



## Health Education England (HEE) Research and Innovation Strategy

### Response from the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK)

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#### Part A: Aims

**1. Do you agree with the aims of the strategy?**

- Yes   
No   
Partially

**Do you have any comments on the aims of the strategy?**

The aims of the strategy are valid and should be applauded, particularly with regard to improving participation. It will, however, require greater clarity, cohesion and the consultation of all agencies to deliver on these aims. Furthermore, it will be important to involve all relevant professions working both within and outside of the NHS, and ensure that workforce planning is defined carefully against specific aims.

#### Part B: Objectives

**Objective One: Establish a system wide coherence to education and training which will facilitate and sustain the organisational and cultural changes required to embed research and innovation.**

**2. Is this objective appropriate and relevant?**

- Yes   
No   
Partially

**Do you agree with what HEE plans to do to achieve this objective?**

Yes

No

Partially

**Do you have any additional comments about objective one?**

Our concern around this objective is that while HEE contributes to the design and delivery of education and training, these are driven by Government health policy, which itself will determine any organisation and cultural changes. Regardless, educational providers will need to collaborate to achieve this objective, and it will be important to have some form of quality assurance process in place.

**Objective Two: Ensure that the evidence on best practice for training in research and innovation informs and influences the delivery of effective education and training within the healthcare system.**

**3. Is this objective appropriate and relevant?**

Yes

No

Partially

**Do you agree with what HEE plans to do to achieve this objective?**

Yes

No

Partially

**Do you have any additional comments about objective two?**

We would argue that HEE has omitted to highlight the importance of disseminating evidence within its plans to achieve this objective. There are many examples of where good quality research exists but the outcomes have not resulted in any positive improvements to practice due to poor dissemination.

We are also unclear as to whether 'education and training' in this context refers to teaching the skills necessary to work in the NHS system, or to fulfil other activities. We would, however, support any initiative that improves the input from dentistry into training and education within healthcare research.

**Objective Three: Undertake the development of a transparent and integrated multi-professional clinical academic career framework for patient benefit.**

**4. Is this objective appropriate and relevant?**

- Yes   
No   
Partially

**Do you agree with what HEE plans to do to achieve this objective?**

- Yes   
No   
Partially

**Do you have any additional comments about objective three?**

We would very much welcome the integration of the dental profession (dentists and the dental team) into a clinical academic career framework, particularly for those working in the frontline within primary care. It is well known that 95% of patient care within dentistry is provided in general dental practice, yet the opportunities for clinicians to combine practice with an academic career are often limited. Additionally, it would appear to be the case that many clinical dental academics appear to be in the field of public health where they may be removed from direct patient treatment and, as a consequence, may have limitations to their understanding of current challenges within clinical practice

It will also be important to ensure that all relevant professions are considered in the successful translation and application of this objective, and their diversity is fully understood. For example, care needs to be taken to include the contractor professions (pharmacy and optometry, as well as dentistry) and allied health professionals, among others. This will be particularly important as the population ages and there is more emphasis on patients taking responsibility for adopting a healthy lifestyle to prevent disease. All healthcare workers have a role in supporting this.

We would urge that a broad spectrum of education providers are involved in delivering the objectives that are set out within any framework, including those with experience not only in multi-professional education but also inter-professional education. It may also be helpful for professionals to be trained together, rather than only within their professional groups, and for agencies to move away from a more traditional education model based on secondary care towards one that takes incorporates primary care workers appropriately.

It is also necessary to have a clearer definition of 'patient benefit' within this objective, and indeed to consider whether the objective relates to patient benefit or benefit to the public and society.

**Objective Four: Establish a HEE Research Evidence Hub which will undertake an intelligence gathering, horizon scanning and evaluation function to ensure investment in future education and training is evidence informed.**

**5. Is this objective appropriate and relevant?**

- Yes
- No
- Partially

**Do you agree with what HEE plans to do to achieve this objective?**

- Yes
- No
- Partially

**Do you have any additional comments about objective four?**

A Research Evidence Hub is important and necessary way to support the overall success of all the HEE’s aims and objectives, and also to help ensure best value. This could provide a home for all research papers, as well as a central contact point for all those engaged in research activities. In addition to an Evidence Hub, a repository of quality assured training material should also be established. There is already a wealth of useful material to help healthcare workers understand and apply the principles of evidence-based practice, as well as the principles and processes of clinical research.

The FGDP(UK) would very much welcome the opportunity to represent primary care dentistry in any horizon-scanning exercise, and we would be happy to share information on the Faculty’s activities in providing education and training for the dental team in clinical research. We would also like to draw your attention to the FGDP(UK)'s series of papers titled ‘An Introduction to Research for Primary Dental Care Clinicians’, which, irrespective of the title, is generic to all clinical research.

We would urge, however, that horizon-scanning will need to consider activities in sectors beyond healthcare to ensure that there is consistency across sectors with regard to best practice.

**Part C: Implementation**

**6. What do you consider the top three challenges for implementation?**

Challenge 1	<b>Financing the objectives:</b> Availability of resources for training and lack of adequate funding/ financial incentives to support clinical academic careers, particularly for contractor performers in general practice. Also adequate funding and availability of trained personnel to deliver appropriate training, and involvement of a broad spectrum of education providers that are able to give the level of commitment required.
Challenge 2	

	<b>Time and attitudes:</b> The pressure of clinical work, and other factors, limiting the time available for professionals to participate in education and training. Also creating a cultural shift in attitudes towards research careers, which could be helped by improving deficiencies within the undergraduate curriculum with regard to research.
Challenge 3	<b>Cross-professional collaboration:</b> Having a framework in place that involves collaboration between all healthcare professions, and dispelling the 'silo' attitudes that can exist among some professionals.

**What are the top three considerations to ensure successful implementation?**

Consideration 1	<b>Communication:</b> Clear and effective engagement between all stakeholders, in particular between the different professions.
Consideration 2	<b>Finance:</b> Availability of adequate resources and funding and clear direction from Government.
Consideration 3	<b>Integration of professionals:</b> A willingness to fully integrate a diverse range of healthcare professions at different career stages, and to achieve 'buy in' from all groups.

**Part D: additional comments**

**7. Are there any additional comments you would like to make? If so, please add them below.**

The Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) aims to improve the quality of patient care through education and research. We support this initiative and would welcome the opportunity for closer working with other agencies in the development of an integrated health research and innovation strategy.

Over 60% of the UK population visits a dentist or member of the dental team on an annual basis, and it is essential that oral health is more closely integrated into general health and into the prevention or early diagnosis of systemic as well as oral diseases. The dental profession has developed a wealth of resources to support the development of a robust evidence base, and we believe that much is to be gained by ensuring that knowledge and expertise from the profession is used to help shape the HEE strategy.

The experience of previous research strategies show that training and funding in primary

care research is likely to have a positive impact on patient care, particularly when there is inter-professional collaboration. It is our contention that any strategy must be structured to support the involvement of those who see and treat patients on a daily basis, as opposed to being limited to those working in academic institutions. To do otherwise, may act to stymie innovation and the development of a robust evidence base that has practical application to the improvement of outcomes in practice.