

COVID-19: One Year On

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Our Research Manager Stella Johnson reflects on the last year. If you would like support from our team please get in touch: research@bradford.nhs.uk

In the whirlwind world of the new normal, and as lockdown restrictions are lifted, I reflect on what our team has achieved throughout the last year. My main feeling is that of pride; I'm proud to be part of the NHS and I'm proud to be part of our research team. Dr William van't Hoff, Chief Executive Officer at the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) Coordinating Centre summarised the year perfectly [in his blog](#) on 24th March 2021:

'The UK's health and research staff should look back on the last year with a huge sense of pride. More than a million people recruited into priority COVID studies. Identification of effective therapeutics. Development of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. Global first recruitments, newspaper headlines and new records set for recruitment into trials have come thick and fast, all against a backdrop of a health system responding to unprecedented pressure. Never before has the pivotal role of clinical research in underpinning our health system and public policy been so widely appreciated by the general public as well as decision-makers. It has offered hope for the nation for a way out of a truly terrible year.'

As a team we have all worked hard, speeding up our processes, working outside our usual workplaces, providing expertise in delivery and boots on the ground. We have contributed to Yorkshire and Humber CRN achievements, including:

- We are the highest recruiting region to ALL Vaccine trials
- We are the highest recruiting region to the Novavax trial (Bradford and Leeds)
- We are the highest recruiting region to the Oxford/AstraZeneca trial (Hull and Sheffield)
- We saw the first Global patient recruited to Iqvia/AstraZeneca monoclonal antibody trial (Wakefield)

It has been a collaboration of staff from across the whole health system pulling together with researchers and with members of the public to support research. As a team we are carrying on developing these collaborations so that we can go forward changed forever in the way we work, so that health research continues to benefit from the boundaries that have been broken down and so that working practices continue to be improved at pace.

For all the successes of our COVID-19 research, we have seen other research suffer. In primary care, workforce pressures and disruption of face-to-face

consultations meant that traditional delivery methods stalled and we have seen study sites close or struggle to recruit, but through the hard work and enthusiasm of our general practices, partners and our team we have managed to successfully restart many studies and we can see a way forward.

On our national day of reflection the Government published their policy paper [‘Saving and improving lives: the future of UK clinical research delivery’](#). This makes me feel hopeful that future research can maintain the last year’s trajectory and our team will continue to be proud that we are part of an NHS research workforce that makes a difference for our patients and the public and keeps the UK at the forefront of tackling global healthcare challenges. This was published the same day I also received my first vaccination, a day that I’ll never forget. This time last year vaccinations seemed so far away but we did it and our team was part of it!