

Research and Innovation



Bring me
the future

Issue 1 | April 2026

WELCOME TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION!

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the Bring Me The Future Research and Innovation Newsletter. This quarterly newsletter will celebrate the achievements and impacts of the Research and Innovation teams here at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust.

In this inaugural issue, we will reflect on the first three months of 2026. We will also look ahead to upcoming events, share key calls to action and provide important updates from across our Research and Innovation community.

Inside This Issue...





Celebrating 10 Years of Innovation

In March, colleagues, partners and friends came together to celebrate 10 years of Innovation at Alder Hey's new hospital.

The two-day Innovation Conference was a fantastic opportunity to reflect on how far Alder Hey Innovation has come, whilst shining a spotlight on exciting work happening across Alder Hey and the wider Liverpool City Region. It was inspiring to see such a diverse mix of people in one space, from healthcare professionals and researchers to designers, engineers, industry partners, local SMEs and voluntary sector representatives. All united by a shared commitment to improving child health.

We were also delighted to welcome guests including Mayor Steve Rotheram and Dame Rachel de Souza, alongside regional, national and international attendees.

Across the two days, more than 180 people joined in person at Alder Hey, including Alder Hey colleagues, speakers and panellists.

Thank you to everyone who attended, contributed and supported the event.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Celebration Gallery



Inspiring the Next Generation: Innovation Schools Competition

During the Innovation Conference, teams from across Alder Hey celebrated the participants and winners of the recent Alder Hey Innovation in Healthcare Schools Competition.

Launched by teams across Innovation and the Academy, Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils were invited to step into the shoes of real-life innovators and design concepts to make hospitals less scary for children. Over several weeks, students worked together, developing creative solutions and submitting posters, models, videos and presentations to a judging panel.

Participating schools included:

- Dovecot Primary School
- Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School
- Holly Lodge Girls' College
- Maghull High School
- Speke Adventure Playground Science Club



Winning Ideas

Students from Dovecot Primary School (pictured on the left), created a child-friendly hospital app, designed to help children and young people feel less scared or lost during their hospital journey.

Students from Holly Lodge Girls' College (pictured on the right), invented a meditation app aimed at supporting children's mental wellbeing and reducing anxiety during hospital visits and stays.



Patient Story: Harry



Eight-year-old Harry from Warrington has chronic kidney disease (CKD) stage 5 and is currently being treated with peritoneal dialysis. Harry is currently participating in a research trial at Alder Hey. The research trial examines how effective the new medicine is in treating anaemia in children with CKD.

Harry told us: "At first it was scary, but being part of research is actually really fun! I am trying new medicine that in the future, will help lots of children like me feel better. I feel like a scientist and a superhero!"

Prior to starting the research trial, Harry's Mum, Lauren, needed to inject Harry once a week to help manage the anaemia, which is something Harry didn't like. Every Monday, Harry would be worried and upset about his Mum injecting him with the medication he needed.

Mum Lauren said: "The research trial has been really positive for Harry. I have seen so many more positives taking the medicine over the injection. Not only in improving Harry's health but I can also see a positive difference in his anxiety."

[READ MORE HERE](#)

BLOGS

Changing Children's Surgery Through Research

By: Professor Dan Perry

"Most people assume that if an operation is commonly performed, it has been tested properly. The reality is way more complex. Surgery often evolves through training and tradition. Operations are taught, repeated, refined and gradually become standardised. Yet many of these operations have never been tested... This can lead to huge variation, where the same disease/injury may be treated very differently depending on which hospital a child attends."

"Children deserve medical decisions to be grounded in robust evidence and families deserve clarity when faced with difficult choices. At Alder Hey, that principle underpins all our research."

This blog shares the experiences of Professor Dan Perry, Children's Orthopedic Surgeon and NIHR Research Professor and looks at recent and successful studies that have changed practice, including SCIENCE, FORCE and CRAFTT.



[READ MORE HERE](#)

Turning Frontline Insight into Real Innovation

By: Ffion Byrne

"Working in the NHS is a privilege. You see extraordinary teamwork, kindness and commitment every single day. You also see how stretched people are. When you are on the shop floor, you quickly notice little things that could be better. Often they are not dramatic problems, just everyday frustrations that slow people down or make their jobs harder than they need to be."

"What I love about working in Innovation is how close we are to the hospital. We are not sitting in a distant office trying to dream up abstract solutions. We are surrounded by real clinical problems and real people who want to make things better..."

This blog shares the experiences of Innovation Fellow Ffion Byrne, of how she ended up working for Alder Hey Innovation and how important it is to have frontline insight when creating paediatric innovation.



[READ MORE HERE](#)

Clinical Research at the Heart of Children's Healthcare

By: Tim Henderson

"As a team leader within the clinical research team, I'm often asked what clinical research actually is, why it matters so much and what happens behind the scenes on a Clinical Research Facility (CRF). The short answer is that clinical research is how we turn hope into evidence and evidence into better care. The longer answer is about people, partnerships and a shared commitment to improving the lives of children and young people."

"Paediatric clinical research is not simply adult research scaled down. Children are physiologically, developmentally and emotionally different from adults, and their healthcare needs must be understood in that context..."

This blog shares the experiences of Team Leader Tim Henderson as he explores what clinical research is and how it can help change the future for children and young people.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Fond Farewell to John Chester

We recently said goodbye to Professor John Chester, retiring as Director of Research and Innovation and Chief Scientific Officer at Alder Hey.

During his time at Alder Hey, John has played a pivotal role in shaping and strengthening the Trust's Research and Innovation strategy. His leadership has helped to further embed research and innovation into clinical care, ensuring that children and young people benefit from the very latest advancements in medicine and technology.

Reflecting on his time at Alder Hey, John said:

"It has been a privilege to work alongside such dedicated and inspiring colleagues at Alder Hey. The opportunity to help shape research and innovation that can make a real difference to children and young people's lives has been incredibly rewarding. I am proud of what we have achieved together, and I look forward to seeing this continue to grow in years ahead."

Thank you John for your significant contribution, leadership and commitment over the years and we wish you a long, happy and well-deserved retirement.



Good News Stories

Innovation Youth Forum Session

Colleagues from Innovation were joined by Medisites in delivering a Youth Forum session at Alder Hey. The session focussed on hearing how young people experience hospital environments, what feels confusing, what feels reassuring and what makes a difference to children and young people in a hospital setting.

The Youth Forum discussed digital wayfinding and hospital navigation and the positives of the Alder Hey virtual 360 map.



First participant recruited for FIT-YOUNG study

Recently the first participant has been recruited into the FIT-YOUNG study, an innovative research project exploring how weight-management interventions affect organ health in children and young people with severe obesity.

The study uses quantitative MRI to assess body fat distribution and organ-specific fat (including liver fat) and will evaluate how these change in response to lifestyle intervention and GLP-1 receptor agonist therapy.

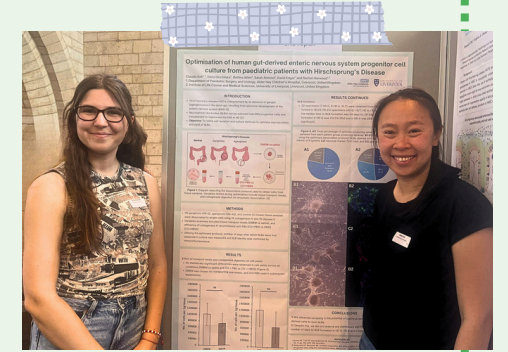
This project has been developed through collaboration between colleagues from Alder Hey, Aintree and external imaging partners. Bringing these teams together has enabled the establishment of a novel research MRI protocol for patients being managed in the Complications from Excess weight (CEW) service. The study will provide new insights into how obesity treatments influence metabolic health beyond weight change alone.



HAWAII Study - Young Investigator Awards

Students from the University of Liverpool presented their work on the HAWAII study, which is sponsored by Alder Hey. The students presented their MRes and PhD work at the 8th Entric Nervous System Conference in Leuven.

All four students - Claudia Koh, Daria Dinchiiska, Joe Moody and Karoline Lundgren-Martinez were awarded the Young Investigator Awards for their work! Congratulations!



The HAWAII study is an exciting and novel project which aims to develop regenerative medicine therapies for Hirschsprung's Disease. These important steps in developing a new therapy offers hope to families of those affected by the congenital gastrointestinal disease, which can have life threatening and life changing consequences.

NHS InSites Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Exchange

Recently the 'Patients as Partners: Making Involvement Real' peer knowledge exchange session was hosted by Alder Hey as part of the NHS InSites peer-to-peer knowledge exchange programme, which brings healthcare staff together to share learning, best practice and common blockers to innovation. The virtual session focused on how services can move beyond consultation and towards more genuine partnership with patients, children, young people and their families. The session drew on Innovation's experience of involvement work, particularly through the Youth Forum and Patient Safety Partners.

Speakers included Conor Peacock, Innovation Consultant at Alder Hey, Alex Jones, Youth Forum representative and Danielle Cormack, Patient Safety Investigation Lead. Together, the speakers shared reflections on involving people earlier, making involvement accessible, sharing power, showing impact and reaching groups who are often missed.

Good News Stories

End of an Era

DIAMONDS and PERFORM studies have now closed for recruitment.

Congratulations to Karen Newall and supporting teams and colleagues who have led, supported and contributed to the study.

Over just shy of ten years the team at Alder Hey have recruited 9888 participants for PERFORM and 1090 participants for DIAMOND. During this time the team also trialed the PREFACE device, which also achieved a recruitment of 62 participants.

Good News from FIORE Study

A huge congratulations to Melonie Johns and team who have recently received amazing news regarding the FIORE study!

Alder Hey has been recognised as the first site in Europe and the fourth site in the world to treat a participant on the study for heart failure.

New BioResource Study Now Open

Congrats to Kirsty Ashcroft and team for the recent opening of D-CYPHR, a new study that will analyse patient biosamples mainly saliva. The BioResource Tissue Bank study is open to all children and young people aged 0-15 years.

Research on diseases like diabetes and some mental health tend to happen in adulthood, but there could

be links to some diseases starting as early as childhood. D-CYPHR is a study that needs a one off sample of saliva or blood (if already being taken). The sample is then sent to a specialised tissue bank where scientists analyse the DNA and genetics of the sample.

The team will start recruiting children and young people in the community with visits in the MRU

Healthcare Partnerships

Recently Alder Hey has signed Memorandums of Understanding with three international hospitals namely, Dublin's Children's Health Ireland, Toronto's Sick Kids and Barcelona's Sant Joan de Deu Hospital.

These documents build on our partnership activities with the hospitals and have been designed, drafted and signed to promote knowledge exchange and best practice and also to establish a clear framework for cooperation and align the intentions of all involved.

Through regular communication with these international hospitals, we intend to identify new and meaningful ways to collaborate together to realise identified benefits to the children and young people in our care.



Celebration of Publications

So far this year there has been 96 publications written and supported by colleagues at Alder Hey. Here are ten from the past couple of months.

Pediatric Anesthesia

Paediatric cancellation rates And Perioperative clinical Evaluation (PINEAPPLE): A UK Prospective Multi-Centre Observational Cohort Study

Phil Arnold



Health Technology Assessment

Prophylactic antibiotics to prevent chest infections in children with neurological impairment: the PARROT RCT

Paul McNamara



Frontiers

"We've managed to find our own path of how we do it": exploring parental perceptions of using age-inappropriate formulations at home - a qualitative study

Louise Bracken



Kidney International Reports

A pathway to High Quality Clinical Trials in IgA Vasculitis Nephritis: Meeting Proceedings From a Multiprofessional International Collaborative Workshop

Louise Oni



Trials

The clinical and cost effectiveness of a conservation treatment pathway compared to appendectomy in children with uncomplicated acute appendicitis: study protocol for randomised controlled multi-centre open-label parallel-group non-inferiority trial (CONTRACT 2 trial) in the United Kingdom (UK)

Harriet Corbett



The Lancet

Surgical fixation versus non-surgical care for children with displaced medial epicondyle fracture of the elbow (the SCIENCE study): a multicentre, randomised controlled, superiority trial and economic evaluation

Dan Perry



BJS Open

Management and Outcomes of paediatric achalasia: multicentre retrospective study in the UK

Rachel Harwood



The Lancet Respiratory Medicine

Endotracheal surfactant for infants with life-threatening bronchiolitis (BESS): a randomised, blinded, sham-controlled, phase 2 trial

Malcolm (Calum) Semple



British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology

Developing medication independence: The experience of UK teenagers

Dan Hawcutt



Thorax

Comparison of Lower Airway Sampling Strategies in Children with Protracted Bacterial Bronchitis (CLASSIC-PBB): a non-randomised, internally controlled, multicentre trial

Ian Sinha

