# The UKCRC Tissue Directory and Coordination Centre

**The UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC) Tissue Directory and Coordination Centre (the Centre) has been set up to support the work of biobanks by improving researchers’ access to human samples. One of the Centre's main projects is to develop an online tissue directory which will hold information about sample collections across the UK and make it easier for researchers to find and make use of samples for high quality research.**

**What is the centre?**

The Centre is funded by a consortium of UKCRC funders, including the MRC, CRUK and the Wellcome Trust, to coordinate biobanking in the UK. The Centre is the UK national node of BBMRI-ERIC, which means that it represents the interests of the UK within this European infrastructure and seeks to facilitate links and sharing samples across Europe.

The centre has a remit to develop a UK Tissue directory, to engage with and coordinate all relevant stakeholders in the UK, and to work with BBMRI ERIC on developing standardisation in the field. The Centre was established by the The UKCRC Experimental Medicine Funders Group, which has a vision for funded collections of human tissue and biosamples to:

*‘…maximise the value of human tissue samples and resources while minimising duplication of effort. This requires better characterisation of tissue samples…and increased linkage to accurate clinical data. Sample collections must then be made more easily discoverable and accessible for use in high quality, ethical research’.*

**What is the Tissue directory?**

The UKCRC Tissue Directory is a UK-wide register of biobanks, human tissue collections and samples. Importantly, it will also hold information on the data that has been collected along with these samples as well as any data that the samples have generated. The primary goal is to increase efficiency by preventing duplication of efforts by making existing samples more discoverable. The Directory is launching in August 2016, following the successful registration of over 50 Biobanks. The directory will also contain information about biobanks’ ability to collect new samples for a research study, allowing researchers to more easily connect with established networks and expertise.

**Why is it important?**

Biobanks will be able to use the tissue directory to promote information about their sample collections to the research community. Human samples are vital for medical research as they contain a wealth of information about the cause of disease. The directory will help researchers locate relevant, sometimes rare disease samples. Patients will be able to donate samples safe in the knowledge that they will be utilised by the best medical researchers to facilitate medical progress. The directory will also relieve pressure on the biobanks to connect with appropriate researchers.

# Quotes on the initiative:

Professor Brian Davidson, UCL lead for the New Centre for National Tissue Directory and Research Collaboration said:

“The new National Tissue Directory and Coordination Centre will develop a resource finder which will enable researchers to discover, search across and contact multiple human tissue and biosample collections through one system. We hope that this coordinated approach and the guidance provided will improve the harmonisation of standards and best practice associated with the collection and governance of tissue samples in the UK.”

Professor Stephen Holgate, Chair of the Evaluation Panel said:

“The new Centre will help to ensure the medical research community maximises value of human tissue samples and resources while minimising duplication of effort. The Centre will support the UKCRC Experimental Medicine Funders Group’s vision by supporting better characterisation of samples and increased linkage to accurate clinical data. Thus, making sample collection more easily discoverable and accessible for use in high quality research.”

Christopher Birkett, Head of Regulation at the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) said:

“Researchers have told us that the HTA has raised standards for the storage of tissue, leading to better research outcomes. The successful partnership of HTA and the HRA on the Research Tissue Bank scheme means that high quality tissue for research has never been more accessible to researchers. Building on the regulators’ successes in improving research quality, accessibility and transparency, we welcome this new initiative, and look forward to working with Professor Davidson to support it.”

The UKCRC Experimental Medicine Funders Group has a vision for funded collections of human tissue and biosamples which is to:

‘…maximise the value of human tissue samples and resources while minimising duplication of effort. This requires better characterisation of tissue samples…and increased linkage to accurate clinical data. Sample collections must then be made more easily discoverable and accessible for use in high quality, ethical research’.

In order to achieve this vision the funders have identified the need for systems to make collections discoverable. UK Clinical Research Collaboration funding partners have therefore established the UKCRC Tissue Directory and Co-ordination Centre to develop a prototype and deliver a functional Resource Finder/Directory to enable researchers to discover, search across and contact multiple human tissue and biosample collections via a unified interface (taking account of existing systems) in order to facilitate sample access.

On behalf of the UKCRC funders, we urge those responsible for biobanks/collections of human tissue and biosamples to work with the Centre to ensure their collections are visible in the tissue directory.

Please see: https://directory.biobankinguk.org for further information on the directory

signed by MRC on behalf of the UKCRC funders:

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