



# SCAS Research Strategy 2024-27

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## Research Strategy

### 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:

1.3.1 Research capacity is built by developing appropriate skills and confidence

1.3.2 Research capacity building should support research 'close to practice'.  
in order for it to be useful

- 1.3.3 Linkages, partnerships and collaborations enhance research capacity building
- 1.3.4 Research capacity building should ensure appropriate dissemination to maximise impact.
- 1.3.5 Research capacity building should include elements of continuity and sustainability
- 1.3.6 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 and shown in Figure 1 below:

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





**Figure 1: SCAS Research strategy 2024-2027**

## **3.1 Research infrastructure**

### **Alignment to clinical strategy**

- When developing or considering participation in new research projects, these should be in alignment with SCAS' Clinical Strategy.

### **Mechanisms in place for research governance**

- Generic Research SOPs should be maintained to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose.

### **Working with finance team to manage budgets and grants**

- Research funding should remain ring-fenced to support further research activity. Development of a consolidated budget tracker would support management of research budgets.
- Continue to ensure eligibility for, and utilisation of, Research Capability funding for its mandated purpose.

### **IT infrastructure for effective data management**

- Bid for small grants that could cover the cost of research software.
- Explore opportunities for staff training in use of databases and other research software.

### **Posts & roles: matched to need**

- Ensure research projects are adequately costed for staffing and that research staff appointments are timely.
- Seek to strengthen the research team through diversity of people, skills and experience.

### **Operation of research fleet**

- We will operate five research rapid response vehicles (R-RRVs) to attend incidents of potential research interest.
- The R-RRVs will be deployed by a dedicated Research Dispatcher who will seek to embed research dispatch in business as usual for the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

## **3.2 Developing a skilled workforce**

### **Research featured on Corporate Induction programme**

- The Research team have innovated to produce an AI-delivered overview video shown to all new starters.

### **Workshops**

- Workshops and other CPD opportunities will be provided to staff. This is usually via team training sessions through in-person or online presentation. These offerings should be evaluated and reviewed in order to optimise impact.
- Staff will also be signposted to appropriate external courses, such as those offered by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the Research Design Service (RDS).

### **Mentorship for junior staff**

- In addition to the current basic induction programme, all Research team staff shall work through the NIHR Competency Framework for Research Delivery Staff according to their previous experience and banding.
- 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 learning objectives shall be agreed and a SMART action plan drawn up to achieve these objectives.

### **Ad hoc opportunities offered to support organisational need**

- The role of research advocates will be promoted, offering staff additional training and opportunities to assist with research projects.
- Operational staff are accommodated for temporary periods of alternative duties when required. Training and supervision appropriate to the delegated tasks are provided.

### **Opportunities facilitated for development as Chief Investigators (CIs) and Principal Investigators (PIs)**

- SCAS will support the development of future research leaders by supporting applications to NIHR training and development programmes.

## **3.3 Developing collaborations**

### **Fosters internal collaborations**

- There is an opportunity to be more responsive to local need by working collaboratively with internal SCAS teams to identify, assess and deliver research projects.

### **Works with local Clinical Research Network (to be known as Regional Research Delivery Network (RRDN) from September 2024)**

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

### **Contributes to national and regional research groups**

- Continue to contribute to local research specialty group meetings appropriate to research project delivery.
- 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

## **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 projects of local importance.

### **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**

### **Share research with staff and governors through internal communication structures**

- Our completed research projects should be promoted via SharePoint.

### **Research campaign week**

- The 'Research and You' (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).
- Where resources allow there should be a SCAS presence at the major paramedic research conferences each year to promote our work and learn from our colleagues.

### **Research webpage; social media presence**

- We aspire to fund some time for a Communications subject matter expert to promote SCAS research endeavours and achievements through the internet and social media.

## **3.6 Sustainability**

### **Financial sustainability**

- Financial forecasting will be undertaken where possible to facilitate future planning.
- We will develop bids to national grant awarding bodies enabling us to complete home-grown research projects.
- We will explore opportunities to work with commercial partners, recognising the potential for such partners to make significant revenue contributions.
- Funds for training and development, as well as dissemination activities will be included in grant applications.
- Innovative use of our fleet will enable us to optimise our offering of research to our patients and public in our local community.

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

### **Research sponsorship**

- Support the wider SCAS team to achieve the necessary Information Governance certifications to allow SCAS to act as research sponsor.

### **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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