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Achieving the Research Pillar in Advanced Practice Roles: Development of a research toolkit

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Aim of this presentation

- Background
- Development of research toolkit
- Research pillar framework
- Research pillar activity log
- Implementation
- Evaluation



The Advanced Practice Research Toolkit

The toolkit was developed in March 2023 by Kerry Gaskin in her previous post as Associate Professor of Nursing at the University of Worcester and Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The toolkit aims to

- support advanced practitioners to 'get started' with the research pillar
- encourage advanced practice teams to consider their research priorities
- enable individual and team research objective setting
- enable AP teams and individuals to plan activity within the research pillar of the AP role using the research capabilities in the Multi-professional framework for Advanced Clinical Practice (HEE 2017)
- aid appraisal discussions

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Chief Midwifery Officer for England's strategic plan for research

< Publication

Content

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Implementation
Governance and future actions

Summary

Research and data can save lives and improve health care and help deliver better outcomes. NHS trusts that are highly research active have better outcomes for patients across their services. All patients have better health outcomes in research active hospitals, even if individual patients are not part of research.

Clinical research embedded in the NHS creates a research positive culture in which all health and care staff feel empowered to support and participate in clinical research as part of their job. This requires a sustainable and supported research workforce – which offers rewarding opportunities and exciting careers for all healthcare and research staff of all professional backgrounds. It also requires boosting areas of high research need and historical under-investment in groups such as midwives.

The Health and Care Act strengthened the duties on NHS England and integrated care systems (ICSs), which are now required to 'facilitate and otherwise promote research'. To make 'research everybody's business' this strategy sets out how embedding evidence and research in maternity policy and programmes and supporting under-represented groups



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A research active organisation can improve safety and quality of healthcare

Understanding research and evidence can significantly enhance the provision of optimal care to patients

(Jonker & Fischer 2018; Ozdemir et al 2015)

Advanced Practice Research Pillar

4.1 Critically engage in research activity, adhering to good research practice guidance, so that evidence-based strategies are developed and applied to enhance quality, safety, productivity, and value for money.

4.2 Evaluate and audit own and others' clinical practice, selecting and applying valid, reliable methods, then acting on the findings.

4.3 Critically appraise and synthesise the outcome of relevant research, evaluation, and audit, using the results to underpin own practice and to inform that of others.

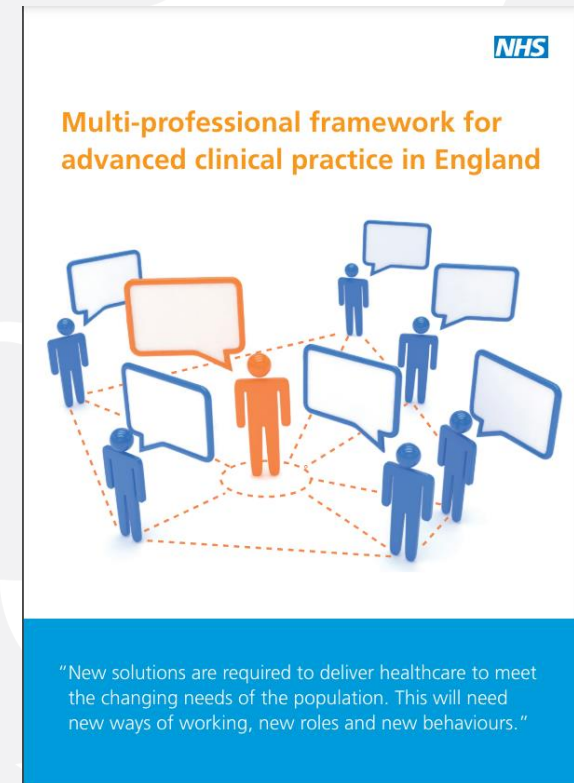
4.4 Take a critical approach to identify gaps in the evidence base and its application to practice, alerting appropriate individuals and organisations to these and how they might be addressed in a safe and pragmatic way.

4.5 Actively identify potential need for further research to strengthen evidence for best practice. This may involve acting as an educator, leader, innovator, and contributor to research activity and/or seeking out and applying for research funding.

4.6 Develop and implement robust governance systems and systematic documentation processes, keeping the need for modifications under critical review.

4.7 Disseminate best practice research findings and quality improvement projects through appropriate media and fora (e.g. presentations and peer review research publications).

4.8 Facilitate collaborative links between clinical practice and research through proactive engagement, networking with academic, clinical and other active researchers.





Multiprofessional practice-based research capabilities framework

The framework organises capabilities within eight non-hierarchical inter-related domains:

1. Research related career growth.
2. Planning and designing research.
3. Delivering research.
4. Knowledge mobilisation and research implementation.
5. Networking and collaborating in research.
6. Supporting research related development in others.
7. Leading and managing research projects and teams.
8. Strategic leadership in research and knowledge mobilisation.



Development of the toolkit



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Section A:

The research pillar framework

This section provides a framework, which maps the research pillar capabilities (HEE 2017) against suggested individual and team activities, with example resources and training opportunities

Additional examples can be added as other resources and opportunities are identified or can be tailored to the individual organisation

Section B:

The research pillar activity log

This section is designed to help APs to work with their supervisor to plan and record research activities, considering medium-term (3-year) research ambitions in relation to research activities both planned (next 12 months) and completed (previous 12 months).

APs are encouraged to share this log with their line manager, to further discussions about research aspirations and objectives more broadly within their Advanced Practice role.





SECTION A: the research pillar framework

Table 1 Suggested actions to meet research capabilities

HEE Research Capabilities	Individual Actions	Team Actions	Training/Resources
<p>Health and care professionals working at the level of advanced clinical practice should be able to:</p> <p>4.1 Critically engage in research activity, adhering to good research practice guidance, so that evidence-based strategies are developed and applied to enhance quality, safety, productivity, and value for money.</p> <p>Maps to NHSE (2024) domains: 1,3,4,7</p> <p>1. Research related career growth. 3. Delivering research. 4. Knowledge mobilisation and research implementation 7. Leading and managing research projects and teams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainee ACP (TACP) • Qualified ACP (QACP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a research methods module at master's level to enhance your knowledge and understanding (TACP) • Explore your own research philosophy, epistemology, ontology (TACP) • Engage in research activity by undertaking primary research for your MSc dissertation (TACP) • Identify personal development objectives within annual appraisal to enhance research knowledge, understanding and skills (QACP) • Undertake Good Clinical Practice training (TACP) • Undertake Associate/Principal Investigator Essentials programme (QACP) • Register as PI with Trust research team (QACP) • Become a research champion within your team and department (QACP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a training needs analysis of the team to identify strengths and weaknesses and identify learning opportunities • Encourage attendance at monthly research workshops • Find out what research is already happening in your speciality, department, or organisation • Engage with Knowledge and Library service in your organisation • Review the underpinning evidence base for all team service delivery to ensure quality and safety • Ascertain need for quality improvement projects, considering quality, safety, productivity, and cost improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register your projects via the Organisation's Research intranet pages, or QI page, email R&D team for Trust approval – following SOPs • Follow your Trust's/organisation's flow diagram for approval process • register with NIHR Learn. Go to: Getting started with NIHR Learn • Undertake the Good Clinical Practice Training available from NIHR • Access the NIHR N&M Incubator • Consider your path in research • Read the UK Standards for public involvement



Section B

Research Pillar Activity Log

Part 1: Where am I now? Research activities from the previous 12 months

Part 2: Your medium – long term (3-5 year) ambitions for your research activities.

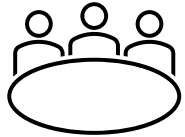
Part 3: Where Next? Research Plans for forthcoming 12 months

Part 4: Signatures and notes from meetings with supervisor/line manager

- Create an activity log however suits you and your organisation best e.g.
 - E-portfolio
 - Word document (example included in the toolkit)

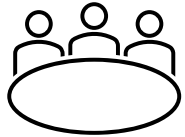


Dissemination 2023-2024



- Dissemination at GHNHSFT (May-Sept 2023)
- Presentations/webinars
 - One Gloucester AP summit March 2023 (n=48)
 - South-West Advanced Practice Conference Oct 2023 (n=25)
 - National AP conference Nov 2023
 - N=184 delegates on demand, 1064 visits to 12/3/24
 - NIHR CRN WM webinar Jan 2024 (n=297)
 - Oxford Health and Care Trust webinar (n=9)
 - Royal Brompton Hospital/ Guys and St Thomas' London – Nursing Research Group webinar (n=20)
 - Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust advanced practitioners - webinar
 - UKCRF Network Nurses and Practitioners Group, Leicester
 - RCN International Research Conference Sept 24
 - UHCW Advanced Practice conference Sept 24
 - Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHST AP conference Sept 24
 - Alder Hey Children's Hospital AP conference Oct 24
 - Liverpool Women's AP conference Oct 24

Collaboration



Collaboration with Midlands Advanced Practice Faculty [Feb 2024 (ongoing)]

- Update of the Toolkit March 2024
- Developing implementation and evaluation strategy



Collaboration with NIHR - SRL project team /National CNO team research delivery/National AP Faculty/ [Feb 2024]

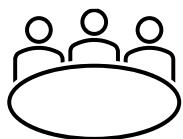
- Senior Research Leader project July 2024-2026
- Implementation within specific organisations



Collaboration with West Midlands Research Delivery Service Jan 2024-March 2025 0.2WTE Research Nurse

- Implementation within specific organisations

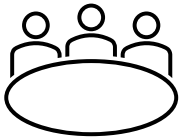
Service development project



The aim is to pilot the **Advanced Practice Research Toolkit** and evaluate the impact of the implementation

- Pre-implementation survey – APs, supervisors, line managers (Nov-Dec 2024)
- Implementation of the advanced practice research toolkit (Jan-August 2025)
- Post implementation survey - APs, supervisors, line managers (Sept-Oct 2025)
 - Case studies
 - Evaluate impact on AP research – health benefits, safety/quality, service and workforce, research culture, capacity, capability, economic, knowledge generation and exchange

Impact - People



Webinars (x6)

Conferences (x12)

N=approximately 1900
delegates/attendees



Pre-implementation
survey

Advanced Practitioners
n=173

Line Managers n= 30

Supervisors n=41

Requests/enquiries about the toolkit n=96

Ten Pilot Sites

The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust

Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Oxford University Hospital Foundation Trust

University College Hospitals London NHS Foundation Trust

Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

Imperial College London

Leeds Community Healthcare Trust

University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Impact - outputs

Blog | Evidence-Based Nursing

Achieving the research pillar: a research toolkit for Advanced Practitioners

Posted on June 11, 2023

In this blog, Dr Kerry Gaskin, Associate Professor of Nursing, discusses the development of an Advanced Practice Research Toolkit to enable AP teams and individuals to plan activity within the research pillar of their role.



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COMMENTARY

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How to start the research pillar in advanced practice

Kerry Gaskin Professor of congenital cardiac nursing, Birmingham City University

Eleanor Hoverd National Institute for Health and Care Research clinical doctoral research fellow

Andrew Finney Director of research, Keele University, School of Nursing & Midwifery, Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust



The advanced practice research toolkit aims to address challenges of bringing research into nursing roles

Advanced practitioner (AP) roles are defined by four fundamental pillars: clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research (Health Education England 2017). However, while most APs will agree that the clinical pillar is the core component, accomplishing and sustaining the other three pillars can be more challenging. Anecdotally, research seems to be the pillar where many APs 'just don't know how or where to get started'.

Nurse Researcher. 33, 2, 6-7. doi: 10.7748/nr.33.2.6.s2

Published: 11 June 2025

Evidence Based Nursing Blog

<https://blogs.bmj.com/ebn/2023/06/11/achieving-the-research-pillar-a-research-toolkit-for-advanced-practitioners/>

Blog Visited 4560 times (as of 25/6/25)



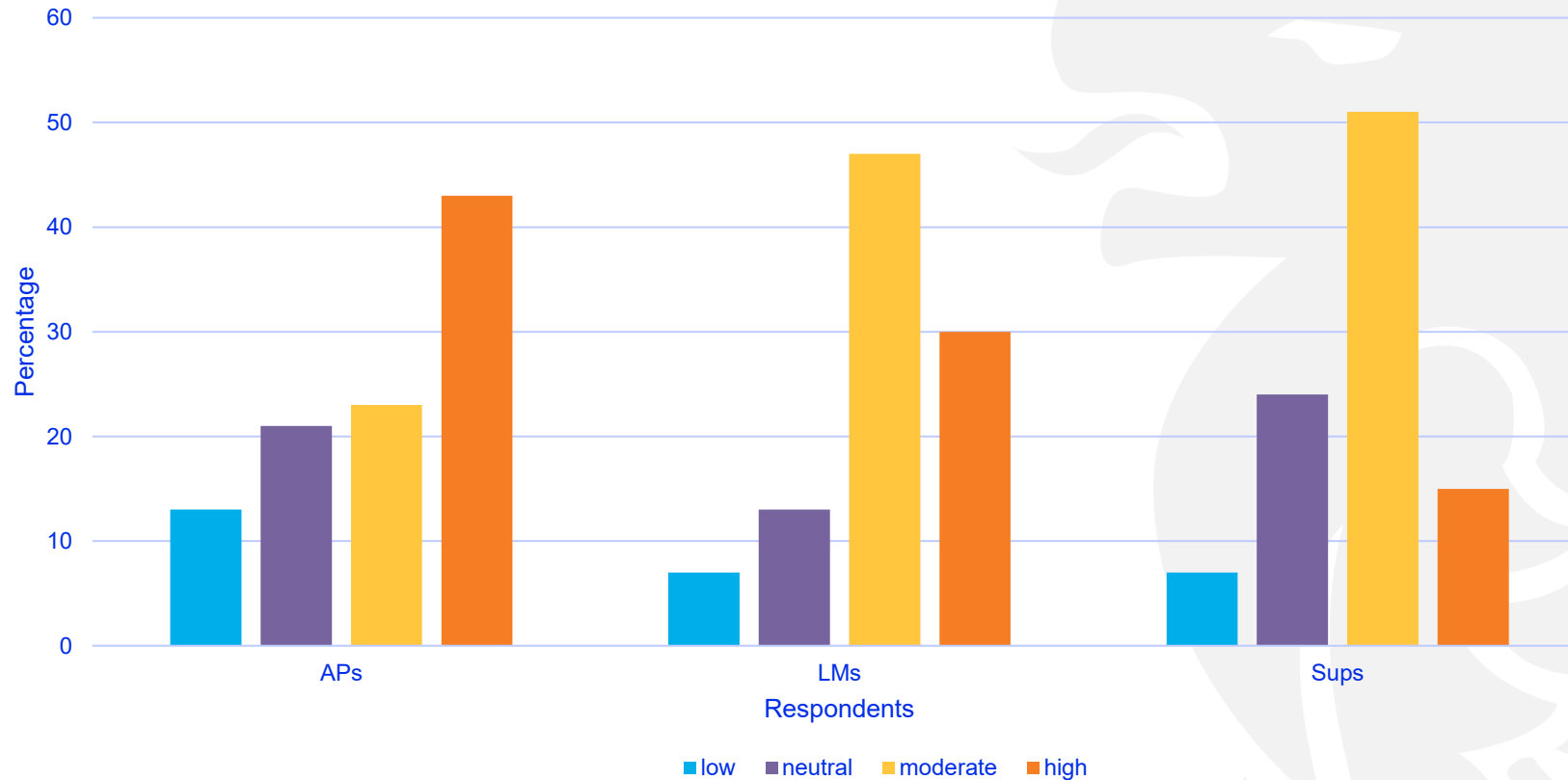
Nurse Researcher Commentary

Twitter/X n=587 views



Pre-implementation Survey

Research Pillar Priority





Top 3 Motivators for research

Motivators	APs (N=173)		Line Managers (N=30)		Supervisors (N=41)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Research pillar written into role description	106	61%	24	80%	26	63%
Increased job satisfaction	107	62%	21	70%	25	61%
To develop research pillar capabilities	102	59%	19	63%	16	39%



Top 3 Barriers for Research

Barriers	APs (N=173)		Line Managers (N=30)		Supervisors (N=41)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Other work roles take priority	122	71%	25	83%	29	71%
Lack of time for research or not in job plan	121	70%	19	63%	28	68%
Lack of skills for research	71	41%	12	40%	16	39%
No system in place to set research capability goals and objectives	70	41%	9	30%	18	44%

Webinar feedback



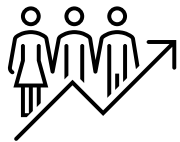
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Items (score low 1-5 high)

	Mean	SD
How important was the APRT webinar for your role?	4.4	0.9
What is the likelihood that you will use the APRT for your own research pillar development?	4.3	1.0
The APRT will enable me to set goals to achieve the research capabilities of my Advanced Practice role	4.4	0.9
The APRT will enable me to monitor progress against the research capabilities of my Advanced Practice role	4.5	0.8
The APRT will support me to discuss the research capabilities of my Advanced Practice role with my supervisor	4.4	0.7
The APRT will support me to discuss the research capabilities of my Advanced Practice role with my line manager	4.4	0.9
How important was the APRT webinar for your organisation?	4.4	0.9
What is the likelihood that your organisation will use the APRT to support development of the Advanced Practitioner research pillar?	4.2	1.0



Next steps



- Post implementation survey - APs, supervisors, line managers (Sept-Oct 2025)
 - Case studies – organisational and individual
 - Evaluate impact on AP research – health benefits, safety/quality, service and workforce, research culture, capacity, capability, economic, knowledge generation and exchange
 - Report
 - Publications
 - Conference presentations
 - Measure ongoing impact

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References



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