Capacity building, training and development plan

2022 – 2027

Building the evidence base to support public health practice
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1. Aims

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) School for Public Health Research (SPHR) is a unique collaboration between leading academic centres in England. Established in 2012, the NIHR SPHR aims to conduct high quality research to build the evidence base for effective public health practice. Our research looks at what works practically to improve population health and reduce health inequalities, can be applied across the country, and better meets the needs of policymakers, practitioners, and the public.

The benefit of the NIHR Research School model is that it brings together leading academic centres, with excellence in applied research, in a collaborative working relationship greater than the sum of its parts and with a strategic, long-term programme of work that allows the ‘big issues’ in the field to be tackled. The SPHR provides a setting where interns, PhD students, research fellows and employed early- and mid-career researchers can benefit from the leadership of researchers at the top of their field and from our extensive networks with public health policy and practice. It is also a place where supplementary training, networking, mentoring, guidance and collaboration between members who are geographically spread across England, are part of the added value that the SPHR environment brings.

Research capacity building in SPHR

In the SPHR’s first quinquennium (QQ1), although there was no explicit plan for research capacity building, 10 PhD studentships (Appendix 1) were leveraged by members, and two-year research apprenticeships (forerunner to our predoctoral fellowships) were piloted. A case study of the impact these apprenticeships had on a researcher’s career trajectory can be found here. Additionally, an Early Career Researcher (ECR) network called ResNet was established. At the end of QQ2 ResNet had 132 members.

In the second quinquennium (QQ2), the SPHR was able to expand its commitment to building capacity in public health research being awarded £3.9 million to provide a range of multidisciplinary training and development opportunities. These included: (i) 24 summer internships hosted by most SPHR members; (ii) 37 PhD studentships comprising 16 SPHR funded, 6 SPHR and Academic Research Collaborations (ARCs) funded and 15 PhDs funded and leveraged by members including two further ARC funded studentships; (iii) 7 Predoctoral; and (iv) 8 Postdoctoral Launching Fellowships. Responding to requests from ECRs at the end of QQ1 for first Principal Investigator (PI) research funding, seven small ResNet project grants totalling £214k were made to teams of SPHR ECRs. A wide range of training and development events was also provided (Appendix 2). Additional support and funding was given to trainees whose work or circumstances were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, our trainees have submitted 8 fellowship or grant applications outside of SPHR, produced 70 journal articles, and written over 30 blogs and briefing papers. In a short animation our QQ2 trainees describe how the SPHR has enabled them to flourish as ECRs.
Building on success

Building on the success of QQ2, we focus here on an ambitious and cohesive plan for what the SPHR will offer in its third quinquennium (QQ3) from April 2022 to March 2027. This will add value to and be synergistic with current studentships, fellowships and other capacity building awards offered by the NIHR Academy and other funders. It is also consistent with the vision of the NIHR Public Health Incubator and with the NIHR Public Health Research programme which is ‘seeking to take a more active role in building research capacity and capability’\(^1\). The diagram in Figure 1 below summarises our SPHR capacity building offer described in this plan which is complementary to that provided by the NIHR Academy.

2. Mission and activities

The SPHR academic research capacity building programme is aligned with the overall mission of the School.

Public health research is undergoing a phase of transformation following the publication of the Academy of Medical Sciences report ‘Health of the Public 2040’. There is a drive to build on existing strengths to make the UK a world leader in public health and prevention research, and to meet the substantial public health challenges we face. We want to see more research that is useful, timely and accessible to those responsible for delivering policies and services that ultimately protect and improve the health of the population and our planet and reduce health inequalities. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has served only to heighten the urgency of doing so. We need research that helps answer the most important questions facing policy makers, local authorities, and service providers.

To do this we need to inspire the next generation of academics into public health research with the option to combine academic research with practice as a career pathway. Public health research requires a multidisciplinary workforce and needs to be representative of the populations that it serves. We therefore need to ensure that we are attracting those from a wide range of relevant disciplinary fields, ensure that we are inclusive in our approach and offer equality of opportunity to people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

The aims of the SPHR Academic Research Capacity Development Programme are:

- to promote and demonstrate excellence in Academic Research Capacity Development and training
- to provide bespoke training events, meetings, resources and materials that meet the development needs of our trainees and researchers

\(^1\) NIHR Strategy Board Paper, NIHR Health Research Programme – Strategic Overview of the Public Health Research Landscape, 2021, Version 4.1
• to develop a diverse cadre of early and mid-career public health researchers with the skills and experience that enable them to have fulfilling careers in academic and practice-based research and for some to become future leaders
• to work collaboratively to share best practice in academic research capacity development and training within and beyond the NIHR

Our Academic Research Capacity Development Plan is designed to target gaps in the public health research career pathway identified by SPHR and colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care and NIHR Academy. It has evolved from our experience in the first two quinquennia, has been developed from the applications for SPHR membership in the School's third quinquennium (QQ3) and in discussion with key stakeholders. The overall Plan was discussed and agreed at the Shadow Executive Group meeting on 24th September 2021 and in November, ResNet’s reflections on research capacity building formed part of the agenda of the business plan consultation Workshop 2. Comments on the full draft plan were sought from the SPHR Training Team, Management Group, Executive Group, Training Leads, the ResNet Committee representing all our trainees and ECRs, members of the SPHR Public Partner Network (PAN), and colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care and the NIHR Academy.

Our Academic Research Capacity Development Plan for QQ3, illustrated in Figure 1, comprises funding for 27 summer internships, 9 predoctoral fellowships 18 doctoral studentships, and 9 postdoctoral launching fellowships. In addition, we will provide funding for 9 ResNet ECR first PI research project grants made available through three funding rounds. With an additional 20% funding for research capacity development, we plan to offer nine short transdisciplinary placements within SPHR and three transdisciplinary research fellowships. All fellows and trainees will receive an annual stipend to cover research expenses, conference attendance and training.
Fig 1.

**NIHR SPHR Training Pathway**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awards</th>
<th>Summer internships</th>
<th>Predoctoral Fellowships</th>
<th>PhD studentships</th>
<th>Launching Fellowships</th>
<th>ResNet funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open/closed call</td>
<td>Open call, local recruitment</td>
<td>Open call, national recruitment</td>
<td>Open call, national recruitment</td>
<td>Open call, national recruitment</td>
<td>Early career researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in SPHR QQ2</td>
<td>23 awarded in QQ2</td>
<td>7 awarded in QQ2</td>
<td>37 awarded in QQ2 (8 funded with NIHR ARCs)</td>
<td>10 awarded in QQ2</td>
<td>Closed call (SPHR members only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number in SPHR QQ3</td>
<td>27 in QQ3 (3 rounds)</td>
<td>9 in QQ3 (2 rounds)</td>
<td>18 in QQ3 (2 rounds)</td>
<td>9 in QQ3 (2 rounds)</td>
<td>7 awarded in QQ2 ECR members (N=125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start dates</td>
<td>Summer 2023-2025</td>
<td>1st round: Jan 2023</td>
<td>1st round: Jan 2023</td>
<td>1st round: Jan 2023</td>
<td>9 in QQ3 (3 rounds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>6-8 weeks</td>
<td>2nd round: April 2024</td>
<td>2nd round: April 2024</td>
<td>2nd round: April 2024</td>
<td>Annually 2023-2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Up to 24 months</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>Up to 24 months</td>
<td>12-18 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full time/Part time (min FTE 0.5)</td>
<td>Full time/Part time (min FTE 0.5)</td>
<td>Full time/Part time (min FTE 0.5)</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Training and Development Opportunities through:**
NIHR SPHR, NIHR Academy & Three Schools Training

*Recruitment and start dates are indicative and may be subject to change*
Each of our SPHR PhD students and fellows has an individualised training plan and regular progress reviews within their host institution and an annual review by the SPHR Training Team. The SPHR trainees automatically become members of the SPHR Researchers’ Network (ResNet). As noted earlier, ResNet was established in 2014 and aims to link researchers working on SPHR projects across the members of the SPHR. It is a forum for communication, peer support, and networking. Its purpose is to aid the professional development of researchers, through working together on small scale research projects via ResNet funding, via virtual meetings and bulletins, and by attending researcher events such as the SPHR Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM). ResNet members also have their own separate annual meeting. Its programme is planned by the ResNet Committee and, with SPHR Training Team assistance, facilitates peer support, cross member collaboration, training and learning.

Since 2019/20 the Training Team has provided a substantial and responsive programme of bespoke training events and meetings for our trainees and ECRs (details listed in Appendix 2). The focus of training must vary across the quinquennium because the needs of our trainees and fellows varies over time. Following a survey of members as to what training is available at their institutions and open to others, and using information gathered from our students and trainees, the Training Team maintains a training directory. This is used to provide our ECRs with advice about where they may be able to access any specialist training that they require. This will continue to be maintained and updated in QQ3 as will our continuous gathering of information about training needs via annual reports, meeting feedback forms and periodic surveys.

By virtue of being part of SPHR, PhD students and fellows are also NIHR Academy members and have access to several unique training opportunities including placements across the School and the ability to participate in other NIHR opportunities (e.g., Short Placement Award for Research Collaboration (SPARC), the NIHR Doctoral Research Training Camp and NIHR Academy Annual Conference).

Objectives:
1. each SPHR PhD student and fellow’s work will, where practicable, align with and contribute to the SPHR research programmes which will include involvement in programme meetings and activities.
2. each SPHR PhD student and fellow will have a personal training plan developed with supervisors and reviewed by the SPHR Academic Career Development Lead (ACDL) Prof Rona Campbell, within four months of commencement.
3. PhD students and fellows will be expected to undertake a placement in a public health policy or practice setting (e.g. local authority, Office of Health Improvement and Disparities or relevant third sector organisation).
4. each SPHR trainee will draft a public involvement and engagement (PI&E) plan four months after the commencement of their award that will be reviewed by their supervisor and the national PI&E lead.

5. each SPHR trainee will draft a knowledge exchange plan four months after the commencement of their award that will be reviewed by their supervisor and the SPHR Knowledge Exchange Broker.

6. all SPHR PhD students and fellows will present a poster of their research at the SPHR ASM, annually.

7. eligible SPHR PhD students and fellows will be encouraged to attend the NIHR Academy Annual Conference at least once during their award.

8. eligible SPHR PhD students and fellows will be encouraged to apply for NIHR Academy SPARC funding to visit another part of the NIHR Academy infrastructure and we will have an internal competition within the School to identify the two PhD candidates who will be nominated to join the NIHR Doctoral Research Training Camp each year.

**Impact of COVID-19**

In QQ2, SPHR had 37 PhD students (see Appendix 3), six of who were jointly funded with ARCs where there was a shared geography. We also had funding for seven predoctoral fellows and ten postdoctoral launching fellows (see Appendix 4). Many have had their research and training disrupted because of the pandemic. To mitigate this, 22 doctoral students were granted funded extensions. In addition, three fellows have requested an extension due to COVID-19 and four more have fellowships which have been extended due to parental leave. This will mean 9 doctoral students and 7 fellows will remain as trainees in the SPHR during the first year of QQ3.

**3. Management and governance**

The School Directorate is hosted by Newcastle University with Professor Ashley Adamson (Fuse, Newcastle University) as SPHR Director. The SPHR Deputy Director, Professor Rona Campbell (University of Bristol), has been reappointed to the role of Academic Career Development Lead for SPHR QQ3. Professor Peymane Adab is now also an SPHR Deputy Director and leads on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. She will play an important role in ensuring that all our research capacity building activity is consistent with excellent practice in this regard. Each School member identifies a Training Lead see (Appendix 5) with the relevant experience, interest and capacity who has oversight of PhD students and fellows within their membership. Professor G.J. Melendez-Torres (University of Exeter) is a new member of SPHR with a strong interest in research capacity development. He will be Training Lead for University of Exeter and will assist the Directorate with the delivery of this programme of work.
The SPHR’s Academic Research Capacity Development programme and training strategy is agreed by the SPHR Executive Group which has it as a standing item at quarterly meetings. It will also be a substantive agenda item bi-annually, at which members will be required to report on the PhD students and fellows in their membership. The ResNet Chair (an ECR or fellow) and Deputy Chair (a PhD Student), or their representatives from the ResNet Committee, attend the SPHR Executive Group meeting. Representatives from the NIHR Academy will also attend the SPHR Executive Group meeting to ensure excellent communication between the Academy and SPHR and maximise opportunities for capacity building in public health research across NIHR.

The aims of the standing agenda item are:

• to disseminate and promote excellence in training and capacity development.
• to contribute to the development of bespoke training events, resources and materials.
• to provide a platform for sharing best practice and progress in training methods.
• to assist with the timely collection and reporting of information on PhD students and fellows.
• to be proactive in sharing local good practice across the School and contribute towards the training and development available within the School.
• to support arrangements for the annual ResNet meeting.

Research capacity development in SPHR is managed, day-to-day, by the Academic Career Development Lead (Prof Rona Campbell), the SPHR Academic Career Development Manager (Andeep Sull) who was appointed to the SPHR Directorate and took up post in April 2020 and the School Manager (Dr Susan Bowett). Together they comprise the Training Team which will now also include Prof G.J. Melendez-Torres. In QQ3 the ResNet Chair or Deputy will be invited to attend the Training Team meeting once a month. The Training Team meets on a weekly basis to ensure that all aspects of the Academic Research Capacity Development Plan are implemented successfully. Funding decisions for internships, studentships, fellowships and ResNet awards are ratified by the SPHR Executive Group and operationalised by the School Manager working with member leads in each host institution.
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

NIHR SPHR is committed to recruiting talented individuals primarily via national competition. The NIHR Academy’s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is an inherent part of the SPHR’s research capacity development processes. These include providing a range of opportunities at different career stages and different levels of commitment; casting the net wide in terms of recruitment to all posts; using inclusive marketing materials; removing names from applications; implicit bias training for everyone who deals with applications, so the best people are made offers; providing flexible training so that everyone can engage irrespective of circumstances; an expectation that all supervisors have supervising training; and providing confidential and non-judgemental support when things go wrong.

In terms of recruitment and selection, all applicants are asked to complete a modified NIHR standard application form based on those used by other national funding bodies. Applicants are shortlisted for interview by the SPHR members and selected by a panel of representatives from across the School. Independent references are taken up and made available to the interview panels where appropriate. Recommendations from the interviews are then approved by the NIHR SPHR Executive Group and contracts are drawn up to distribute funding to the host institutions.

As noted previously, recruitment to our internship programme is at the member level but we encourage our members to follow processes which match our approach to national recruitment. Our internships programme, offering paid internships is one of the ways in which we are trying to ensure widened participation in public health research.

In QQ3 we will be offering our studentships and fellowships on a part-time and full-time basis, however, applicants must ideally be able to study or work at 0.6 FTE (although we will consider requests for 0.5 FTE on a case by case basis). We hope this will enable those working in public health practice to continue to do so alongside their academic research training and make these opportunities available to others whose circumstances permit them only to pursue part-time academic research career development.

The SPHR Directorate collects EDI data that is analysed and discussed with the Academic Career Development Lead and SPHR Executive members. Data collected include equal opportunity metrics including at recruitment, details of publications and other dissemination activity, grants applied for, promotion and training opportunities. These data are reported in the SPHR annual report to NIHR. We will review the data collected for each recruitment round and if substantial imbalances are evident, we will seek to address these via our recruitment strategies in any subsequent round.
Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The NIHR and all SPHR members are signed up to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. As a School, we are committed to implementing the principles of this concordat and to ensuring that our research capacity development plans and expectations are consistent with it. We will work with our member Training Leads to ensure that all our members are cognisant of principles of the charter and that these are being upheld as far as our SPHR trainees and early career researchers are concerned.

4. Building research capacity

Awards are distributed between SPHR members in open competition. Where possible, we aim for an equitable distribution of awards across members but only where there are excellent candidates to fill posts. Supervision involves more than one SPHR member and will include a practice-based advisor and a placement in practice, policy, or other setting appropriate to the topic of study.

SPHR summer internships in public health research

The summer internships are aimed at undergraduate students with an interest in a career in public health research who are at the end of the second year of their degree. The internships offer paid employment for 6- to 8-weeks to undertake short projects supervised by SPHR Early Career Researcher (ECRs), fellows and PhD students. These provide a valuable opportunity for undergraduates to test if public health research is the right career choice for them. It also provides our ECRs with the opportunity to organise and manage the recruitment and supervision of the intern with support from a more senior academic. Our member institutions have different policies with regards to summer internships so recruitment to these is organised by each member with the funding provided by the Directorate.

SPHR predoctoral fellowship awards in public health research

The predoctoral fellowships offer up to 24 months full time (with similar part-time awards agreed on a case-by-case basis also available) for individuals with a relevant Masters degree and strong academic trajectory who wish to gain experience of research in public health. Fellows can access skills training in topics such as epidemiology, statistics, health economics, qualitative methods, health services research and developing and evaluating complex public health interventions by attending courses and by working on a variety of pre-existing SPHR research projects. They learn new research methods both through attendance at short courses and by applying them in the projects on which they work. They also have the opportunity to shadow and work alongside those in public health practice through a placement. The goal of the fellowship is for the fellow to gain experience, knowledge and, skills and to prepare an application to undertake a PhD in public health research in a way that supports the capacity and training needs for the future public health
research workforce. The fellowship covers the fellow's salary with some research and training costs.

**SPHR PhD studentships in public health research**

Doctoral studentships are for those with a strong academic record who wish to develop a career in public health research. Applicants must have an excellent first degree in a discipline relevant to public health research and are expected to complete a PhD during the award period. Students receive fees and a tax-free stipend. The host member receives an allocation of funds to support the research. Students from outside the UK are required to pay the additional cost of fees for overseas students.

**SPHR postdoctoral launching fellowships in public health research**

The postdoctoral fellowships are ‘NIHR SPHR Launching Fellowships in Public Health Research’. They offer up to 24 months full time support (with similar part-time awards agreed on a case-by-case basis also available) for individuals with a strong academic record who wish to become an independent public health researcher closely connected to practice. The goal of these fellowships is for the fellow to publish papers from their PhD, contribute to SPHR research projects and write fellowship or grant application(s) to secure further funding e.g. an NIHR Advanced Fellowship. The launching fellows receive training and development opportunities provided by SPHR, the NIHR Academy and host organisation that equips them to undertake research that meets the substantial public health challenges we face in the UK in the 21st Century. This will include specific training around coproduction of research with practitioners and the public and includes the opportunity to undertake a practice-based placement and acquire skills in new methodological approaches, for example. Applicants are expected to have experience of research in public health or a related area. The fellowships cover the fellow’s salary with some research and training costs.

**Need for a transdisciplinary public health workforce**

The public health research challenges that we face require us to have a broad transdisciplinary workforce that includes people with expertise in disciplines less well represented in public health research such as informatics, engineering, architecture, environmental science, law, and public policy. In QQ3, with an additional 20% funding we plan to support transdisciplinary research capacity by offering short placements within the SPHR to give those considering a career in public health research the opportunity to ‘test the water’ and two-year fellowships to enable those who wish to change, the opportunity to make that transition.
Transdisciplinary placements

We will fund short placements of six to eight weeks in a member institution where the appointee will be expected to contribute to a relevant SPHR project and where they will gain experience of academic public health research. This placement can occur as a block or part-time over a series of weeks.

Transdisciplinary fellowships

Appointees will have a strong research track record in their base discipline (which must have relevance to public health) and will ideally have undertaken a transdisciplinary placement with SPHR. The first year will involve the appointee undertaking an approved MSc in Public Health which includes a thorough training in public health and research methods, most likely at the member institution where they are based. They will be expected to develop their dissertation alongside or within an SPHR project. In their second year these fellows will be expected to make a substantial contribution to an SPHR research project or projects in ways that draw on their base disciplinary strengths combined with their newly acquired expertise in public health. They will be expected to undertake a short placement in public health practice, to publish a paper based on their dissertation and author at least one other paper arising from their research during their second year.

A schedule for the recruitment of internships, PhD students and fellows is shown in Appendix 6. This has been designed to enable doctoral students and employed ECRs in QQ2 to be able to apply for postdoctoral launching fellowships to facilitate a pathway across awards, to maximise the opportunities for part-time research training, and to spread the workload across the quinquennium.

Placements with public health practice

All our doctoral students and fellows will be expected to undertake a short placement with public health practice. They will be expected to organise this themselves with the help of their supervisor or line manager and it is likely that the majority of these will use pre-existing connections that members have with local public health practice. In QQ3, however, the Training Manager and Training Team will also try to broker some placement opportunities with relevant regional and national bodies.
Capacity development for employed researchers and mid-career researchers

Early and mid-career researchers employed to work on SPHR funded research will be supported in a variety of ways. They can become members of ResNet and benefit from all the activities and support provided through ResNet including access to ResNet project funding, networking opportunities, and acquiring leadership, organisational and negotiating skills through ResNet Committee membership. Our ECRs and mid-career researchers can attend our varied programme of training and development events (see Appendix 2 for examples) which is tailored to meet the variety of researcher and trainee needs. We are, however, aware that in QQ2 we were particularly focussed on the needs of our ECRs. In QQ3 we will consult further as to how we can best meet the career development needs of our mid-career researchers and, with part of the additional 20% funding for capacity building, ring fence funding to improve our offer accordingly.

We are aware that for those wishing to pursue an academic career in research the award of an advanced postdoctoral fellowship can be an effective route to securing a more permanent post in their host institution. However, these fellowships are extremely competitive and anecdotal evidence suggests the expertise to judge the quality of applications from public health researchers may not always be available. The SPHR is part of the NIHR Public Health Incubator, and we are working collectively to increase the success rate of public health researchers. We will, for example, work to ensure that our most able mid-career researchers are supported to become future public health research leaders and to make compelling applications to, for example, the new Population Health Career Scientist Award. We will do this by, for example, encouraging them to become Trainee members of the NIHR Public Health Research Funding Committee and by signposting relevant research leadership training.

Our mid-career researchers can also take the initiative to lead projects within our programmes of work, with the involvement and mentoring support of more experienced academic colleagues, at an earlier stage than they would be able to do so if seeking competitive external project funding. This develops their research leadership and grant writing skills enabling them to progress to more senior grades within their employing institutions.

Our doctoral studentships provide a key qualification and means of access to a career in research. There are, however, those already employed as researchers whose circumstances are such that they cannot pursue this route to a PhD and find their opportunities for progression limited by not having one. We will work to tackle this inequity and support researchers in these circumstances to explore routes to obtaining PhDs by publication within their employing institutions. We will also consider a mechanism by which the SPHR could part-fund their fees.
Building public health research capacity beyond the SPHR

In this third quinquennium we will assist in building research capacity in the wider public health community. All our studentships and fellowships will be advertised nationally through an open call. Member institutions will also be encouraged to make their internship recruitment via open call; however, these are subject to local institutional recruitment practices which may require recruitment to be internal. Supervision of all our trainees will involve public health practice partners and can involve an academic supervisor from beyond the SPHR membership. We will also extend the geography of our support for research capacity development by making training events available to all Pre-Doctoral (PLAF) and Doctoral (DLAF) Local Authority Fellows. Finally, as noted earlier, the SPHR will continue to be part of the NIHR Public Health Incubator whose raison d’etre is to build public health research capacity throughout the UK.

SPHR Alumni

Given the successful research capacity building that has already occurred within the SPHR, a new focus in QQ3 will be to build a strong SPHR community of alumni including trainees from all quinquennia where we have consent to do so. As our trainees complete their studentships and fellowships, and as we move into a new quinquennium, we are seeking permission to retain their contact details. We will endeavour to do likewise with other ECRs who move to positions outside of the SPHR. In this way we will be able to track the career progression of our trainees and ECRs and capture details of outputs related to work undertaken while they were members of the SPHR. We also hope that some of our alumni will be willing to act as mentors to new trainees and facilitate practice placements and academic visits to other cognate institutions. We will make training events open to our Alumni where appropriate. Again, using part of the additional 20% funding for capacity development, we will create a new section of our website specifically for alumni and purchase a bespoke database to support this work.

5. Public Involvement and Engagement (PI&E)

Meaningful involvement and engagement of the public is central to the ethos of the School, ensuring our work draws on their lived expertise, incorporates their perspectives, and responds to their challenge. PhD students and fellows will contribute to and build on the existing body of involvement and engagement activities within our research projects and beyond. All PhD students and fellows will be required to draft a public involvement and engagement plan four months after the commencement of their award.

The public will be involved and able to participate in all stages of research and governance. Existing expertise and structures will be used wherever possible. Work will be coordinated with other key organisations.
The SPHR Associate Director for Public Involvement & Engagement, with representatives from across the School will lead the SPHR PI&E strategy and operational groups tasked with implementing the SPHR PI&E Strategy. SPHR PhD students and fellows will have access to the strategy and be expected to implement the plan in their research and will be asked to consult and use the INVOLVE definitions of involvement, engagement and participation. All PhD students and fellows are expected to produce plain English summaries of their research and outputs. The School, centrally, will provide training sessions for its PhD students and fellows on all aspects of PI&E and drawing on the experience and expertise of our Public Partner Network (PAN).

In QQ3, the Training Team will work with the PAN and representatives from ResNet to consider co-creating and piloting a buddy system whereby trainees are paired with a public partner who can learn more about and contribute to the research trainees are doing and help the trainee to present their work in ways that the public can understand it, including helping to write lay summaries. Consultation on this with PAN members and ResNet committee members elicited clear support for this idea, recognising that there were many details that would need careful consideration. If such a scheme is piloted, then PAN members and trainees will be provided with training on how to work together in reciprocal and productive ways.

6. Dissemination and communication

Communications about the SPHR research capacity development programme and impact will be managed centrally by the SPHR Directorate and locally by SPHR members. All trainees and students will have access to support from the SPHR Communications Manager and from Katie Appleby, Knowledge Exchange Broker, in promoting the outputs from their work to wider audiences and maximising impact. All research progress reports will include a description of dissemination activity and impact.

Funding will be made available to PhD students and fellows to enable their research to be disseminated appropriately, in line with the NIHR Open Access policy. They will also be eligible to apply for the Impact Accelerator Awards that will be available to researchers in QQ3.

PhD students and fellows will be encouraged to produce at least one peer reviewed publication in a good quality journal, and these will be captured in annual reports and made available on the SPHR website. PhD students and fellows will be asked to provide structured feedback, contribute ideas for training events, act as peer mentors, write blogs, tweet and provide articles about particular aspects of their training so that good practice and experiences are shared.

All PhD students and fellows are expected to attend the SPHR Annual Scientific Meeting where they are required to produce a poster of their work that is entered
into a competition, presented to their peers, external stakeholders and to senior academic staff in the School.

**7. Feedback and review**

The SPHR Directorate will collect regular feedback from our PhD students and pre- and post-doctoral fellows to monitor the quality of their experience as members of the SPHR and enable us to constantly improve what we are doing with regards to research capacity development. We will share findings and discuss suggested actions based on the findings with the SPHR Executive Group. We will also review the training plan annually to ensure that it remains up-to-date and fit for purpose.

**8. Performance Indicators**

The School will collate data on the number of applications received and success rates for all awards. These will be compared to other funding schemes in NIHR. Equal opportunity data are collected from all applicants for SPHR schemes.

All School PhD students and fellows will complete an annual progress report based on those used by the NIHR Academy to collect data on a range of performance indicators that are indicative of success, including, publications, grant income, training and career progression. High-level data will be presented and discussed by the SPHR Executive Group and be available for annual reporting to NIHR. The Directorate will also monitor career progression and research related impact, publicising this through our website, newsletter and wider dissemination activities.

Key performance indicators include:

1. Contribution to developing research capacity in public health research from pre-doctoral to post-doctoral levels including number and % of PhD completions; number of Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Launching Fellows appointed to SPHR; and training opportunities offered to PhD students, fellows and ECRs
2. Number of high-quality peer reviewed publications by SPHR PhD students and fellows
3. Number of further research awards gained by SPHR PhD students and fellows
4. Number and % of PhD students and fellows continuing careers in public health research and/or practice
5. Public involvement and engagement activity by Summer interns, PhD students and fellows
6. Innovative approaches to communication used by Summer interns, PhD students and fellows
7. Impact of research of PhD students and fellows on public health practice and policy including contributions to impact case studies
8. Promotions obtained by early and mid-career research staff
9. Impact of Summer internships on awardee’s future plan