

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Professor Dame Sally C Davies



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Professor Tony Weetman, Medical Schools Council  
Sir Ron Kerr, Association of University Hospitals  
Sir Steve Smith, Universities UK  
Professor Michael Arthur, The Russell Group  
cc Katie Petty-Saphon and Wendy Piatt

Dear Tony, Ron, Steve and Michael

We have just completed a very busy full week with an expert international panel interviewing short-listed academic/NHS partnerships across England for NIHR Biomedical Research Centres and Units (BRCs and BRUs). One of the things the panel and I were very concerned about going forward, is how both the academic and NHS partners are supporting women in clinical academia so that they can develop into and be appointed to senior leadership positions.

When questioned, the NHS Trust responses were generally OK. However, the Medical School responses varied from excellent to frankly appalling. I was embarrassed on behalf of our nation to hear some of the responses.

I now write to tell you therefore, that when we next run the competition for NIHR BRCs and BRUs we do not expect to short-list any NHS/University partnership where the academic partner (generally the Medical School\Faculty of Medicine) has not achieved at least the Silver Award of the Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science. The present funding period of five years that we are about to enter gives both those who are funded, and those who are potential entrants next time four years to demonstrate this level of commitment to women in science.

When we announce the present successful awards we will ensure that our website highlights this as a condition for short-listing for the next funding round. We will also put it in our final award letter for this round of BRCs/BRUs but it would be very helpful if, through your networks, you could make everyone aware now so that they use this period of time to get the Athena SWAN Silver Award in place effectively.

With best wishes and thanks for your help

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally C Davies'.

**PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES**  
**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER & CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER**