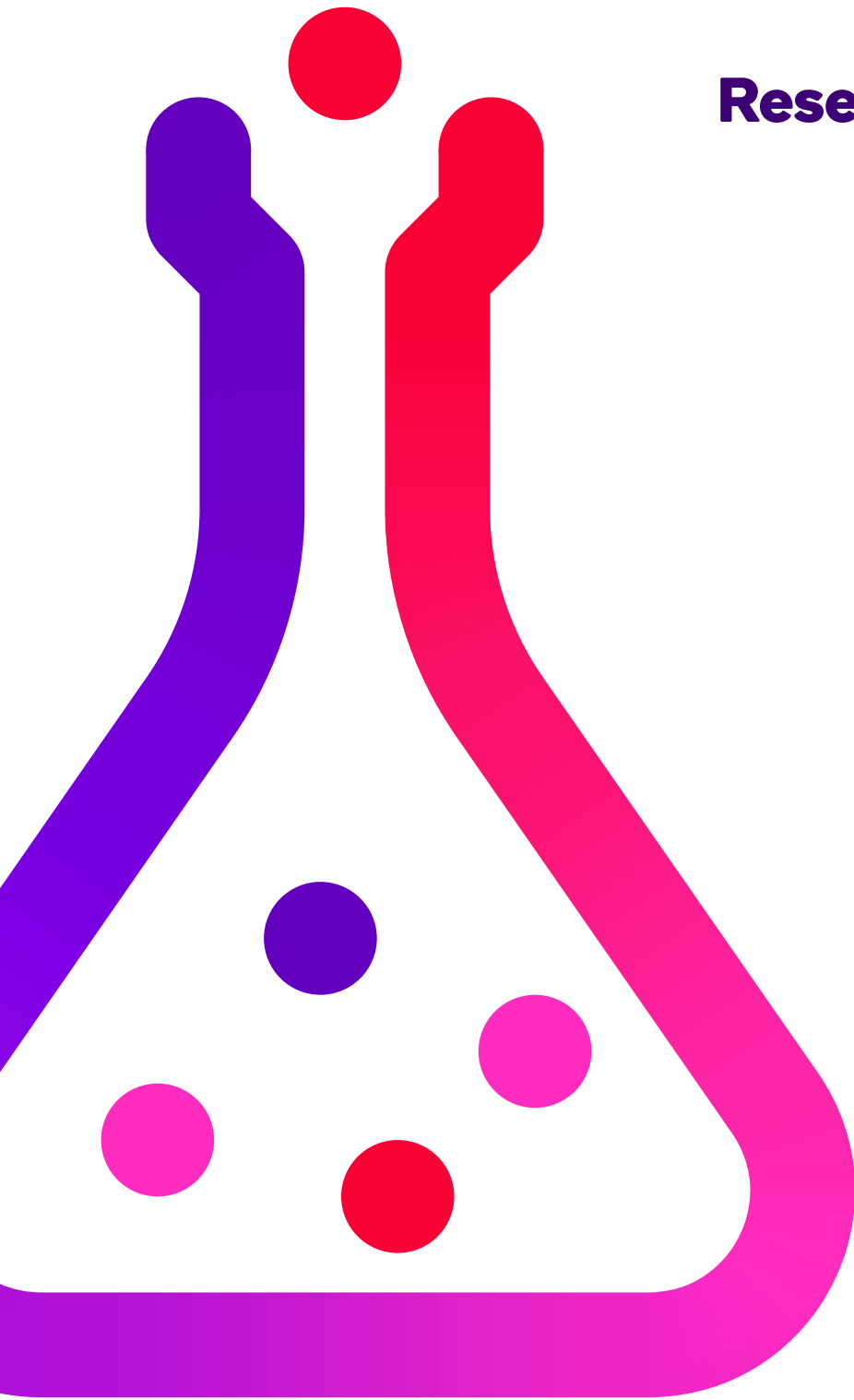


Research Department Strategic Plan

2022 - 2026



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Introduction

There have been huge improvements in the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease (CVD) over the last decade, and deaths from CVD and coronary heart disease (CHD) have significantly fallen. However, 7.6 million people are still living with CVD in the UK which includes 2.3 million with CHD.

CHD is responsible for more than 63,000 deaths every year in the UK (of which 22,000 were premature deaths - before the age of 75). This compares with almost 35,000 deaths due to lung cancer, the most common cause of cancer death, and around 35,000 deaths from stroke.

Also, with an ageing population and the current levels of obesity and diabetes, further research is needed otherwise recent advances will not be sustained.

The Research Department is responsible for the selection, award and monitoring of research grants, and supports Fundraising and Marketing/Communications Departments. There are plans to increase the research budget and expand the role of the Research Department.



7.6million
people are living with cardiovascular disease in the UK



2.3million
people are living with coronary heart disease in the UK



63,000
deaths every year in the UK from coronary heart disease

Job roles and responsibilities for 2022

Currently, the Research Department consists of the Head of Research, a part-time Grants Administrator and part-time Research Information Officer.

- **Head of Research** - responsible for the strategic planning of the research activities and management of the Charity's research portfolio, ensuring that Heart Research UK supports high-quality research. This includes planning funding rounds, managing the peer-review process and monitoring the progress of ongoing grant awards.
- **Research Information Officer** - responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on the progress, outcome and impact of the research that we fund, and communicating this effectively both internally within the Charity and to our external stakeholders.
- **Grants Administrator** - supports the Charity's medical research grant-giving processes from the notification and application stages, through to award, and monitoring post-award.

Strategic aims of the Research Department

Our aim is to fund high-quality medical research projects at hospitals and universities in the UK into the prevention, treatment and cure of heart disease and related conditions.

We prioritise research which aims to benefit heart patients as soon as possible whilst maintaining our excellent reputation within the research community. We intend to maintain our niche within the wider research environment at the same time as being adaptable to changing circumstances.

In 2021, Heart Research UK awarded more than £2 million in research grants which is more than ever before, and the budget for 2022 has been increased further to £2,350,500, as follows:

- Novel and Emerging Technologies (NET) Grants £750,000
- Translational Research Project (TRP) Grants £1,000,000
- Scotland Grant £200,000
- PhD studentship £122,500
- Trustees Discretionary Grants £117,500
- Fellowships £160,000

The Research Department is directly involved in delivering the following two strategic aims and this document outlines the department's objectives between 2022 and 2026 in relation to these aims: -

- 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.



Medical research funding

Currently, Heart Research UK offers the following medical research grants:

Novel and Emerging Technologies (NET) Grants

Projects which focus on the development of new and innovative technologies to diagnose, treat and prevent heart disease and related conditions.

Translational Research Project (TRP) Grants

Projects which aim to bridge the gap between scientific research and patient care, bringing about clinical benefits in the most efficient way.

Scotland Grant

A special regional grant to support research at Scottish institutions to link with the Heart of Scotland campaign.

PhD studentships

A new, dedicated scheme was introduced in 2021 to give exceptional students the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and expertise needed for a career as a research scientist.

Trustees Discretionary Grants

Ad hoc projects that do not fall within the remits of the research grants but that the Trustees consider to be important and relevant to the strategic aims of HRUK.

The Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) recommends that the research strategy is reviewed every 3 to 7 years to maintain the charity's niche within the wider research environment. This involves consulting our network of research contacts, including panel members, previous grant applicants, and past/current grantees, for feedback on our grants programme. Also, we will monitor the research strategies of other relevant funders to identify gaps in research that would benefit from more funding opportunities.

Peer review

As an AMRC member, Heart Research UK adheres to the five principles of peer review;

1. **accountability**
2. **balance**
3. **independence**
4. **rotation**
5. **impartiality**

Our peer review process is audited every five years to demonstrate to stakeholders (including government, researchers, funders and donors) our commitment to the highest standards of accountability and probity in the selection and award of research grants.

An effective and robust peer review system depends on:

- **Medical Review Panels**

Panels consist of leading experts from a range of disciplines to reflect the research strategy. Membership is reviewed annually to ensure rotation and to give a fair balance of experience, scientific disciplines, institutions, age, gender, ethnicity and geographical location.

- **External reviewers**

These are carefully-selected, independent researchers with the appropriate expertise, whose opinions assist the medical review panels in their funding decisions.



Grants management system

FlexiGrant® will streamline the grant-selection process and management of grants, from the application, review and award stages, through to monitoring, reporting and payments. It will give the Research Department the capacity to administer larger numbers of applications and/or additional grant rounds. Also, it provides modern, efficient online application, review and reporting processes for researchers.

Fellowships

In 2022, Heart Research UK is introducing cardiac surgery and cardiology fellowships in partnership with the Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery in Great Britain and Ireland (SCTS) and the British Cardiovascular Society (BCS), respectively. These will help to raise the profile of Heart Research UK, strengthen our relationships with the SCTS and BCS, as well as having potential benefits for fundraising and marketing activities.

We will offer individual and team fellowships to fund visits to other centres, and a cross-specialty fellowship for a joint cardiac surgery and cardiology team will be considered for 2023. A total budget of £160,000 has been allocated for 2022, to be divided equally between the two types of fellowship, and the partnerships with the SCTS and BCS will be reviewed by the Trustees after one year.



Monitoring of grants

Monitoring the output, outcome and impact of research helps to ensure that our funds are used appropriately. The submission of annual progress reports and final reports is a condition of grant funding, and this information is used to support fundraising activities and is disseminated to stakeholders.

It can take many years for successful medical research projects to have an impact and we plan to extend the monitoring of grants by retrospectively assessing past research projects.

Communicating our research

Medical charities have a duty to inform supporters, donors and the wider general public how funds are spent, and about the output, outcome and impact of the research they fund.

Providing accessible information about our charitable activities is key to raising the profile of Heart Research UK. Therefore, information about the research we support is vital both internally to support Fundraising and Marketing/Communications Departments, as well as externally for the general public and researchers.



Public and patient involvement (PPI)

Patient and public involvement (PPI) is the active involvement of patients, carers, family members and members of the public in the research process. Many funders work collaboratively with patients and the public to incorporate PPI into their decision-making, and there is increasing evidence that PPI improves research and achieves better outcomes for patients.

From 2022, we plan to research the different models of using PPI to prioritise research, the pros and cons, and the resources involved.



Strategic aims

Currently, Heart Research UK's strategic aims are separated into one-year, three-year and five-year plan.

One-year plan

Medical research funding

- Continue to offer successful and popular NET and TRP Grants
- Increase NET Grants budget to £750,000 for 3 grants
- Increase TRP Grants budget to £1,000,000 for 5 grants
- Continue to offer Scotland Grant
- Work with Marketing/Comms to publicise grants programme (with emphasis on Scotland Grant to increase number of applications)
- Offer PhD Studentship for a second year
- Introduce diversity monitoring of grant applicants and recipients

Peer review

- TRP Panel - appoint 4 new members, including a cardiologist and a cardiac surgeon
- NET Panel – appoint 4 new panel members, including new Chair and Vice-Chair
- Migrate 4,000 external reviewer records to FlexiGrant®

Grants management system

- Complete implementation of FlexiGrant®
- In 2022, use FlexiGrant for TRP, Scotland and PhDs
- Complete FlexiGrant® training
- Use FlexiGrant® for monitoring of grants (interim / final reports)

Fellowships

- Finalise details of Fellowships to be offered and the selection process
- Appoint suitable clinicians to represent Heart Research UK in selection process
- Announce at annual meetings of SCTS/BCS
- Work with Marketing/Comms and SCTS/BCS to publicise

Monitoring of grants

- Continue to monitor grants (interim/final reports)
- Research the ways of assessing and reporting the impact of research

Communicating our research

- Identify and focus on projects with the greatest potential for public or media interest, and/or impact
- Provide information on our grants in clear and concise formats
- Promote research through website, Pulse, press releases and social media
- Provide information on heart conditions for website to link to our grants
- Obtain videos from grantholders explaining their research for website
- Use research contacts as expert Heart Research UK spokespeople
- Have closer links with PhD students and EXSEL scholars
- Update mortality/morbidity statistics annually, ensuring consistent use of accurate figures

Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)

- Research PPI models used by other funders
- Recommend PPI model and resources needed
- Produce PPI report for Trustees

Three-year plan

Medical research funding

- Increase the number of NET and TRP grants offered, ensuring that the amounts available for each grant are enough to make a difference
- Review whether to continue Scotland Grant
- Monitor the research strategies of other heart charities to identify overlap and gaps in funding opportunities
- In 2023, consult research contacts for feedback on Heart Research UK grants programme
- Evaluate and develop our PhD studentships to ensure that early career researchers are given the opportunity to undertake original, impactful research
- Where appropriate, fund research into emerging, high priority areas as the need arises

Peer review

- Review membership of NET and TRP panels annually, appoint new members as necessary
- In 2023, retire 2 more members from TRP panel at end of tenure, appoint new Chair and Vice-Chair
- In 2025, take part in AMRC peer review audit

Grants management system

- Consult with Finance Department about using FlexiGrant® for financial management of grants, set up and train staff

Fellowships

- Evaluate success of 2022 fellowships (number of applications, feedback from recipients)
- Trustees to review partnerships with SCTS/BCS
- Review administration of selection processes and amend as necessary
- In 2023, pilot a cross-specialty fellowship and evaluate success
- Work with Marketing/Comms and SCTS/BCS to promote

Monitoring of grants

- Identify successful past grants for impact reporting
- Interview past grantholders about progress/developments
- Provide information on our research outcomes to the public in clear and concise formats
- Write impact reports on previous grants (three/year)

Communicating our research

- Same as for one-year plan

Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)

- Establish system to incorporate PPI in funding decisions
- Pilot in NET Grant round



Five-year plan

Medical research funding

- Evaluate outcome of PhD studentships that have reached completion
- Increase the number of grants offered, ensuring that the amounts available for each grant are enough to make a difference
- Where appropriate, fund research into emerging, high priority areas as the need arises

Peer review

- Review membership of NET and TRP panels annually, appoint new members as necessary
- Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)
- Extend to other grant schemes

Fellowships

- Work with Marketing/Comms and SCTS/BCS to promote
- Collect data and interview recipients - produce impact report

Monitoring of grants

Produce an 'Impact Report' to coincide with publication of the next Research Strategy

Communicating our research

- Same as for one-year plan
- Consider appointing a Clinical Director to write/approve articles on an ad hoc basis

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 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

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