

Chief Executive Officer Report to the Board May 2020

Part 1 Public session

1. Research Systems Outline Business Case

The board will be aware that we recently submitted an outline business case to the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) investment board to secure some longer-term funding for the continued development of the new IRAS platform and the maintenance of the current research systems over the next few years. The investment board has now given us permission to move to the procurement stage which is a significant achievement for everyone who has worked on the business case and for the members of our sponsor team who have supported us with this work.

2. Covid-19

The HRA has maintained its stand-up calls to manage our response to the Covid-19 outbreak and we are currently reflecting on what we have learned during the first two months of lockdown with a view to considering the future operating model. I am extremely proud of the response of both our staff and our volunteers who have been proactive, engaged and collegiate in responding to the call for action without exception. The board will receive a presentation on the impact of Covid-19 on the HRA, our volunteers and the wider research sector at the meeting on 20th May. We are now turning our attention to what we have learned about our response in the context of our future operating model and the impact of the changes that we have made to date. My own personal reflections around this are that much of the work done at a corporate level across the HRA over the last 18 months have been instrumental in supporting our ability to make a successful overnight transition to virtual working. We know however that this has been an extremely challenging time for some of our staff and volunteers who have worked extremely hard over extended days including weekends and bank holidays which is not a resilient or sustainable model for long term success. Our ability to support the rapid deployment of the CMO approved research studies has been positively acknowledged at a number of meetings.

3. 2020 Staff Survey

I am delighted with both the high response rate to this years' staff survey but also with the feedback that we have had from those who returned it which suggests that our actions to address a number of areas have been positively received. We must not however be complacent, and the new report shows up further work which

requires our attention which we will factor into a wider piece of work focussed on our people. It is important that we retain high engagement while we stay working in this virtual world.

4. HRA Annual Report and Business Plan

Both reports have been adjusted to take account of the Covid-19 outbreak. There is no doubt that 2019/2020 has been challenging on a number of fronts. Short term funding and procurement rules frustrated our ability to spend all of the funds that had been allocated to the Research Systems developments and a number of key projects e.g. our Transparency work was hampered by the reduced level of baseline grant in aid funding. Work was constantly being prioritised at a corporate level to ensure that individual directorates were able to deliver to the best of their ability. The final year end accounts reflect these challenges but do not really capture the significant level of time and diligence that has been required from our finance team to match resources to our business needs. During the year the constant driver for process change and innovation has been instrumental in offsetting the reduced headcount across the organisation but we are still walking a fine line as demonstrated by some of the audits which highlight work which we were unable to complete. I am concerned that our response to Covid has raised expectations that we can deliver to the same quality and speed as our expedited review process for all research applications. We need to ensure that we recognise a significant achievement but at the same time learn from this experience and resource any new models accordingly.

5. Chief Digital Transformation Officer

We have now started the recruitment process for this new position and aim to make an appointment in July. Early signs are positive in that the advertisements and searches to date have generated a good response.

External Engagement activity

Meeting	Purpose of meeting	Outcome
DHSC Co-ordination of Covid Research Response	Weekly call with DHSC, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), NHS England, Task Forces, Medicines & healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE).	Receive updates on progress to date of co-ordinated activity and to agree actions and next steps
UK Clinical Research Council Board Meeting	Cross Sector Meeting with 4 Nations, NIHR, Industry, Academia, Charities and others to	Shared understanding of the challenges facing the sector and planning for UK response

	discuss the cross-sector response to covid-19	
4 Nations Policy Group Meeting	Shared approach to UK Policy agenda	Discussion and agreement on compatibility agenda and policy changes
NHS Leadership Academy CEO Network	Facilitated meeting with cohort of provider & Arm's Length Body (ALB) CEOs to share an understanding of Covid impact	Discussion of challenges facing CEOs in particular and opportunities to support each other
NHS Digitrials	To share and support progress of the Digitrials programme	Follow up meetings organised with HRA staff in Confidentiality Advisory Team (CAT) and Approvals to consider the current focus of work on research outcomes
CEO meetings with William van't Hoff NIHR Allan Marriott- Smith Human Tissue Authority (HTA) and Peter Thompson Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA)	Shared interest agenda	Agreement on areas of common interest where we will work together
Calls with NHS R&D Directors	To gather insights into non Covid Research activity and likely start up	Mixed picture in different NHS Trusts – further work needed to inform HRA planning assumptions
Calls with Gatenby Sanderson	To progress Chief Digital Transformation Officer (CDTO) appointment	Advertisements have now been placed a search has started. Dates set for shortlisting, assessments and interviews