

RESEARCH CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME: BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY IN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

INTRODUCTION

The Research Champions programme is an innovative introduction to research for health and social care staff within the region. It is tailored to their needs and designed to build research capacity within and across services. To-date, 57 Champions have participated over 6 cohorts (**Figure 1**).

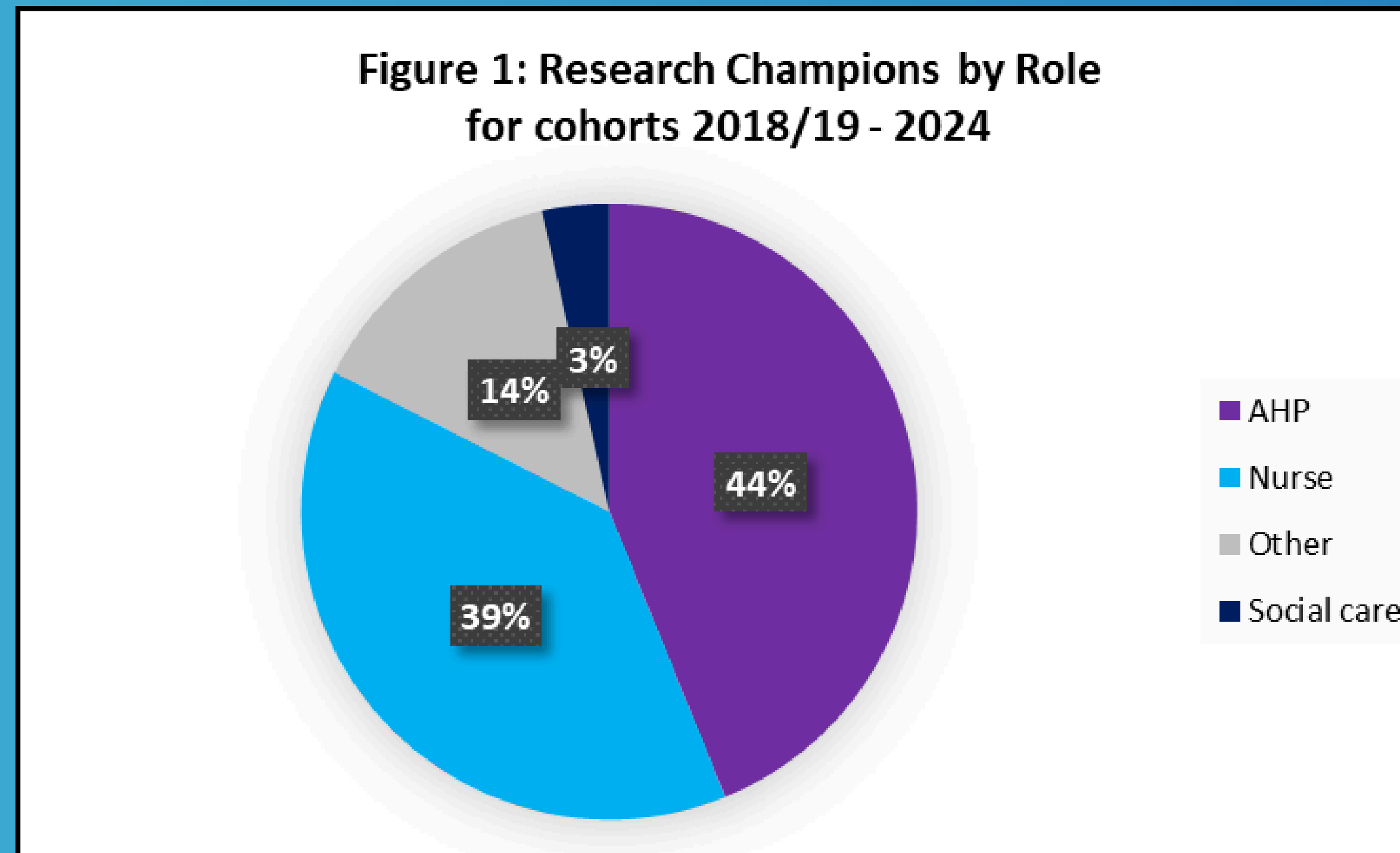
OBJECTIVES

The programme was evaluated to highlight its impact on Champions and the services to answer the following:

What did practitioners perceive as the benefits and challenges of the programme?

What outcomes did practitioners identify individually, for their service and their organisation?

How can a larger and more diverse number of practitioners be encouraged to participate in the programme?



RESULTS

27 Champions who had finished the programme completed the pre-programme questionnaire; 19 the post-programme questionnaire; and 13 managers completed their questionnaire. All Champions who submitted their assignments for Masters credits achieved the pass mark.

Figure 2 illustrates the findings from qualitative data which was categorised into three themes. Immediate gains included practitioners sharing their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm for research with colleagues. Medium to longer term gains included changes in clinical practice with direct patient benefit, developing a research network, ongoing research activities and embarking on a clinical-academic pathway.

CONCLUSION

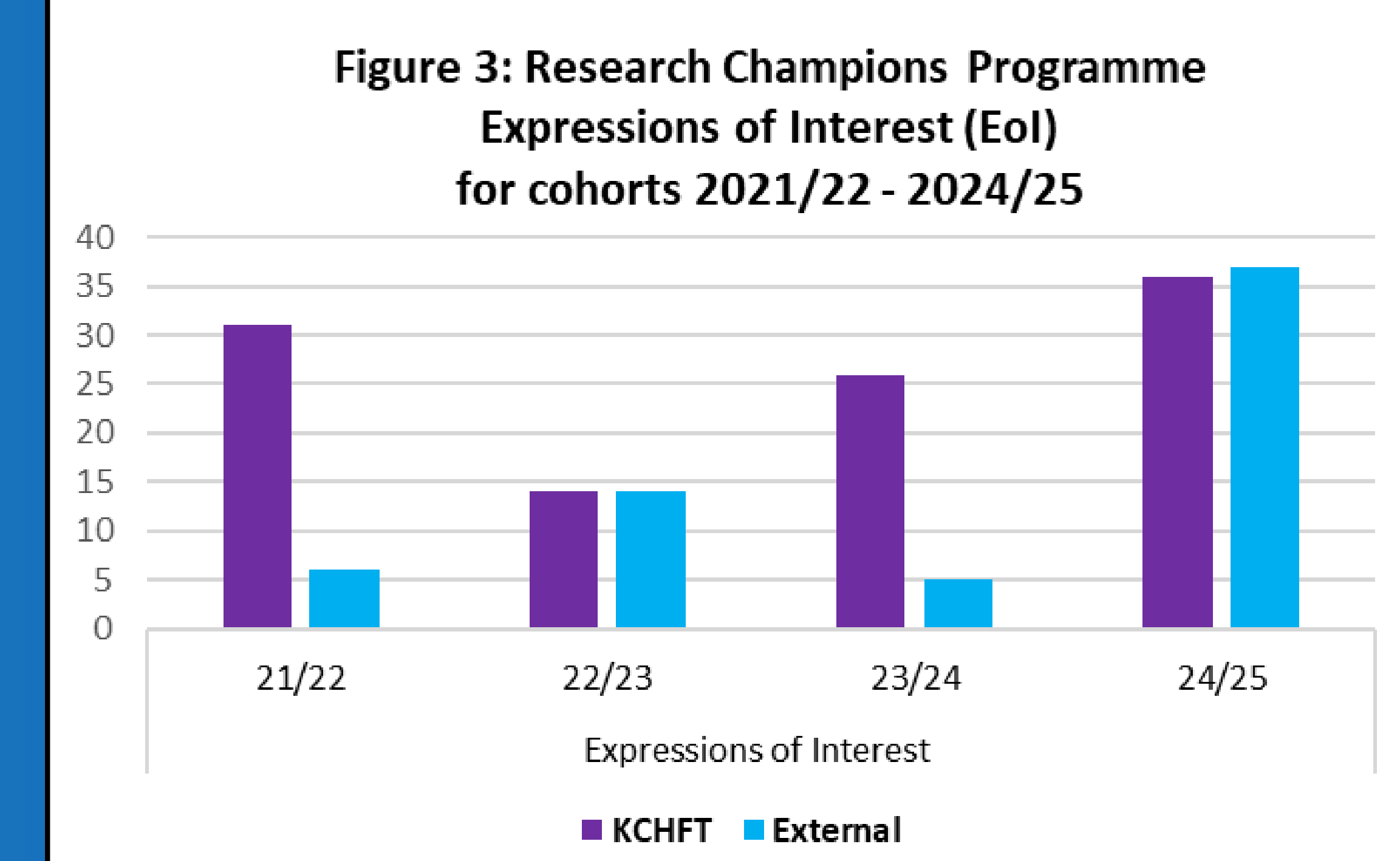
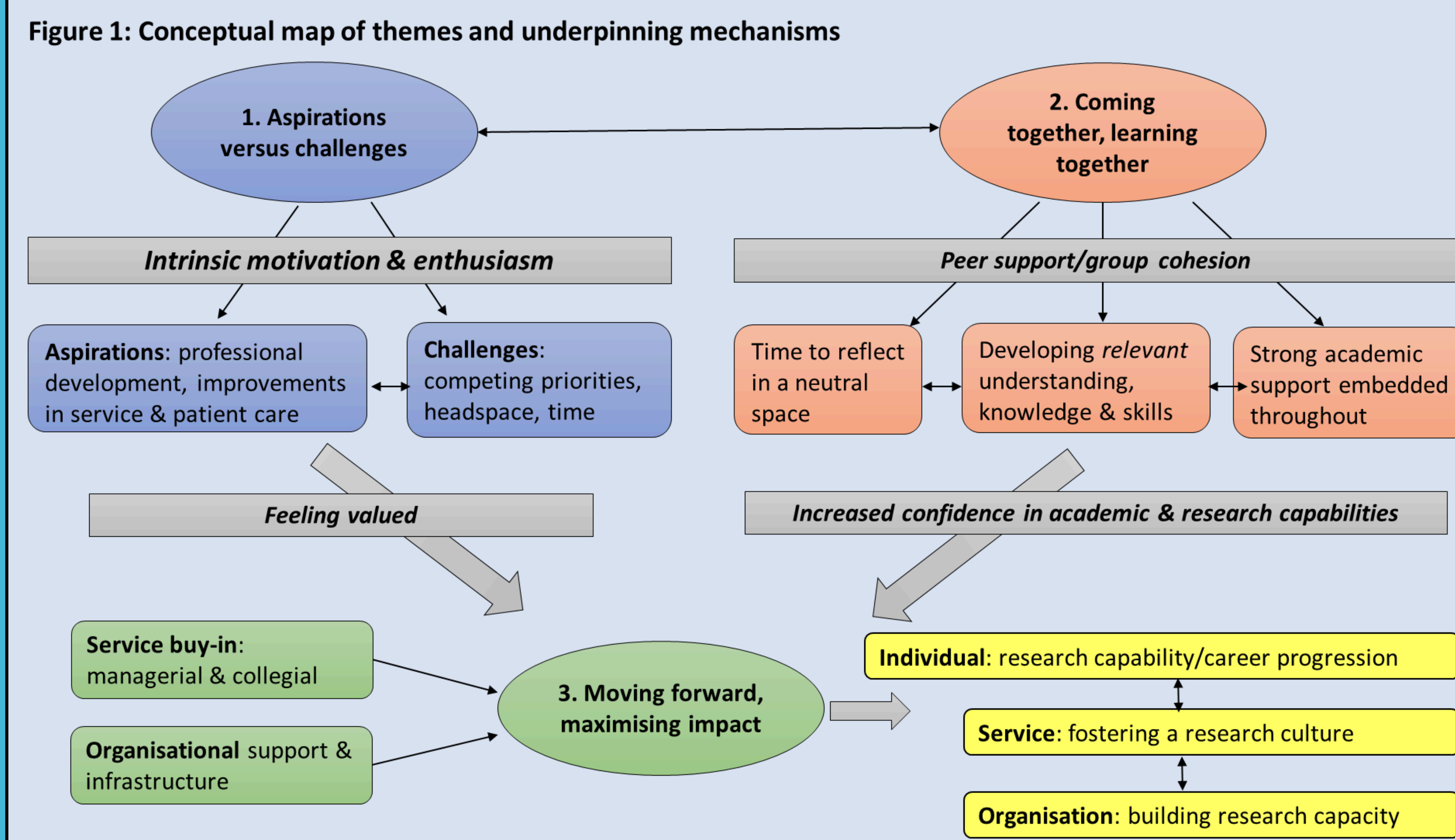
The programme is a unique partnership building research capacity in health and social care across the region. It provides the first step to further clinical-academic opportunities for the most capable and motivated Champions.

Key mechanisms included developing research knowledge/skills and the confidence to translate learning into practice.

The 2024/25 cohort has seen an increase in expressions of interest (**Figure 3**) as well as diversity of disciplines/organisations, but sustaining the programme depends on funding. The impact on retention and other longer-term benefits requires further evaluation.

METHODS

Mixed methods longitudinal pre- and post-programme questionnaires for Champions and their managers; two focus groups; and tracking Champions' progress. Thematic analysis of focus group data combined with free text comments



3. Moving forward, maximising impact:
"I sort of saw it as a springboard essentially to get my feet wet in research, and then it would allow me, give me more confidence and allow me those contacts"