

Strategic Plan 2023–2028

July 2023

Introduction

Our strategy carries the vision and values of the Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) at its heart. The first object of the RCoA Charter states that the RCoA must 'advance, promote and carry out study and research into anaesthesia and related subjects, and disseminate the useful results of any such research'. Each of the CR&I's strategic aims maps directly to the overarching strategic objectives of the RCoA, in particular:

- pursuing excellence in all we do
- to promote, implement and share world class research
- translate research into anaesthetic and perioperative practice.

The achievements of anaesthetists involved in research and improvement over the previous 10 years are significant with much of the success being driven through the work of portfolio projects from the Health Services Research Centre (HSRC) and Perioperative Medicine Clinical Trials Network (POMCTN). This consistent high level of engagement of anaesthetists across the UK, at all stages of their careers, has been encouraged and maintained via the series of national audits, sprint audits and improvement programmes delivered by the HSRC. Additionally, perioperative research trials are now becoming a part of day-to-day practice for anaesthetists, and there is a thriving network of local principal investigators and NIHR associate principal investigators delivering high quality research at local level. The POMCTN has trained nearly 50 new potential chief investigators who have benefitted from a bespoke program enhancing their skills to become leaders in perioperative research. Most importantly, there are demonstrable improvements in care processes and outcomes for patients undergoing anaesthesia because of this work. Thousands of patients have benefitted from the positive impact of these national projects; for example, the National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA) has led to measurable and sustained improvements in care and outcomes for a previously unrepresented group of high-risk patients.

This document sets out the key priorities for the next five years of the Royal College of Anaesthetists' Centre for Research and Improvement. The establishment of the CR&I is the first step in this five-year plan and is the result of the merger of the RCoA HSRC with the POMCTN into one overarching body – the CR&I. This strategy has been written with extensive consultation from key stakeholders, including patient and lay representatives.

Our vision

To improve patient care, health and outcomes through research and improvement in anaesthesia and perioperative care.

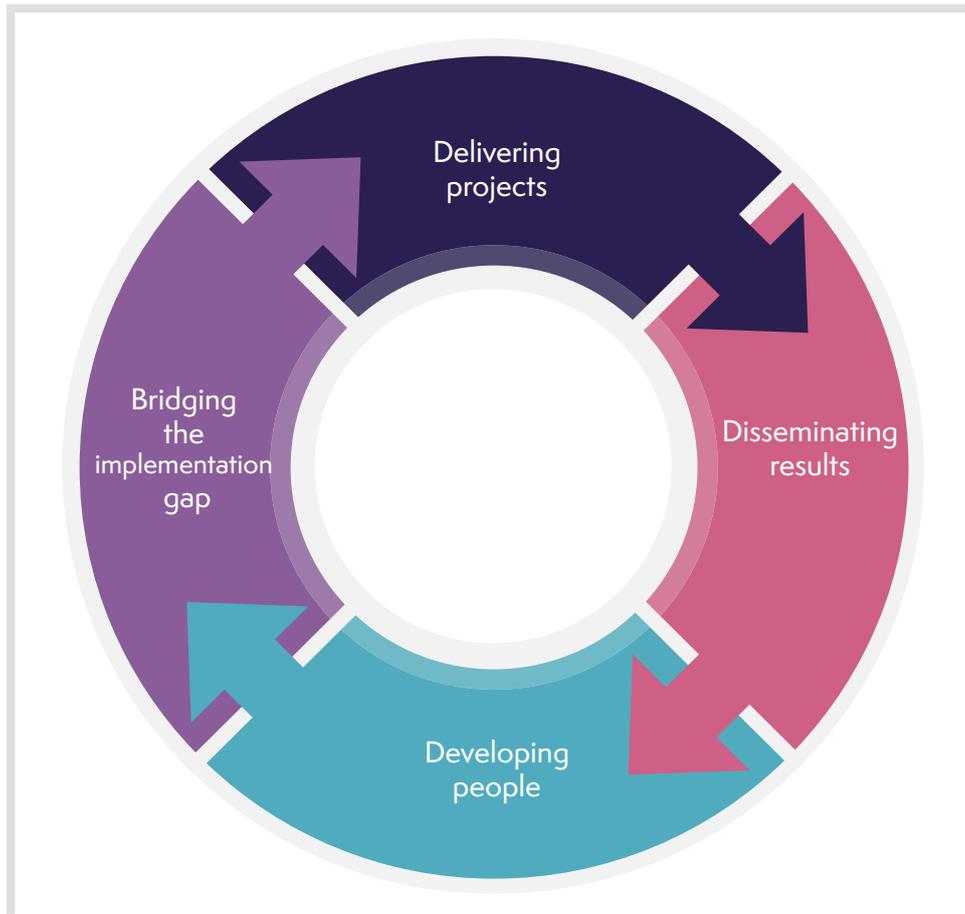
Our mission

To ensure that every anaesthetist, at every stage of their career, whatever their role or interest, has the ability and opportunity to generate high quality evidence and use research to drive improvements throughout a patient's perioperative journey.

To support the development of future programmes that continue to ask the 'big' important questions and ensure the appropriate methodology is used to answer them.

Strategic aims

- 1 Delivering national level research, audit and quality improvement (QI) projects.
- 2 Disseminating and presenting research findings in clear, understandable, and relevant ways.
- 3 Bridging and understanding the implementation gap.
- 4 Developing future and current clinical researchers in anaesthesia and perioperative medicine.



Core principles

All work and associated projects of the CR&I will be underpinned by four key principles:

- 1 collaborating with key professional stakeholders throughout the design, development and delivery of projects
- 2 working meaningfully with patients and their families throughout the design, development, and delivery of projects
- 3 ensuring CR&I projects represent the diversity of the patients, public and communities that they represent
- 4 promoting equality, diversity and inclusion equity for researchers and teams working on CR&I projects.

Strategic aim 1: delivering national level research, audit and QI projects

We will continue to be a leading centre for research, audit, quality improvement and service evaluation. We will:

- 1 **identify gaps** in knowledge and implementation through surveys, learning from findings of previous portfolio projects and active engagement with key stakeholders at local, national and international level
- 2 **develop the questions to be asked** at national level to close these knowledge gaps
- 3 **deliver projects** using a suite of methods including clinical trials, observational and mixed methods research, national audit projects (NAPs), sprint national anaesthesia projects (SNAPs), ongoing registries, responsive surveys and evaluations
- 4 **normalise participation** in clinical trials by embedding network-based recruitment and promoting equipoise
- 5 **encourage and enable the submission of CR&I-supported projects to major funders**
- 6 **support the development of efficient research methodologies** such as platform trials, registry-based research and data-enabled trials to enable rapid and efficient assessment of clinical interventions.

Strategic aim 2: dissemination of findings

We will ensure that the findings from CR&I projects are disseminated clearly, promptly and accessibly. We will share findings which may support commissioning of services in areas of need in perioperative medicine. We will do this through:

- 1 **designing effective dissemination** in every project lifecycle
- 2 **delivering presentations, conferences and webinars** at regional and national level
- 3 providing resources and interpretations that are **relevant to national, regional and local commissioners**
- 4 working with RCoA Education, Training and Events to ensure that CR&I project **outputs are embedded in anaesthetists' training and continuing professional development**
- 5 working with the **Clinical Leaders in Anaesthesia Network** to ensure that CR&I project findings can be used effectively to support the implementation of key development programmes, eg Anaesthesia Clinical Services Accreditation (ACSA), Guidelines for the Provision of Anaesthetic Services (GPAS)
- 6 working with the Patient and Public Involvement team to **translate findings into accessible information for the benefit of service users and patients** and to raise **awareness of the importance of taking part in clinical trials**.

Strategic aim 3: bridging and understanding the implementation gap and evaluating the impact of projects

Pivotal to the success of this workstream will be understanding whether the data and findings from core CR&I projects are effective in changing practice or process. Demonstrating if their application results in improvements for patients will be one of the central tenets of the CR&I's work. We will do this through:

- 1 including **implementation tools** in all CR&I projects to enable people to make use of research findings
- 2 qualitative and quantitative **evaluation of project reach and impact**
- 3 embedding recommendations from CR&I projects within **ACSA and GPAS** and using the findings to inform the future development of guidance for local hospitals in the provision of high-quality services for patients
- 4 formal collaboration with the London Patient Safety Research Collaborative.

Strategic aim 4: developing future and current clinical researchers in anaesthesia and perioperative care

We will continue to build upon the networks and development schemes already in place through:

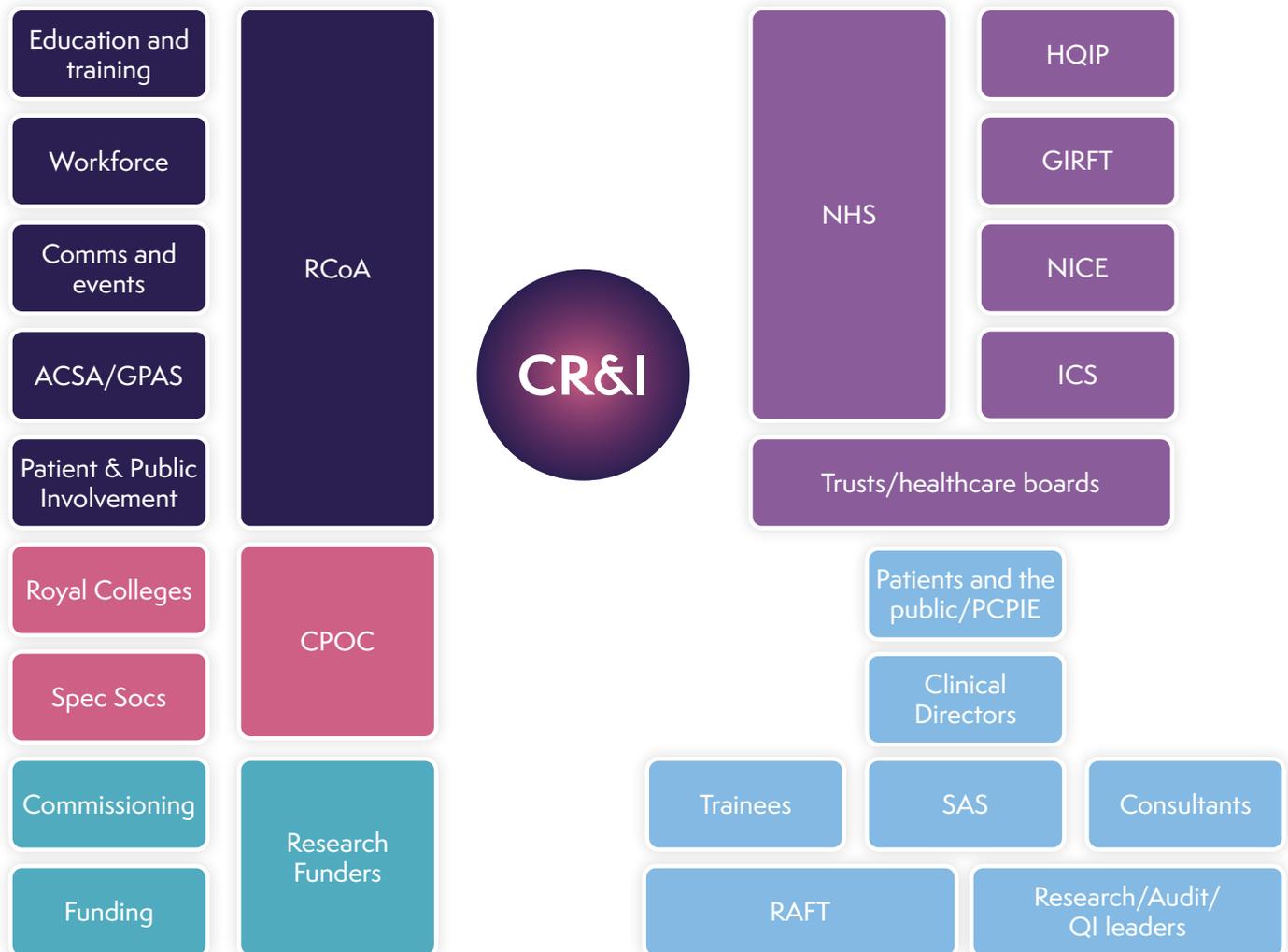
- 1 supporting, engaging and consolidating **networks of audit and research leads** in every acute hospital trust/healthcare board
- 2 supporting and expanding the **CR&I (formerly HSRC) fellowship programme** to encompass clinical trials-focussed fellowships
- 3 supporting and expanding the **CR&I (formerly POMCTN) chief investigator scheme** to also develop investigators interested in observational/mixed methods research – the ‘**research leaders scheme**’
- 4 supporting the appointment and development of **senior project leaders** for national-level projects
- 5 ensuring that participation in any CR&I-projects is **appropriately recognised** at individual, departmental and curriculum levels
- 6 providing **learning and development opportunities in research and improvement for all anaesthetists** throughout all stages of their career.

Core principles for the delivery of the CR&I strategic aims

Collaborating with key professional stakeholders throughout the design, development and delivery of projects

To be fully effective in achieving its mission, the RCoA CR&I cannot, and must not, exist in a silo. The extensive portfolio of work that the CR&I delivers has relevance across every single sector of RCoA activity, from training and education to clinical leadership networks, to ACSA, to personal appraisals. For the CR&I strategic aims to be achieved, strong, visible links and channels of communication with the teams running these activities will need to be established. This will be a two-way process, both with CR&I outputs and activities feeding into other workstreams, and others networking to the CR&I requesting specific support (for example providing opportunities for anaesthetists in training to achieve their curriculum requirements). We will:

- 1 streamline, rationalise and re-engage the current existing research/audit and QI networks
- 2 proactively share key findings with relevant NHS bodies, Centre for Perioperative Care (CPOC), Royal Colleges and other healthcare professional bodies, research funders and commissioners, and charities
- 3 work with RCoA Boards to ensure CR&I work and findings are integrated throughout the RCoA.



Working meaningfully with patients and their families throughout the design, development, and delivery of projects

We will use the findings of our portfolio work to educate and empower patients in their healthcare choices. We will share findings from our work that can be used in patient information and resources supporting patients to make decisions about their care, in particular working closely with the RCoA Patient Information Group and the Patient and Public Involvement Team.

We will seek meaningful patient involvement. We will continue and widen Patient, Carer and Public Involvement and Engagement (PCPIE) membership, with an overarching aim to reach a more diverse group of patients. We will listen to and act on the recommendations from PCPIE.

We will involve patients as experts with lived experience, in the development of projects, the delivery of programmes, and the analysis and interpretation of results. We will ask each project to produce a patient summary. We will strive to ensure the diverse voices of patients and public are listened to throughout the duration of our projects, from initiation to dissemination. We will do this through:

- 1 supporting and developing the work of the **PCPIE** group
- 2 ensuring **meaningful patient representation** is present in all CR&I projects
- 3 ensuring CR&I outputs are **accessible and understandable to patients and the public**.

Ensuring CR&I projects represent the diversity of the patients, public and communities that they represent

We will aim to reduce the inequity that exists in the involvement of patients from different backgrounds in research, audit and quality improvement projects. This is imperative if recommendations made, and subsequent standards of care set, are to be representative of the diverse population we serve. We will therefore ensure that the socio-economics, ethnicity and geography of participants are taken into account in the design of all research activities. We will:

- 1 build upon the development of practical tools to assess health equity research impact of projects[†]
- 2 monitor and report our progress, and make interventions where appropriate to ensure equity for patients and the public in benefitting from the findings and advances made from CR&I projects
- 3 require all new projects to explicitly and publicly address **accessibility, inclusivity, diversity and inequality** in their design and dissemination.

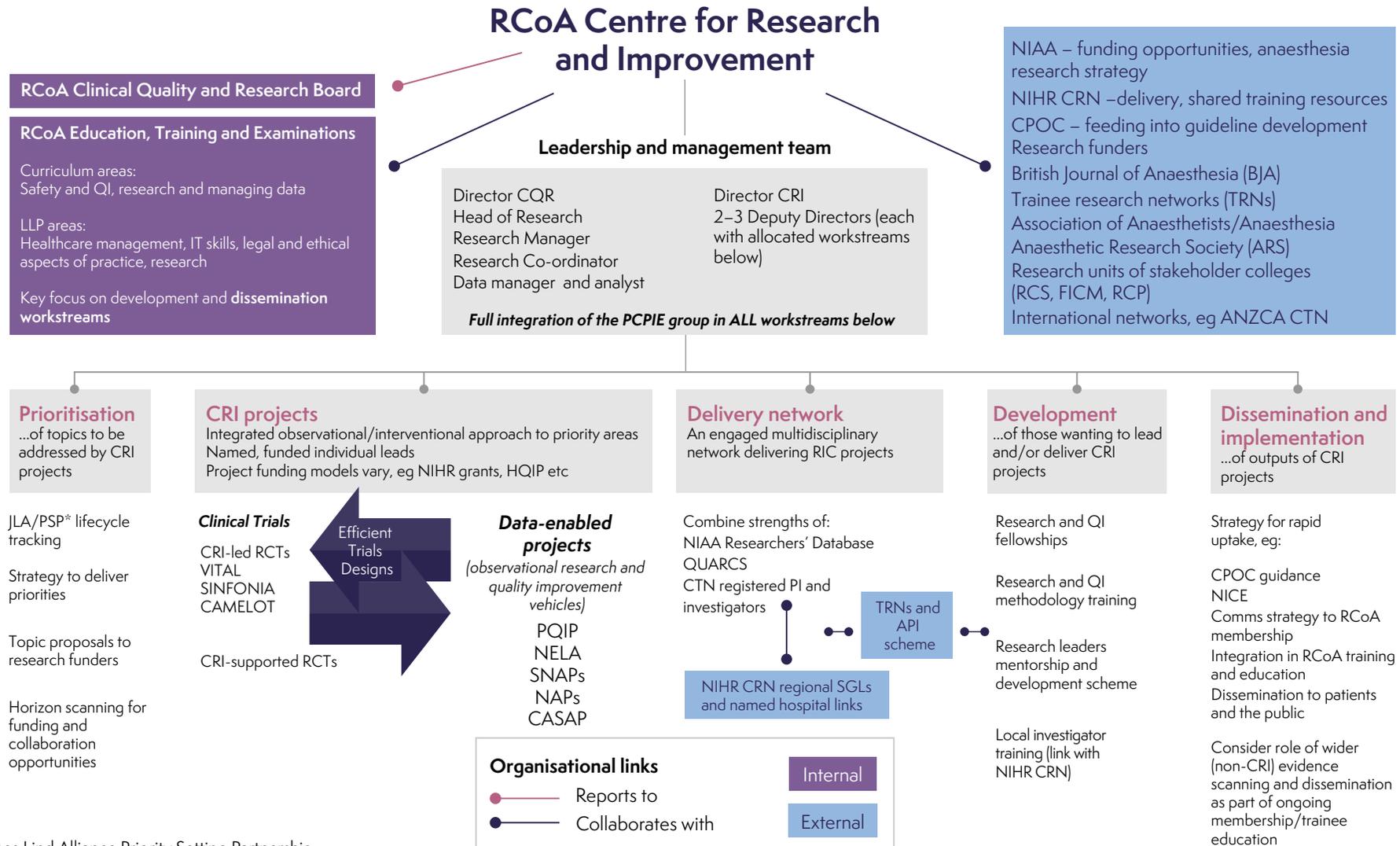
Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion equity for researchers and teams working on CR&I projects

The CR&I will:

- 1 seek to widen the diversity of those involved with CR&I
- 2 we will collect and publish data on this where appropriate.

[†]Castillo EG, Harris C. Directing Research Toward Health Equity: a Health Equity Research Impact Assessment. *J Gen Intern Med* 2021;**36**(9):2803–2808.

CR&I leadership structure and workstreams



*JLA/PSP = James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership

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