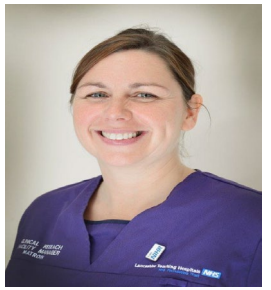
Leading a Culture of Research and Innovation in Primary Care across Lancashire & South Cumbria



Gillian Southgate
Director of Collaboration & Communication



Head of research
Morecambe Bay



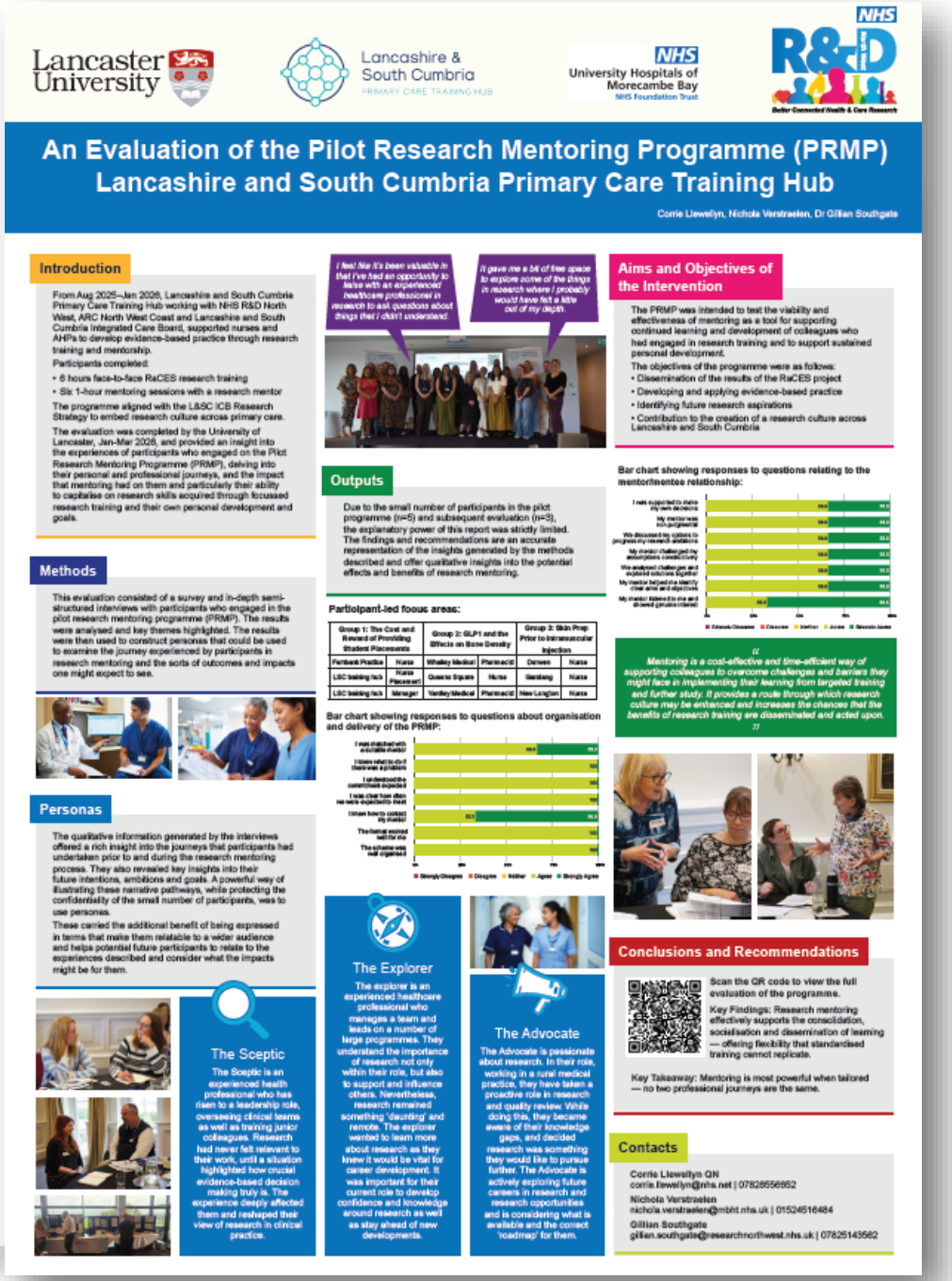
Corrie Llewelyn
Strategic Clinical Lead/ Governance Lead
at Lancashire & South Cumbria Primary Care Training Hub

A pilot progamme funded by NIHR RRDN NW Strategic funding

Delivered by **NHS R&D NW** in partnership with the Lancs & S Cumbria Primary Care Training Hub and University Hospitals Morecambe Bay Trust

History – Research mentorship in LSC primary care

- Corrie, Gillian and Nichola developed a pilot programme – evaluated over 6 months for non-medical staff in LSC
- Formed off the back of NW Coast ARC – RaCES programme that is rapid evidence summaries
- Lots of personal and service benefits to it – about being mentored and supported beyond the initial learning – very bespoke way



Lancaster University · Lancashire & South Cumbria Primary Care Training Hub · University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust · NHS R&D

An Evaluation of the Pilot Research Mentoring Programme (PRMP) Lancashire and South Cumbria Primary Care Training Hub

Corrie Llewellyn, Nichola Verstraelen, Dr Gillian Southgate

Introduction

From Aug 2025–Jan 2026, Lancashire and South Cumbria Primary Care Training Hub working with NHS R&D North West, ARC North West Coast and Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board, supported nurses and AHPs to develop evidence-based practice through research training and mentorship.

Participants completed:

- 6 hours face-to-face RaCES research training
- Six 1-hour mentoring sessions with a research mentor

The programme aligned with the L&SC ICB Research Strategy to embed research culture across primary care.

The evaluation was completed by the University of Lancaster, Jan-Mar 2026, and provided an insight into the experiences of participants who engaged on the Pilot Research Mentoring Programme (PRMP), delving into their personal and professional journeys, and the impact that mentoring had on them and particularly their ability to capitalise on research skills acquired through focussed research training and their own personal development and goals.

Methods

This evaluation consisted of a survey and in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants who engaged in the pilot research mentoring programme (PRMP). The results were analysed and key themes highlighted. The results were then used to construct personas that could be used to examine the journey experienced by participants in research mentoring and the sorts of outcomes and impacts one might expect to see.

Personas

The qualitative information generated by the interviews offered a rich insight into the journeys that participants had undertaken prior to and during the research mentoring process. They also revealed key insights into their future intentions, ambitions and goals. A powerful way of illustrating these narrative pathways, while protecting the confidentiality of the small number of participants, was to use personas.

These carried the additional benefit of being expressed in terms that make them relatable to a wider audience and helps potential future participants to relate to the experiences described and consider what the impacts might be for them.

The Sceptic

The Sceptic is an experienced health professional who has risen to a leadership role, overseeing clinical teams as well as training junior colleagues. Research had never felt relevant to their work, until a situation highlighted how crucial evidence-based decision making truly is. The experience deeply affected them and reshaped their view of research in clinical practice.

Outputs

Due to the small number of participants in the pilot programme (n=5) and subsequent evaluation (n=3), the explanatory power of this report was strictly limited. The findings and recommendations are an accurate representation of the insights generated by the methods described and offer qualitative insights into the potential effects and benefits of research mentoring.

Participant-led focus areas:

Group 1: The Cost and Reward of Providing Student Placements		Group 2: GLP1 and the Effects on Bone Density		Group 3: Skin Prep Prior to Intramuscular Injection	
Portland Practice	Nurse	Whalley Medical	Pharmacist	Darwen	Nurse
LSC training hub	Nurse Placement	Queens Square	Nurse	Garstang	Nurse
LSC training hub	Manager	Yardley Medical	Pharmacist	New Longton	Nurse

Bar chart showing responses to questions about organisation and delivery of the PRMP:

The Explorer

The explorer is an experienced healthcare professional who manages a team and leads on a number of large programmes. They understand the importance of research not only within their role, but also to support and influence others. Nevertheless, research remained something 'daunting' and remote. The explorer wanted to learn more about research as they knew it would be vital for career development. It was important for their current role to develop confidence and knowledge around research as well as stay ahead of new developments.

The Advocate

The Advocate is passionate about research. In their role, working in a rural medical practice, they have taken a proactive role in research and quality review. While doing this, they became aware of their knowledge gaps, and decided research was something they would like to pursue further. The Advocate is actively exploring future careers in research and research opportunities and is considering what is available and the correct 'roadmap' for them.

Aims and Objectives of the Intervention

The PRMP was intended to test the viability and effectiveness of mentoring as a tool for supporting continued learning and development of colleagues who had engaged in research training and to support sustained personal development.

The objectives of the programme were as follows:

- Dissemination of the results of the RaCES project
- Developing and applying evidence-based practice
- Identifying future research aspirations
- Contribution to the creation of a research culture across Lancashire and South Cumbria

Bar chart showing responses to questions relating to the mentor/mentee relationship:

"Mentoring is a cost-effective and time-efficient way of supporting colleagues to overcome challenges and barriers they might face in implementing their learning from targeted training and further study. It provides a route through which research culture may be enhanced and increases the chances that the benefits of research training are disseminated and acted upon."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Scan the QR code to view the full evaluation of the programme.

Key Findings: Research mentoring effectively supports the consolidation, socialisation and dissemination of learning — offering flexibility that standardised training cannot replicate.

Key Takeaway: Mentoring is most powerful when tailored — no two professional journeys are the same.

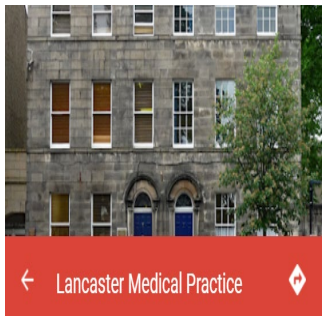
Contacts

Corrie Llewellyn QN
corrie.llewellyn@nhs.net | 07826556852
Nichola Verstraelen
nichola.verstraelen@mbht.nhs.uk | 01524516484
Gillian Southgate
gillian.southgate@researchnorthwest.nhs.uk | 07825143562

NIHR | Research Delivery Network



Thornton Medical Centre, Thornton Cleveleys



10 practices in LSC new research hubs
Growing a culture of research across LSC



Fatima Health Centre, Preston,



Barnoldswick Medical Centre

Lancaster Medical centre Lancaster

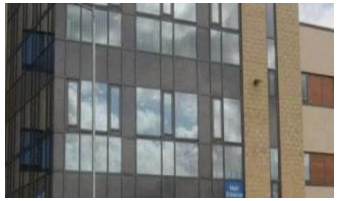
East Lancs PCN Alliance

Station House Surgery, Kendal



Hazelvalley FAMILY PRACTICE







Shifa Surgery, Blackburn

The Pendle Medical Partnership

Ash Trees surgery Carnforth

Hazelvalley Family Practice HASLINGDEN, ROSSENDALE,

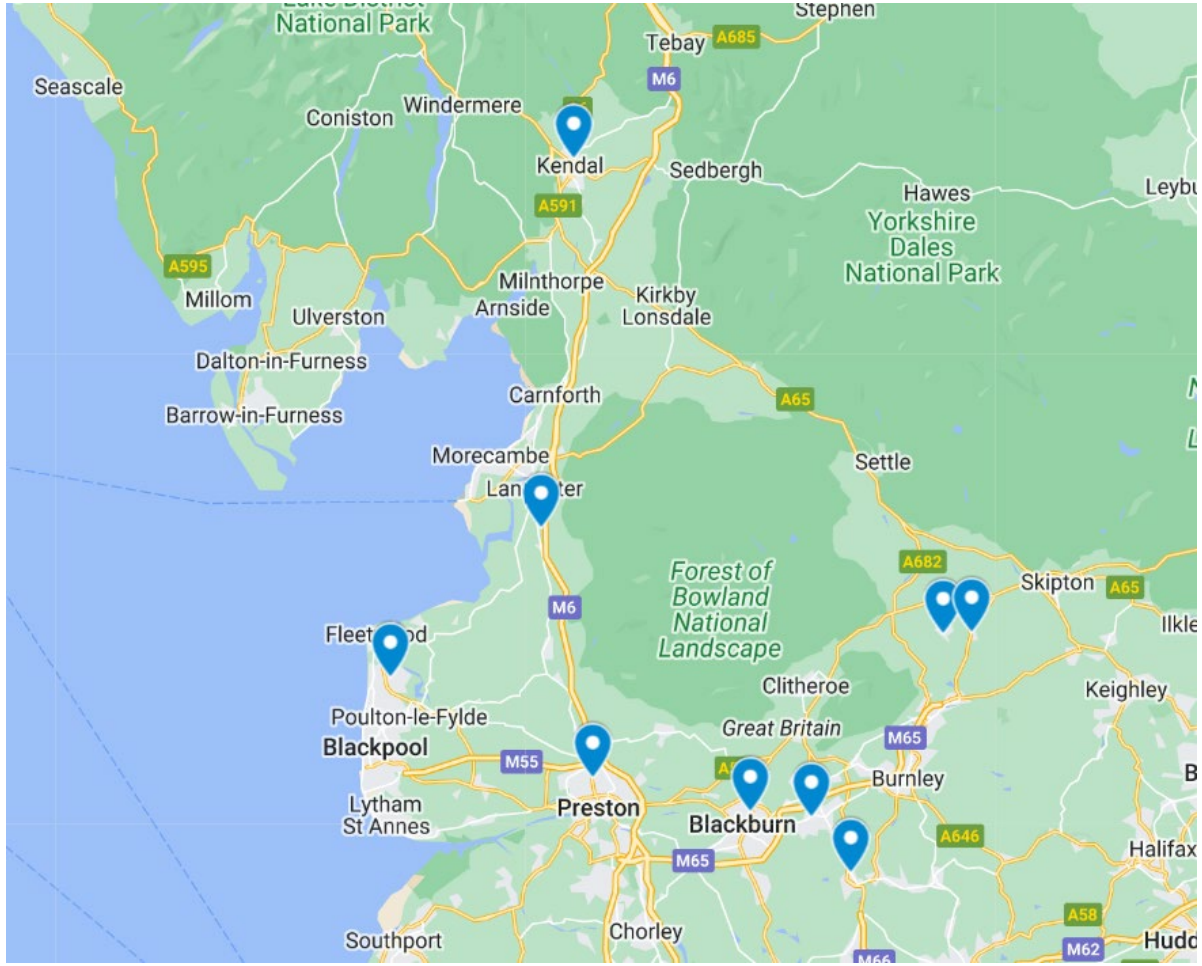
Links for further research connections

Wide spread of geography across our ICS for the new research hubs

Research engagement network (NHSE) VCFSEs, research and ICB's

Bridges web page bringing together VCFSE's, research and the ICB

Current project has champions in all the PC hubs to support more promotion of research to recruit to specific studies – if anyone wants to link in with me to help please do…..
Nichola.Verstraelen@mbht.nhs.uk



https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=19TLQeBev-DOMuMHSXAM_L07vaO1l9to&ll=54.03617223078148%2C-2.456198479453615&z=9

NIHR | Research Delivery Network

What is this programme about?

- **Fully funded by the NIHR RRDN – strategic funding call, to build research capacity in wider care or community settings (10-year plan)**
- Health and care research delivery across Lancashire and South Cumbria (L&SC) faces well-recognised local challenges
- **A pilot six-month leadership development programme designed for health care professionals across primary care in L&SC,** providing them with the **knowledge, confidence, and practical tools** to lead a sustainable culture of Research and Innovation



What does it comprise of

- **A two-day residential**
- a series of 5 workshops (face-to-face and online)
- **online coaching groups,**
- 1:1 mentoring,
- Development of a **personal *Research Culture Change Work Plan*** focused on real challenges in individual services and identifying realistic targets for research delivery, engagement and impact



Must be able to attend all sessions

Workshop Dates

14–15 October 2026 — 2-Day In-Person Residential Workshop (1 overnight stay) time commitment approx. 18 hrs.

18 November 2026 — 1-Day In-Person Workshop- 8 hrs.

15 December 2026 — Half-Day Online Workshop – 3 hrs.

7 January 2027 — Half-Day Online Workshop – 3 hrs.

3 February 2027 — 1-Day In-Person Workshop – 8hrs.

18 March 2027 — 1-Day In-Person Celebration Event- 8hrs.

Coaching and mentoring

- As well as the workshops, coaching and mentoring takes place between workshops at a time agreed by the individual/group.
- **6 x 2 hour group coaching sessions-** online over 6 months- total time commitment **12 hours**
- Mentoring- individual 1;1 mentoring , 1 hr per month for 6 months – total time commitment 6 hours.



Who can apply

Open to all health and care professionals working in primary care across Lancashire and South Cumbria — no matter your role or level.

We welcome applications from:

- Practice nurses and nurse practitioners; GPs and GP registrars; Practice managers
- Pharmacists/ community pharmacists and pharmacy technicians; Allied health professionals; Social care professionals
- Any other health or care professional working in a primary care

Eligibility

- Works in primary care settings in Lancashire or S Cumbria (e.g. GP practices, Primary Care Networks, community services) - **minimum of 15 hrs.** per week preferred
- Is **passionate** about **improving patient care** and learning more about the impact of research.
- **Can attend the workshops, coaching and mentoring sessions.**
- Has support from their **line manager**.



Why should I apply?

Participants who complete the programme will leave with:

- Increased confidence in research, innovation and evidence-based practice
- Stronger research & professional networks across primary care, social care and community services
- Ongoing connection to a regional R&I community of practice
- A completed Individual Research Culture Change Work Plan focused on a real challenge in their workplace
- Insight and experience of leading and implementing research-related changes in their own setting
- Skills in stakeholder engagement, creative facilitation, and evidence-based leadership
- Contribution to shaping future programmes for leading a culture of R&I in health and care.



Why release staff to take part?

There are **incentives** for primary care professionals and organisations to undertake the course at the individual, practice, and system levels. E.G:-

Short-term	Improved awareness of funding opportunities (e.g. fellowships, grants, NIHR programmes); greater ability to develop competitive funding applications; access to funded research training and protected learning opportunities.
Medium-term	Increased success in securing research grants; **research delivery income** for practices participating in clinical studies; **funding for backfill** or protected research time; **reduced costs through evidence-based service improvements** and more efficient care pathways.
Long-term	Sustainable research income for practices and Primary Care Networks (PCNs); increased organisational reputation attracting further investment; improved staff recruitment and retention, reducing recruitment costs; better patient outcomes leading to more efficient use of NHS resources and fewer avoidable admissions or referrals.

Funding

All aspects of the programme are fully funded, including all workshops, residential, coaching and mentoring sessions.

Salary backfill is available at the following rates (Max of 56hrs per claim)

- Group 1 - salary up to £40K pa (Nurse midwife AHP and Pharmacy) - £25 ph
- Group 2- salary above 40k pa (Nurse midwife AHP and Pharmacy) - £45ph
- Group 3 - Medical Grade (GPs, Trainee GPs, PAs) - £72.50ph

Evaluation

The programme will **be independently evaluated by the University of Lancaster.**

The evaluation will include:

- Pre- and post-programme surveys
- Qualitative interviews with participants, mentors, and partner organisations
- Network mapping to track new collaborative relationships formed during the programme

- A final evaluation report with recommendations for regional scaling, to be completed post-programme

The findings will be shared with system partners and made available for wider learning and dissemination across the region and nationally.



Key Dates

Q&A sessions: 19 June and 22 July, 12–12.30 pm

- Application deadline: **31 July 2026**
- Programme starts: 14/15 October 2026



Questions

Contact
Nichola.Verstraelen@mbht.nhs.uk

Corrie.Llewelyn@nhs.net

Gillian.southgate@researchnorthwest.nhs.uk