

# Enhancing Research Culture at Warwick Medical School (WMS): A community-driven, values-based vision towards enhancing WMS's research culture

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## Abstract

*Understanding ‘what’ research culture means to members of Warwick Medical School’s (WMS) diverse community and how it can be enhanced is important to ensuring that all can flourish and deliver the best quality, world-leading research. Through active consultation and engagement with staff and students, we coproduced an action-focused WMS Enhancing Research Culture (ERC) Roadmap.*

*We hosted three (three-hour) semi-structured café-style conversations open to students and staff (both researchers and research enablers – that is, non-academic colleagues involved in the development and delivery of research). In Café 1, participants explored what ‘research culture’ meant to them. Cafés 2 and 3 built on these findings, exploring what could change, how, and when. A thematic analysis of findings was undertaken after each event, with findings shared and built on at each café. A five-year plan was crafted. The roadmap represents a community-driven, co-produced and values-driven understanding of the importance of a positive and inclusive research culture, which builds on existing initiatives and describes associated actions for change.*

**Keywords:** enhancing research culture; community engagement; co-production; values-driven culture

## Introduction

To improve the culture of a community, we need to understand what ‘culture’ means to that community, where change might be required, how this can be achieved and by whom, and ultimately, how that change can be measured. At its simplest level, ‘research culture’ can be described as the environment or ecosystem in which research and innovation takes place on the way to delivering excellence in research; it embraces everything that researchers or research enabling staff (‘research enablers’) do that isn’t research. However, there are inherent complexities in defining research culture. By virtue of the intrinsic diversity in research teams, research settings, and research activities, research culture is a multi-faceted and multi-level concept. It is influenced and underpinned by a range of personal and professional behaviours, values, expectations, attitudes, and norms (**Royal Society, 2024**) experienced across the research journey, career pathways, and across communities.

Recent years have witnessed the emergence of a more holistic approach to thinking about what constitutes research excellence, with national and international research funders and policy makers highlighting the importance of research culture (for example, UK Research and Innovation (**UKRI, 2024a**) and The Wellcome Trust (**Wellcome Trust, 2024a**). This is further evidenced in a revision of the UK’s Research Excellence Framework (REF2029) to include an assessment of research culture and the future capability of institutions (people, environment, and culture) (**REF2028; REF2029; Hill, 2024**). This shift recognises the importance of promoting healthy, dynamic, and inclusive research environments which ensure that all members of the community – irrespective of professional background, career stage, gender, race, or other characteristic – are valued and empowered in the delivery of world-class research that really makes a difference. Understanding what a dynamic and successful research culture looks like, and where changes are required, is therefore important.

Established in 2000, Warwick Medical School (WMS)<sup>ii</sup> is a vibrant research and teaching organisation, which embraces a diverse community of staff (including clinical and non-clinical academics, research and teaching fellows, postdocs, technicians, research assistants), research teams, research enablers, and students (undergraduate, MBChB, and post-graduate researchers). Understanding the needs and experiences of this heterogeneous community is important to informing a positive and inclusive research culture which resonates with and is responsive to the communities needs and values. Through a model of active, long-term, community engagement, we sought to engage with our community to better understand their views on research culture and to propose ideas for

how this could be enhanced at WMS through the co-production of a research culture roadmap.

## **Methods**

Informed by the World Café (**World Café, 2024**) and Wellcome Trust research culture café toolkits (**Wellcome Trust, 2024b**), and funded by a Warwick University (Research England) Enhancing Research Culture Grant<sup>iii</sup> we hosted a series of café conversations to explore the opportunities, aspirations, and challenges for enhancing WMS's research culture. The overriding aim sought to inform the ideal 'future' research culture of WMS by addressing the key research question: 'What does the WMS Research Culture of 2028 look like and how do we get there?' A key output was the co-production of a community-derived roadmap towards a positive, inclusive, and supported research culture at WMS.

### *Who was invited and how?*

Throughout February and June 2023, there was an open invitation to all WMS research and teaching staff and students. Staff could be clinical and non-clinical academics who were directly involved in research; research enablers – that is, non-academic colleagues contributing to the wider research effort through the development and delivery of research; or as users of research – for example, in the delivery of evidence-based teaching. Both undergraduate and post-graduate (taught or research) students were invited. To actively encourage a diversity in participants from across the school, the 'Research Culture Cafés' were advertised via a range of channels, including school staff meetings, school newsletters (staff and student facing), local networks such as the Early and Mid-Career Academic Staff development network (EMCAS), posters (online) and flyers (with hard copies posted across the school). Colleagues were also encouraged to 'bring a colleague' to encourage wider engagement.

### *How were the cafés run?*

Three semi-structured, facilitated sessions were held off-site from WMS through February, April, and June 2023. Sessions were hosted in the morning or afternoon to accommodate different working patterns; lunch was provided. Participants could attend one, two or all three events. Each session lasted up to three hours and included both large and small group (maximum of 10 per small group) discussions. Each small group included a facilitator and scribe who took anonymised notes. Participants captured key messages on flip charts. After each small group discussion, the key findings were presented back to the room in advance of larger group discussions.

### *Research Café 1*

After an initial general introduction to the concept of research culture, the purpose of the culture cafés, and ways of working, participants were allocated up to forty-five minutes to explore the following questions in their small groups:

- *What does research culture mean to you?*
- *When thinking about research culture, what are the issues, challenges, and opportunities that come to mind?*
- *What are the top five challenges, and can these be prioritised?*

Participants were invited to explore where good practice was already happening at WMS and ideas for change. The key issues were captured on a flip chart, supporting feedback to the large group and further discussion around these key questions.

Following a short break, participants were again asked to work within their small groups (a further forty-five minutes) to explore their prioritised challenges and to consider the following questions:

- *What are the opportunities for change/development/enhancement?*
- *Who could make the change?*
- *How could change be made?*
- *When could changes be made?*
- *What does a 'good' outcome look like?*

As a bonus question, participants were asked to consider: 'If there was one thing they could do tomorrow to support their idea, what would this look like?'

A final 25 minutes was allocated to small group feedback followed by large group discussion to explore the key findings and suggestions.

### *Research Cafés 2 and 3*

In advance of Cafés 2 and 3, a thematic analysis of Café 1 data was undertaken (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Data were independently reviewed by KH and AK, informing the generation of key themes which were then discussed and developed further. The findings were shared with, and feedback sought from, the core group of co-applicants.

The proposed findings from Café 1 were shared with participants in both Cafés 2 and 3. Through both small and large group discussion, participants sought to build on and explore the proposed themes ('values') and associated definitions, seeking to inform a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities which would inform an enhanced research culture at WMS. The following questions were again proposed as an aide memoir to the discussions: 'What examples of good practice are already

happening?', 'What are the opportunities for change/ development/ enhancement?', 'Who can make the change?', 'How can the change be made?', 'When can the change be made?', 'What does a "good outcome" look like?'

Feedback from Café 2 was further shared with participants in Café 3, supporting an iterative development of the meaning of research culture to the WMS community, and key recommendations and priorities with which to inform the development of a WMS Enhancing Research Culture Roadmap. We worked together with a visual artist (Nifty Fox<sup>iv</sup>) to support the visual representation of the key messages from the data analysis.

*Launch event*

In July 2023, the findings from the cafés were collated and shared with the WMS community via a two-hour hybrid event. This included a power-point presentation of the key findings from the research culture cafés. Key findings and recommendations were also shared with the WMS Senior Management Group.

**Results**

Three research culture cafés were hosted between February and June 2023, with an adjusted total of 80 staff (researchers (41/80; 51%)), research enablers (23/80; 30%)), and students (16/80; 23%) from across the WMS community participating in the conversations (**Table 1**). Most participants were female (22 males/ 65 females) and, except for three participants (one research enabler and two students (one UG, one PGR)) who participated in two cafés, most participated in just one session. Further detail with regards to the diversity of participants was not collected.

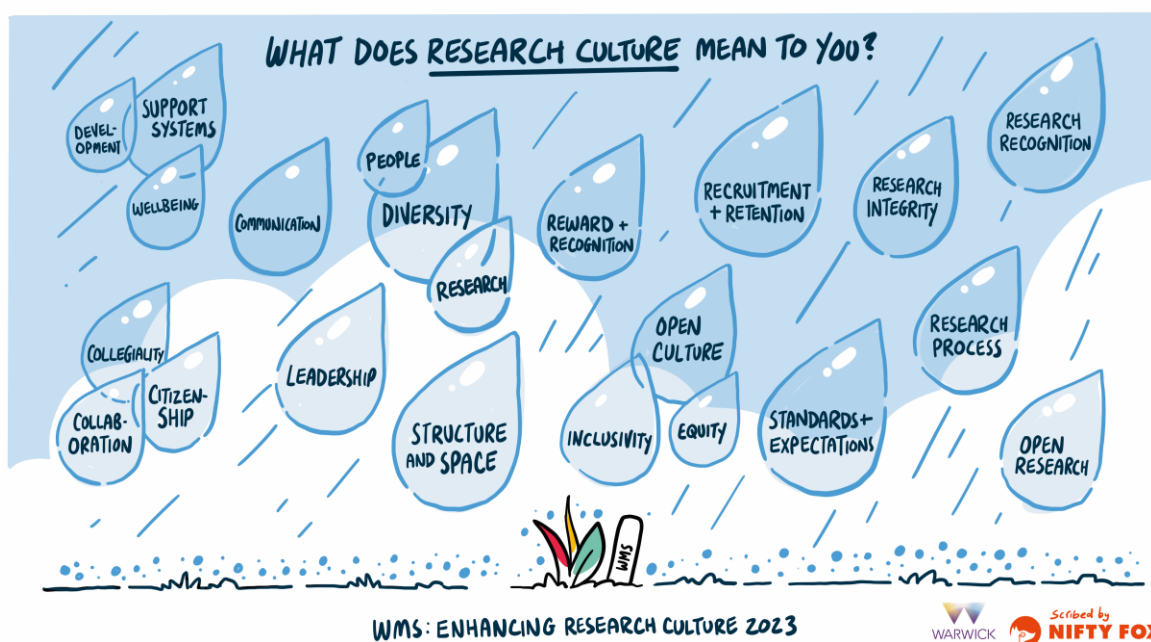
*Table 1. Participants in the WMS research culture cafés.<sup>v</sup>*

	<i>Café 1</i>	<i>Café 2</i>	<i>Café 3</i>	<i>Adjusted Total<sup>d</sup></i>
<b>Staff:</b>				
Researcher <sup>a</sup> (ECR <sup>b</sup> )	12 (5)	14 (2)	15 (7)	41 (14)
Research Enabler <sup>c</sup>	9	6	9	23
<b>Students:</b>				
PGR	8	2	3	12
UG (including MBChB)	0	4	1	4
<b>Total<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>29</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>80</b>

### Research Culture Café 1: What does research culture mean? A thematic analysis

When asked to consider what research culture meant to our community, a broad range of concepts were described which were seen as important in feeding a positive research culture where all could flourish and grow (Figure 1).

Figure 1. What does 'research culture' mean to you? Overriding themes (Research Café 1).

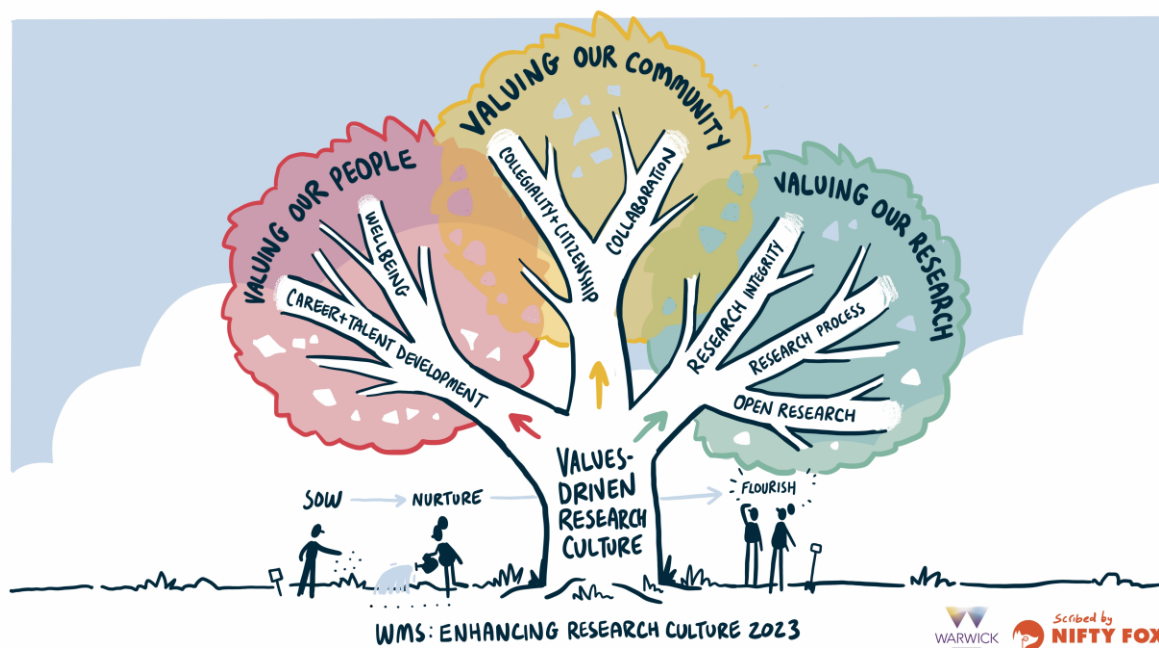


These included the importance of support systems, collaborative working, greater transparency and communication, and a more inclusive approach towards reward and recognition which recognised both the diversity of teams and output.

Further analysis informed three key themes, with associated sub-themes, underpinning a 'values-driven' research culture: valuing our People, our Community, and our Research (Figure 2).

Exploration with our community highlighted pockets of great activity and initiatives at WMS which were actively seeking to help promote an enhanced (research) culture. For example, the Ambassadors for Better Research Culture (ABRC) group<sup>vi</sup> with its focus on the lab-based community and the Early and Mid-Career Academic Support network (EMCAS)<sup>vii</sup>. However, as illustrated in Figure 2, there was clear evidence of siloed working, a need for enhanced communication, and gaps which evidenced potential opportunities to further enhance the (research) culture at WMS.

Figure 2. What does 'research culture' mean to you? Pockets of activity across three core 'values-driven' themes (Research Café 1).



*Research Culture Cafés 2 and 3: What do these gaps look like and what needs to happen to facilitate positive change?*

In our second and third café conversations, participants were encouraged to build on the findings from the first café to better understand the challenges and opportunities that needed to be addressed or delivered on to underpin an enhanced research culture at WMS. The proposed values-driven research culture was well-received by the participants, supporting the three core Values. For each Value, sub-themes and associated definitions were developed and refined.

*Valuing our people*

Within 'Valuing Our People', two sub-themes were confirmed which embraced both the importance of 'wellbeing' (**Box 1**) and supporting 'personal and professional (career and talent) development' of all staff and students (**Box 2, Figure 3**).

*Box 1. Wellbeing – definition and associated objectives.*

**WELLBEING:** Promoting the centrality of wellbeing across WMS through the provision of safe, supported, and inclusive (research) environments where wellbeing is valued and championed, enabling people and their ideas to flourish.

**WMS RC Objective 1:** To provide a safe, supported, and inclusive research environment for all staff and students.

The centrality of 'Wellbeing' was to be promoted through the provision of safe, supported, and inclusive (research) environments where wellbeing was valued and championed, thus enabling people and their ideas to flourish (**Box 1**).

Career aspirations and decision-making, which included both personal and professional development, was to be supported for all (**Box 2**).

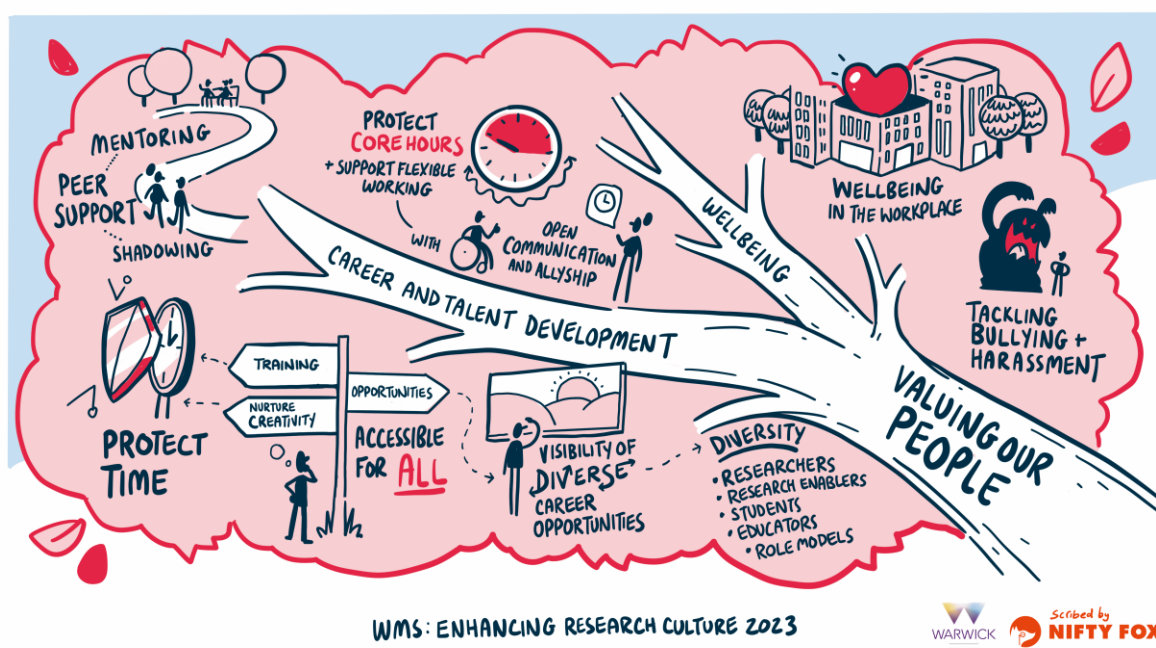
*Box 2. Career and Talent Development – definition and associated objectives.*

**CAREER and TALENT DEVELOPMENT:** Supporting career aspirations and decision-making, including personal and professional development.

**WMS RC Objective 2:** To support career aspirations and personal and professional development.

**WMS RC Objective 3:** Support opportunities for innovative thinking, creativity, and the pursuit of new ideas.

Figure 3. Valuing Our People – Wellbeing, and Career and Talent Development.



Recognising and supporting the wide diversity of staff and students across our community was positively embraced. Use of the term 'research enablers' for non-academic colleagues was supported – for example, embracing clinical trial and project managers to name but a few. Moreover, highlighting a diverse range of role models was to be championed – and this should not just be limited to those in senior leadership roles. Leadership and who made a 'good' role model had many guises.



Building on the theme of diversity, was the importance of making visible the range of possible career opportunities for all. This could include secondments, new collaborations, redeployment, and shadowing opportunities. However, job security, or rather precarity, was a major concern, particularly for those on fixed term contracts. For some, this negatively impacted on their ability to fully engage with the role and jobs were often selected for contract duration as opposed to career development.

Initiatives to attract, develop, and retain talented people were seen as essential to ensuring that people could enjoy a rewarding and sustainable career at WMS. Moreover, such initiatives would ensure that WMS built on existing strengths and the development of a workforce aligned with its future ambitions including the delivery of world leading research.

The importance of protected time to engage with new opportunities, training, and opportunities to ‘think’ or where creativity, discovery and innovation could be nurtured was paramount – for example, to develop new grant applications or collaborations. A culture of ‘life-long learning’ and a ‘growth’ mind-set was to be promoted. The value of peer support and opportunities for mentoring – for all staff and students – where people could engage in meaningful conversations and be helped along their journey was prized but felt not to always be available.

Open communication with line managers was highly valued and important for communicating concerns, exploring working patterns, and supporting flexibility where possible. Allyship and peer support was crucial to empowering colleagues, for example, where there were instances of core working hours not being appropriately considered.

Wellbeing in the workplace encapsulated several concepts ranging from feelings of vulnerability and how different lifestyle/work choices were valued, through to bullying and harassment and the importance of providing ‘safe spaces’ where people could raise concerns without fear of negative consequences. An appreciation of the diversity of needs across the research community, and the value of identifying and supporting different ways of being successful, were considered essential to understanding what effective support systems might look like.

An overview of actions and opportunities for change and development proposed by the community are summarised in **Box 3**.

**Valuing our People: Overview of actions**

**Wellbeing:**

- Build on the wellbeing expertise at WMS and links with departmental and institutional initiatives to develop a range of Wellbeing initiatives.
- Bullying and Harassment: Establish a working group which enhances linkage with institutional provision to enhance support (for example, 'Report and Support').
- Promote transparency in conversations between staff and managers around flexible working and the expectations of roles.
- Promote WMS values including, for example, a revision to the WMS Induction template.

**Career and Talent Development:**

- Raise the visibility of diverse career opportunities for all.
- Create a 'one-stop shop' resource for training provision by working with central University and the WMS community to grow and highlight accessible and diverse training provision for researchers, research enablers, staff, and students across WMS.
- Develop training and peer support for Early and Mid-Career Academic Staff.
- Develop training and peer support for Research Enablers.
- Develop and implement a PGR supervisors' training and support programme that is mindful of the supervisor diversity at WMS.
- Support meaningful career conversations for all.
- Promote and build on existing mentoring peer support and shadowing opportunities for all.
- Explore opportunities to protect time for creativity, focused activities, and strategic thinking.
- Explore career pathways and opportunities that reduce precarity associated with fixed-term contracts for researchers and research enablers.

***Valuing our community***

Within 'Valuing Our Community', just one over-riding sub-theme was proposed: that of collegiality, citizenship, and collaboration. This valued the importance of embedding a spirit of collegiality, citizenship and collaboration for all staff and students by developing a supportive and engaged community in which all can flourish (**Box 4, Figure 4**).

In 'Valuing Our Community' we are seeking to create a 'community of excellence' that supports, drives, and motivates all towards reaching their full potential and delivering the best research, whilst also enjoying the journey! (**Figure 4**) A positive, inclusive, and respectful culture was central to this.

Box 4. Collegiality, citizenship, and collaboration – definition and associated objectives.

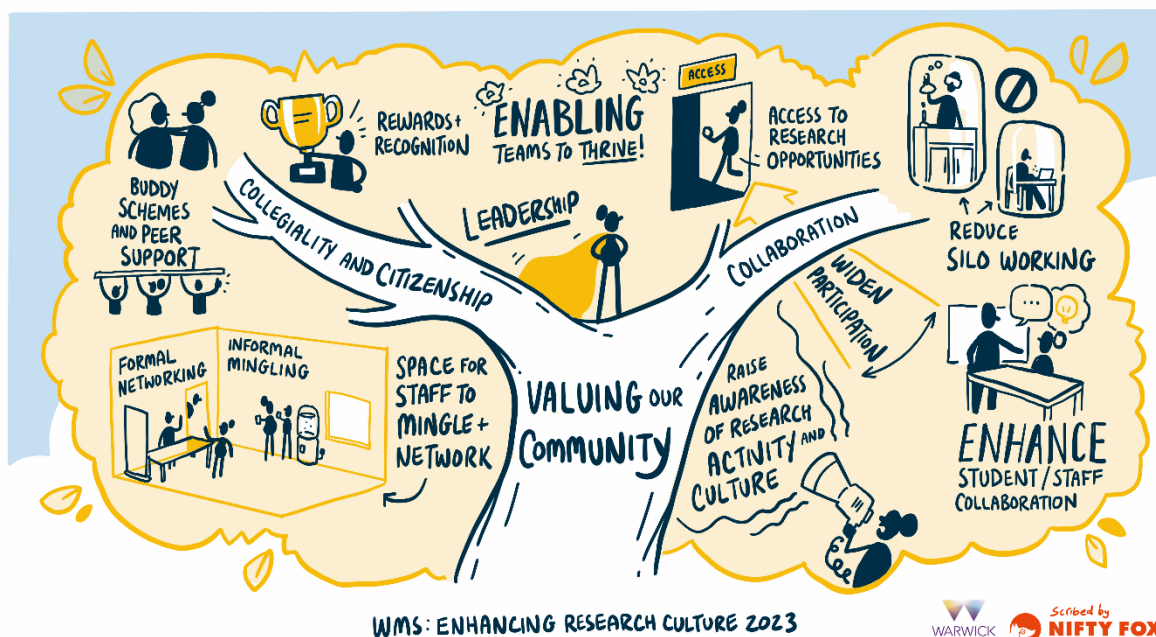
**COLLEGIALITY, CITIZENSHIP and COLLABORATION:** Embedding a spirit of collegiality, citizenship, and collaboration across WMS for all staff and students by developing a supportive and engaged community in which all can flourish.

**Objective 4:** To provide and promote opportunities for active engagement across the school.

**Objective 5:** To recognise and reward where colleagues actively engage with the community, helping each other to succeed.

**Objective 6:** To enhance opportunities to develop strong relationships and collaborative opportunities across the school, the university, and beyond.

Figure 4. Valuing Our Community – Collegiality, Citizenship, and Collaboration.



However, the physical location and set-up of WMS, the often-perceived lack of connectivity across the three divisions and across different functions, and the inequity in access to ‘social space’ impacted negatively on networking and opportunities to encounter and engage with others. A consequence of this was ‘siloe working’ - supported by quotes such as ‘I don’t know what people in the other buildings are doing’.

There is a clear need to address these challenges through, for example, increased opportunities for both formal and informal networking activities where research activities and opportunities for staff and students across the school, the university, and beyond can be shared, stimulated, and celebrated, and which will seek to underpin excellence in research and innovation and in research-led education.

And whilst hybrid and flexible working was highly valued for supporting access to increased opportunities and promoting the diversity of talent evident across the WMS community, normalising in-person social interaction was viewed as important.

A lack of visibility of potential research supervisory opportunities combined with workload concerns expressed by staff ('juggling research and teaching commitments') also spoke to the need for a targeted effort to enhance staff-student collaborative opportunities.

Moreover, greater support for supervisors - of students and early/mid-career researchers – was to be welcomed.

Workload was cited as a potential barrier to people participating in opportunities to engage with others in more collegiate and supportive ways. Recognising, protecting time for, and rewarding collegiate activities should be afforded a higher profile. For example, 'buddying schemes' where established colleagues supported new starters, and peer support initiatives were valued. Colleagues who actively contributed to a positive research culture could be celebrated through peer nominated 'Culture Awards'.

In response to the question 'what one thing could you do tomorrow?', and reflecting on how to be more collegiate, colleagues suggested that one could simply 'Knock on the door of a colleague and ask them how they're doing!'

The importance of inclusive and supportive leadership – at all levels – was recognised. However, it was recognised that people in leadership positions should be appropriately supported and provided with the right skills to 'unlock the potential' within their teams – thus enabling the many teams at WMS to thrive.

Enhanced communication across all facets of the school was viewed as central to many of these endeavours.

An overview of actions and opportunities for change and development proposed by the community are summarised in **Box 5**.

*Box 5. Valuing Our Community: overview of community-derived actions.*

**Valuing our Community: Overview of actions**

- Promote networking and both formal and informal collaborative opportunities across the research community.
- Establish a community-driven 'Research Culture - Rewards and Recognition' initiative.
- Improve the connectivity between research and education across WMS through improved alignment, greater transparency of opportunities, and cross-fertilisation that enhances both student and staff experiences.
- Engage with the community to establish an informal 'Buddying Scheme' for new starters.
- Increase visibility of Research, Research Opportunities, and Research Culture Activities.
- Grow the WMS/SLS 'Enhancing Research Culture Community of Practice' to share best practice.

**Valuing our research**

Our third value spoke to the importance of 'Valuing Our Research'. Here, three sub-themes were described which valued the process of undertaking research, research integrity and the importance of open research (**Boxes 6-8, Figure 5**):

Valuing the Research Process recognised the importance of embedding clear and fair approaches for the way in which research is conducted, supported, recognised, and rewarded (**Box 6**).

*Box 6. Research Process – definition and associated objectives.*

**RESEARCH PROCESS:** Develop and embed clear and fair approaches for the way in which research is conducted, supported, recognised and rewarded

**Objective 7:** Embrace a holistic view of different roles, contributions and outputs linked to the research endeavour

**Objective 8:** Provide a platform to nurture innovation and creativity.

Although 'Research Integrity' and 'Open Research' were not discussed at length by participants in the research culture cafes, it is evident that the conduct of rigorous and ethical research is essential to the production of high-quality research, and hence research excellence (**Boxes 7 and 8**). Moreover, open research spoke to the importance of research visibility, impact, and global reach.

*Box 7. Research Integrity – definition and associated objectives.*

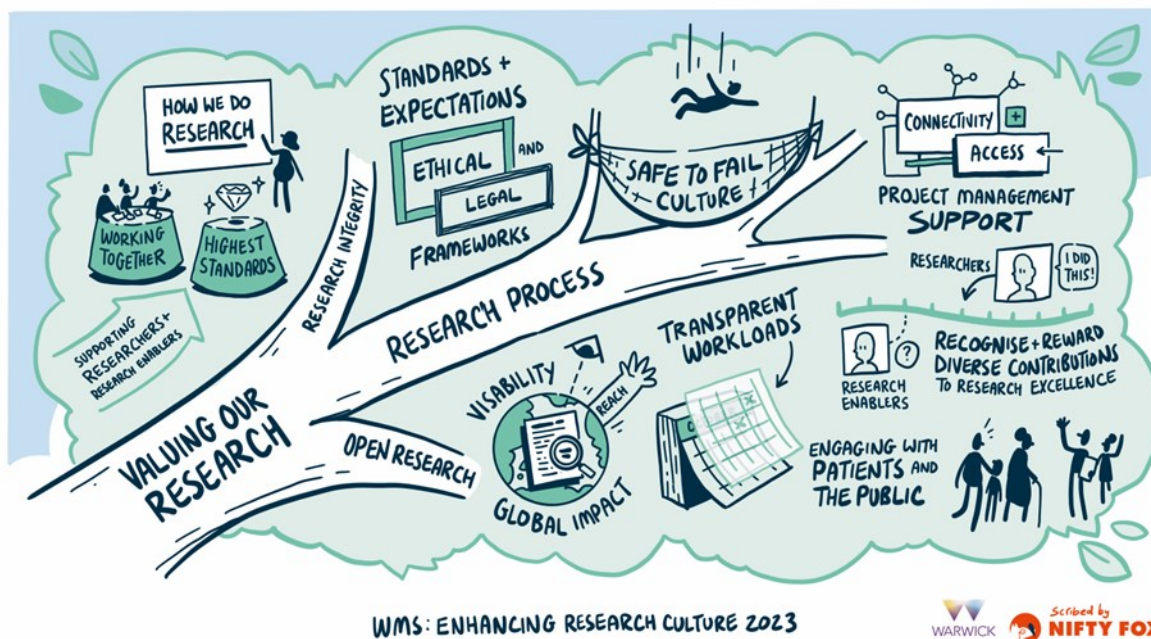
**RESEARCH INTEGRITY:** Support and facilitate the conduct of rigorous and ethical research to enhance research quality and trust

**Objective 9:** Promote and embed inclusive research integrity training across the community.

**OPEN RESEARCH:** Facilitate, promote and reward open research

**Objective 10:** Upskill our community in open research practices. Providing accessible and inclusive training in the varied components of open research to future-proof our research, enhancing visibility, reach and global impact.

Figure 5. Valuing Our Research – Process, Integrity, and Open Research.



The realities of the research process spoke to the importance of normalising ‘failure’ and establishing a ‘safe to fail’ culture where the learning experience from ‘failure’ was valued. Making the metrics around success/failure more transparent, ensuring that appropriate support networks and learning opportunities were available, and showcasing the highs and lows of the research journey were important components of this.

It was recognised that various processes and systems could be overly burdensome and time-consuming which could result in friction and detract from opportunities for innovation and creativity. Appropriate project management support was proposed as a potential solution – but inequities in access to this support were observed. Greater guidance with regards to the range of potential support – that is, from light touch through to fully-costed support – and having named people for specific activities, were proposed as ways of increasing both access and connectivity. However, the importance of connectivity also extended to project managers, to ensure that they were not working in isolation.

The community recognised the current limitations and inequities around the way in which research excellence is currently defined, and how different contributions are recognised, valued, and rewarded. For example, whilst it is relatively ‘easy’ to showcase the success of a ‘researcher’ in terms of papers published and grant income, this was not so evident for research enablers. Engaging with the WMS community to explore, broaden and establish a shared definition of research excellence and innovation which valued the diversity of research, who is involved, and how research is delivered was viewed as a priority. This could include, raising the profile, visibility and reputation of researchers and research enablers across our community and promoting a more holistic understanding of the varied contributions to research excellence. For example, ‘why’ was the research brilliant? How did it change things? And who contributed to this research endeavour?

Workload demands were frequently mentioned and were impacted by a range of factors. In the context of research process, for example, mismatches between ‘allocated’ and ‘actual’ time to deliver programmes of research were described, contributing to work ‘overload’ and anxiety. For those on research only contracts, greater transparency with regards to the requirement to engage with teaching opportunities was called for.

Whilst not discussed at length by participants, there is a need to upskill our community in open research practices. Providing accessible and inclusive training in the varied components of open research would seek to future-proof our research, enhancing visibility, reach and global impact. We will actively seek to align with research culture initiatives championed across the University of Warwick,<sup>viii</sup> whilst drawing on examples from other institutions, including the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Open Research guidance (UKRI, 2024b).

Research integrity spoke to the importance of working together to ensure that all aspects of our research are conducted to the highest standards of academic rigour, and with reference to appropriate ethical, legal, and professional standards and frameworks. And whilst basic research integrity training is mandated for all researchers, this appears not to be the case for research enablers. Inclusive training and activities to promote and embed research integrity and good research practice into how we do research are required across the community should be prioritised. The role of ‘research integrity champions’ should be explored.

Finally, the importance of active engagement with patients and the public was described – and spoke to all components of how we value our people, value our community, and value our research. Within the context of research, for example, colleagues spoke to the importance of ensuring that systems in support of patient and public involvement and

engagement (PPIE) are both efficient and equitable; recognising and rewarding PPIE contributions to research excellence; and valuing the importance of PPIE in open research.

An overview of actions and opportunities for change and development proposed by the community are summarised in **Box 9**.

*Box 9. Valuing Our Research: overview of community-derived actions.*

#### **Valuing our Research: Overview of actions**

- Promote a 'Safe to Fail' culture that recognises, normalises and embraces 'failure' as part of research and the continual improvement process.
- Raise the profile of project management and its contribution to the research process.
- Engage with the WMS community to explore, broaden and establish a shared definition of research excellence which values the diversity of research, who is involved, and how research is delivered.
- Explore and evolve our Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement interface within research, education and our wider community.
- Provide accessible and inclusive training in the varied components of open research to future-proof our research, enhancing visibility, reach and global impact.
- Establish a network of Open Research champions.
- Explore opportunities to improve research conduct and reproducibility.
- Establish a network of Research Integrity champions.

## **Discussion**

Consultation with the WMS community has informed a community-driven, values-based understanding of the importance of a positive and inclusive culture, where our people, our community and our research are valued and where 'people are supported in reaching their full potential whilst also enjoying the journey' (Café 1 participant) (**Figure 6**).

This initiative has informed the development of the WMS Enhancing Research Culture Roadmap,<sup>ix</sup> a living document which builds on existing initiatives and pockets of good (research) culture activities across WMS and is responsive to the needs and experiences of our community in driving forward new initiatives.



Figure 6. WMS Values-driven Research Culture – Valuing our People, Our Community, and Our Research.



We believe that everyone can help to improve the working environment and hence research culture at WMS. As such, we have worked collaboratively with members of our community to propose changes that resonate with their needs and values, seeking to demonstrate a long-term commitment to active engagement and change, and an avoidance of tokenistic interventions. And whilst we recognise that participants reflected a relatively small proportion of our total staff and student cohort, aligning future culture-focused initiatives with the lived experiences described by WMS staff and students demonstrates engagement-led change which will, we hope, encourage greater and wider future engagement. We will build on the lessons of this community-engagement activity, continuing to work with colleagues and with change leaders across WMS, the University, and beyond – including our industry partners and the NHS – to drive long-term holistic cultural change, enhanced connectivity, and collaborative opportunities in the delivery of research ‘excellence with purpose’. Moreover, through sector-wide connections established through the National Centre for Research Culture at the University of Warwick,<sup>x</sup> we will build on our shared experiences, priorities for change, and evidence of good practice, collectively contributing to enhanced research culture across the wider community.

Understanding how to measure change in research culture – and measuring what really matters - is a priority for the wider community, with various colleagues exploring what this might look like at institutional level (for example, **University of Leeds, 2023**) and more broadly in relation to REF2029 (for example, **Curry, et al., 2022** and **Bali, 2023**). Community

engagement will be essential to ensuring that robust co-designed, outcomes-focused indicators – most likely a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative evidence – which are meaningful, contextualised, capable of detecting important change, and feasible are selected (**Corner, 2023**).

In conclusion, through implementation and evolution of our WMS ERC activities we aim to provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive research environment for all; nurture creativity and connectivity across our broad community; recognise and reward diverse contributions to research; and to inspire colleagues to do their best work, to embrace best practice, and improve the quality and reach of research. Moreover, in supporting colleagues to feel both empowered and fulfilled by the work that they do, we hope that they will enjoy the journey!

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### *Contributors*

KLH is the guarantor. KLH and AK wrote the manuscript. The design and analysis were led by KLH with AK. KLH and AK undertook the data collection and led on the data analysis, data interpretation and discussion of the findings. The data analysis, interpretation and discussion were shared with all co-authors and members of the WMS Enhancing Research Culture Group (who were all named co-applicants on the grant submission). All authors were involved in the development of this paper.

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*Ethics Approval*

The need for ethical approval was explored with the chair of the University of Warwick's Biomedical and Scientific Ethics Committee (BSREC). It was confirmed that ethics approval was not required.

Kirstie Haywood is a Professor of Health Outcomes, Warwick Medical School's deputy Pro-Dean People, Chair of the Athena SWAN/Gender Equality committee, and EDI representative on the SEM Faculty EDI forum. Institutionally, she is a member of Warwick's Silver Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team and the Research Culture Forum. Her applied health outcomes research embraces a wide range of conditions and settings, including clinical trials and routine practice, with a particular interest in the active engagement of patients and public in research. A physiotherapist by training, Kirstie is married with two fabulous young boys who bring her much joy and fun!



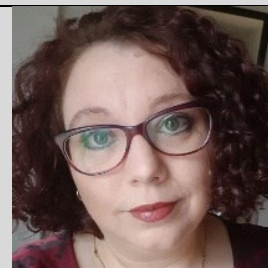
Adele Kenny graduated from UCL with a degree in Anatomy and Developmental Biology and initially worked as research assistant in developmental neurobiology at Guy's Medical School. She then moved into the pharmaceutical industry, working on clinical trials in a range of roles across a variety of therapeutic areas. In 2014, she transitioned into academia and managed the daily running of the Integrated Academic Training programme (funded by NIHR) at Warwick University. In 2022, the medical school was awarded a grant from Research England's Enhancing Research Culture fund. Adele is now on secondment in the role of WMS's Research Culture Officer.



Katie Geary is a physician and part time post graduate researcher. Her doctoral thesis is in exploring patients' experiences of cross-cultural consultations; she is based at Warwick Medical School (WMS). She is a GP and Public Health consultant and has always had a keen interest in patient and public advocacy, practising these in the civilian, military, and corporate worlds. As a returnee to academic medicine, research culture was a fascinating subject to explore and through this work contribute to defining the values it should encompass and enhancing its future look.



Helen Bates is a 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate on the Health and Medical Sciences BSc at Warwick Medical School (WMS). She has a keen interest in research in Public Health and is moving on to the MPH (Master's in Public Health) here in the autumn. She is involved with a number of working groups at WMS, where she advocates for peers and staff who have protected characteristics. Helen enjoys working side by side with staff, helping in this small way to shape the future of WMS for the better.



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**Endnotes**

<sup>i</sup> On behalf of the WMS Enhancing Research Culture Group

<sup>ii</sup> See: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>iii</sup> See: <https://warwick.ac.uk/research/research-culture-at-warwick/2022-23-projects> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>iv</sup> See: <https://www.niftyfoxcreative.com/about> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>v</sup> Table Key: a. **Researcher** – includes academic and clinical academic colleagues on research-only, research and teaching, and teaching-only contracts; b. **ECR – Early Career Researchers**; c. **Research enablers** - non-academic colleagues contributing to the wider research effort through the development and delivery of research; d. **Adjusted total** – those who participated in more than one café were not included in the adjusted total. e. **Total WMS staff population** (2023): 527; Total WMS student population (2023): 1888 across all programmes (Undergraduate (UG)/ MBChB/ Post-graduate Taught and Post-graduate Research (PGR)).

<sup>vi</sup> See: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/culture/abrc/> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>vii</sup> See: [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/staffintranet/staffresources/careerdevresearchteaching/ecr/wms\\_ecr/](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/staffintranet/staffresources/careerdevresearchteaching/ecr/wms_ecr/) [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>viii</sup> See: <https://warwick.ac.uk/research/research-culture-at-warwick/ercf-projects> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>ix</sup> See: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/culture/> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].

<sup>x</sup> See: <https://warwick.ac.uk/research/ncrc/> [Accessed: 12 April 2024].