

Messages from Jen



Jen Walters
NIHR Director of Communications

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September 2025

I hope you had a wonderful summer and managed to get some respite, in the form of a break or slighter quieter inbox!

As the nights start to draw in, we are delighted to have so much to celebrate and reflect on, so this is a bumper issue.

Celebrating a brilliant Annual Report

Let's start with what was a hugely successful Annual Report launch. As previously mentioned, we decided to launch [this year's report](#) several months earlier, ahead of Parliamentary Recess, and it was perfectly timed to elevate our response to the 10 Year Health Plan for England.

So far, over 10,000 people have viewed it online (compared to 581 last year), with people spending almost double the amount of time reading it. Plus, around 500 people have so far downloaded it from the website.

It's been a gargantuan effort, and we continue to roll out the powerful stories and statistics we gathered. We're already busy planning for next year!

Smashing it in the media relations world

We are busy implementing a new media relations plan, including a new journalist outreach programme. We're already seeing this paying off. For example, for the period April-August, the NIHR was mentioned in the media almost 5,000 times - a 20% increase compared to

the same period last year. This includes almost 300 references in UK national media outlets, more than double that of last year.

Just a few recent highlights include:

- proactively leading media on behalf of 40 major UK health organisations, actively call for the inclusion of older adults in research, pitching exclusively to [The Guardian](#)
- pitching a story about NIHR research successfully testing drones delivering defibrillators during simulated 999 calls. Coverage included [The Times](#), ITV, [The Independent](#), [BBC News](#) and BBC Radio 5 Live

Be Part of Research and what's happening next

NIHR staff, family and friends have shown an incredible amount of support for Be Part of Research. Together, we've generated 15,000 new volunteer registrations (20 May–20 July), secured widespread media coverage across major outlets, and made real progress in engaging younger volunteers and participants from Asian and Black communities.

We have got lots of great activity coming up, including a new Be Part of Research SMS pilot, working with GP practices to send SMS messages to their patients with a call to action to register. While we wait for the full evaluation, there have already been more than 500 referrals, and the preliminary results are really encouraging.

Hybrid communicators' event – a month(ish) to go!

We're hosting the first of our new hybrid webinar series for NIHR's communications community on Thursday, 23 October. We're running these webinars quarterly, so there'll be more opportunities for us to connect with our colleagues during the year.

We'll share the latest on the One NIHR Communications Strategy and preparations for NIHR20, and we'll celebrate and reflect on our achievements from the year so far. We'll also hear from the Department of Health and Social Care, and there'll be chance to ask any questions on your mind.

Don't miss out! Register by Wednesday 24 September to book your place. We still have in-person spots available in Leeds, London and Southampton - we'd love to see you in the flesh if you're able to travel to one of these places. You're also welcome to join online. Look forward to seeing you there.

Insta success

[NIHR's Instagram](#) following continues to grow, gaining just under 5,000 followers since its launch in May this year! The summer saw numerous successful collaborations with

content creators as part of the Be Part of Research campaign and we will look to continue working with influencers to help build our presence.

Support World Alzheimer's Month

This month, we're marking World Alzheimer's Month across our social media channels, with content highlighting [Join Dementia Research](#) and NIHR dementia research. Expect an interactive quiz on Instagram stories, an Instagram Q&A with NIHR dementia speciality lead Paresh Malhotra, and numerous case studies throughout the month. Do give it a like, comment or share to posts from NIHR and Join Dementia Research- every little nudge helps.

We've also got a new video coming soon, encouraging people of South Asian heritage to take part in dementia research. Keep an eye out for it on the Join Dementia Research website and YouTube channel.

The team are always keen to include more voices in the campaign, so if you have a dementia research story to share, we'd love to hear it - just email ryan.jewell@nihr.ac.uk.

As always, thanks for all your hard work.

Jen