

Research Briefing March 2026

News and Events

- **NIHR Celebrates 20 Years of Life-Changing Research** - April 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR20 campaign celebrates two decades of impact, highlighting major achievements, sharing personal stories, and looking ahead to future innovations. For NIHR20, NIHR will be celebrating the impact they have made. They will be marking some of their most significant past achievements, reflecting on shared successes with partners and the research community, and looking forward to the future. Learn more and get involved: [NIHR20 supporters page.](#)
- **Shaping the future of health and care applied research- Tuesday 23 June 2026, 10:00 - 15:00** [The Maltings, Ely, CB7 4BB](#)) **Free event** Join the [next iteration of ARC East of England](#) and explore how we can shape the future of health and care research together. [This event](#) is open to anyone with an interest in [ARC East of England research](#) and a desire to collaborate, learn, and contribute to improving health and care through applied research. Register [here](#).

New Funding and Training opportunities

- [NIHR Developing Research Leader Programme: Applications now open](#) Are you a nurse, midwife or allied health professional passionate about developing your research leadership and embedding research in health and care? The DRL Programme is a funded initiative focused on building a sustainable research culture across health and care organisations. The 3-year programme provides protected time, structured development and mentorship, and access to a national network of peers. Participants will be supported in strengthening their leadership skills and increase research capacity in practice. Applications close on 21 April 2026.
- **NHS East of England has opened a call for a Research Support Award for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals (NMAHPs) looking to further their research development.** This research award aims to provide extra support to those who need it to enhance ongoing funded research projects, including in developing NIHR applications. Closing date is Friday 1st May. Email HEE.Bridging@uea.ac.uk to request an applications form, which will need to be submitted along with your CV and supporting letter.
- [NIHR has launched the latest in its series of annual capital investment calls for NHS organisations in England.](#) Up to £55 million is being made available to pay for specialist equipment, associated building refurbishment and modular buildings. This money will enhance NHS organisations' ability to carry out innovative commercial research in hospital and primary care settings. It ensures patients can access new treatments, no matter where they live. Applications are welcomed from NHS trusts and primary care organisations (PCOs) delivering NHS-funded services in England. **The call closes on 7 May 2026. For more details on how to apply, visit here: [Capital Investment Funding Opportunity 2026](#)**

New Research

- [The first men have been tested in a landmark prostate cancer screening trial](#) funded in partnership between NIHR and Prostate Cancer UK (PCUK). [The £42m trial called TRANSFORM](#) is aiming to find the best tests to screen men for what is the most common cancer in the UK without a screening programme.

Research Findings and Reports

- ARC East of England's new [public involvement impact report](#) highlights how, over the last six and a half years, the ARC has collaborated with patients, carers, and communities to make research more relevant, fair, and useful for everyone. [This report](#) celebrates our collaborative achievements with public contributors, community organisations, and researchers in shaping how research is designed, delivered, and communicated.

- **Why the first 1,000 days are key to preventing childhood obesity** Following the Government's recent announcement to tackle childhood obesity through support in schools, it is important to recognise that prevention can begin much earlier. In this blog, ARC East of England researcher [Dr Cara Ruggiero](#) introduces the [SPROUT study](#), which explored parents' and professionals' experiences of feeding during the first year of life to help inform healthier childhoods. The study identified barriers to responsive feeding and developed recommendations for services and policies that give infants the best start in life.
- **[Study highlights stroke risk linked to recreational drugs, including among young users](#)** There is increasing evidence that these drugs may increase the risk of stroke, but the evidence is often of differing quality and is observational only. In findings published in the [International Journal of Stroke](#), the team found that the use of cocaine and amphetamines was associated with around double the risk of stroke (cocaine increased the risk by 96%, amphetamines by 122%), while cannabis use increased the risk by around 37%. The team found no statistically significant link between opioid use and stroke risk.
- **[Improving care for care home residents through data linkage](#)**. The findings highlight the importance of scaling this approach nationally to transform the quality of care in care homes. The NIHR ARC East of England [DACHA study](#) has shown that a Minimum Data Set (MDS) can bring together information already recorded about care home residents across health, social care and care homes into a single system to support the planning, delivery and evaluation of care.
- **[Study develops key principles to help schools respond to rising self-harm among young people](#)** An ARC East of England study, developed in collaboration with young people and school staff, has produced evidence-informed principles to help guide whole-school approaches to addressing self-harm among pupils. The findings highlight the need for clearer national guidance and more comprehensive training so staff can support young people in ways that are both effective and compassionate
- **[A new study explores how physical and mental health professionals experience delivering mental health care to young people in paediatric hospital settings](#)**. Despite rising levels of mental health need among children and young people, many physical health teams feel underprepared to manage complex presentations such as self-harm, suicide and eating disorders. Three key themes emerged from interviews with 31 clinicians.
- **[New research shows that the memory and cognitive problems often experienced by people with systemic rheumatic diseases do not get worse over time as many patients fear](#)**. Over the two-year study, patients' memory scores and adapting to living with a disease scores improved, with depression and anxiety scores remaining unchanged. The researchers concluded that these patients need more medical and psychosocial support for these mental health symptoms.
- **[Online consultation tools should not be a mandatory first step to access primary mental healthcare](#)**. The study funded by NIHR SPCR highlights that while digital systems can help some patients share information more easily, they may also create barriers for those with limited digital access or complex needs, and can make it harder for clinicians to assess risk and maintain continuity of care. Researchers conclude that online tools should remain optional alongside phone and face-to-face appointments - not a default gateway.
- **[New Research Highlights Prostate Cancer Inequalities and Builds on School of Primary Care Research Insights](#)**-A recent study has revealed significant disparities in prostate cancer diagnosis and outcomes for men with learning disabilities, adding to growing evidence about inequalities in cancer care pathways. The research, led by teams at the University of Manchester and The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, found that men with learning disabilities were substantially less likely to receive key diagnostic tests such as PSA (prostate-specific antigen) screening, timely referrals and biopsies - and were more likely to be diagnosed at an advanced stage or at the time of death.
- **[Teamwork and relational infrastructure: a qualitative study of modern UK general practice](#)**- Francesca Dakin writes for British Journal of General Practice. 2026 Feb