

CASE
STUDY



Elevating Standards and Achieving Workforce Excellence

Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Trust (RDaSH)
Grounded Research Team

SNAPSHOT: The Grounded Research Team is impressive from start to finish; and this was independently assessed and certified through the robust and independent IAOCR Workforce Process Quality Certification (WPQC) assessment process. The team from the RDaSH NHS Foundation Trust clearly operates at an excellent standard, which is why they became the first NHS clinical trial site to achieve the WPQC Gold standard, evidencing their commitment to being an ‘Employer of Choice’ and a ‘Clinical Trial Partner of Choice’.

The WPQC assessment, gap analysis and improvement process is focused on organisational development best practices - culture, competence, staff engagement, and mental health and wellbeing. The assessment team recognised the positive values and environment that the leadership team has created, which demonstrates an exemplary work culture.

Overview

The Grounded Research team at RDaSH wanted to provide reassurance to patients, sponsors, CROs, and their staff, that they are working to the workforce best practice standards that were designed to ensure safe and effective delivery of clinical trials. They also wanted to increase confidence and capability across their team, through ensuring competency-based development and established staff wellbeing processes were embedded at the core of the organisation.

RDaSH selected WPQC because it was developed in collaboration with key stakeholders from the Clinical Research Industry; WPQC ensures sites and companies have a “right first time” and “quality built in” workforce ecosystem that enables compliance with ICH-GCP by focusing on global best practices related to team performance and competence.

The WPQC quality mark acknowledges a high-performing clinical research ‘workforce of excellence’, defined by having fit-for-purpose processes and procedures that work to reduce risk to patients, research and industry reputations. The WPQC standard also demonstrates an employer who is committed to the mental health and wellbeing, competency and professional development of their staff.



“RDaSH exemplifies why we run the WPQC – to identify top performing clinical research organisations and set them apart as a benchmark that others should be aspiring to meet. The RDaSH assessment process showed a clear commitment from the team throughout, to demonstrate the high-quality processes, standards and competent workforce.”

Jacqueline Johnson North – CEO, IAOCR

Ground Research’s Objective:

The Grounded Research Team at RDaSH wanted to lead the way in the ongoing paradigm shift in clinical research delivery to help shape a better future for the industry by ensuring that their workforce processes are independently quality assured to global best practice standards, so that valuable new treatments can be brought to market more quickly and safely.

Process and Evaluation:

The Workforce Process Quality Certification (WPQC) assessment, gap analysis, process improvement, and certification process was developed by IAOCR to help address the clinical research talent crisis and enable a ‘workforce of excellence’ ethos. The WPQC quality mark provides a clear sign to employees and other key stakeholders that the organisation or site is committed to best-in-class workforce practices and ensuring that people really matter.

The assessment process involves an examination of the organisation’s workforce processes and procedures, and the team’s awareness of them. It also reviews the competency-based career development pathways in place for staff, as well as staff engagement and mental health and wellbeing procedures (see assessment criteria for WPQC bronze, silver and gold standards in the image below).

The WPQC assessment process verifies and celebrates what an organisation is already doing well and identifies where improvements can be made. The gap analysis and action plan provide a route map for continuous improvement and the ability to build a high-quality workforce infrastructure underpinned with efficiency, quality and performance.



The process also provides individual employees and teams with the opportunity to share insights and ideas that improve and shape an organisation's core workforce foundations, resulting in an empowered and committed team.

"An external audit is always valuable as it opens your eyes as what areas need development but also where you're doing a really good job, and we found we are doing a really good job. We were commended for the positive culture in the team, and this is something we really pride ourselves on and it's important that it's externally noticed, because this is a core factor to our business."

Heather Rice – Director of Research & Innovation

Core Insights:

The WPQC assessment process identified areas where RDaSH had an opportunity to further improve to ensure they remain a provider of high-quality research for all of their serving communities and ensure they continue to make a real difference to patients' lives.

- **Efficiency has improved** because the assessment streamlined operations, removing unnecessary meetings to ensure the team operate more effectively to the benefit of the team, their partners and the community.
- As a result of the assessment, senior management held focus groups to hone the job descriptions and ensure they were current and relevant. The organisation and industry has evolved over recent years and this provided **greater opportunities internally and externally.**
- Insights from the assessment has driven **alignment throughout the organisation, reinforcing the brand and identity** and creating uniformity.

Newly recruited Consultant Psychiatrist: The Gold certified status to someone new joining, was an early indicator that the team has a joined-up vision, is able to contribute towards research in the area and most importantly that it places research as a priority. It was a positive time to join the team.



Outcomes:

- Certification has led to an **increase in commercial activity**, supporting the **development of strategic partnerships with CROs**. The WPQC was specifically cited when RDaSH developed strategic partnerships with leading CROs, e.g. IQVIA and PPD.
- There has been a significant **increase in ‘expressions of interest’** from commercial sponsors and CROs, with a **four-fold increase in enquiries** following the WPQC.
- The certification has proved beneficial in new business meetings to **demonstrate the inbuilt quality** within RDaSH operations, reassuring sponsors that the right processes are in place and the organisation is inspection ready.
- A multidisciplinary study delivery team has been created to bring core skillsets together to **improve operational efficiencies** and enhance the RDaSH offering.
- The Grounded Research team are now undertaking the **GCSA Certification process**, broadening their scope of external review and input of processes to **further support the high-quality delivery of safe clinical trials**.



"Having the quality of our workforce processes externally assessed is really important – it's vital that we are open and hold ourselves up to scrutiny. This Gold Accreditation helps us do that, as well as recognising the hard work and dedication of our team. The IAOCR process also showed us areas where we have opportunity to improve so we can remain a provider of high-quality research for all of our communities and can continue to make a real difference to patients' lives." **Jodie Keyworth – Head of Business Development, Grounded Research RDaSH**