Health Research Authority

Agenda item:	**9**
Attachment:	**A**

HRA Board

18 November 2026

Title of paper:	**Key Performance Measures report: Quarter 2**
Submitted by:	Karen Williams, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources
Summary of paper:	To provide the HRA Board with a review of key performance measures
Reason for submission:	For approval
Further information:	The paper presents the key performance measures at Q2 and is a concise adaption of our historic reporting template. This report is produced in addition to the Strategy Delivery Report. Our key performance measures are grouped into four areas: • Our people • Our customers and stakeholders • Our services • Our finances The report includes the most recent data available. For this meeting, we report on performance for quarter two. This report provides a high-level strategic dashboard as well as a more detailed performance report to the Board.
Budget / cost implication:	N/A
Dissemination:	Published on HRA website with Board papers
Time required:	10 minutes

Performance report: Apr 2026 - Sep 2026

High level dashboard

Our services:

Ethics review of CTIMPs

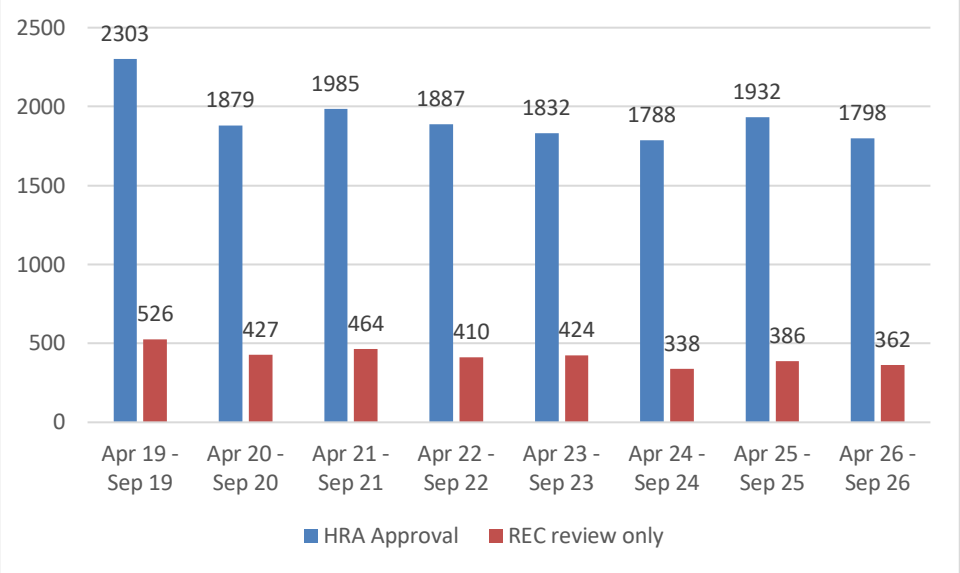
Median time to complete full review *22 days*

95% (200 out of 210) combined review CTIMPs were given an initial decision within 30 days.

97% (165 out of 170) combined review CTIMPs had an RFI reviewed within 10 days.

100% (170) combined review CTIMPs were reviewed within 60 days as needed to comply with the regulatory component of the 150 day target.

HRA Approval and REC Review only



Long-term trends have seen new applications reduce by about 5% each year. This trend reversed in the 2025-26 financial year with new applications 8% higher than 2024-25 and at the highest level since 2021-23. This increase in application volume was seen across most study types. This upward trend does not appear to be maintained so far this year and applications volumes appear to be dropping to the similar levels seen in 2024-25.

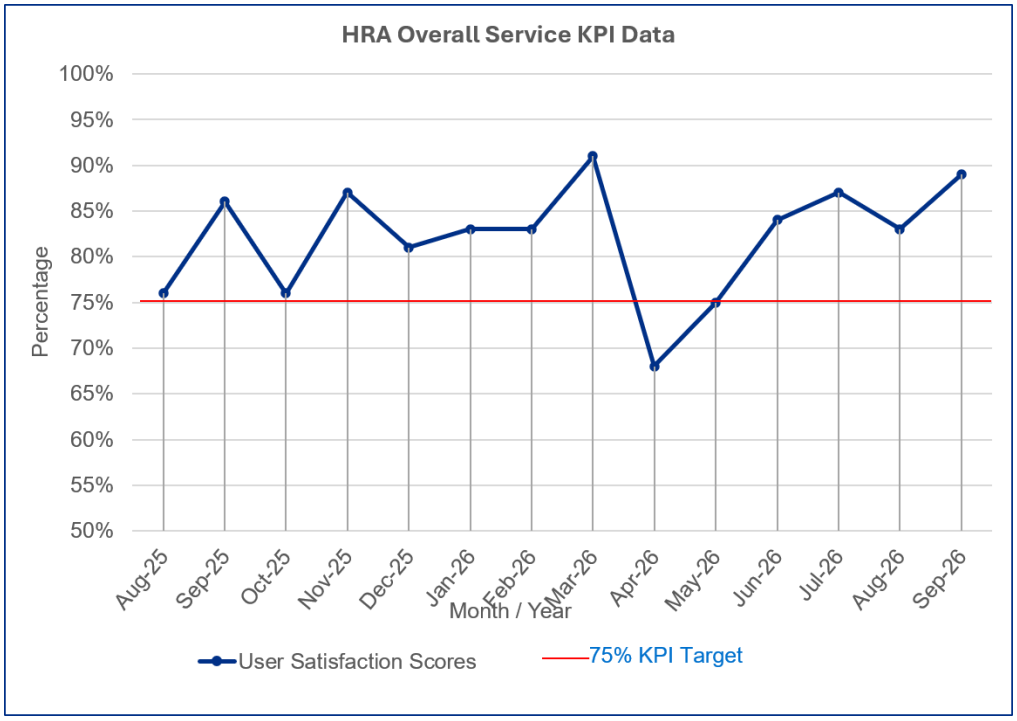
CAG

100% (16 out of 16) CAG applications requiring full review completed in target time

Applications in progress that have exceeded target times: None

Our service users:

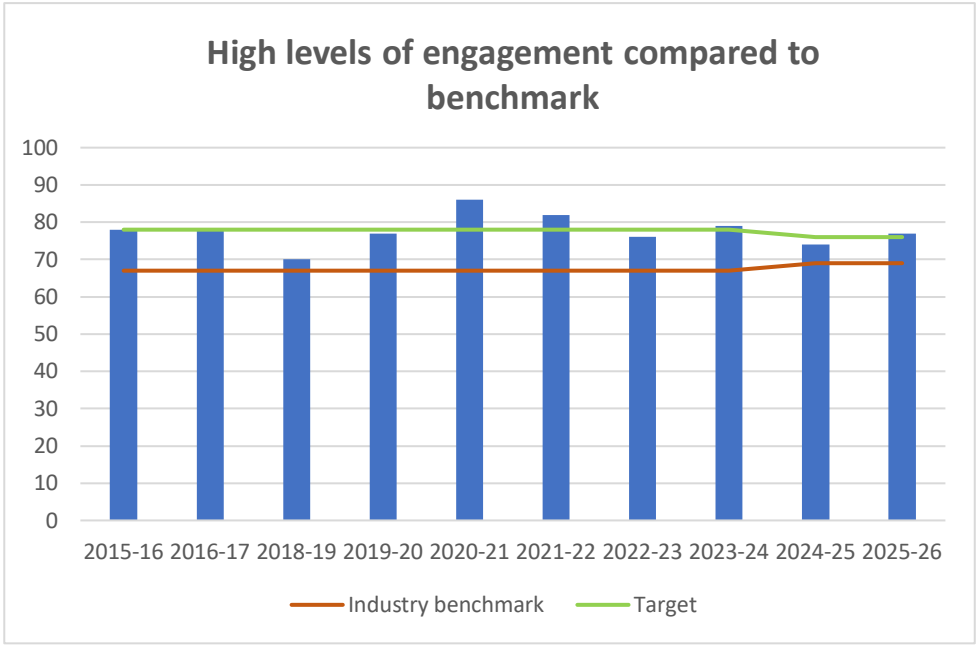
Customer satisfaction comfortably achieved our target of 75% throughout the quarter finishing at 89% in September.



⇅

Our people:

Staff engagement (based on annual staff survey)



2026: 77%; target: 76% shown in green; industry benchmark: 69% shown in brown

Our staff engagement remains strong, above the industry benchmark and increased from last year. Strong engagement is essential to our strategy delivery.

⇈

Our staff vacancy rate (capacity)

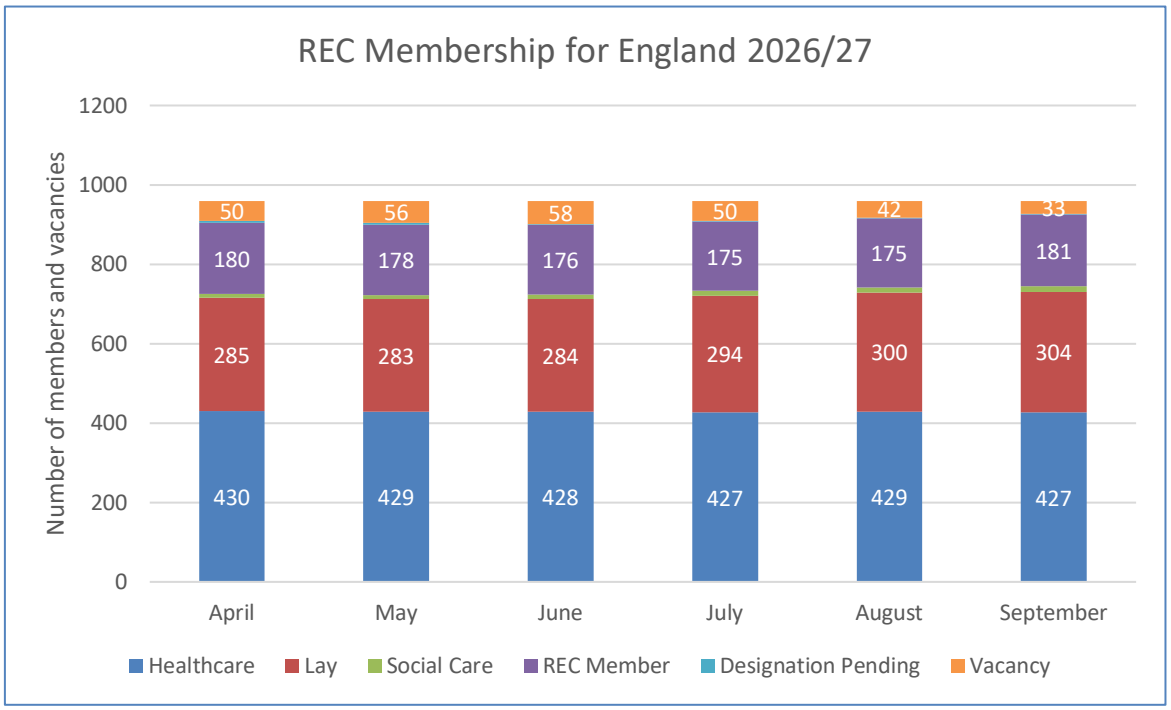
2026-27 Q1: 7% Q2: 14%

2025-26 Q1: 6% Q2: 10%

Our vacancy rate has increased due to continued challenges with recruiting to specialist roles such as digital. Whilst turnover figures are consistent with NHS benchmark, some specialist roles such as test engineers are in high demand, impacting supply. Alternative strategies such as contingent labour and service contracts are being explored.

⇆

Our members vacancy rate (Research Ethics Committee members in England)



We have 927 REC members (427 Healthcare, 304 Lay, 13 Social Care and 181 REC member) and are operating at a 4% vacancy rate. We are currently targeting recruitment to recruit more lay members to the service as we adjust to the new CT Regulations requirements.

⇈

Finance:

Expenditure within 4% of funding

Overall

✓

Research systems programme

✗

Our Q2 forecast on 'run the business' activities is within 4% of plans. Our digital transformation expenditure forecast is within our business case allocation for this year and in total for the programme. The allocation between RDEL and CDEL expenditure is different to our original plans as is the phasing resulting in a forecast overspend on RDEL £200k overall and underspend in CDEL, this year.

⇆

Approvals service

Combined review

Combined review is the approval process for new clinical trials of investigational medicinal products (CTIMPs) and combined medicine and device trials. It involves several bodies, including Research Ethics Committees (RECs) and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Amended Clinical Trial Regulations came into effect in April, changing how RECs and the MHRA review CTIMPs.

During the reporting period, 95% of CTIMPs received an initial decision within 30 days of receipt. 10 of the 210 trials reviewed missed this target. 8 were considered at August meetings held on day 25 or later, leaving limited time to issue a decision. Monitoring and moving applications to earlier meetings helped 21 trials meet their statutory deadlines, but did not prevent these 10 delays.

Decisions on requests for further information (RFIs) were issued within 30 days of receipt for 97% of CTIMPs. All CTIMPs would have met the previous regulations' 60-day target for an ethical opinion. These figures cover ethical review only.

These timelines are different to those reported to DHSC as part of the UKCRD work which measures the complete time to issue a joint outcome with MHRA. We are continuing to closely monitor these timelines and actively supporting Approvals staff to ensure we meet these targets going forward.

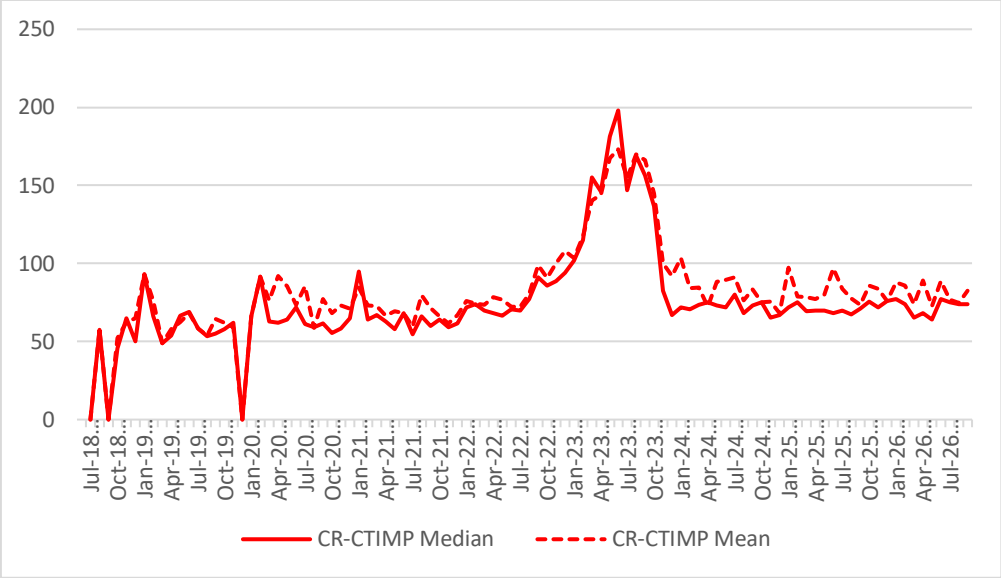
The table below refers to CTIMPs reviewed by the Fast Track ethical review process only:

Fast-track Ethical Review (combined review, non-COVID-19 studies)

Fast Track ethical review	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Jul-26	Aug-26	Sep-26
Median time to complete full review	25	25	24	19	21	19
Initial reviews completed in 30 days	85%	90%	98%	97%	97%	100%
RFI reviews completed in 10 days	80%	89%	88%	98%	100%	93%
Total completed	25	19	35	16	13	14
Total submitted	20	32	53	33	17	12

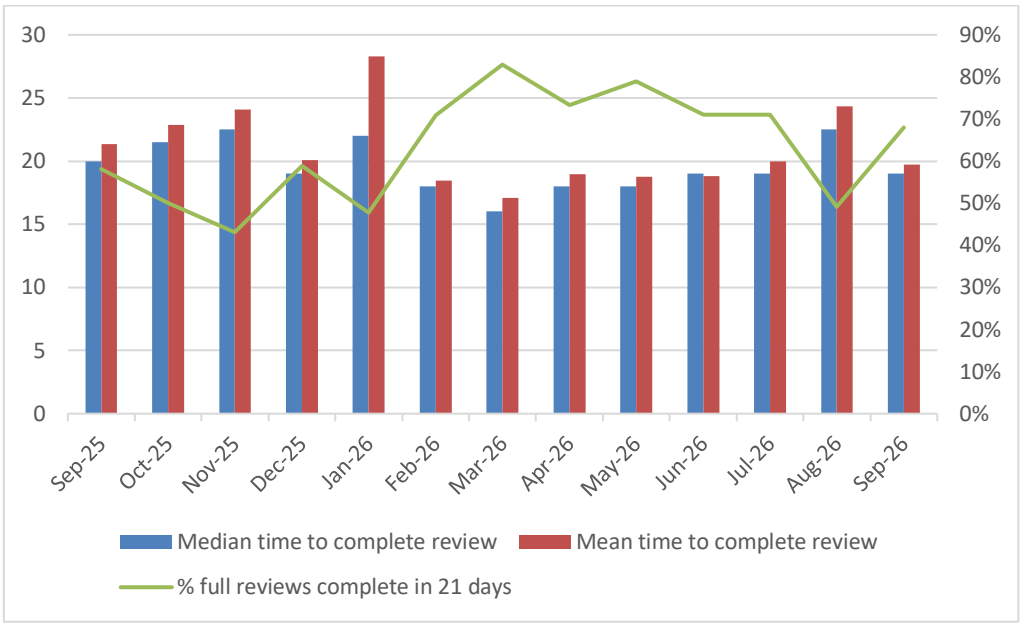
HRA Approval

For HRA and HCRW Approval in England and Wales, the graph below shows the median and mean elapsed timeline for applications from submission to approval (no clock stops) for CTIMPs. This means any time the application is waiting on a response to an RFI or for another regulatory approval is included in this measure as HRA and HCRW Approval cannot be issued until these have all been received. Applications withdrawn or invalid have been omitted from the data set.



Proportionate Review (PR)

Proportionate review is available for applications with no material ethical issues, with a target of issuing a final REC opinion within 21 days. Increased demand in August put pressure on meeting capacity and delayed reviews, although review times are beginning to improve. RECs are reviewing more studies per meeting and additional sub-committee meetings have been arranged where needed. Operational teams continue to monitor demand and manage capacity.



Public Involvement

Number of Activities in which we have involved the public in our work

Apr 26	May 26	June 26	Jul 26	Aug 26	Sep 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
4	2	2	4	4	5						

48 individuals, including 6 REC Chairs, took part in 13 involvement activities across 9 areas of work.

More than 80% of people involved in the HRA's work agreed that they had shaped and informed the work they had been involved in

Apr 26	May 26	June 26	Jul 26	Aug 26	Sep 26	Oct 26	Nov 26	Dec 26	Jan 27	Feb 27	Mar 27
	80%	100%			100%						

Both feedback respondents this quarter (100%) strongly agreed they had shaped and informed the work they contributed to. These figures exclude a further feedback session facilitated by the Engagement Team.

RAG Status criteria

Ethical review of CTIMPs (both the combined and non-combined processes)	green > 94%, amber 90%-94%, red <90%
Application numbers	Green > -6% amber -7% to -12% red < -13%
Staff engagement	green >76%, amber 68%-75%, red <68%
Staff vacancy rate	green < 6%, amber > 6%-14%, red > 14%
REC membership vacancies	green < 6%, amber 6%-14%, red >14%
Customer satisfaction	green >76%, amber 68%-75%, red <68%
Finance	Green +/- 4%, amber +/- 10%, red +/- 15%