



RESEARCH STRATEGY

2026 - 2030

CROHN'S &
COLITIS UK



CATHERINE WINSOR

DIRECTOR OF SERVICE,
RESEARCH & EVIDENCE

66

PEOPLE LIVING WITH CROHN'S AND COLITIS DESERVE A FUTURE FILLED WITH HOPE.

They also deserve to see meaningful progress today. This strategy reflects our commitment to listening to, and learning from, people living with Crohn's and Colitis.

It focuses on research that answers the questions that matter most and brings together the expertise needed to accelerate change. Grounded in both evidence and lived experience, it sets out our ambition to improve lives now while building a roadmap towards a future where Crohn's and Colitis can be cured.

99



NATALIE CARTER

HEAD OF EVIDENCE,
INFORMATION & RESEARCH

People living with Crohn's and Colitis are at the heart of this strategy. Their experiences, priorities and questions have shaped what we choose to focus on and why it matters.

At the heart of this strategy is a simple but important commitment: **research must lead to better lives.**

We are proud to present a strategy shaped by both evidence and experience, combining scientific insight with the real-world perspectives of those living with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). That means listening carefully, working in partnership and focusing our efforts on the questions that matter most. Research must go beyond discovery alone, it should lead to real improvements in diagnosis, treatment, care and quality of life.

We are also setting our sights on something bigger: building a roadmap towards a cure. This is an ambitious goal, but one that reflects the scale of need and the urgency we hear from

people living with Crohn's and Colitis every day. By taking a coordinated, long-term approach, we aim to help drive progress step by step towards that ultimate outcome.

We recognise the role we can play in making that happen. We are uniquely placed to bring people together, connecting individuals with lived experience, researchers, clinicians, funders and partners. By aligning expertise and insight, we can help focus effort where it will have the greatest impact and support progress that no single organisation could achieve alone.

This is an ambitious strategy because the need is great and the opportunity is real. We want to do more than fund research. We want to help shape it, champion it, and ensure it delivers for the people it is intended to serve.

Collaboration will be the key to success. Whether you are living with Crohn's or Colitis, working in research, or looking to partner with us, your contribution matters and is valued.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A
MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE.**

INTRODUCTION

Crohn's and Colitis affect hundreds of thousands of people across the UK. For those living with them the impact is daily. Pain. Fatigue. Uncertainty. The constant effort of managing life around symptoms.

Progress is happening. Research is improving understanding and expanding treatment options. But it's not happening fast enough.

Too many people are still waiting. Waiting for answers. Waiting for better care. Waiting for a future without Crohn's or Colitis.

This strategy sets out how Crohn's & Colitis UK will contribute to change between 2026 and 2030.

Research is central to our mission to help people live well today while driving towards a future free from Crohn's and Colitis tomorrow. Our role is to focus effort where it can have the greatest impact, support collaboration and ensure research leads to meaningful improvements in people's lives.

We developed this strategy by listening, to people living with Crohn's or Colitis, to researchers and clinicians, and to partners across the research community. Their insight helped us understand where progress is being made, where gaps remain, and where we can make the biggest difference.

Between 2026 and 2030, we will focus on three priorities:

1

Accelerating research into impact

2

Improving quality of life through evidence

3

Building the skills and workforce needed for the future

This is a focused and practical strategy. It balances long-term ambition with the need to improve people's lives now.

Because progress only matters if people can feel it.

6699

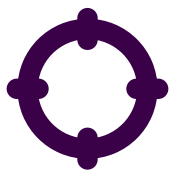
Investment in quality IBD research is vital to move us closer to a world in which Crohn's and Colitis no longer exist and also to ensure that people living with IBD can thrive, despite their disease, both today and in the future.

OUR VISION



A world without Crohn's or Colitis, where people live well today and progress towards a cure happens faster, together.

OUR MISSION



To focus research effort where it can make the greatest difference.

We will work alongside people with lived experience, researchers and partners to strengthen the research pipeline, accelerate real-world impact and improve quality of life for everyone affected by Crohn's or Colitis.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These principles shape every decision we make about research.

They ensure the work we support stays focused on what matters most – improving the lives of people affected by Crohn's or Colitis.

Patient voice first

People living with Crohn's or Colitis will shape our priorities and decisions. Their insight will guide how research is designed, delivered and applied.



Evidence-led

We will invest in research grounded in data, need and scientific opportunity.



Collaboration over competition

Progress happens faster when people work together. We will actively support collaboration across the research community to reduce duplication and share knowledge.



Equity and inclusion

Research should work for everyone. We will make sure studies reflect the diversity of people living with Crohn's or Colitis and remove barriers to taking part.



Responsible research management

We will ensure strong governance, clear accountability and active oversight so our investments deliver real impact.



WHY PROGRESS ISN'T HAPPENING FAST ENOUGH

Research into Crohn's and Colitis is growing. But it's not happening evenly or quickly enough.

Recent analysis of the UK research landscape in Inflammatory Bowel Disease shows:

- The number of researchers has increased, but early career progression is still limited
- Priorities identified by people living with Crohn's or Colitis are still being overlooked
- Collaboration within the UK is strong, but funding growth has slowed

At the same time industry interest is increasing, creating new opportunities for partnership and investment.

This creates a clear challenge, and a clear opportunity.

Crohn's & Colitis UK can play a unique role in strengthening the research system, connecting people and accelerating progress where it matters most.

BETTER RESEARCH STARTS WITH PEOPLE

Research should reflect the people it aims to help.

That means involving people living with Crohn's or Colitis at every stage, from setting priorities to shaping studies and sharing results.

We will strengthen how we involve our community in research, making sure their voices help guide decisions and improve outcomes.

This includes:



Involving people living with Crohn's or Colitis throughout the research process



Making it easier for people from all backgrounds to take part



Supporting a more diverse and representative research community



Working with partners to learn, improve and share what works

Better research starts with people.

And when research reflects real lives, it leads to better outcomes for everyone.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2026-2030

To make progress faster, we will focus where we can make the greatest difference.

These three themes set out where we will lead and where we will work with others to drive progress.

Accelerating
research into impact

Improving quality
of life through evidence

Building the
skills and workforce
needed for the future

6699

Crohn's & Colitis UK has a special role in ensuring that those living with Crohn's or Colitis are both central in shaping research and are also at the heart of implementation of research outcomes, to positively progress treatment and care for all of us living with IBD.

6699

I'm a huge believer that the best solutions come from working closely with the people they're designed for. I put this into practice in my day job, working closely with employees to help their employers make the right changes to their workplace.

As a Research Champion, I hope by sharing my experience of living with Crohn's Disease, I can help the wonderful people trying to build understanding and improvements in the complex world of IBD.

SIMON

Patient Research Champion



PRIORITY 1

Accelerating research into impact

People need change sooner. Not years from now.

Research only matters if it leads to better lives. People with Crohn's and Colitis need faster diagnosis, more effective treatments, and care that reflects the reality of living with a lifelong, unpredictable condition.

Crohn's & Colitis UK has a valuable role in connecting research, lived experience and the real world, helping move evidence into practice, policy and further discovery.

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

- Work with a clear and credible pathway to improving care, treatment and quality of life.
- Studies that strengthen UK-wide collaboration, data and infrastructure.
- Activity that supports the uptake of evidence into clinical practice, guidance and future research.

HOW WE WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN

We will bring partners together across the research system, including academia, industry, patient organisations and funding bodies to align priorities and focus effort where it will have the greatest impact.

This includes leading the development of a UK Roadmap to a Cure coalition, recognising that progress depends on sustained, coordinated action across the UK and beyond.

We will support collaboration across organisations and disciplines, including multi-centre studies that improve the quality, consistency and usability of data in the field.

Alongside this, we will fund targeted grants to help move research into real-world use, improving care and support.

We will work with international partners where this adds clear value, sharing data, aligning research agendas and accelerating progress while maintaining a strong UK focus.

We will support responsible engagement with pharmaceutical and biotechnology partners, recognising the role they play in driving innovation and scale.

People living with Crohn's or Colitis will shape this work throughout. Through Research Champions, advisory groups and co-creation approaches, we will ensure priorities reflect the real needs of our community and that findings can be applied in practice.

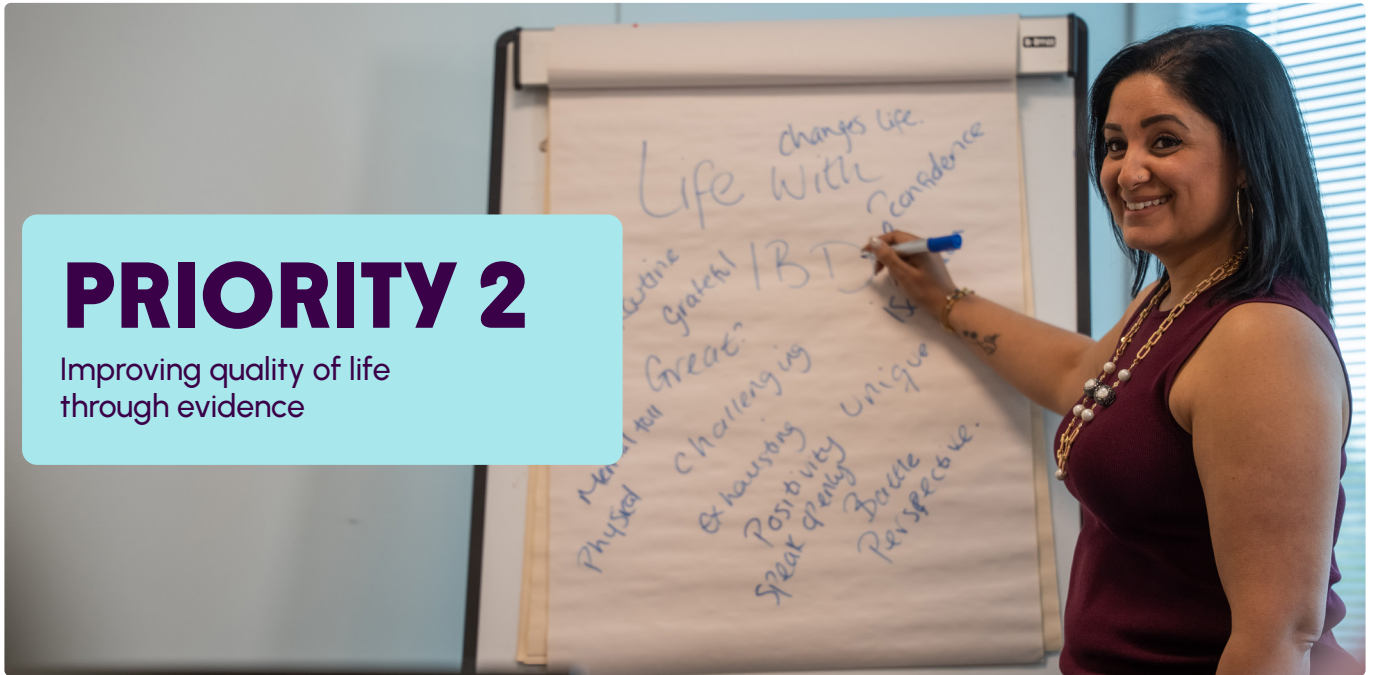
We will also make sure this work reflects a wide range of experiences, by working closely with people, gathering their feedback and making it easier for everyone to take part, so that research benefits all communities.

BY 2030, WE AIM TO DEMONSTRATE

- A high proportion of funded projects with a clear pathway to real-world impact.
- Evidence that research has informed care, policy, guidance or further investment.
- A more coordinated UK research landscape, aligned across sectors and partners.
- A UK Roadmap to a Cure coalition with shared goals, measurable outcomes and increased external investment through national and international partnerships.

PRIORITY 2

Improving quality of life
through evidence



While a cure remains the long-term goal, people living with Crohn's and Colitis need better answers now.

Daily life is shaped by pain, fatigue, mental health challenges, unpredictability and the emotional toll of an often-invisible condition.

Crohn's & Colitis UK is uniquely placed to champion research driven by lived experience, particularly in areas that are under-funded or overlooked.

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

- Research driven by the priorities of people living with, or closest to, Crohn's and Colitis, ensuring focus on the questions that matter most to people affected by these conditions.
- Research addressing quality-of-life issues that cut across Crohn's, Colitis and other long-term conditions, such as fatigue, pain, mental health, diet, flare unpredictability and the specific needs of children and young people.
- Focusing on generating evidence that can directly inform improvements in clinical care, services, support models and self-management.

HOW WE WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN

We will focus our investment on a smaller number of high-priority areas.

We will collaborate with partners on cross-condition work where shared challenges can speed up progress or increase impact.

People living with Crohn's or Colitis will be involved throughout research, from setting priorities to reviewing and sharing findings.

Evidence from this work will be used to inform our information, services and advocacy, ensuring it leads to visible improvements in people's lives.

Research priorities will reflect the experiences of people living with Crohn's or Colitis, with a clear focus on quality of life and practical solutions. This will include:

- Panels of people living with Crohn's or Colitis who will help identify the most important patient questions in research.
- Supporting people to share findings within their communities.
- Ensuring a diverse range of voices are represented in advisory groups and decision-making.

We will also strengthen our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including our policies, advice, support and funding to ensure this is properly considered in the work we fund.

BY 2030, WE AIM TO DEMONSTRATE

- Strong alignment between funded research and patient priorities, both in our portfolio and more widely.
- Consistent, meaningful patient and public involvement across the portfolio.
- Clear evidence that findings are informing support, services and care.

66 99

It is important for researchers to hear how IBD affects our day to day in order for their research to accurately reflect us.

NATALIA

Patient Research Champion



PRIORITY 3

Building the skills and workforce for the future

Progress depends on people.

Better treatments and ultimately a cure rely on researchers with the skills, commitment and insight to ask the right questions and pursue answers over the long term.

Right now, too many talented researchers leave Inflammatory Bowel Disease research at key points in their careers. If we don't address this, progress will slow and people living with Crohn's or Colitis will wait longer for answers.

Crohn's & Colitis UK will help strengthen the pipeline by supporting the people, skills and ideas needed to drive progress now and in the future.

Between 2026 and 2030, we will take a targeted approach, focusing investment where it can make the greatest difference, alongside other funders.

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON

- Supporting researchers at key early career transition points.
- Provide early-stage and proof-of-concept funding to develop new ideas and strengthen the research pipeline.
- Building a diverse and interdisciplinary research community, bringing together a wide range of scientific skills, perspectives and experiences.

HOW WE WILL MAKE IT HAPPEN

We will deliver a focused number of early career researcher awards, aligned to our strategic priorities, delivered both independently and with partners.

We will provide small, flexible pilot grants to help researchers develop ideas and secure further funding.

We will support early career researchers with funding, training and mentoring opportunities.

Success will be judged by whether the researchers we support stay in Crohn's and Colitis research, progress in their careers, and go on to deliver impact for people living with these conditions.

We will support a diverse, skilled and resilient research workforce to sustain long-term progress.

We will also make our development opportunities more accessible, including hybrid events, bursaries and practical support such as childcare.

BY 2030, WE AIM TO DEMONSTRATE

- Evidence of researcher progression and follow-on funding.
- Improved retention at key early career stages.
- Increased breadth and diversity across the research community.

This will be measured using a Diversity and Breadth Index, tracking both the range of disciplines and the diversity of researchers we fund.

A rising index will indicate a more innovative, resilient and representative research community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy has been shaped by the expertise, insight and commitment of many people, and we are grateful to all those who contributed.

We would like to thank our Research Strategy and Funding Committee for their thoughtful guidance, constructive challenge and support throughout the development of this strategy. We are also grateful to the researchers, clinicians and research professionals who shared their expertise and helped ensure this strategy is grounded in evidence, opportunity and impact.

Most importantly, we thank the people living with Crohn's and Colitis who contributed their lived experience and expertise. Their voices have been instrumental in shaping our priorities and ensuring that this strategy focuses on the questions that matter most to our community.

Together, these contributions have helped create a strategy that is ambitious, collaborative and focused on improving the lives of people affected by the conditions.



6699

DR NURULAMIN NOOR**Specialist Gastroenterologist**University of Cambridge and
Cambridge University Hospitals

Dr Nurulamin Noor is a specialist gastroenterologist based at the University of Cambridge. He has won awards for his groundbreaking research into Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

For me, medicine has always been about people. From the very start of my career, I was struck by the profound impact Crohn's and Colitis have on people's lives. It's not only about physical symptoms, but also about independence, confidence, and quality of life. That's why I believe patient involvement in research is crucial, right from the beginning of any potential project.

I am hugely grateful to Crohn's & Colitis UK for supporting me early in my career. The charity's funding allowed me to begin investigating why some people respond to certain treatments while others do not: a question that remains central to improving care.

That opportunity helped lay the foundations for my research journey, and I continue to be inspired by the charity's commitment to fostering ideas that make a real difference.

We have to speed up diagnosis and treatment. We also need to broaden our view of what research can achieve. We all know medications are vital, but we must also invest in areas such as diet, sleep, exercise, and psychological support. They may hold the key to addressing debilitating symptoms like fatigue and pain where current treatments fall short.

Looking back, I am encouraged by the progress we've made. Treatments have advanced, outcomes have improved, and patients have more choice than ever before. But, like everyone in my field, I want us to go further, faster. We don't have all the answers and there is a lot of work still to do.



6699

CAROLINE BROCKLEHURST**Lived Experience member**

Crohn's & Colitis UK Research Strategy
and Funding Committee

The work I do with Crohn's & Colitis UK is hugely important to me. I was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease in 2009 and then with the associated spinal disease Axial Spondyloarthritis in 2019.

Because of my lived experience, I became more interested in Inflammatory Bowel Disease research and the possibilities it has for us to understand more about Crohn's and Colitis. That's how we're going to develop better treatments for these conditions and enable those of us who live with them to live better, despite our IBD.

I have multiple voluntary roles within Crohn's & Colitis UK, and I've been a lived experience representative on the charity's Research Strategy and Funding Committee (RSFC) since December 2022. As part of my role, I help evaluate and approve research funding decisions and look at the progress of research activities funded by the charity. I also played a big part in putting this new Strategy together.

As people with lived experience, we're equal partners in decision-making. We're focused on reflecting the diverse priorities of patients like us and keeping real-world experience at the heart of the research we support. That matters, because research doesn't start in labs: it starts with people.

How would I like things to look five years from now? Ultimately, we'd live in a world free from Crohn's or Colitis, with patient-centred research ensuring that goal is achieved. Sadly, we may not get there for some time, so we're also focussed on the sort of IBD research and treatment that enables patients to thrive - despite their disease - in the here and now.

That's why this Strategy focuses on designing and developing the kind of research infrastructure that will create a pipeline. We want to encourage and keep talent in the field. We also want an approach to IBD research that targets the evidence-based priorities of patients.

We can't do this on our own: collaboration really matters. For this to work, patients need to be front and centre of everything we do. That means properly listening to their voices and letting lived experience shape what we focus on. It's about involving people in ways that reflect different needs, making sure research actually delivers on those priorities, and, in the end, ensuring it reaches the people who need it most in a way that makes a real difference to day-to-day life with Crohn's or Colitis.

**WE NEED
PROGRESS
PEOPLE
CAN FEEL**



**WE
CAN'T
DO IT
ALONE**

Collaboration will be the key to success
– together we can set out the roadmap
to a cure. To get involved, email:

✉ research@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

**CROHN'S &
COLITIS UK**

Visit our website

🔗 crohnsandcolitis.org.uk

Let's get social

📘 /crohnsandcolitisuk

📷 @crohnscolitisuk

📺 @crohnsandcolitisuk

📺 @crohnscolitisuk

DSN 0024 - 2026 © Crohn's & Colitis UK – a registered charity
in England & Wales (1117148) and Scotland (SC038632).

Registered as a company limited by guarantee in England &
Wales (5973370), 1 Bishops Square, Hatfield, AL10 9NE