NorthFutures
Northern Health Futures Hub

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

NorthFutures Public Showcase

11 June 2026 | Opening Plenary

Keynote Speaker 2

"Mental health research in NENC: past present and future opportunities"



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Director of Research, Innovation & Clinical Effectiveness at CNTW NHS Trust

NHS
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NHS Foundation Trust

Mental health research in NENC - past, present & future opportunities

Simon Douglas
Director of Research, Innovation and Clinical Effectiveness

Cumbria Northumbria Tyne and Wear NHS FT

With YOU in mind

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What I plan to cover

- Background: context of CNTW
- CNTW Strategy and R&I strategy
- History of research activity
- Current collaborative research
- Future plans and opportunities

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About the Trust

Mental Health and Disability Foundation Trust

Local population of **1.7** million

Employ around **9,000** staff

Local catchment area of **3,350** mi²

We work from over **70** sites across Cumbria, Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland

We also provide a number of regional and national specialist services to England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Working across **8** local authorities and a partner member of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

£

Turnover of around **£537m** million

CNTW Trust strategy



Quality care, every day

Person-led care, when and where it is needed

A great place to work

Sustainable for the long term, innovating every day

Working with and for our communities

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Delivering tomorrow, with you in mind.

Service change plan
2026 - 2027

Model of care and support

Help and treatment for people with mental health and wellbeing needs, learning disability, neurodivergence, or neurological disorders.

Community treatment

Services for people in the community receiving evidence-based treatment.



Understanding you and helping you stay well

This will happen by closely working with:

You and your needs
Family, friends, carers, peers
Education
Voluntary sector
Social care
Work and activities
Housing and benefits
Primary care, GPs
Physical health
Other partners

Inpatient care

Services for people who require additional treatment within an inpatient setting.

Long term complex needs

Services for people in the community with severe mental health needs and other complex needs.

Urgent and crisis care

Services for people in the community with urgent needs.

With YOU in mind

CNTW strategy for Research

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Research and innovation are embedded into services, culture and practice in CNTW

- *Research is embedded into services and practice as an everyday activity*
- *Research Network within CNTW to engage staff and encourage embedding*
- *Service developments are informed by the latest research*
- *Increase research literacy and access to evidence and information*
- *Routinely collected data can be used for research*

Research in CNTW is co-produced and available to all users of CNTW services and the wider population within the CNTW footprint

- *Our research is influenced by and as far as possible co-produced with those who provide and use our services*
- *Research is available to all service users across the geographies and specialties, and access is equitable and fair.*

We support and enable our staff to be involved in research and innovation at all levels of the organisation

- *All staff are empowered to support and participate in clinical research.*
- *Staff at all levels of the organisation are given the opportunity for training and skills development for research where appropriate to their role*
- *The workforce has opportunities to engage in research, from interest to delivery to leadership and are supported in this by our partnerships within the system and academia.*

We enable research through innovative approaches to using data and digital methods

- *We are at the forefront of digital innovation in health research, leveraging our data and IG expertise to promote new and innovative ways of developing and delivering research*
- *We have a clear culture of innovation to which all staff are able to contribute*

CNTW is a leader and an influencer in local, regional, national and international research networks and partnerships

- *We will work with academic and clinical partners, regionally and nationally to develop and deliver the best and most relevant research for our population and use our influence on networks to promote our embedded and equitable approach.*
- *We will utilise innovative study design to ensure our research is both efficient and effective in answering relevant clinical questions*

History of research in CNTW

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- Long history of research in collaboration with NU
- NTW/CNTW consistently in top 3 or 4 MH trusts for research activity (NIHR)
- Upward trend for CNTW service user research participant numbers
- Cross Trust / cross specialty research interests
- Key areas of research strength: Mood disorders / dementia DLB / autism / psychosis
- A number of CIs of international standing, but numbers reduced over last 10 years (consistent with national picture)
- Successful NIHR grant funding applications (where lead) (since 2013)
    - *1 PGfAR*
    - *2 PDG*
    - *4 HTA*
    - *6 RfPB*
    - *2 HS&DR*
    - *6 NIHR Fellowships (Pre / Doctoral and SCPRA)*
    - *2 NIHR Infrastructure (ARC + HCP internship Programme)*

Where are we now?

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Research leadership / sponsorship

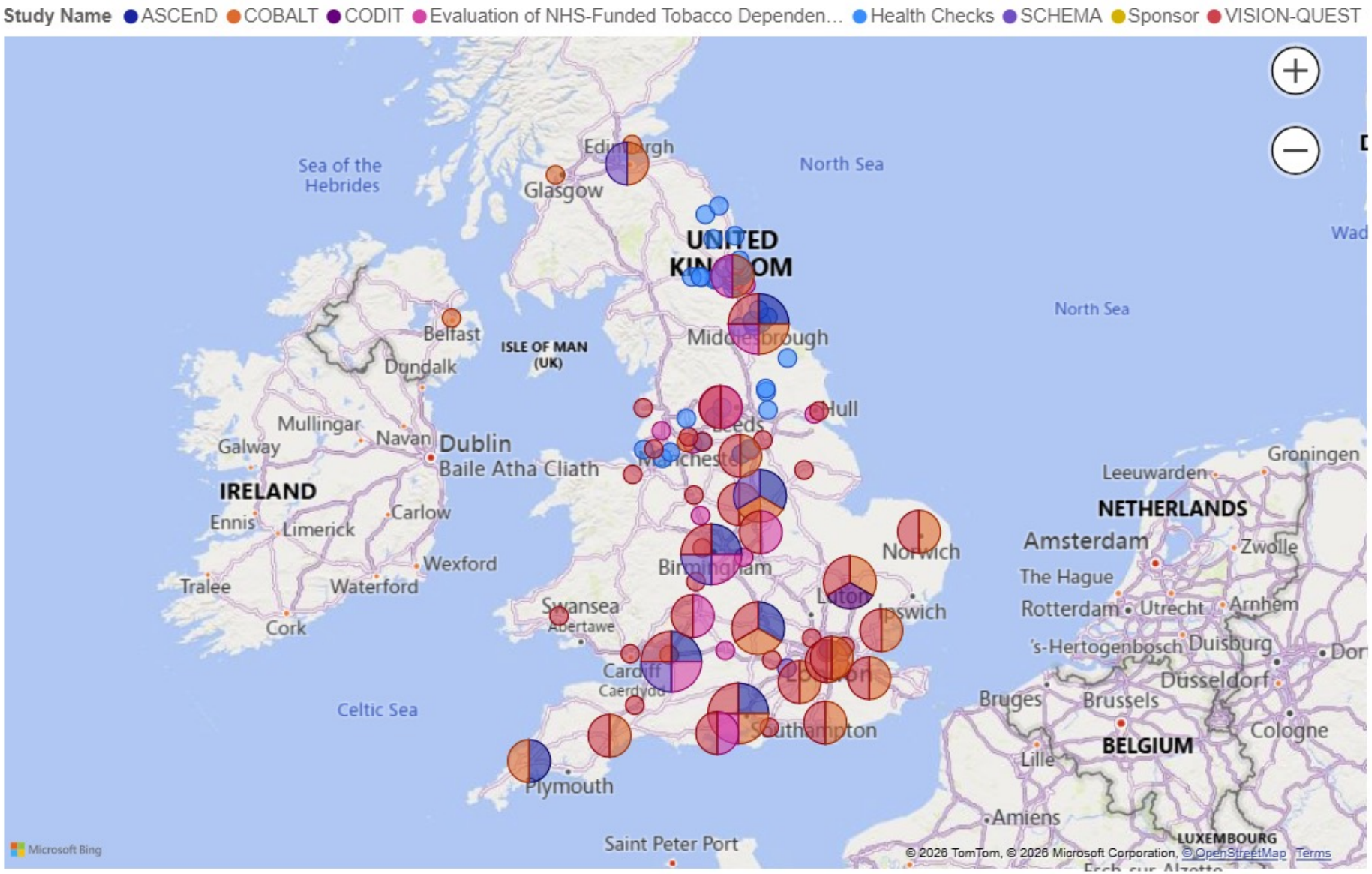
Current Portfolio	Number of
In Set-Up	4
Open	17
In Follow-Up	8
Study Closed	10

Site Level	Number of
Multi-Site	22
Single Site	17

R&D Oversight	Number
CTIMP	3 (1 open, 1 in closedown, 1 in set up)
Interventional	9 open
Observational	27 open

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Sites in CNTW sponsored studies



Research in CNTW

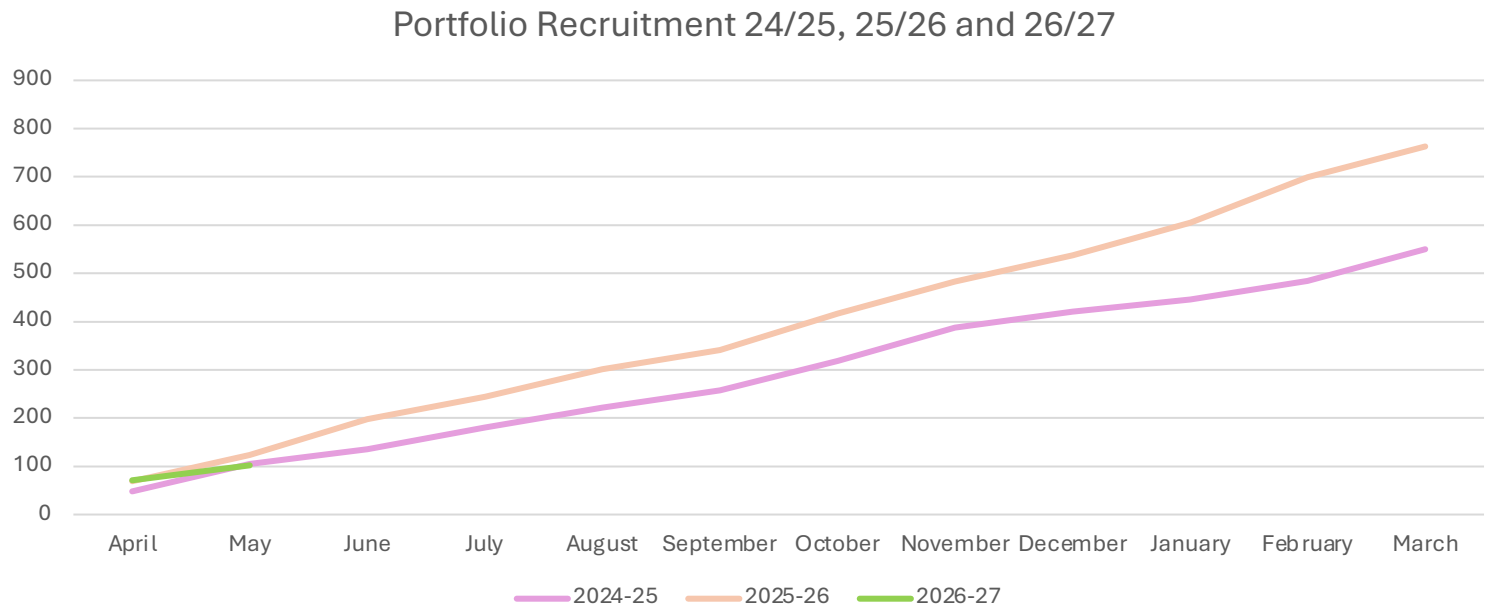
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Title	Funder
Imaging Lithium in Alzheimer's Disease	Alzheimer's Research UK
A Realist and Economic Evaluation of Police Involvement in Inter-agency Mental Health Crisis First Response Pathways in England	NIHR HSDR
Virtual reality for visions (VRV): a feasibility study for treating distressing visual hallucinations in people with psychosis	NIHR RfPB
To develop an outcome measure for adults who are nil by mouth using a co-design approach	NIHR DCAF
What makes health checks work well for people with a learning disability and for autistic people to improve their health and wellbeing? What works, how and in which contexts?	NIHR HSDR
BIO-LEAD	NIHR BRC
Illness representations and coping styles in people with Functional Seizures	Alzheimer's Research UK
Primary-smART (primary school mentalisation-based art therapy): A Feasibility Cluster Randomised Trial	NIHR RfPB
Evaluation of the clinical and cost effectiveness of Coping with Uncertainty in Everyday Situations (CUES) (working title)	NIHR HTA
Group Art Therapy Intervention for communicating the needs of children with long-term health conditions (GAIN): Multilevel meta-analysis single-subject experimental design.	NIHR RfPB
A Randomised Control Trial assessing the efficacy and mechanism of action in a novel, digitally delivered treatment "Managing Unusual Sensory Experiences" (MUSE) in comparison to treatment as usual in people with an At-Risk Mental State	NIHR EME
Increased psychological understanding and treatment for hallucinations across sensory modalities in people with psychosis	NIHR Research Professorship

Portfolio Recruitment (24-25, 25-26 and 26/27)

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

Month	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
April	48	69	71
May	105	124	102
June	136	198	
July	181	244	
August	221	301	
September	258	341	
October	319	417	
November	387	483	
December	421	537	
January	446	605	
February	484	699	
March	550	763	



With YOU in mind

Focus on collaborative working

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

- 3 large national HTA treatment trials
- Host for NIHR Applied Research Collaboration NENC / HCP Internships Programme
- Partner in BRC / NHRP / CRF / PSRC
- Research and other grants obtained with:
  - Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland Universities

- CAPE clinics as pathway for research recruitment
- Secure Data Environment
- NorthFutures collaborative projects
- Leader in PPIE for research

What next? The Future

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

- Increasing research leadership capacity (via NHRP & Academy)
- Developing PPI approach (unique University accredited course – PDG and PGfAR in development)
- Collaborative research activity (cross Trust/cross speciality)
- Building on developing research areas:
  - Huntingdon's, psychedelics, devices, technology
- Implementation
- Digital and data opportunities

Beyond research in CNTW

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XR Therapeutics

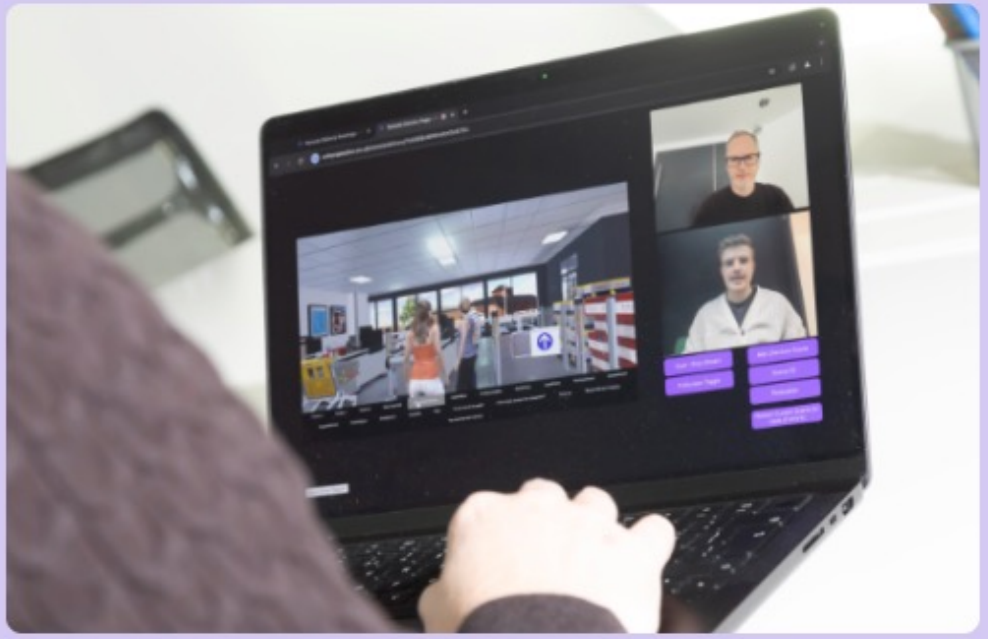
How it works For Adults For Children Talk to Us

The Basics. What is XR Therapy?

XR or Extended Reality is where we use technology to enhance our view of the world. In therapy this means using technology to create simulations of everyday life. The therapist controls these simulations adapting it to your needs.

We still use traditional methods like CBT but we have created award-winning technology to enhance the treatment.

For example, we could recreate a journey to work on public transport. The therapist would control when the transport starts/stops, how noisy it is and even the actions of the other passengers.



Digital and data opportunities

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- CNTW a Global Digital Exemplar
- CNTW has a EPR system Rio for around 12 years = >300k records
- Engaged with GNCR / access to HIE
- SDE
- CRIS

CRIS NETWORK

12

NHS Mental Health Trusts across the UK

2.6m+

De-identified electronic patient records



1. Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
2. Devon Partnership NHS Trust
3. Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust
4. Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
5. North East London Foundation Trust
6. Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
7. Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
8. Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
9. Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust
10. South West London and St George's NHS Foundation Trust
11. West London Mental Health NHS Trust
12. Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust

Great North Care Record

Digital and data opportunities

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- CRIS:
  - Clinical Record Interactive Search
  - Oxford University spin out company
    - (Akrivia Health)
  - De-identifies the EPR for use in research
  - Governance model
- Around 20% of EPR data is held in Structured fields
- The majority is in unstructured ‘progress notes’
- Member of the CRIS network allowing for complex and powerful searches of data alone and in collaboration with other network members e.g.
  - Identification of women of child bearing potential on valproate and modafinil
  - Quantification of the burden suffered by, and service utilisation of, patients with DTD

CRIS NETWORK

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10. South West London and St George's NHS Foundation Trust
11. West London Mental Health NHS Trust
12. Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust

CRIS opportunities

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- datlinkage (and links to SDE)
- AI Multiply
- Maternity pathway project
- ARUK bid for linking OCTA scans and people with dementia
- Case finding for NIHR portfolio and commercial research
- Natural language processing for data structuring

- … Your project here?

CNTW - Responding to the 3 shifts

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Hospital to community	*Thinking differently – working as an integrated system and with partners* *New models of care which help people live well in their communities* *Alternatives to inpatient care enabling us to support people in crisis where they live* *Address areas of greatest need and health inequalities*
Analogue to digital	*AI for predicting better treatments* *Data linkage* *Leveraging data integration for better understanding of MLTCs* *Virtual appointments*
Treatment to prevention	*Working across the system to promote better mental health / address inequalities* *Social determinants of health* *Early intervention*

Thank you

- There are opportunities to work with CNTW!



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