

# Bristol Cancer Research Network Strategy 2025-2030

## Vision

The University of Bristol's Cancer Research Network is dedicated to leading high-impact, world-leading cancer research by fostering strong interdisciplinary collaborations with global, national and local expertise.

Our mission spans the entire cancer journey from prevention and risk stratification, early detection and diagnosis, elucidating mechanisms of progression, identification of new targets and biomarkers, to the delivery of transformative treatments and pathways for patients and populations. We aim to enhance the impact of cancer network-enabled research on people affected by cancer through holistic, personalised and patient-centred approaches, including co-production of research. As part of a global civic university we are dedicated to tackling cancer worldwide, shaping the future of cancer care for all. We are proud to model a network rooted in our sense of place, with strong connections to our local communities. There is also a huge opportunity for Bristol to be at the forefront of addressing equity of access to cancer research and developing inclusive and diverse research teams that lead world-class research delivery.

## Background

The [Cancer Research Network](#) at the [University of Bristol](#) is interdisciplinary and outward-looking. We strive to cultivate an inclusive and diverse community of clinical academics and researchers involved in all aspects of cancer research and its interconnecting fields. The Network was formed in 2014, building on existing strengths in cancer research, and is hosted by the [Elizabeth Blackwell Institute for Health Research](#). We have a strong track record in promoting the development and progression of early career researchers across basic, translational and clinical sciences. These early career researchers have a pivotal role in shaping the network's present and future outputs and impact.

This updated University of Bristol Cancer Strategy reflects the current era of accelerated discovery and delivery within cancer science and treatments, and aligns with the [University of Bristol strategic aims](#). This new strategy embeds cross-faculty teams conducting research in areas of excellence such as risk stratification, artificial intelligence, big data, biomarkers, tumour micro-environment, cancer vaccines, immuno-oncology, precision medicine, prevention, cancer genomics, clinical trials, health equity, nanotechnology, engineering and mathematical modelling. We are strongly aligned with the University of Bristol's Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Cancer [Grand Challenge Research Cluster](#), and work across research themes including

clinical sciences, genetic epidemiology and informatics, and molecular, cellular and structural biology.

## How We Work

The Cancer Research Network hosts and supports regular workshops and facilitates networking. We also provide crucial pump-priming funding through the [University Cancer Research Fund](#) (UCRF) for innovative research, focused on early and mid-career researchers to build their independence, thus ensuring that Bristol cancer research remains relevant, cutting-edge and impactful.

Our strategies focus on:

### 1. Impactful Partnerships

By collaborating with other leading research institutions in the UK and globally, we significantly enhance the scale, quality and impact of our research. Our commitments to interdisciplinary working, innovation and partnership-building are key to advancing cancer research on all fronts. We facilitate the meeting of minds of clinicians, scientists and industry or third sector collaborators, to accelerate translational research. This is exemplified by successful collaborations in early primary brain tumour detection and large-scale epidemiological studies funded by [Cancer Research UK](#).

In line with the University's wider strategy we continue to develop strategic partnerships with industry who contribute to our ultimate aim of improving the patient experience through early detection, diagnostics and treatment.

### 2. Promoting Academic Excellence and Innovative Research

We drive transformative cancer research through interdisciplinary collaboration across the University's faculties. Leveraging the UCRF, and through conferences, steering groups and networking, our Network is committed to fostering a pipeline of talent by supporting researchers at all stages of their careers. We aim to attract global talent while nurturing an environment where the most talented staff—locally, nationally and internationally—can thrive. Our collegial approach ensures that great ideas can flourish. With our flexible funding structure, we support novel projects and respond swiftly to emerging research opportunities, ensuring that our research stays relevant and timely.

### 3. Global Leadership

Positioning Bristol as a global leader in cancer research is central to our mission. Through international collaborations and programmes like the Cancer Research UK/National Cancer Institute [Cancer Grand Challenges](#), we aim to influence the global

cancer research agenda. Our work is committed to addressing health inequalities and embedding principles of NHS England's [CORE20PLUS5](#) approach to reducing healthcare inequalities to ensure representation and strive for equitable outcomes.

To deliver on these ambitions we continue to work towards achieving [Cancer Research UK Centre](#) status within the next 5-10 years, with potential to align with the Bristol Trials Centre.

#### **4. Nurturing Academic Careers**

Our members offer interdisciplinary training at all levels, from PhD programmes and training to clinical fellowships, ensuring a robust future for cancer research. By promoting inter-professional collaboration from “bench to bedside and back” we aim to be known for developing ambitious researchers committed to innovation in cancer care. Our novel early career researcher grants offer unique and substantial funding from the UCRF, supporting researchers during their challenging journey towards academic independence.

### **Strategic fit with the University of Bristol**

Cancer is a [key priority](#) for the University of Bristol, NHS partners and the population of the city we serve. Building on existing strengths and expertise from teams across population health, laboratory-based cellular and molecular medicine, clinical sciences, AI and digital health, engineering, behavioural psychology and veterinary sciences, we are working to bring together our distinctive and diverse approaches to answering fundamental research questions to positively impact cancer outcomes.

Bristol is internationally recognised as a world-leading interdisciplinary centre of expertise in cancer research. We are uniquely positioned with medical, dental and veterinary schools within our footprint, enabling far-reaching collaborations and a comprehensive approach to healthcare research and education. Accelerating new and diverse collaborations with academia, clinical teams, third sector and industry partners ensures a sustainable future, for our students and staff, our communities, city and region within the UK and globally.

As a result of strong academic leadership, including through the Network's connections, we attract and inspire students and academics from across the globe, increasing our ability to scale the highest quality, high impact research which addresses key cancer challenges. By nurturing and supporting this inclusive research culture, we demonstrate a commitment to recruiting, developing and retaining a diverse, collaborative community of exceptional researchers.

## Conclusion

The University of Bristol Cancer Research Network exists to redefine and accelerate cancer research paradigms, translating discoveries into tangible benefits for patients worldwide while developing the next generation of outstanding cancer researchers. Our strategy is built on strong interdisciplinary and global partnerships that drive innovation and impact across cancer biology, epidemiology, prevention, early detection and treatment.

As a global civic institution, we are dedicated to co-creating a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future, working in partnership with diverse organisations across local, national and global communities. Through proactive engagement and celebration of excellence we increase the profile of Bristol as one of the world's leading research-intensive universities and enhance the future of cancer care and outcomes for patients.

*Bristol Cancer Research Network Steering Group, January 2025*