

## Candidate Information

**Position:** NICRF Head of Operations  
**School/Department:** NI Clinical Research Facility  
**Reference:** 26/113248  
**Closing Date:** Monday 13 April 2026  
**Salary:** £64,570 - £74,823 per annum  
**Anticipated Interview Date:** Friday, 8 May 2026

### JOB PURPOSE:

The Head of Operations provides strategic and operational leadership for the Northern Ireland Clinical Research Facility (NICRF), ensuring alignment with the vision and objectives set by the NICRF Director.

The post holder will shape, implement, and evaluate the long-term strategic and operational development of the NICRF, ensuring seamless integration within the broader iREACH Health infrastructure to support translational, early- and late-phase clinical trials aligned with institutional, regional, and national priorities.

Working with the NICRF Director and iREACH Health leadership the Head of Operations drives operational excellence and fosters innovation in research infrastructure, ensuring that high-quality, compliant, and efficient clinical research delivery is consistently achieved.

The role will also play a key support function to the NICRF Director and Deputy Directors, including investigators and research physicians, ensuring they are operationally enabled to deliver high-performing research within the facility.

The post holder will focus on streamlining operational readiness, optimising trial delivery processes, and ensuring performance against UK-wide recruitment and delivery metrics, aligned with NIHR and iREACH Health performance frameworks.

### MAJOR DUTIES:

1. Provide operational, financial, and governance leadership of the NICRF, ensuring alignment with the iREACH Health operating model and strategic framework, and supporting the NICRF's transition into the new iREACH Health facility.
2. Accountable for planning and delivery of the NICRF decant, ensuring safe, compliant, and efficient transfer of people, processes, equipment, and studies, while maintaining continuity of research delivery.
3. Act as the senior operational interface with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) to support integrated delivery across workforce planning, HR processes, finance mechanisms, clinical governance, estates, and operational pathways, ensuring seamless partnership working.
4. Enable and assure the NICRF Director, Deputy Directors, visiting Chief Investigators, sub-investigators and research physicians by ensuring operational processes, study set-up, and research delivery systems are fully optimised.
5. Own and lead robust financial planning, including annual and multi-year budgets, income targets, cost-recovery models, forecasting, and financial performance monitoring to support NICRF sustainability and growth.
6. Accountable for operational delivery of commercial and investigator-initiated trial income growth through effective business planning, costing, and operational efficiency.
7. Set and lead workforce strategy, business cases, recruitment, and staff development to build capability, resilience, and a high-performance culture.
8. Provide senior oversight of operational deployment, ensuring optimal utilisation and scalability and support future expansion.

9. Provide leadership, coaching, and professional development to NICRF staff, ensuring a collaborative, inclusive, and supportive working environment.
10. Ensure effective delivery of all clinical and translational research operations in line with institutional, regulatory, and sponsor requirements (e.g., GCP, MHRA, HTA, GDPR).
11. Lead organisational risk management, quality assurance, and regulatory compliance risk management, to maintain safety, compliance, and research integrity.
12. Lead strategic implementation of digital systems, workflow automation, and performance dashboards to support study delivery, monitoring, and evidence-based reporting.
13. Manage contracts, service-level agreements, and operational partnerships with internal and external providers, including industry sponsors.
14. Lead initiatives to enhance collaboration with UKCRF network sites, imaging facilities, digital teams, and other core research infrastructure.
15. Represent NICRF and iREACH Health at senior operational level across QUB, HSC Trusts, NIHR, HSC R&D, funders, academic groups, and industry collaborators to streamline study delivery and co-develop sustainable research models.
16. Provide senior representation and leadership at regional and national forums, contributing to the UK clinical research infrastructure agenda.

**ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:**

1. A postgraduate or professional qualification in a relevant discipline, such as:
  - Health Services Management
  - Clinical Research or Translational Medicine
  - Business/Healthcare Leadership (MBA or equivalent)
  - Public Health or Life Science
 OR  
 Extensive senior leadership experience in clinical research operations or healthcare delivery that demonstrates professional development and capability to lead strategic and operational functions at a similar level.
2. Substantial leadership experience in managing complex research or healthcare operations, ideally within a university–Health and social care partnership context.
3. Proven track record of strategic planning, policy development, and delivery of large-scale projects in a research or healthcare environment.
4. Experience of managing significant budgets within multiple funding portfolios, and diverse income streams.
5. Demonstrated success in building strategic partnerships with senior academic, industry, and Health and Social Care stakeholders.
6. Expert understanding of the regulatory standards and governance frameworks relevant to clinical research (e.g. GCP, MHRA, HTA).
7. Comprehensive knowledge of research management, clinical trials, and health research infrastructure.
8. Excellent leadership, influencing and communication skills with the ability to lead teams through growth and change.
9. Exceptional analytical, strategic, and problem-solving skills.
10. Excellent interpersonal, communication, and presentation abilities.
11. Ability to lead and motivate teams through complex change while maintaining service quality.

**DESIRABLE CRITERIA:**

1. Master's degree or higher (e.g., MSc, MBA, MRes, PhD) in a relevant field.
2. Formal training/certification in:
  - Clinical research governance (e.g., Good Clinical Practice)
  - Project/Programme Management (e.g., PRINCE2, MSP, PMA)
  - Healthcare operational leadership credentials
3. Evidence of leadership development relevant to complex research delivery and integrated health–academic systems.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Queen's University Belfast is a diverse and international institution which is strongly committed to equality of opportunity and to selection on merit. We welcome applications from all.

Given the operational leadership responsibilities and the requirement to oversee on-site research delivery and facilities, this post will be primarily based on-site at Belfast City Hospital within the iREACH Health Clinical Research Facility.

Informal enquiries may be directed to Alison Clinton - [alison.clinton@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:alison.clinton@belfasttrust.hscni.net)