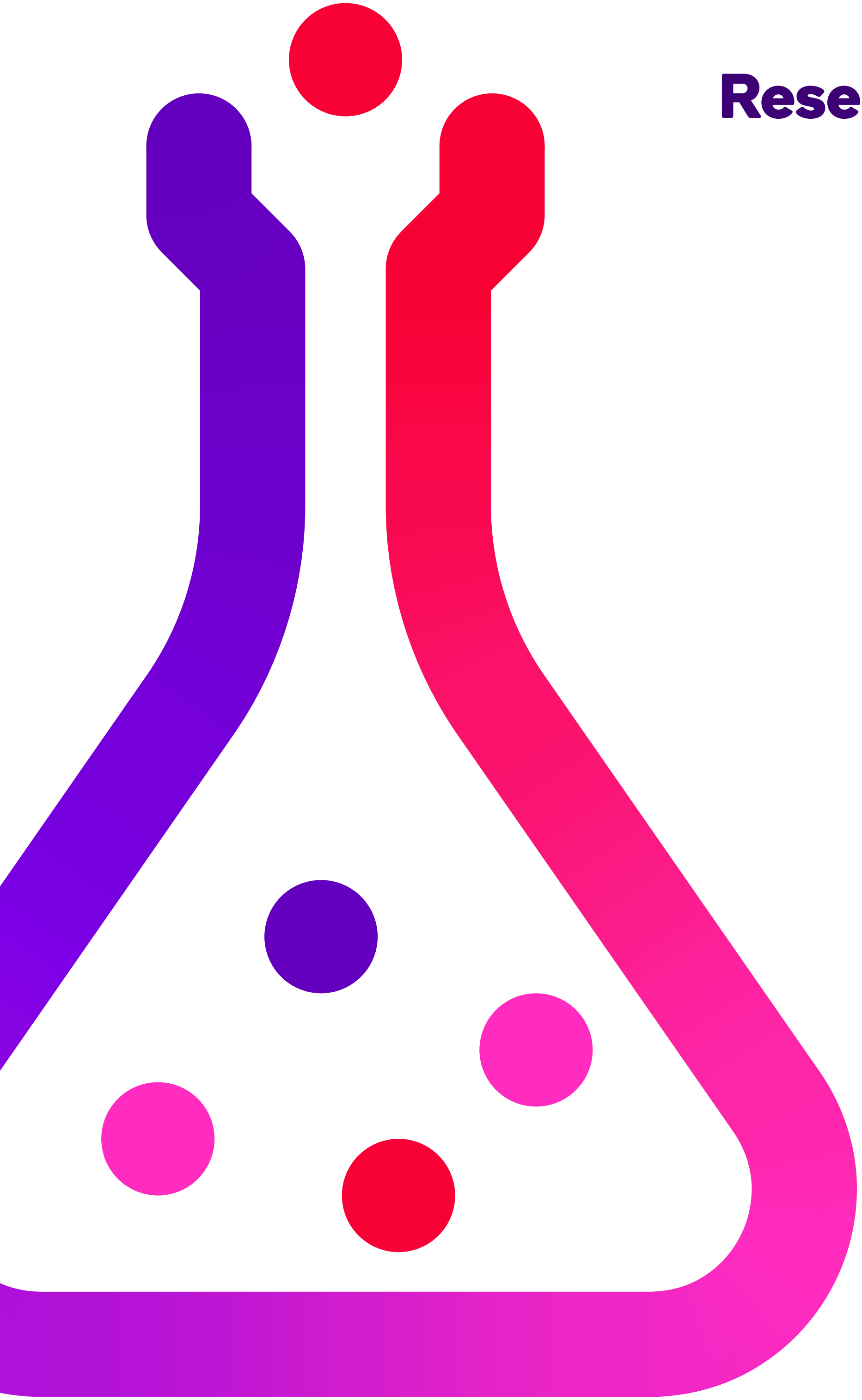


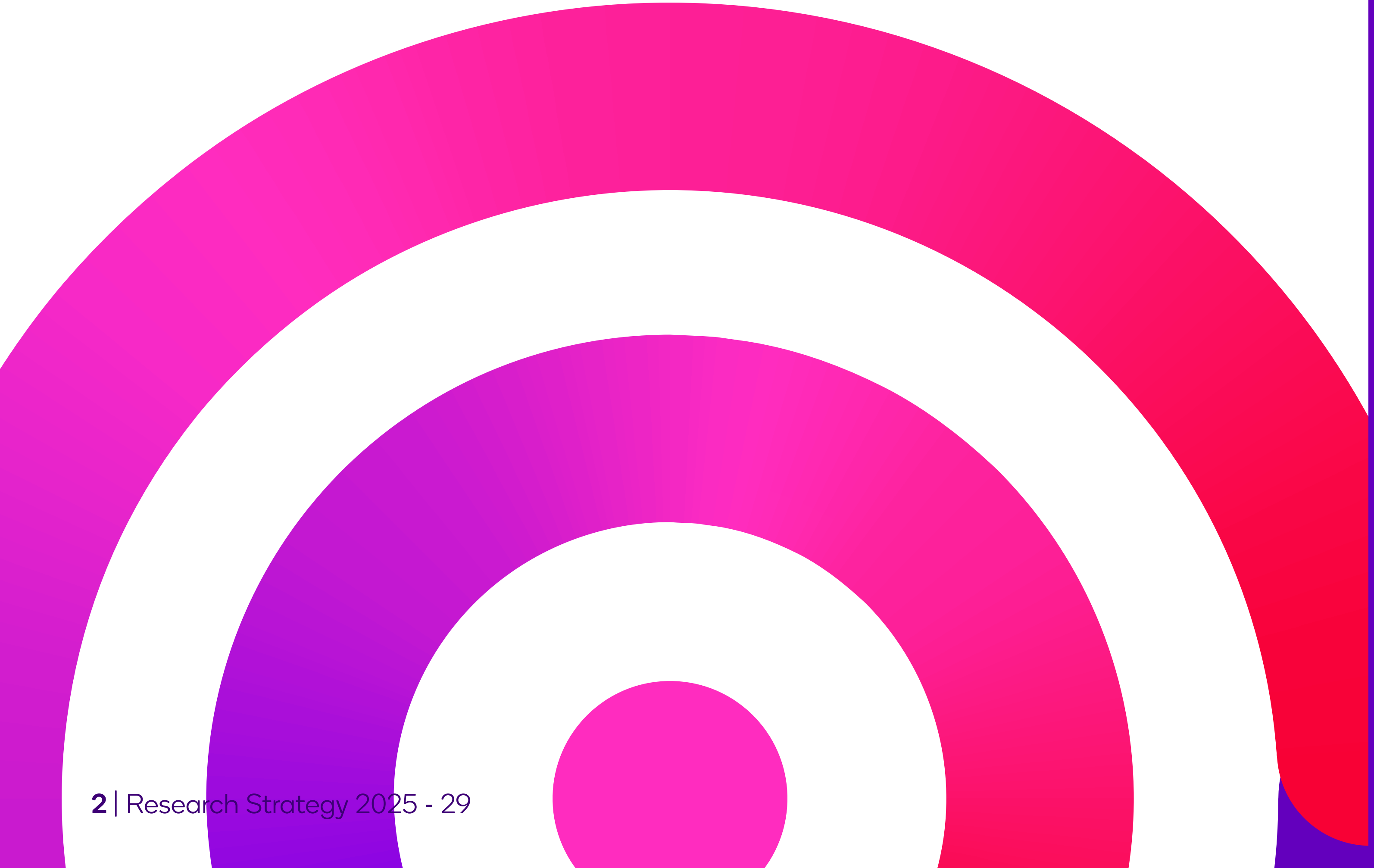
Research Department Strategic Plan

2025-2029

Heart Research UK

Mission

The Research mission is to advance the prevention, treatment and cure of heart diseases through the medical research projects that we fund and deliver against the Heart Research UK mission ‘until there are no more deaths from heart diseases’.



Contents

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 have significantly fallen. However, 7.6 million people are still living with CVD in the UK which includes 2.3 million with CHD.

Coronary heart disease is responsible for more than 65,000 deaths every year in the UK (of which 25,000 were premature deaths - before the age of 75).

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

7.6million

people are living with cardiovascular disease in the UK

2.3milion

people are living with coronary heart disease in the UK

65,000

deaths every year in the UK from coronary heart disease

Research Department

Currently, the Research Department consists of the Director of Research, Patient and Public Involvement Officer, Research Impact and Communications Officer and a Grants Administrator.

- **Director 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 expert-review process and monitoring the progress of ongoing grant awards.
- **Patient and Public Involvement Officer** – responsible for recruiting, training and liaising people with lived experience, and coordinating their input into the grants-selection process and other activities.
- **Research Impact and Communications 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.

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.

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 Heart Research UK.

Supporting the next generation

We also invest in the next generation of clinicians and academics to continue the ground-breaking research into the prevention, treatment and cure of heart diseases. We are proud sponsors of the EXSEL programme at the University of Leeds which gives talented medical students the valuable opportunity to be involved in research projects, and receive mentorship and training in research techniques from eminent research leaders. We also fund travel fellowships with the British Cardiovascular Society and Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery which offer the potential for clinical top-up training, allowing candidates across the NHS workforce to gain new clinical skills or experience in a global centre of excellence.

Research Strategy 2025-2029

Our new five-year strategy aims to maximise the advances we can make through two strategic pillars:

Reflect the patient population:

- Incorporate the patient voice across the research lifecycle.
- Remove unnecessary barriers across research lifecycle to broaden the diversity of the people involved in research at all stages.

Expand the capture of impact data to understand the patient benefit delivered by the medical research projects funded.

It is our belief that when the people involved in research at all stages represent the patient population, the outcomes of the research are better and will benefit more people. We aim to drive progress in this area through increasing the patient voice and removing unnecessary barriers for applicants.

We also believe that to truly understand the impact of our research portfolio we need to capture broader impact information.

Through these activities we can increase our understanding of the true patient benefit the medical research projects we have and will fund are delivering, and make changes to increase the impact where possible.

Reflecting the patient population

Incorporate the patient voice across the research lifecycle:

By actively involving people with lived experience across the research lifecycle, we can ensure that research outcomes directly benefit those affected by heart diseases and their risk factors. This approach is an integral part of responsible, ethical and impactful research, aligning with the needs of those it aims to help. The insights, experiences and perspectives of those with lived experience can support the identification of research topics that will deliver most patient benefit and often lead to improved study design and delivery.

The medical research projects we fund will become patient-led by:

- Identifying the therapeutic areas and conditions of most importance to people with lived experience in collaboration with the Patient and Public Network.
- Incorporating the view of our PPN to the expert review process for all grant rounds.
- Mandating responses to the PPI questions in all funding applications and projects.
- Bringing patient insights to the research design stage.

Remove unnecessary barriers across research lifecycle to broaden the diversity of the people involved in research at all stages:

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are critically important in medical research. Incorporating these principles in research into heart diseases enhances the scientific validity of studies, ensures that findings are applicable to a broad range of people, and helps to address health disparities. Improving diversity amongst funding applicants will lead to increased innovation in the projects proposed and will result in greater diversity amongst the researchers employed through the projects and who continue into the academic community. In turn, greater representation amongst academics leading clinical trials results in greater diversity amongst participants, which is critical to deliver treatments for the broadest population.

Expand the capture of impact data to understand the patient benefit delivered by the medical research projects funded

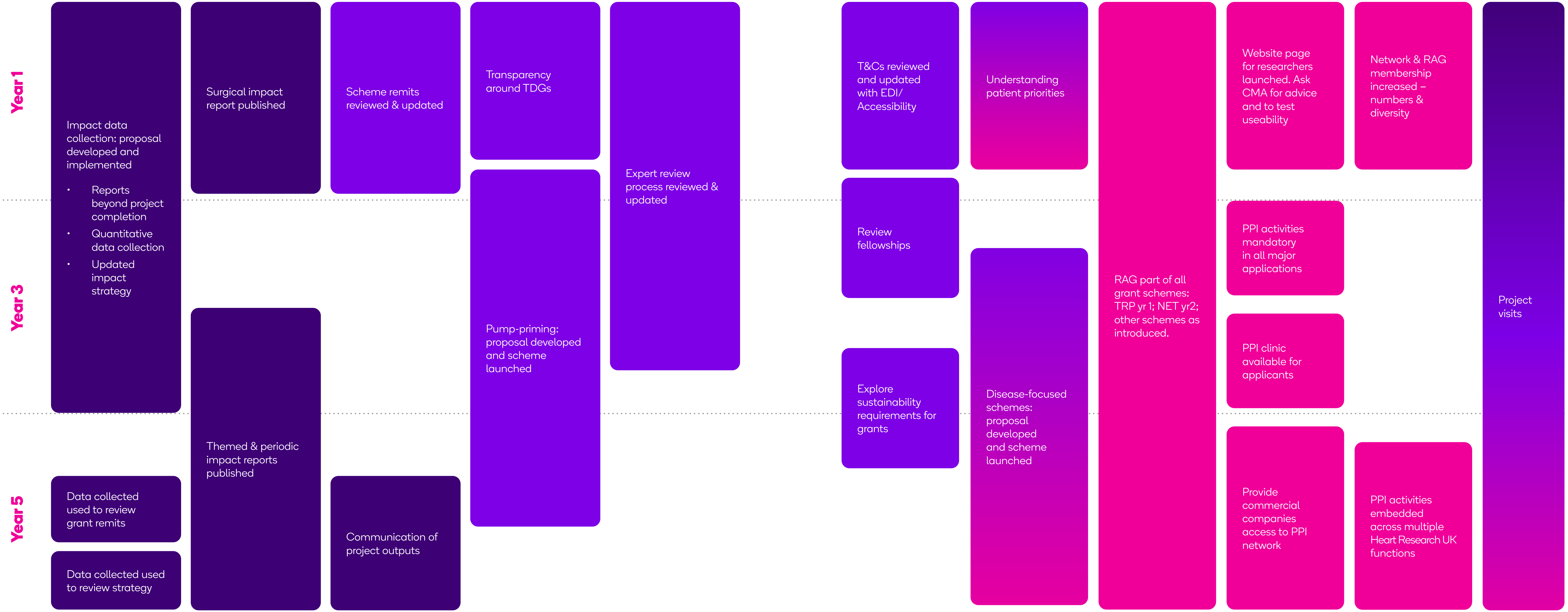
To understand the full patient-benefit of the medical research projects we fund we need to better understand the impact of these projects.

This insight will ensure that the investments in research made by the charity are achieving the desired outcomes and addressing the needs and gaps within the wider sector. We will expand our impact strategy to incorporate additional metrics to capture enhanced quantitative, and quantitative data, and introduce post-completion reports to support long-term impact tracking.

Proposed timeline of activities

Key

🟪 Research grants
🟥 PPI
⬛ Impact & science communications



Impact data collection: proposal developed and implemented

- Reports beyond project completion
- Quantitative data collection
- Updated impact strategy

Data collected used to review grant remits

Data collected used to review strategy

Surgical impact report published

Themed & periodic impact reports published

Scheme remits reviewed & updated

Communication of project outputs

Transparency around TDGs

Pump-priming: proposal developed and scheme launched

Expert review process reviewed & updated

T&Cs reviewed and updated with EDI/ Accessibility

Review fellowships

Explore sustainability requirements for grants

Understanding patient priorities

Disease-focused schemes: proposal developed and scheme launched

RAG part of all grant schemes: TRP yr 1; NET yr2; other schemes as introduced.

Website page for researchers launched. Ask CMA for advice and to test useability

PPI activities mandatory in all major applications

PPI clinic available for applicants

Provide commercial companies access to PPI network

Network & RAG membership increased – numbers & diversity

PPI activities embedded across multiple Heart Research UK functions

Project visits

Heart Research UK

To find out more about the amazing work we do please visit **heartresearch.org.uk**

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