

# Heart Research UK Strategy

2022-2026 and beyond...



# A message from our Strategy Team

It's been tough to plan for the future when the present has felt so uncertain. The impact of coronavirus has permeated everything. But we know that heart disease continues to be one of the biggest killers in the country, and the long-term impact of coronavirus on our hearts remains an area that will require further research.

**We began planning our new strategy just before the pandemic hit and, understandably, throughout 2020 we focused on staying safe and continuing to deliver our charitable activities where possible, including introducing a COVID-19 research programme.**

Over the last year we have been crafting this plan, and to make it the best it could be we started by consulting with our stakeholders. This strategy is truly a collaboration and has been built on the input of our supporters, partners, grant holders, volunteers, trustees and staff. This, of course, includes those directly affected by heart disease.

As a group of staff representing all aspects of Heart Research UK's work, we have taken this responsibility seriously. Reflecting the priorities of our stakeholders and communicating the change we want to make is a serious business. In the coming years we want to continue to deliver pioneering medical research while also doing more in our communities. We want to do more, we want to make an impact, and we want to do it in the right way.

We are a small but growing team, and just as we support each other, we want to support our partners to do their best and be their best.

That is the way we will take on heart disease together.



## At Heart Research UK we are dedicated to making a real difference both now and in the future

### It is our mission that:

'Through pioneering research and accessible education, we will reduce the number of people developing and dying from heart disease, while improving and extending the lives of those affected.'

### Our vision is simple:

Prevention | Treatment | Cure

Our values reflect us. We are dedicated to fundraising ethically, and to ensuring that the money that you donate to us is spent in the best way possible.

### Our values:

- We will continuously demonstrate our credibility and knowledge.
- We will always act with integrity, compassion, and humility.
- We are committed to working together to make a difference.
- We are passionate, and proud of it.
- We strive to be innovative and collaborative in everything that we do.
- We are large enough to have a voice and small enough to hear yours.

## Where have we come from and where do we want to be?

**In the last five years, Heart Research UK has grown in scale and impact. Along with increasing the size and number of medical research grants, we have further developed our health promotion work, enabling us to educate professionals and school children and support communities, workplaces and individuals to make informed choices and live healthier lives.**

All of this helps us to do what we want to do the most – improve the heart health of the nation as soon as possible.

# What we do now

We have always, and will continue to, spend most of our income on medical research.

## Our two main grants programmes are:

### Translational Research Projects

These research projects aim to be the crucial piece of work between lab-based science and direct patient benefit.

### Novel and Emerging Technologies

These research projects investigate ways to develop or utilise innovative technologies that can have a positive impact on the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease and related conditions.

#### TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT:

## Improving access to cardiac rehabilitation for people with heart failure in Scotland

### The Problem

Cardiac rehabilitation can improve patient outcomes, such as health-related quality of life, and has the potential to reduce time spent in hospital. However, fewer than 1 in 20 patients admitted to hospital with heart failure participate in cardiac rehabilitation.

### The Project

Professor Taylor's team has already shown in a clinical trial that a new 12-week home-based rehabilitation programme, called 'REACH-HF', benefits patients and is cost-effective for the NHS. In this project they will assess the impact in 'real-world' settings in Scotland.

### The Benefits

REACH-HF has the potential to improve patient outcomes, such as health-related quality of life, and to reduce time spent in hospital. If successful, this home-based rehabilitation programme will improve the choice of, and access to, rehabilitation services for people with heart failure in Scotland.

#### NOVEL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES:

## Wearable devices for detecting atrial fibrillation: The SMART-ALERT study

### The Problem

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is the most common heart rhythm problem and is thought to affect around 2 million people in the UK. AF may cause blood clots to form inside the heart which can lead to an AF-related stroke. The risk of stroke in patients with AF is five-fold higher than people with normal rhythm. Anticoagulants play a major role in the management of AF by making the blood less likely to clot which therefore reduces the risk of a stroke. However, anticoagulants make patients more prone to bleeding, which in some cases can be serious. AF often doesn't cause symptoms. Some people are in AF all the time but many have intermittent, infrequent episodes. Currently everyone has to take their anticoagulation treatment all the time, even during periods of normal rhythm.

### The Project

We need an accurate and reliable way to detect AF and promptly alert the patient, so that patients take anticoagulants only when needed.

This study will test an injectable cardiac monitor and two brand new wearable devices. The Sky Labs Cart ring and the Apple Watch will be compared with the Medtronic LINQ II that is injected under the skin to see how accurately they detect AF. We will also assess when AF is detected, how quickly they alert the patient and how promptly the patient acknowledges the alert.

### The Benefits

The ultimate goal is to use the data collected to test and improve current technology and plan a large trial using heart monitors and wearable devices to guide 'as required' anticoagulant treatment so that AF patients receive treatment only when they need it.



# Our work within communities

Our Health Promotion and Education team lead the way in supporting healthier lifestyles across the country.

Our Healthy Heart Grants are given to voluntary and community groups with a focus on those who may struggle to access support and activities for developing and maintaining lifestyle habits that contribute towards good heart health.



## CASE STUDY:

### Dwarf Sports Association, Scotland

#### The Problem

Competing in sport is never going to be easy or fair when you are half the size of your peers, and people with dwarfism suffer greatly with health issues and weight problems that affect the heart.

Learning to ride a pedal bike is also something that many people with dwarfism miss out on because their legs cannot physically reach the pedals.

#### The Project

We awarded a Healthy Heart Grant to deliver a project which has motivated group members at Dwarf Sports Association to get active and improve their wellbeing.

Members have been inspired by weekly training sessions, themed Zoom meetings and sporting challenges to boost heart health.

Seven specially adapted bikes, from Islabikes, which are designed specifically to suit riders with dwarfism, were purchased as part of the project and a bike loan scheme has been set up.

#### The Benefits

This project has brought together a community of people with dwarfism to compete in sporting events, providing huge benefits to the heart health of participants through increased physical activity.

Group members can also now reap the many benefits of cycling. Individuals who have never had the opportunity to have a bike fit to their unique size are now enjoying cycling and families are now finally able to cycle together, following the development of a bike loan scheme.





# Getting children into healthy habits early

We know that to appeal to primary school children we need activities to be engaging and, let's face it, fun!

Using virtual and augmented technologies children learn about their heart health, now and as they grow up.



# We don't just educate children; we work with professionals too

Our masterclasses are highly sought after and enable surgeons and other professionals from across the country to gain practical experience in life-saving techniques, ultimately making surgery safer for those who need it. As our surgeons will tell you, the most complex, vital surgeries tend to take place as emergencies and out of hours.

**In 2021 we even moved to delivering these virtually as well. Our surgeons are the best people to tell you how important they are.**

“The Aortic Dissection masterclass enables us to train surgeons to perform complex emergency operations, which they would not normally get chance to perform as a trainee, and often occur out of hours when less support is available. This work is a vital part of our strategy to improve outcomes for patients with AD in the UK.”

Debbie Harrington,  
MD FRSA CTh SCTS  
Education Secretary





# Healthy Hearts at Work Programme

We recognise that having a healthy and happy workforce is essential for the success of any organisation. Our Healthy Hearts at Work Programme enables employers to support their staff to be healthy and active. This online programme is suitable for organisations with staff working either on-site or remotely. The programme offers an online lifestyle assessment and an individualised report for employees, including recommendations for living a healthier lifestyle and reducing the risk of heart disease.

There are four key pillars of wellbeing that are focused on in the programme: nutrition, physical activity, emotional wellbeing and smoking/alcohol. Online 15-minute coaching sessions with our expert Healthy Heart Coaches are also available for employees as part of this programme. Organisations are provided with an anonymised wellbeing report, which includes analysis and recommendations from a workplace wellbeing expert. In addition, employers are supported in the development of initiatives to improve employee health and wellbeing and they can gain public recognition for their efforts through our awards scheme.



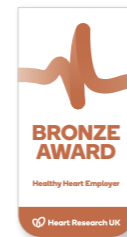
## Gold Award

To achieve the gold award, your organisation will provide evidence of three twelve-month targeted initiatives set up to address one or more of the key Pillars of Wellbeing.



## Silver Award

To achieve the Silver Award, your organisation will provide evidence of two six-month targeted initiatives set up to address one or more of the key areas.



## Bronze Award

To achieve the Bronze Award, your organisation will provide evidence of a three-month targeted initiative set up to address one of the four key Pillars of Wellbeing (Healthy eating, physical activity, emotional wellbeing or smoking/alcohol).



## So, what now?

In a changing world how do we continue to make a difference? The answer is more, more of the same and some new stuff too.



We will work with individuals and communities to **PREVENT** Heart Disease.

We will work with researchers and medical professionals to improve the **TREATMENT** of Heart Disease.

We will support researchers and other partners to find a **CURE** for Heart Disease.

**In the coming  
years we will...**



## Support healthier communities by

- continuing to deliver our Healthy Heart Grants to communities across the UK, increasing grant amounts to at least £15,000 each. We will share the learnings from these projects so that other groups can make use of the innovative activities our partners are undertaking.
- providing recipes and tips, for the public, supporting them to live healthier lives for healthier hearts.
- delivering healthy heart checks in local areas where people may not access information and advice from health professionals. We will focus on groups of people who are at particular risk of heart disease.
- growing our schools programme with the introduction of new modules for secondary aged children, ultimately delivering the programme in 1,000 schools a year. All our schools will be offered the chance to join our new Healthy Heart Schools Award Programme.
- increasing what we offer to our Healthy Heart Employers with new products that enable them to better support their employee wellbeing. We will also develop the programme, making the Healthy Hearts at Work accessible to schools so they can create Healthy Heart School Communities for their pupils, staff, and families.
- providing information to the public on heart conditions and related topics, signposting people to specific support should they need it.

## Through educating professionals, we will improve treatments by

- working with leaders in their field to create more online masterclasses with at least 15 available. Virtual classes can be accessed by as many professionals as possible, widening their impact.
- continuing to deliver our hands-on masterclasses and expanding the number available if appropriate. We will look at opportunities to work with Allied Health Professionals and others to ensure we support the education of the healthcare profession as a whole.
- working with partners to deliver a clinical fellowship programme to medics and other professionals in both cardiology and cardiac surgery. This will mean that the best surgical and diagnostic techniques are ultimately available to all, no matter where they live.
- producing additional toolkits for professionals, patients and families relating to congenital heart disease, helping those living with the disease to lead active lives without fear.

## Deliver results through innovative research by

- increasing the number of grants available across our Translational and Novel and Emerging Technologies programmes, ensuring that the amounts available for each grant are enough to make a difference.
- evaluating and developing our PhD awards to ensure that early career researchers are given the opportunity to undertake original, impactful research. We are training the scientists of the future.
- providing information on our research outcomes to the public in clear and concise formats.
- where appropriate, funding research into emerging high priority areas as the need arises. We can move quickly, putting our money where it is most needed.



## Raise awareness to improve the heart health of the nation by

- Increasing our visibility – increasing awareness of heart disease.
- Developing the way we communicate – working with our partners to take action.
- Promoting the voices of our experts – we will use our knowledge to share information with our supporters.

Over the last few years we have undertaken a number of initiatives and campaigns to raise awareness of heart disease as one of the UK's biggest killers. Key metrics have shown that we are starting to achieve success.

Our grants programmes are receiving higher application numbers, our website is receiving a greater number of new visitors and we are partnering with more and more organisations and household names to help us spread our message more widely. But we know we can do more to increase the visibility of the invaluable work that we are undertaking into the prevention, treatment and cure of heart disease.

We want to reach out and inspire more supporters across all of our key communication channels to let them know how they can be part of the next big breakthrough. We will focus on digital platforms and social media to connect with existing and new supporters to encourage more people to find out about the incredible work that we undertake.

And most importantly, for too many years, the innovative and often life-saving work that we have helped to fund hasn't received the acknowledgment that it truly deserves. Over the next 5-10 years we are dedicated to changing that, highlighting the difference we are making across the UK to help inspire others to help us in the fight against heart disease.

## Raise more to do more

We are lucky to have supporters who give to us in many ways. The reality is that to do more, we need to raise more. In the coming years we will work to increase the amounts raised from our existing income streams and, just as importantly, we will increase our digital presence, undertaking a significant programme of re-engagement and highlighting the incredible work of our supporters, encouraging their colleagues, friends and family to get involved. We work to ensure our supporters have the best experience possible with us. This means:

- Treating our supporters as we would want to be treated.
- Understanding that the personal touch means a lot. People fundraise for many reasons, and we really do want to know those reasons.
- No matter the amount we will always say thank you





## The main ways people give

### Legacies



Generously leaving us gifts in their wills like Margret Sail, who we have since named a NET grant after.

### Regular Donations



Donating a set amount every month through direct debit. It couldn't be easier!

### Buying something cool



Buying a t-shirt, an art print or an original mini masterpiece during our Anonymous heART Project.

### In Memory



Setting up donations in memory of a loved one. The Harris family set up a fund for Dave, in memory of an amazing dad, husband and grandpa.

### Community



Organising community activities to raise funds like Craig and Dougie Potter. Craig ran 47 x 10k in a row in memory of his mum, Theresa.

### Events



Getting friends involved by taking part in an event, like Andrew Taylor and Chris Chambers who ran the London Marathon.

### Corporate



Getting your work colleagues involved like PPG who set up a big event at the Olympic Park in aid of Heart Research UK.

## Nurture our people

We know that we need the best people to do our best work. While we are pretty confident that we have the best team around, we want to ensure we continue to attract and retain highly skilled, motivated people.

As an employer we will:

- Increase access to support and training – developing our people to reach their potential benefits us all.
- Monitor equality and diversity data across all areas of the organisation and be accountable for actions that will ensure we better reflect all our communities.
- Introduce an Employee Assistance Programme – sometimes we don't have the answers, and sometimes we may be the problem. Outsourced support and information are a benefit our staff deserve.
- Hold monthly wellbeing sessions – if we can't support our own people to lead healthier lifestyles, we can't effectively support others.
- Develop our wellbeing policies and keep the promises we make.
- Have some fun with regular socials and team challenges that are accessible, enjoyable, and NOT mandatory!
- 1-1 health coaching.

We also couldn't do what we do without our fabulous volunteers. We will make sure they get the best experience by ensuring they have:

- A structured induction.
- Support from a named member of staff.
- Access to training and development.

But most importantly we understand that they are part of the team, just like everyone else. The donation of time and expertise is invaluable to us.

## To conclude...

We take very seriously that you give us your money in so many ways so we can continue to tackle heart disease.

We want to make sure you can always see what we are doing with your money and that we are doing what we say we will. Please visit [heartresearch.org.uk/strategy](https://heartresearch.org.uk/strategy) where we will regularly update you with our progress.

If we fall behind, we will tell you why.

If we do something not in the plan, we will tell you why.

We are accountable to you, our supporters, and partners. That you choose to work with us means the world.

Together let's continue to take on heart disease and keep those we love around for longer.







To find out more about the  
amazing work we do please visit  
**[heartresearch.org.uk](http://heartresearch.org.uk)**

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