

# Honorary Research Contracts & Letters of Access

## Division: *Strategy & Transformation*

Specific staff groups to whom this policy <u>directly</u> applies	Likely frequency of use	Other staff who may need to be familiar with policy
All staff involved in the delivery of Research	Where external researchers outside of NBT request to work on a research study hosted or sponsored by NBT	All staff involved in the delivery of Research

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<b>Version:</b>	RD/QMS/SOP/006/V4.2
<b>KEYWORDS:</b>	Letter of access, Honorary Research Contract (HRC), honorary Contract, research passport, access arrangements
<b>Summary of changes since the previous version</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated reference to Research &amp; Development</li> <li>Updated Policy references and links</li> <li>Update to SOP Template &amp; Version convention</li> <li>Updates to procedure in obtaining contractual access.</li> </ul>

<b>1. Purpose</b>	<p>The purpose of this SOP is to outline the procedure by which external researchers to North Bristol Trust may obtain the appropriate contractual access to undertake research related activities within the NHS, once the relevant study has been granted approval by the Health Research Authority and other local approvals.</p>
<b>2. Key Messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External researchers must hold an appropriate contractual access arrangement (HRC or LoA) unless an exemption applies.</li> <li>• The requirement for a Research Passport depends on employment status and research activity.</li> <li>• Access decisions are risk-based and proportionate, in line with national guidance.</li> <li>• All access requests are processed via the TRAC system.</li> <li>• Holding an issued HRC or LoA does not remove the accountability of the researcher's substantive employer.</li> </ul> <p>Abbreviations:</p> <p>CV Curriculum Vitae</p> <p>ERIF NBT External Research Information Form</p> <p>HEI Higher Education Institution</p> <p>HRA Health Research Authority</p> <p>HRC Honorary Research Contract</p> <p>LoA Letters of Access</p> <p>PI Principal Investigator</p> <p>R&amp;D Research and Development Office</p> <p>SOP Standard Operating Procedure</p> <p>LEARN Trusts online learning platform</p> <p>TRAC Online Recruitment system for access arrangements</p>
<b>3. Relevant Policies &amp; Guidance</b>	<p>Health Research Authority  <i>UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research</i></p> <p><u><a href="#">UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research - Health Research Authority</a></u></p> <p>National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)  <i>Research in the NHS - Human Resources (HR) Good Practice Resource Pack</i></p>

	<u><a href="#">IRAS Help - Preparing &amp; submitting applications - HR Good Practice Resource Pack</a></u>
<b>4. Operational Areas Included</b>	All environments undertaking research
<b>5. Operational Areas Excluded</b>	None
<b>6. Who should read this</b>	This SOP is aimed at researchers employed by a HEI or other NHS organisation, who are applying to undertake research within this Trust. This SOP applies where the external researcher does not already have an appropriate contractual relationship with this Trust
<b>7. Roles responsible for carrying out this procedure</b>	<p>This SOP should be referred to when requesting access to this Trust for research purposes.</p> <p>Researchers who do not already have an appropriate contractual relationship with this Trust must follow this SOP in order to apply for an Honorary Research Contract (HRC) or Letter of Access (LoA), as appropriate</p> <p>The Research Infrastructure Assistant is responsible for reviewing applications, confirming that appropriate checks have been completed in line with national guidance and local policy, undertaking a proportionate risk assessment, and issuing the appropriate level of access.</p> <p>Oversight of this process is provided by R&amp;D Infrastructure / Management staff.</p>

## 8. Procedure:

### 8.1 Access Arrangements - Overview

All researchers without a contractual relationship with the NHS organisation in which they plan to undertake their research will require either a HRC or LoA to undertake research within this trust.

Where Researchers are from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) and do not hold an NHS employment contract or NHS honorary contract, a Research Passport is required. This is obtained via the researcher's HEI and must be signed off by the HEI before being presented to the first NHS Trust R&D department.

The researcher will be sent / access TRAC to apply for a letter of access or honorary research contract using TRAC online. Once they have registered for an account (if they do

not already have an account) and completed the online application form, they will receive an automated email response from TRAC confirming their application has been sent. If the researcher has documents to send to R & D in support of their application (such as a completed and signed off research passport, CV, etc), they must reply to this automated email attaching their relevant documents.

The R & D Infrastructure Assistant will review the application and any supporting documents submitted and complete a risk assessment. If further checks are required or any documents are missing, the researcher will be contacted to provide the necessary information / documentation.

*Please refer to section 1.3 of this SOP for details of how to apply for a Research Passport.*

- (a) **Where researchers hold either a NHS employment contract or an honorary contract with a NHS organisation, a HRC is not required to undertake research within our Trust. Instead, a Letter of Access will be issued.**

Additional pre-engagement checks may occasionally be required, dependant on outcome of the risk assessment of the tasks the researcher will be performing with participants during the study.

- (b) **NHS Staff from other Trust's requesting access to conduct research at this Trust.**

R&D will accept a completed and signed NHS-to-NHS proforma confirming pre-engagement checks from the researcher's substantive employer. Where a clinical academic is applying for access, a copy of their honorary contract they hold with another NHS Trust will be required along with a completed NHS to NHS proforma.

R & D will then issue an NHS-to-NHS Letter of Access to the researcher and provide a copy to their substantive employer to inform them of the researcher's activities within this trust.

Please note: We reserve the right to carry out additional pre-engagement checks if, following a risk assessment, the tasks the researcher will perform with study participants are not aligned with the checks previously completed

Access requests are all processed online within this Trust, using TRAC, and a website link will be provided to the researcher to apply accordingly.

## **8.2 NHS to NHS Letter of Access- NBT Staff requiring access to another organisation**

- (a) **Obtaining an NHS-to-NHS proforma to obtain access at another NHS trust, for staff employed by this organisation who require access to another NHS organisation**

Employees of this trust who require a Letter of Access (LoA) to conduct research in another NHS Trust should complete the NHS-to-NHS Confirmation of Pre-Engagement Checks proforma, available on the NIHR website:

[www.myresearchproject.org.uk/help/help%20documents/NHS-to-NHS-confirmation-of-pre-engagement-checks.doc](http://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/help/help%20documents/NHS-to-NHS-confirmation-of-pre-engagement-checks.doc)

This form will need to be signed by Employment services to confirm completion and validation of the employment checks completed.

The applicant should then submit the completed and signed form to the NHS Trust they wish to conduct Research. The letter of access will then be issued to the staff member by that Trust, and a copy to the main employer.

### 8.3 Research Passport

*Where researchers are from a HEI and do not hold an NHS employment contract or NHS honorary contract*

The Research Passport system provides:

- a single set of checks on a HEI researcher who intends to conduct research within the NHS;
- a standard form to be completed by the HEI researcher and their employer which is **validated** by an NHS organisation;
- a Research Passport which can be presented to all relevant NHS organisations, enabling faster start-up and an overall reduction in duplication and inconsistencies.

There are two types of Research Passport:

- **Project specific passport** for researchers who will be involved with only one project over the course of a three-year period: or
- **Three-year passport** for researchers who will be working on a number of projects over the course of a three-year period and have an on-going research portfolio.

Holding an Honorary Research Contract with this Trust provides access to NHS Indemnity for activities authorised under that contract. The substantive employer remains accountable for the actions of the external researcher.

Please note that the HRA does not validate Research Passports.

The local NHS R & D Office in England will validate the Research Passport (section 8) once the researcher completes sections 1,2,3 & 6 and the HEI has completed sections 4 & 5

Blank Research passports are obtained from the researchers HEI, or from the NIHR website:

[https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/help/help%20documents/ResearchPassportApplicationForm\\_F001\\_v5\\_1.doc](https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/help/help%20documents/ResearchPassportApplicationForm_F001_v5_1.doc)

#### (a) Research Passport Algorithm – HRC or LoA?

The Research Passport Algorithm will be assessed by the HRA (for new studies only) during the initial assessment, and the HRA approval letter will provide details regarding the need for either a letter of access or Honorary research contract.

It will also confirm what pre-engagement checks should or should not be requested, in line with the HRA Good Practice Resource Pack and the HRA assessment criteria and standards.

**Neither an HRC or LoA will be required** if the researcher:

- Is employed by NBT (although additional pre-engagement checks may occasionally be required).
- Is a medical student who will be supervised within a clinical setting by an NHS employee or is covered by local agreements in place between an HEI and NHS trust (pan-Bristol agreements).

#### (b) **PROCEDURE – RESEARCH STAFF FROM HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs)**

Researchers who do not hold an employment contract with a NHS Trust or honorary contract with a NHS Trust may be identified in the following ways:

- HRA during initial assessment for a new study;
- The PI or Research team members for the study;
- The individual concerned by contacting R & D directly.

The researcher should complete a Research Passport Application Form (if they do not hold one already) and obtain signed approval from their HEI for the relevant sections on the application form. This form is available to download from the NIHR website.

A support document for completing this form is available to download from the NIHR website.

#### **The researcher must then:**

**(A) If this trust is the first NHS Trust** to be approached to validate (sign section 8) the signed off (by the HEI) research passport, then the researcher should;

- email [researchaccessarrangements@nbt.nhs.uk](mailto:researchaccessarrangements@nbt.nhs.uk) requesting access to this trust.
- A website link to TRAC will be issued / be available to the researcher to apply for access, and they will be required to attach all the relevant documents such as the completed by HEI research passport and associated documents where relevant by replying to the automated email they receive from TRAC
- Once the application has been submitted, all communication and processing of the request for access will be conducted online
- Section 8 validation by R & D of the new research passport will be completed using the online identify verification software called TRUST ID, and instructions will be provided during that process.

- The researcher will be required to download TRUST ID application to their phone, and submit relevant identification, as well as take a photograph of themselves to complete verification.

## **OR**

**(B) If your research passport has already been signed off** (section 8) by another NHS Organisation, then the researcher should attach the signed Research Passport Form and any associated documents by replying to the automated email received from the TRAC system.

- If necessary, the researcher may need to undergo additional clearances and complete any outstanding pre-engagement checks if the appropriate pre-engagement checks have not been completed commensurate to the activities being performed in the study by the researcher.
- Subject to the research being approved by the R & D, an HRC or LoA will be issued to the researcher and a copy to their employer.
- A Trust identification badge will be required where the staff member will need to come to this trust site. The local research team the researcher will be liaising with will be able to request a Trust identification badge with appropriate access.
- Where a researcher will need access to IT systems in this trust to conduct the research required, the local research team the researcher will be liaising with will be able to request appropriate and relevant IT access.

## **9. DISSEMINATION AND TRAINING**

SOPS will be distributed in accordance with SOP [RI/QMS/SOP/001 – Preparation of R & D Research SOPs](#).

This SOP and any associated templates and forms will be uploaded to the Trust website ([www.nbt.nhs.uk/research](http://www.nbt.nhs.uk/research)) and the LEARN system on the Trust LINK shortly after having been released.

All staff whose activities are subject to this SOP should ensure that they read and understand the content of this SOP.

## **10. References (if applicable):**

- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)  
*Research in the NHS - Human Resources (HR) Good Practice Resource Pack*  
[IRAS Help - Preparing & submitting applications - HR Good Practice Resource Pack](#)

Health Research Authority  
*UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research*

[UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research - Health Research Authority](#)