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Birmingham First for Academic Research

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A partnership led by University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Birmingham has been named today as the first in the West Midlands to be successfully awarded £10 million in funding to become a centre of excellence for health research. The Birmingham and Black Country Collaboration now have CLAHRC centre status – they are a Collaboration for Leadership in Health Research and Care.

Public Health Minister, Dawn Primarolo, announced today that the Birmingham collaborators are one of seven new partnerships between NHS organisations and leading universities who will receive a total of £64 million to conduct research and improve care in major conditions including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity. The Birmingham and Black Country Collaboration has been awarded the maximum amount available of £10 million from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), the R&D wing of the Department of Health.

The Minister said: “This new funding will help to improve health outcomes for patients across England, with particular emphasis on conditions that cause chronic distress to patients and are a significant issue for the NHS to manage.”

To be successful, the partnership had to demonstrate an excellent record in undertaking applied health research - particularly targeted at chronic disease and ways of improving public health - and to put forward very strong proposals for new research and for implementing research findings, which were very likely to generate a step change in the way that research is done and research evidence is implemented into practice.

Director of the Birmingham Clinical Research Academy, Professor Richard Lilford, said: “We’re delighted to have secured this award and status to put the West Midlands firmly on the map as a world leader in applied medical research. The great attraction of this award is that the NIHR funding complements matched funding from local NHS organisations. This will allow us to conduct prospective evaluations of measures that are being put in place to improve the quality of health services.

“We will pursue a number of research themes that will deliver a real impact on the lives of our diverse community, including implementing effective community care for those with diabetes, evaluating paediatric outreach services, early detection and interventions in psychosis, redesigning maternity support services for multi-ethnic disadvantaged groups and improving patient safety.”

Julie Moore, Chief Executive of University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, commented: “I am extremely proud that the Birmingham & Black Country Collaboration bid, led by University Hospital Birmingham and the University of Birmingham, has been selected as one of only seven health research partnerships in the country, and the first in the West Midlands. It is great news for Birmingham and, more importantly, even better news for our patients. Our projects, which partner with other health organisations across the city, will undertake high-quality research and turn the science into substance improving outcomes for our patients.”

Professor Michael Sheppard, the University of Birmingham’s Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Resources, said: “The most important aspect of this news is that we can now go ahead with nine ground-breaking projects that will have a real impact on the wellbeing of our local community. We can now put our plans and proposals into action, transferring world-class medical research to patient bedside.”

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Notes to Editors:

1. The University of Birmingham and the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust already enjoy a strong working partnership, and both organisations have benefited from a physical campus co-location for more than 50 years, with the University’s Medical School and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital sited next door to each other.

2. The research themes of the Birmingham proposal include:

From structure to function: health service redesign

Evaluation of Paediatric Outreach Services

Early detection and interventions in psychosis

Housing and Health: SMART, Equal Independent

Re-designed maternity support services for multi-ethnic disadvantaged groups

Investment in prevention (evaluation of targeted prevention of cardiovascular disease in primary care)

Optimisation of the Management of Stroke and TIA

Implementation of effective community care for diabetes

Improving patient safety: studying an evolving information technology (IT) system

3. The NIHR Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (NIHR CLAHRCs) will undertake high-quality applied health research focused on the needs of patients and support the translation of research evidence into practice in the NHS for the benefit of patients, including the trialling and evaluation of initiatives to encourage adoption of evidence based practice or clinical effectiveness. Further information about NIHR CLAHRCs, including details of the other 6 partnerships, is available at: http://www.nihr.ac.uk/infrastructure_clahrcs.aspx.

4. The new NIHR (National Institute for Health Research) Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care were selected by an independent international selection panel and will start work on 1 October 2008.

5. The NIHR CLAHRCs were formerly known as Academic Health Centres of the Future. However, the Department of Health decided to change the name to avoid confusion with Academic Health Science Centres, such as the partnership launched in Autumn last year by Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust, St Mary’s NHS Trust and Imperial College London, which is quite different in purpose and structure to CLAHRCs.

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