

Celebrating 25 years

of the NIHR/Wellcome
Trust Birmingham Clinical
Research Facility

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As the NIHR/Wellcome Trust Birmingham Clinical Research Facility (CRF) marks 25 years, this is an opportunity to reflect on its development and the contribution it has made to clinical research and patient care.

Established with the aim of providing a dedicated environment for clinical research, the Birmingham CRF has grown into an important part of the region's NHS and academic research infrastructure.

This development has been shaped by the people who have contributed to its work - patients and public contributors, researchers, clinicians, nurses, pharmacists, administrators, laboratory staff and other colleagues. Partnerships across the NHS, universities, industry, charities and community organisations have also been central to its success.

Over the years, it has supported research across a wide range of specialties, helping to bring new treatments, technologies and approaches to patient care from concept to reality. Many studies that began within the facility have contributed to advances that are now part of routine clinical practice, improving the lives of people locally, nationally and internationally.



A message from... from the NIHR/Wellcome Trust Birmingham CRF Director's

The impact of the Birmingham CRF has always extended far beyond the walls of the facility. Over the years, the CRF has built strong and lasting relationships across Birmingham Health Partners, the wider NIHR community and beyond. These connections have created opportunities not only for research, but also for people to learn, grow and develop throughout their careers.

Looking back over the past 25 years, there is much to be proud of. Yet perhaps the most exciting chapter lies ahead. The challenges facing healthcare continue to evolve, and clinical research remains central to finding solutions. Building on 25 years of achievement, the Birmingham CRF is well placed to embrace new opportunities, make research more inclusive and continue delivering studies that make a meaningful difference to patients and the public.

This milestone is an opportunity to recognise and thank everyone who has contributed to the Birmingham CRF story. Being part of that journey has been a privilege, and the next 25 years hold exciting opportunities to build on what has been achieved and continue making a difference together.



Professor Lorraine Harper
Managing Director (Adults and Children's)



Professor Dhruv Parekh
Programme Director (Adults')



Dr Jan Idkowiak
Programme Director (Children's)



Milestones in the Birmingham CRF Story

2000 to 2001 Establishment and opening

Established in 2000 through Wellcome Trust funding and opened in 2001, the Birmingham Clinical Research Facility (CRF) has since benefited from successive National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) infrastructure awards, enabling the delivery of experimental

medicine research for more than two decades. Initially based only at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, its primary focus was to provide a dedicated environment for early-phase and experimental medicine research.



2008 Expansion to paediatric research

The CRF expanded to include a dedicated facility at Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital.

This created an "ageless" research model, supporting studies from newborns and children through to older adults.



2010 Health Research Bus launched

A bespoke mobile clinical research facility designed to bring research directly to communities across the West Midlands, helping to increase access to studies for people who might otherwise be unable to participate.

The bus included consultation rooms, sample processing facilities, scanning equipment, and space for health promotion and screening activities.



2010 Opening of the Inflammation Research Facility (IRF)

A significant milestone in the growth of the Birmingham CRF was the development of the Inflammation Research Facility (IRF), located alongside University of Birmingham research laboratories. The IRF was established to support cutting-edge research into inflammatory diseases and has enabled specialists in rheumatology, respiratory

medicine, neurology and other disciplines to undertake experimental medicine studies in a dedicated research environment. The facility has strengthened Birmingham's position as a national and international centre for inflammation research and translational medicine.



2023 NIHR funding secured

The Birmingham CRF secured £4 million of NIHR funding to enhance research delivery and

expand access to innovative research across the region.

NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

2026 The MIDRU CRF opened at Heartlands Hospital

The opening of the Medical Innovation Development Research Unit (MIDRU) CRF at Heartlands Hospital marked a significant expansion of the Birmingham CRF. The new unit has increased capacity for early-phase and complex studies, brought research closer to local communities, and strengthened Birmingham's infrastructure for delivering cutting-edge clinical trials and advanced therapies.

Liz Adey's vision, leadership and commitment to research have left a lasting mark on Birmingham's clinical research landscape. Her role in establishing MIDRU at Heartlands Hospital created foundations that continue to benefit patients, researchers and the NHS. The Birmingham CRF is proud to recognise her contribution and legacy.



Key studies from 25 years of research



2001
First trial to be run through the CRF: CYCLOPS

First randomised trial to be run through the CRF, investigating a new therapy for ANCA-associated vasculitis. The landmark CYCLOPS trial helped refine treatment approaches and improve outcomes for patients with vasculitis.



2005
STAMPEDE trial

A pioneering multi-arm, multi-stage prostate cancer trial. Over 20 years, STAMPEDE has transformed the standard of care for advanced prostate cancer and influenced practice worldwide.



2015
Morquio trial

A Phase I study of enzyme replacement therapy for Morquio syndrome, contributing to a treatment that progressed from early clinical development to standard of care within five years. This jointly managed project ran across both the children's and adult facilities.



2016
First Intrathecal Administration for Huntington's Disease

Delivery of a novel therapy directly into the cerebrospinal fluid, marking a significant step forward in the development of disease-modifying treatments for Huntington's disease.



2017
Staff Wellbeing Clinics

Rollout of Staff Wellbeing Clinics across University Hospitals Birmingham, led by CRF colleagues to support NHS staff wellbeing and study their impact on health outcomes and staff sickness.



2022
VASP Challenge Study

First human challenge study using Salmonella Paratyphi A, expanding the CRF's capability in infectious disease and vaccine research.



2026
Chimeric antigen receptor T-cell [CAR-T] trials and Tumour-infiltrating lymphocyte [TIL] therapy

Expansion of advanced cell therapy research into solid tumours and inflammatory diseases, helping bring next-generation immunotherapies to a wider range of conditions.

Voices from the CRF

Our patients

Between April 2025 and March 2026 alone, Birmingham CRF has supported 475 active studies, facilitated over 20,000 visits, and recruited over 5500 participants into research.

Here is what some of our patients had to say...

"Every week has been a pleasure visiting the Clinical Research Facility. The team have helped me so much and have been there for me every step of the way. I will miss coming to these appointments."

"The staff carrying out the research and looking after the patients have been superb. Caring, friendly and professional. It has been a pleasure to take part."

"Staff were extremely helpful and professional. The information I was given was helpful and relieved any anxieties I may have had regarding procedures."

"The staff are fantastic - always friendly, caring, competent and attentive! The best :-)"



Our colleagues

"Over the years, I have learnt so much through working on a wide variety of studies and alongside many knowledgeable research staff. The support I have received throughout my time in the CRF has helped me build strong foundations and develop both personally and professionally."

"I have been working at the CRF since January 2001. I love working here as there is always something new to learn. We are involved with patients from such a wide range of specialities, and all the trials are so different. We get trained up to work with so many different extended roles."

"Highlights have been to see clinical practice change in real time over the last 23 years. Working on innovative treatments that improve quality of life for patients in a mindful way. Seeing treatments that improve life expectancy become part of standard of care on the ward."

"Joining the Clinical Research Facility reinvigorated and enhanced my clinical and nursing practice at a point in my career when I was searching for my place and purpose. Being part of a team delivering clinical trials that offered new hope to patients I had previously cared for on the wards was truly transformational. Seeing those patients enjoy longer, healthier, and more active lives demonstrated the profound difference that nursing in research can make."



THANK YOU.
**25 years of research
have only been
possible because of
the people behind it.**



To our colleagues, participants, public contributors, partners, funders and supporters - thank you for your expertise, commitment, time and trust.

Together, you have helped shape the CRF, enabled thousands of people to take part in research and contributed to advances that are making a difference to patients locally, nationally and internationally.

Thank you for being part of our story – and for helping to shape what comes next.