

UKHSA annual statement on research integrity 2024

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) acknowledges that only the highest standards of ethics and integrity will enable the delivery of the high-quality research that is needed to provide high quality public health advice and services. UKHSA has committed to the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research to enhance animal research, and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity to support good research and its governance. UKHSA commitment to these concordats ensures continued adherence to consistently high standards and further strengthening of the integrity and transparency of UKHSA research. This demonstrates to government, business, international partners, and the public that they can have confidence in the research the UKHSA produces and uses.

In accordance with the principles of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, UKHSA has published this short annual statement on research integrity. This statement has been compiled by the Head of Research Governance and approved by the UKHSA Science Futures and Research Governance Board. It uses the template developed by the UK Research Integrity Office.

Section 1: Key contact information

Question	Response
1A. Name of organisation	UK Health Security Agency
1B. Type of organisation:	Executive Agency of the Department of Health and Social Care
1C. Date statement approved by governing body	14 th January 2025
1D. Web address of organisation's research integrity page	https://research.ukhsa.gov.uk/research-integrity/
1E. Named senior member of staff to oversee research integrity	Name: Isabel Oliver
	Email address: scienceprivateoffice@ukhsa.gov.uk
1F. Named member of staff who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity	Name: Elizabeth Coates
	Email address: research.support@ukhsa.gov.uk



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Promoting high standards of research integrity and positive research culture.

Policies and systems

The UKHSA has a responsibility to ensure that the research it supports is conducted in accordance with the law, is in the public interest and is consistent with best scientific practice. UKHSA policies support the application of research integrity principles and make clear the expectations and standards for research conduct by UKHSA staff, and all students and visitors who are using UKHSA's premises or facilities so that all research is compliant with regulatory requirements and is ethical and well-designed.

Any research delivered by UKHSA staff, including research in collaboration with others, is subject to several approvals prior to initiation. These include divisional approvals to ensure that the research contributes to the priorities of UKHSA's scientific functions and that the study design meets appropriate standards. Adequate management, monitoring and reporting arrangements and sufficient resources and infrastructure must also be in place. The UKHSA ensures that research expenditure is planned and accounted for and demonstrates financial probity and compliance with the law and rules set out by HM Treasury.

All UKHSA led research is subject to an appropriate and independent review by an ethics committee. Research that takes place in the NHS is reviewed by an NHS ethics committee. Research that takes place outside of the NHS is reviewed by the UKHSA Research Ethics and Governance Group.

In UKHSA, we are committed to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals in our research at every opportunity, in line with [guidance from NC3Rs](#). Our scientists have made great progress with the 3Rs, including the development of advanced cell models of the human airways that allow us to investigate how our airways respond to inhaled viruses, moulds, and other particles and chemicals without needing to use animals. We are also contributing to a new [government initiative to support the development and evaluation of non-animal test methods and new approach methodologies \(NAMs\)](#). The UKHSA Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body reviews and approves all research proposals involving animal experiments to assure quality maintenance and animal welfare in laboratory studies while conducting research. In October 2024, UKHSA published a corporate [report on research involving animals](#).

Communications and engagement

The UKHSA is an open and collaborative organisation that is committed to bringing its unique capabilities to partnerships with academia, industry, the



NHS, and other Public Sector Research Establishments for health and societal benefits. These successful partnerships are founded on the highest standards of integrity, honesty, transparency, and accountability.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Protection Research Units (HPRUs) are partnerships between UKHSA and Universities, funded to support UKHSA in delivering its health protection functions. Currently, there are fifteen HPRUs that cover thirteen subject areas, across nine leading universities and other collaborators. The research they undertake informs public health policy and practice to address pressing public health priorities. [Thirteen new HPRUs and 2 focus awards have been funded to continue this work from 2025-2030 across 13 topic areas.](#)

The UKHSA also presents its work to non-expert audiences to gain valuable feedback on the usefulness of its work and find out what issues the public would like to see addressed. The UKHSA science outreach programme provides training to UKHSA staff so that they can take part in outreach activities that introduce young students in schools to the possibilities of working in science. The outreach programme aligns with the UKHSA Social Mobility Action Plan which is helping to break down barriers and encourage more young people, regardless of background, to see themselves in a science career.

Open Science is a movement that is dedicated to ensuring the results of research are available to all. To encourage Open Science, the UKHSA supports Open Access (OA) which is the making the results of publicly funded research freely available to all who wish to access them. This benefits public health by providing equity of access to research and supports greater research integrity through transparency and openness. It also helps to aid and advance the development of new and innovative research, through the rapid and wide availability of information and knowledge.

UKHSA is currently working to:

- gain an understanding of staff knowledge, awareness, and experience of OA.
- develop staff knowledge on the subject.
- further develop organisational Policy and guidance on OA
- put in place the UKHSA Central Research Information System (CRIS), which contains an Institutional Repository (IR) where publications can be archived and made OA.
- investigate publisher transformative OA agreements.

Culture, development, and leadership



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UKHSA employees work in accordance with the Civil Service Code, which includes standards of behaviour and values of integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality. All UKHSA researchers must undertake their work with honesty, rigour, and transparency, as these values are essential for a healthy research culture, and lead to high quality research with results that can be trusted.

The Science Futures and Research Governance Board provides leadership and oversight to the production and implementation of the Science Strategy and core research governance systems. It enables UKHSA to deliver the statutory and best practice functions for science and research governance. It monitors achievements and impacts of UKHSA research, advises on policies that promote research integrity and approves the annual statement of compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

UKHSA staff are encouraged to challenge misconduct and bad research practice. Concerns about unsafe working, misuse of resources, suspicions of theft, corruption or scientific fraud and failure to address acts of negligence or poor performance that create a health and safety risk, can be raised in confidence with nominated individuals.

As part of our commitment to integrity in research, UKHSA encourages research active staff members to undertake learning and development activities and provides online training resources for staff members wishing to increase their skills. Online training is offered in Good Clinical Practice, Information Governance, Informed Consent, as well as training in regulations that govern research involving human participants. UKHSA has been a subscriber to the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) since 2019 (as Public Health England) and has benefitted from access to the UKRIO training and guidance documents. Details of UKRIO online training events are circulated to UKHSA staff and attendance is encouraged.

The UKHSA PhD scheme funds PhD training for staff who wish to undertake post graduate training and PhD students are supported by the post-graduate training sub-committee which meets regularly to give students a forum for discussion. The committee also arranges an annual meeting which gives students the chance to present their research and network with one another. The UKHSA also supports students with external funding applications and provides a small internal funding stream to support high quality research proposals to external funding bodies.

Monitoring and Reporting

Audits and inspections are undertaken in UKHSA to confirm that research procedures have been correctly followed, that good scientific practices have been adhered to, and to confirm that the data collected and reported are



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reliable and recorded according to any relevant overarching Quality Standard in place in the laboratory, such as Good Clinical Practice or ISO 9001.

The UKHSA monitors internal research projects via progress reports (annual/ interim reports project reports, final project reports), and oversees the processes for approvals for research. The UKHSA ensures arrangements are in place to support research and to ensure compliance with research governance guidelines. Externally funded projects are also monitored by the funding organisation.

The UKHSA Central Research Information System is a system that centralises storage and management of research information. It oversees research projects from the identification of funding opportunities to the funding application and award and records research outputs such as publications, conference presentations etc. The accurate up to date reporting of these research activities allows UKHSA to demonstrate impact, relevance, and value for money.

Changes and developments during the period under review.

In accordance with the [UKHSA Science Strategy](#) published in 2023, UKHSA has been developing the Scientific Workforce Plan which will help researchers to develop rewarding careers through training opportunities and mentoring. Patient and public involvement in UKHSA research has also been strengthened this year.

Framework documents that cover all aspects of research governance and integrity are currently in development and include research prioritisation, impact and patient and public involvement, knowledge and evidence, academic partnerships and scientific integrity and independence.

Our Central Research Information System is in the final implementation stages and will manage research projects throughout the entire research pathway and allow UKHSA to demonstrate impact, relevance, and value for money through accurate reporting of activities.

Reflections on progress and plans for future developments.

The UKHSA is a Public Sector Research Establishment that was launched in October 2021 and its immediate priority was to fight the COVID pandemic and support the development of vaccines against new and emerging variants. The agency has had to develop so it can operate as an



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integral part of the public health system and the national security infrastructure, utilising state-of-the-art technologies and ground-breaking capabilities in data analytics and genomic surveillance to tackle threats locally, nationally, and globally, and to tackle the stark inequalities in our society that were made apparent during the COVID 19 pandemic. The [UKHSA Science strategy](#) was published in May 2023 and shares our vision of how we will secure health and prosperity and protect our communities from hazards and diseases. The first [review of Science](#) was published in January 2025. Our research will generate evidence and the translations of research findings will inform health security practises and services to enable UKHSA to prepare for, prevent and respond to major public health challenges and emergencies, as well as providing the highest quality public health advice.

Addressing research misconduct.

Processes that are in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct.

To safeguard the integrity and the work of the UKHSA any actual case of misconduct, or any genuine suspicion of research misconduct is reported to management. The UKHSA Whistleblowing Policy and the UKHSA Disciplinary Policy and Process have been produced to guide staff in cases of suspected misconduct. The falsification of results, and thereby possible fraud, is dealt with in accordance with the UKHSA's Countering Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy and Response plan. Training in counter fraud, bribery and corruption is mandatory for all UKHSA employees, and training sessions for staff members in undertaking unbiased investigations into disciplinary, grievance and whistle-blowing cases were introduced this year. The Anti-Fraud team are also available to offer advice.

UKHSA is currently developing a Policy specifically for Misconduct in Research which will sit alongside existing policies such as the Disciplinary and Whistleblowing Policies.

Investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken.

The UKHSA did not undertake any formal research misconduct investigations in 2024.