Proposal:

Research Strategy 2018-2023

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Vision

Our vision is to realise the research potential of South Central Ambulance Service in order to optimise outcomes for our patients and staff.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Research is a core function of health and social care. Prehospital and out-of-hospital research is not as well established as that within the hospital setting. Ambulance services are key to developing and delivering prehospital research.

1.2.2 Research engagement by clinicians and organisations, that is, playing an active role in the research cycle, has been found to improve the process and outcomes of health care (Boaz et al, 2015). This review found that engagement in research increases the likelihood of improvements in healthcare performance even where this was not the main focus of the research. Most improvements were observed in the process of care rather than in health outcomes. It has been suggested that this may be due to changes in clinician attitudes or to long-term adoption of the infrastructure put in place to support clinical trials (Boaz et al, 2015).

1.2.3 In order for an organisation to increase its research capacity, it is essential to develop opportunities, skills and systems (CLARHC SY, 2013).

1.2.4 An organisational support tool for research development is available for trusts to self-assess their research capacity (Sarre & Cooke, 2007). This is based on the framework for research capacity building proposed by Cooke (2005) and includes six principles:

- Research capacity is built by developing appropriate skills and confidence
- Research capacity building should support research 'close to practice' in order for it to be useful
- Linkages, partnerships and collaborations enhance research capacity building
- Research capacity building should ensure appropriate dissemination to maximise impact
- Research capacity building should include elements of continuity and sustainability
- Appropriate infrastructures enhance research capacity building

Activities may be driven by these principles but are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A review in 2017 of SCAS' research activities informed development of this strategy.

1.3 Drivers

The NHS, through the NHS Constitution, has made research part of its core business (NHS, 2015). Every patient should have the opportunity to take part in research, as both patients and the NHS as a whole benefit from cutting edge treatments, technologies and processes (NHS England, 2017). Supported by the National Institute for Health

Research (NIHR), NHS organisations are making these pledges a reality and the UK ambulance services are committed to improvement of patient outcomes through the conduct and use of research.
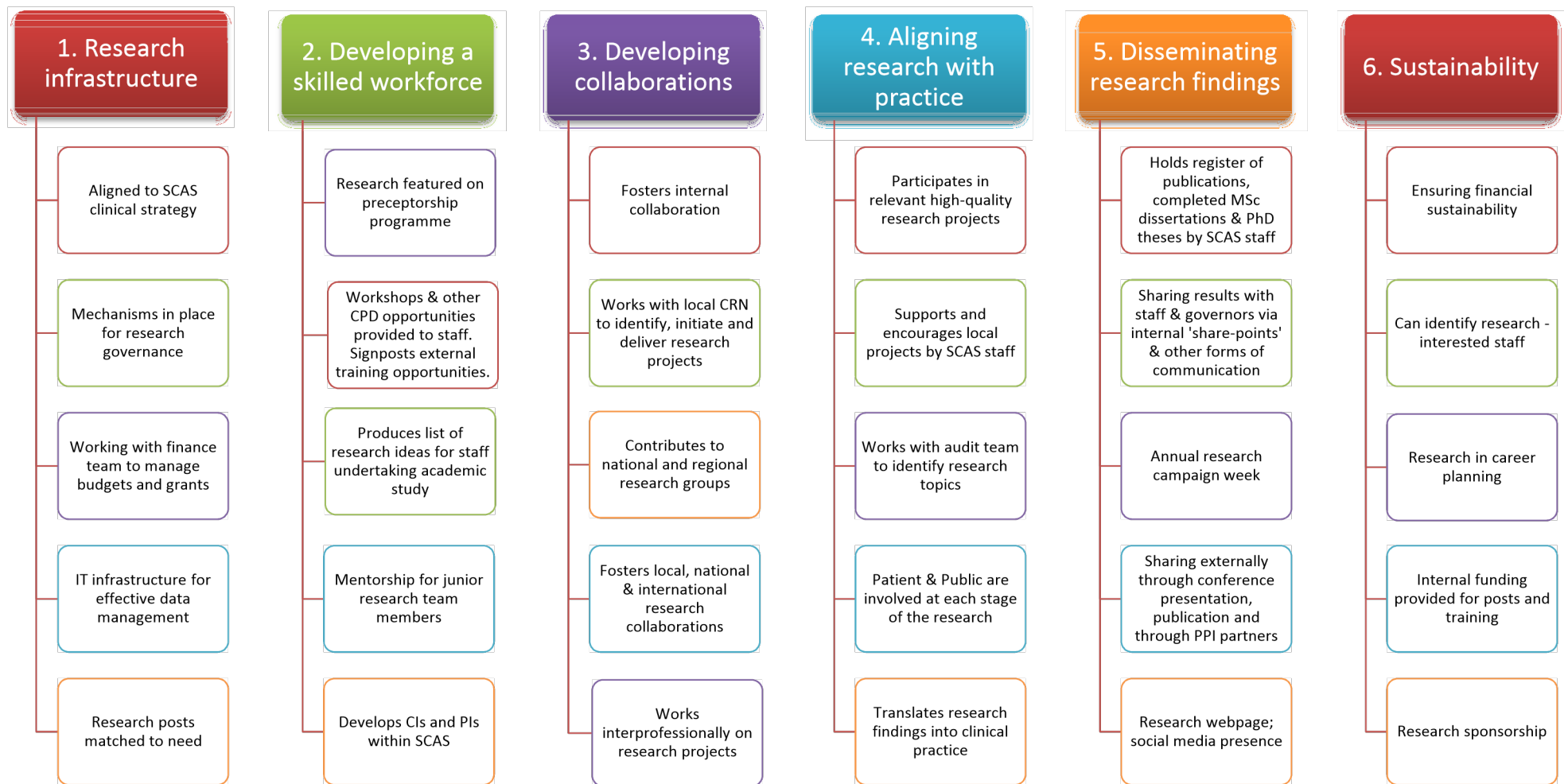
2.0   Strategic Aims

Our research aims align with our organisational values:

- To develop the skills required to conduct research ~ PROFESSIONALISM
- To strengthen the systems within SCAS that facilitate research ~ TEAMWORK
- To recognise and respond to opportunities to develop and conduct research ~ INNOVATION
- To put research findings into practice ~ CARING

3.0   Objectives

Our objectives are driven by the six key themes identified above:

1. Research infrastructure
2. Developing a skilled workforce
3. Developing collaborations
4. Aligning research with practice
5. Disseminating research findings
6. Sustainability

1. Research infrastructure

- Aligned to SCAS clinical strategy
- Mechanisms in place for research governance
- Working with finance team to manage budgets and grants
- IT infrastructure for effective data management
- Research posts matched to need

2. Developing a skilled workforce

- Research featured on preceptorship programme
- Workshops & other CPD opportunities provided to staff. Signposts external training opportunities.
- Produces list of research ideas for staff undertaking academic study
- Mentorship for junior research team members
- Develops CIs and PIs within SCAS

3. Developing collaborations

- Fosters internal collaboration
- Works with local CRN to identify, initiate and deliver research projects
- Contributes to national and regional research groups
- Fosters local, national & international research collaborations
- Works interprofessionally on research projects

4. Aligning research with practice

- Participates in relevant high-quality research projects
- Supports and encourages local projects by SCAS staff
- Works with audit team to identify research topics
- Patient & Public are involved at each stage of the research
- Translates research findings into clinical practice

5. Disseminating research findings

- Holds register of publications, completed MSc dissertations & PhD theses by SCAS staff
- Sharing results with staff & governors via internal 'share-points' & other forms of communication
- Annual research campaign week
- Sharing externally through conference presentation, publication and through PPI partners
- Research webpage; social media presence

6. Sustainability

- Ensuring financial sustainability
- Can identify research - interested staff
- Research in career planning
- Internal funding provided for posts and training
- Research sponsorship

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3.1 Research infrastructure

Alignment to clinical strategy

- External research projects could be scored according to how they align with SCAS' Clinical Strategy. Internal research projects should be developed with the strategy in mind and should aim to achieve a high score. This would ensure that the trust is consistent in working towards meeting its clinical priorities and would support the engagement of key individuals.

- Non-clinical projects should be similarly scored according to their alignment with the relevant SCAS strategy.

Mechanisms in place for research governance

- A document explaining the approvals process has been developed. This now needs dissemination through external and internal web pages, and at key trust meetings to ensure that all departments are aware.

Working with finance team to manage budgets and grants

- There is a need to explore the possibility of ring-fencing research funding following previous experience of this funding being lost to other departments.

- Ensure research team have access to, and utilise, Research Capability funding.

IT infrastructure for effective data management

- Bid for small grants that could cover the cost of IT requirements, e.g. College of Paramedics small grant scheme application for focus groups research which included funding for NVIVO software.

- Explore opportunities for staff training in use of databases and other research-relevant software

Posts & roles: matched to need

- Seek new opportunities for funding for research staff

3.2 Developing a skilled workforce

Research featured on preceptorship programme

- Development of a welcome letter/pack would be a quick and easy way of promoting research and opportunities to preceptee staff. This is not a tactic used by other departments and so the novelty of this means of dissemination may ensure that it doesn't get lost amongst other information that preceptees receive during their course.

Workshops

- Workshops and other CPD opportunities should be provided to staff. This could be offered via a number of different delivery modes: team training, 'pay-day training', elearning. These offerings should be evaluated and reviewed in order to optimise impact.
- Research topics should be offered as part of the Newly Qualified Paramedic (NQP) education provision.
- External provision should be included. The Research Design Service (RDS) have offered to provide sessions to staff. These too should be evaluated to ensure that they are suitable and address need. Staff should also be signposted to other appropriate external training opportunities.

Produce list of research ideas for staff undertaking academic study

- The list of research ideas should be informed by trust Clinical Risk Register.

- Continue to develop and update the list and proactively share with the Higher Education team via Outlook teams

Mentorship for junior staff

- In addition to the current basic induction the Senior Research Paramedic shall maintain a list of training and development opportunities for new staff thereby enabling the development of bespoke training plans as new members join the team.

- Each new member of staff shall have a period of mentorship. This period may be agreed on an individual basis according to previous experience. At the beginning of this period a number of learning objectives shall be agreed and a SMART action plan drawn up to achieve these objectives.

Has Chief Investigators (Cis) and Principal Investigators (Pls) within SCAS

- Further opportunities for leading studies should be sought for other members of the research team, supported by CRN-provided training and development.

3.3 Developing collaborations

Fosters internal collaborations

- There is an opportunity to be more responsive to local need by working collaboratively with the audit, clinical governance and risk teams to identify research topics.

Works with local CRN

- Works with local CRN to identify, initiate and deliver research projects.

Contributes to national and regional research groups

- Continue to contribute to local IESG meetings.

- Consider attending other specialty meetings when working on current and proposed research projects in the specialty area with due consideration of the productivity of time spent in meetings.

- Continue to contribute to NARSG. Seek collaborative opportunities through this forum.

Fosters national & international research collaborations

- Exploit existing collaborations for further projects

- Seek collaborative opportunities through NARSG and other national forums

Working inter-professionally on research projects

- Explore opportunities to conduct service evaluations and research with clinical and research staff in the community, urgent care and emergency care settings.

3.4 Aligning research with practice

Participation in new research projects

- The research team will submit expressions of interest in relevant high-quality external research projects.

Development and running of new research projects

- We will support staff in designing and delivering local projects

Working with audit team to identify new research projects

- Establish a working relationship between research and audit teams. Establish a mechanism for identification of potential research projects.

Patient & public involvement

- We will seek to develop a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) research forum and utilise existing links to PPI groups in order to ensure PPI involvement in all stages of research projects.

Translation of research findings into practice

- We will work with the education team to ensure research findings are translated into practice in a timely manner.

3.5 Disseminating research findings

Register of publications, completed MSc dissertations and PhD theses by SCAS staff

- Increase awareness of publication list amongst staff. Add this list to research area on SCAS internet page.
- Develop a centrally-held register of previously completed dissertations and projects ongoing. This would be a list of abstracts with contact details of the author so that staff can contact them directly for the full article and authors can retain control of who reads their work. A plagiarism disclaimer would need to accompany this process.

Share research with staff and governors through internal communication structures

- Better use needs to be made of the intranet to promote completed research projects. A specific area of the intranet should be dedicated to research and this should be promoted.
- Production and dissemination of research updates explaining concepts, outlining research projects, reviewing publications. Media and distribution would need to be agreed following a scoping exercise.

Research campaign week

- The RaY conference should be repeated, evaluated and debriefed by the research team for future planning.

- A Research campaign week each year could further promote research and opportunities to a wider audience across the trust.

Share research externally

- Research team members should aim to gain experience of presenting at a conference (submit at least one abstract per year).

There should be a SCAS presence at the major paramedic research conferences throughout the year. A short report should be produced and circulated by the attendee following each conference attendance. At the end of each year a brief report outlining the added value that conference attendance has brought to the activity of the team should be produced.

Research webpage; social media presence

- The image of SCAS as a research-active trust could be better demonstrated by development of the website. Additional information on previous trials, publications and the approvals process should be easily accessible on the site.

- The potential for the Research team to harness the immediacy of social media should be explored.

3.6   Sustainability

Financial sustainability

- Seek new opportunities for funding of research staff

- Work with local CRN to ensure that new studies are adopted onto the portfolio where applicable.

- Try to include monies for training/ development, including conference attendance when making new funding applications.

Identification of research-interested staff

- Research-interested staff could be identified through formal methods (via Team Leaders) and more ad-hoc means.

- The role of research champion could be developed, offering staff additional training and opportunities to assist with research projects.

- Highlight opportunities to staff for wider recognition by encouraging writing for publication and entry into case study competitions.

Research in career planning

- The research profile of SCAS could attract new staff to the trust. We will work with the Recruitment team to include information on research in recruitment

materials.

- Maintain up-to-date recruitment pack in order to respond to local need an opportunities in a timely fashion.

- Continue to recruit research paramedics into part-time roles as funding allows.

- Plan bespoke development programmes as each new staff member enters the team.

- Exploit the training opportunities provided by the CRN for all members of the team according to need.

Research sponsorship

- Initiate small-scale projects that SCAS can sponsor, e.g. Dementia survey project, in order to develop experience and a 'track record'.

Use of research to identify clinical excellence

- Recognise and promote good practice, either in the results of research projects or during the course of data collection.

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