haematologist

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Malignant haematology, advanced therapies, rural and remote settings.

Professor Gerald Lip: Consultant Radiologist

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: AI in medicine, cancer screening programs,

Ms Beatrix Elsberger: Consultant Breast Surgeon

VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Breast cancer

East Node (Tayside/Fife/Forth Valley)

Commercial Research Delivery Centre, Ninewells, Dundee. – 2 positions

If you wish to discuss a position in this node, please contact - s.martinsdasilva@dundee.ac.uk

Primary Care mentorship provided in the East node by Professor Frank Sullivan

Potential mentors include

Professor Isla Mackensie Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Decentralised Clinical Trials

Professor Rory McCrimmon Professor of Experimental Diabetes and Metabolism
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Diabetes Clinical Trials

Dr Iffy Mordi, Clinical Senior Lecturer in Cardiology
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Heart Failure Clinical Trials

Dr Natalie Mordi Consultant in Renal Medicine
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Chronic Renal Failure Clinical Trials

Note: *The above can also work in combination to offer co-ordinated collaborative mentorship for those wishing to work in cardio-renal -metabolic diseases - potential candidates are encouraged to discuss this with individual mentors if this is of interest*

Professor Russell Petty, Professor of Medical Oncology
Professor Andrew Radley, Chair of Pharmaceutical Public Health
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Decentralised Oncology Clinical Trials and Subcutaneous Oncology Medicines

Dr Esther Sammler. Reader in Neurology,
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Clinical Trials in Parkinson Disease

Professor Lesley Colvin, Professor of Pain Medicine
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: Chronic pain and neuropathy clinical trials

South node (Lothian and Borders)

Commercial Research Delivery Centre, Western General Hospital Edinburgh – 2 positions

If you wish to discuss a position in this node, please contact -
Rebecca.Sutherland@nhs.scot

Primary Care mentorship provided in the South node by Professor Bruce Guthrie

Potential mentors include

Dr Becky Sutherland - Honorary Senior Lecturer
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: ID and vaccines

Professor Bean Dhaun – Professor of Nephrology
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: renal medicine

Dr Stuart Ritchie – Honorary Clinical Senior Lecturer
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: diabetes, endocrine, obesity

Dr Peter Henriksen – Honorary Senior lecturer
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: cardiology

Gordon Duncan – Honorary Clinical Senior Lecturer
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: neuroprogressive disease and dementia

Gourab Choudhury – Respiratory Consultant
VPAG GP Fellowship area of Interest: respiratory/COPD

West node (Greater Glasgow and Clyde/Lanarkshire/ Ayrshire and Arran/Dumfries and Galloway)

Commercial Research Delivery Centre, Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow – 2 positions

There may also be opportunities to spend time in other Clinical Research Facilities throughout the fellowship.

If you wish to discuss a position in this node, please contact Professor John Haughney - john.haughney@nhs.scot

Mentorship Team

Professor John Haughney Associate Clinical Director FRCGP

Naomi Hickey – Education Lead.

Additional Available Mentors include

Professor Chris Carlin, Consultant Physician, QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Innovation, OSA, respiratory

Professor Colin Berry, Professor of Cardiology, UoG and QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Community facing Phase IV CTIMP (tbc), Cardiology

Dr Linsay McCallum, Consultant Physician, QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: hypertension, lipidology, GLP type studies, clinical pharmacology

Dr Hannah Bayes, Consultant Physician, GRI

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: COPD, bronchiectasis, respiratory

Professor Jesse Dawson, Professor of Stroke Medicine, Consultant Physician, R&I Director, QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Stroke Medicine, all aspects of clinical research

Dr James Shepherd, Consultant Physician, GRI

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Vaccine and related studies, pandemic planning, infectious diseases

Dr Rachael Swann, Consultant Physician, QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Alcoholic Liver Disease, hepatology

Professor James Boyle, Consultant Physician, GRI

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: GLP type studies, diabetes, endocrinology

Dr Matthew Sheridan, Consultant Psychiatrist, Glenkirk Centre and QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Mental Health, dementia

Dr Ross Campbell, Consultant Physician, QEUH

VPAG GP Fellowship area of interest: Heart Failure, Cardiology

Training

Some Cohort training will be arranged centrally but other training will be available within different CRFs depending on where the Fellowship is based. Much of the available training is currently geared towards secondary care as are many of the mentoring and shadowing opportunities. A possible aspect of this fellowship for some Fellows will be helping to adapt the resources to make them more applicable useful for delivering trials in out of hospital settings.

Fellows might also consider the NIHR associate PI scheme as a model for the required learning to get to the appropriate level.

NIHR Learn is also freely available and contains many suitable resources.

- Commercial Research Resource Pack:
<https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/commercial-research-resources>
- Royal College of General Practitioners, Research Engagement Hub:
<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/representing-you/research-at-rcgp/research-engagement-hub>. This includes case studies, research learning tools and support with conducting research. Also links to a RCGP Research Read - Accreditation and eLearning Module.
- NIHR - Deliver commercial research in Primary Care:
<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/industry/spotlights/deliver-commercial-research-primary-care>
- NIHR - Primary Care Strategy and programme - links to 'Primary Care Learning Events' <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/support-for-delivering-research/find-an-expert-specialties/primary-care/strategy-and-programme#learningevents>

VPAG investment Programme

Commercial Research Delivery Centres

Commercial Research Delivery Centres (CRDCs) act as regional hubs for pioneering clinical trials, creating opportunities to test innovative new treatments with the latest equipment and technology.

CRDCs bring together expert teams, facilities and partners to support the efficient set-up and delivery of industry-sponsored studies, from early feasibility through to recruitment and implementation.

Acting as a regional hub for innovative research, they increase capacity for high-quality trials, improve patient access to cutting-edge treatments, and strengthen collaboration among the NHS, academia, and the life sciences industry.

Practice Embedded Research Units - PERU

A VPAG team in each of three areas around the country will be supporting the setup of Practice -Embedded Research Units (PERU) and associated Patient Identification Centres (PIC). The PERU is a host practice that has research embedded as part of their business plan. The VPAG team will be integrated into daily research activity to mentor and upskill teams to enable the practices to become independently research active. It is envisaged that the GP Fellows will also be able to get experience of the setup of these research units and actively support research within them.

The first team will be working in Lothian, but further teams will be set up in Glasgow and Highlands/Grampian and supporting this initiative will be an important part of the Fellowship delivery.

Oversight

Oversight and monitoring of the scheme will be undertaken by the **NRS Primary Care Network** who will organise cohort activities and training to supplement that provided by the local mentors and VPAG infrastructure. They will also ensure that sufficient progress is made by each Fellow.

Outcomes

A successful outcome will be a cohort of GP's spanning the country that are able to lead commercial clinical trials in a non-hospital setting. Leading to an increase in the amount of commercial research being undertaken.