HRA Board meeting

18 November 2026

13A

Title of paper:	Strategic comms and engagement update (Q2 & Q3)
Submitted by:	Will Griffiths-Stent (Senior Engagement Manager, HRA)
Summary of paper:	This is an overview of our strategic comms and engagement activity over Q2 and planned for Q3, broken down by the strategic drivers: **simple**, **fast**, **trusted**, and **effective**.
Reason for submission:	For information
Further information:	
Budget / cost implication:	n/a
Dissemination:	HRA website
Time required:	5 minutes

Mission: Simple

Outcome: Simple for researchers to find out how to do research with and for everyone and access support to do this well.

Strategy objectives	Key stakeholder/s & objectives	Q2 communications and engagement activity	Activities and plans for Q3
Make research more transparent.	**Stakeholder/s:** sponsors and chief investigators **Objective:** increase awareness of requirement to submit final reports and encourage submission	• We are continuing planning work around a refresh of the HRA's research transparency strategy, including a blog on what we've learned and what comes next. • We are presenting at NIHR Industry Hub webinar "Beyond compliance - turn patient engagement regulation into research results" • We presented at Clinical Data Disclosure & Transparency Conference 2026 "Uniting Global Clinical Transparency Professionals to Decode Regulations and Drive Patient-Centred Outcomes" in Philadelphia	• On 4th November we have the next quarterly meeting of the Make it Public group. • We are designing a survey to gather feedback to inform our updated Make it Public strategy • Identify opportunities to build planned work into the 'HRA PR' campaign so that wider stakeholders understand our statutory role with regards to transparency
Make it easier to do research across different settings in the UK.	**Stakeholder/s:** R&D managers, chief investigators **Objective:** raise awareness of resources available to speed study set up, get ongoing feedback to inform our approach	• We published the results of our study set-up at site survey 2026, which received 440 responses from the survey's run between March and April of this year. • We continue to engage partners to develop the ideal set-up pathway for research across settings and in regional delivery models. • Confirm the language to be used when referring to research locations, settings and organisations. • Continue our work with HMPPS to enable research participation for participants. • We ran a month-long campaign during September to promote guidance and a blog on 'contacting	

		people about research' which resulted in a 450% increase in website traffic to this section	
Support greater representation in, and access to, research.	**Stakeholder/s:** Sponsors **Objective:** recruit sponsors to take part in our pilot	• Options paper for the next steps for the draft guidance for developing an Inclusion and Diversity Plan was taken to joint UKREDG on 14th July for agreement on next steps • We hosted two workshops in September with RECs and sponsors who took part in the pilot of the draft guidance to discuss pilot findings and next steps. This included considering what information RECs want to see from an Inclusion and Diversity Plan. • We will begin to meet UKCRD clinical research inclusion group members to discuss implementation following agreement. A New section on the UKCRD website to showcase work being done under the UK Clinical Research Inclusion Group umbrella	• The week commencing 3 November, we will publish findings of the pilot, next steps and updated guidance for the HRA-MHRA Inclusion and Diversity Guidance. This will include information about a 12-month implementation phase starting in early 2027 where researchers/sponsors can volunteer to submit an Inclusion and Diversity Plan alongside an application.
Support researchers to do research in new ways and using new technologies such as AI.	**Stakeholder/s:** policymakers focused on data and AI **Objective:** grow our relationships with others developing approaches to data and AI to inform our approach	• We continue our ongoing support of the MHRA AI Commission, and the AI Airlock as it enters its 3rd phase and rolls in discussion around Digital Mental Health interventions. • We published content related to AI via AIDRS and keep current guidance up-to-date, and continue to respond to enquiries around AI. This includes a blog outlining how the HRA is supporting the AI Airlock as it enters phase 3 • We will support analysis of the planned Shared Ethical Debate on AI	• We are taking forward a project to update the 'is it research?' decision tool to better support developers of AI in healthcare to understand whether their activity is research. As part of this, we are planning a stakeholder engagement session at an event on 17th November • We will publish results of a proof of concept study on comparative AI use on specific standards within the approvals process in the Nature Machine Intelligence journal. The HRA and University of Bristol are the authors of the study. The study was a precursor to current AI project workstreams

Ensure that more research meaningfully involves the public to inform the way it is done.	**Stakeholder/s:** public involvement professionals **Objectives:** build relationships, support information-sharing and policy development	• Stakeholder engagement work with the Charities Research Involvement Group and others to develop a shared public involvement question set • With the Shared Commitment to Public Involvement partnership, we conducted deep dives into issues that cause barriers to public involvement at our quarterly Learning and Sharing meetings • Participated in quarterly ALB people network meeting	• We will continue stakeholder engagement work on developing a shared public involvement question set • We are holding Shared Commitment to Public Involvement meetings in Oct and Nov, hoping to publish the report from the August meeting on the NIHR Learning for Involvement website • We will be joining Five Nations public involvement leads meeting, sharing findings from recent Shared Commitment and ALB Payments group meetings re ethical approval of public involvement and problems with ineligible and fraudulent public contributors and concerns around the use of AI during and instead of involvement • We are attending the Second Patient Empowerment World Congress 2026 Europe in London as part of a panel discussion focused on making patient involvement count in policy and strategy development • We are also attending Understanding Patient Data's workshop on exploring the future of patient and public involvement and engagement in health data

Mission: Fast

Outcome: Fast to plan, approve, set up, manage and complete research in the UK.

Strategy objectives	Key stakeholder/s & objectives	Q2 communications and engagement activity	Activities and plans for Q3
Make setting up research more efficient, with simple steps and less duplication.	**Stakeholder/s:** sponsor, chief investigators, R&D managers **Objectives:** raise awareness and increase use of resources to speed study set up	• We have gathered feedback from non-commercial researchers on plans to launch mandated unmodified template agreements from early 2027 • Publish a UK site selected email template and corresponding guidance, as well as a study set-up guide • Take our work to the next step for pharmacy, radiation and IG with newly seconded lead technical experts	• Blog to be published from Alastair Nicholson talking about the success of the UK's approach to template contracts • Supporting the release of the next round of 150 day target data on 20 October 2026. Both of the above support the HRA PR campaign • Start to gather data and feedback to understand whether a refresh of our assurances, to make it easier to understand their function, would better support our strategic objectives
Make it faster and easier to use our new digital services to plan, approve, set up, manage and complete research in the UK.	**Stakeholder/s:** users of our digital services **Objectives:** inform service development, raise awareness of vision for future change	• In this period, we rolled out the Plan and manage health and care research service to modifications to REC only studies, which involved extensive engagement with UK-wide REC volunteers, HRA and UK-wide approvals staff • We continued engagement with sponsor organisations (UK-wide) to increase the number of early adopter sponsors from 10 to around 40 • We held the Research Systems programme quarterly show and tell held on 8 September • Ongoing user research to inform the development of the new service	• Continued engagement with early adopter groups to support their use of the new service and a further release of functionality in November • Ongoing user research to inform the development of the new service • Research Systems programme quarterly show and tell will take place on 8 December 2026
Implement new clinical trials legislation and continue to take	**Stakeholder/s:** sponsors, chief investigators of CTIMPS	• Working with the CTU network to plan a regulatory sandbox for simplified arrangements for informed consent in low intervention clinical trials	• We will continue to work with MHRA to support stakeholders to follow the amended regulations,

action to make it more proportionate for researchers to navigate the regulatory process without reducing rigour.	**Objectives:** raise awareness of updated regulations and updated MHRA-HRA guidance to support transition	• Continued monitoring and response to specific queries sent through various inboxes • We will mark the sixth-month anniversary of the 28th April (28th October)	and monitor HRA Contact and other inboxes to respond to specific queries that may arise

Mission: Trusted

Outcome: Trusted by everyone who needs us.

Strategy objectives	Key stakeholder/s & objectives	Q2 communications and engagement activity	Activities and plans for Q3
Increase the diversity of perspectives inform our work.	**Stakeholder/s:** wider community engagement sector, specific community groups **Objective:** build relationships with experts in community engagement to learn	• Following the workshops toward the start of this work, we developed our plan to recruit REC members under 30, including planning a paid social media campaign and outreach/engagement with targeted stakeholders to drive recruitment • We are planning for an in-person event in November, focused on bringing in a diverse range of appropriate perspectives to meaningfully inform our work. This will be UK-	• We will continue to develop our campaign to recruit REC members under 30 with the view of launching in the new year • In response to recommendations from the Infected Blood Inquiry, community engagement workshops are being planned to take place over November and December with 2-3 community groups to understand what information people want/need to decide whether to take part in research. A workshop will also be held as part of the HRA

	from them and identify opportunities to work with them	wide, with involvement and collaboration from partners across the Four Nations. It was also involve members of staff and members of the wider HRA community	Open Day in November. The findings from these will help shape new resources to communicate this information to potential participants. The resources will be created through a co-production exercise which will run from January to March 2027. An Advisory Group of relevant stakeholders, Co-Chaired by Jonathan Montogomery and a public contributor will support this work and are due to have their first meeting in November • We will support a CAG recruitment campaign to replace members who have recently left • We will develop a small campaign to recruit people with social care experience to RECs
Ensure that people can understand, value, and trust the way we work.	**Stakeholder/s:** n/a **Objective:** build a consistent understanding of HRA stakeholders and their sentiment towards us	• Finalised the answers to wider questions about the voice and persona of the HRA, and a draft interim campaigns plan, which will be used to steer how we will implement the recommendations from Trusted HRA	• Continue to develop a refreshed Communications and Engagement strategy for the HRA, for review in early 2027 • Establish a Missions Board to review the organisation's active campaigns in one place, and identify opportunities to increase the impact of individual pieces of work
Work in partnership to support new ways to do research such as working alongside the Health Data Research Service and make sure that regulation keeps up with	**Stakeholder/s:** wider policymakers, R&D managers/chief investigators/sponsors **Objective:** build relationships to increase visibility of HRA and our role in this space and better	• Published a follow-up blog and practical guidance on finding and contacting people about research, building on the Using health information to let patients know about research options: legal, policy and ethical issues report. Engagement with NIHR RDN and NHS information governance and research networks helped explain the expectations and identify scenarios needing further operational guidance, including digital intermediaries.	• Build on engagement with Four Nations policy leads, NIHR RDN, NHS England and wider partners to support consistent approaches to finding and contacting people about research, including consent to be contacted models and recruitment involving agile research delivery teams and digital intermediaries, and inform further scenario-based operational guidance as outlined in Next steps - from the report to practical guidance - Health Research Authority.

research so you can trust our decisions.	understand opportunities to support, promote action underway to address issues	• Continued engagement with DHSC, NHS England, HDRS and other key stakeholders on aligning emerging health data services with research governance, including recruitment, confidentiality and opt-out policy. Discussions also identified opportunities for HRA/CAG input into proposed SDE projects • We participated in the MHRA synthetic data workshop, contributing perspectives on research ethics, transparency, privacy and confidentiality • We supported communications around the publication of guidance on safeguarding UK human genomic data, highlighting its relevance to research data governance	• Build on the October meetings with HDRS and the DHSC sponsor team to strengthen HRA/CAG collaboration and align emerging services with research governance, including engagement with HDRS-funded Technical Transformation Projects involving recruitment through the SDEs network, drawing on and informing the recruitment guidance work outlined above • Continue discussions with DHSC on proposed COPI and opt out reforms, alongside regular meetings with the Joint Digital Policy Unit on governance and data access reform, to help ensure proposals support research while maintaining appropriate confidentiality safeguards and public trust, and to clarify responsibilities for implementation and oversight • We will publish a blog about SDEs and our the HRA's role

Mission: Effective

Outcome: Taking action to improve the research system and support our people well.

Strategy objectives	Key stakeholder/s & objectives	Q2 communications and engagement activity	Activities and plans for Q3
Ensure that our staff have a high	**Stakeholder/s:** staff	• We will develop an internal communications campaign based on actions highlighted in Staff Survey Action Plan	• We will deliver an internal communications campaign based on the Staff Survey Action Plan

level of engagement.	**Objective:** show what we have heard and action that we are taking to address this, create opportunities for staff to feedback to inform approach	• We will also develop and begin an internal communications plan focused on the Target Operating Model	• Begin a new model of working to best support Staff Voices • Work alongside HR to promote a relaunched HRA benefits offer for staff
Ensure that our community of volunteers and public contributors have a good experience with us and can see the difference they make.	**Stakeholder/s** HRA Community members **Objective:** promote relevant activity to HRA Community, ensure that they have the information that they need to support them in their role, ensure that they have ways to feedback to inform our work.	• We reminded colleagues that early planning and budgeting can improve the Community's experience of being involving in our work. • We are sharing monthly volunteer case studies, and we are also doing exploratory work to gather studies we can use as case studies to show the impact and value of our volunteers • As part of the Change campaign, we are reviewing the channels we use to communicate with our volunteers to reduce risk of inconsistency, information fatigue, and fragmentation • Continued use the access and support needs form and collected feedback • Supporting public contributors and REC members who are getting involved in reviewing the findings from the 2026 community survey and our proposed commitments for the next 2 years	• Planned publication of agreement to use when we invite public contributors to be involved in our work • Launch community survey findings with a supporting blog • We will publish a blog about REC members who have visited Phase 1 research units and why these visits are important • We will continue sharing monthly volunteer case studies • As part of the Change campaign and following our communications channels review, we are exploring whether we can use MS Teams to communicate with our volunteers