

# Health Education England: Strategic Development Framework - Call for Evidence

## Response by the Wellcome Trust

August 2013

## Key Points

- Research and innovation are vital to ensure that the delivery of services in the future is effective, efficient and evidence-based and Health Education England must prioritise these in the Strategic Development Framework.
- Health Education England must ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to enable clinicians to devote time to high quality research training and to help post-graduate deaneries and employers to create a supportive environment for their staff to undertake research.
- To underpin Health Education England's important role in research and innovation it is crucial that there is strong academic representation in its advisory structures, and that this advice is prioritised at the highest levels of Health Education England.

## INTRODUCTION

1. The Wellcome Trust is pleased to have an opportunity to respond to Health Education England's (HEE) call for evidence on its *Strategic Development Framework*. As a major provider of research fellowships for clinicians at PhD and postdoctoral level, our response focuses on the importance of education and training of the workforce to support research and innovation.

## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN THE HEALTH SERVICE

2. We welcome the inclusion of "a flexible workforce receptive to research and innovation" as one of the five domains in HEE's Education Outcomes Framework. HEE must continue to recognise this in the Strategic Development Framework.
3. Research and innovation are fundamental to ensure that the delivery of a health service that is effective, efficient and evidence-based. Research and innovation enable services to keep pace with a changing environment and must therefore be considered as priorities when mapping the needs of the future health service. New technologies and approaches – such as genomics and stratified medicine – have significant potential to transform care. The workforce has a critical role to play in ensuring that all new technologies and approaches are deployed effectively in the NHS. In order to meet this challenge and deliver the full benefits of research and innovation, it is essential that healthcare professionals are given the education, training, time and resources needed to support research and innovation. For example, the greater specificity provided by genomic

medicine will lead to a transformation in diagnosis and therapy. This is already starting to happen in areas such as cancer and in understanding the spread of infectious diseases. Training and education of the workforce will be needed to ensure that the NHS is in a position to deliver the opportunities offered by genomics, as this becomes increasingly relevant to other branches of medicine.

## **ROLE OF HEE IN FOSTERING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

4. An important priority for HEE in this domain is to ensure that the training system supports the development of clinician scientists, enabling the UK to train a cadre of the highest calibre people. Strengthening the clinician scientist workforce, will require HEE and its Local Education and Training Boards (LETBs) to work in partnership with post-graduate deaneries, employers and funders to introduce greater flexibility in the training pathway to enable trainees to balance their need for clinical training with research opportunities. For example, for clinical trainees interested in pursuing an academic career, it is vital that the pathway facilitates periods of research training – for example taking a PhD – and enables doctors to balance their postdoctoral research and clinical work. There must also be sufficient geographical flexibility in clinical posts to ensure that trainees can conduct their research in strong academic centres. A key aim for HEE must be to ensure that the system enables clinicians to devote time to high quality research training and to help post-graduate deaneries and employers to create a supportive environment for their staff to undertake research.
5. Academic Health Sciences Networks (AHSNs) provide an exciting opportunity to link education and training with research and innovation, building on strong partnerships between centres of academic excellence and healthcare providers across England. We are pleased that the LETBs Authorisation Framework promotes “cross board representation” between LETBs, AHSNs and Academic Health Sciences Centres to ensure that their activities are closely aligned and we hope that HEE will continue to foster these interactions in the future.
6. To underpin HEE’s important role in research and innovation it is crucial that there is strong academic representation in its advisory structures, and that this advice is appropriately prioritised at the highest levels of HEE. We look forward to seeing how the Healthcare Science Advisory Group will develop and how research and innovation will be represented on the new Multi-Professional Advisory Body.

*The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. We support the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. Our breadth of support includes public engagement, education and the application of research to improve health. We are independent of both political and commercial interests*