NIHR Funding Fact Sheet

Remit

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) commission and fund NHS and social care research that is essential for delivering their responsibilities in public health and personal social services. Their role is to develop the research evidence to support decision making by professionals, policy makers and patients, make this evidence available, and encourage its uptake and use.

The goal of the NIHR is to create a health research system in which the NHS supports outstanding individuals, working in world class facilities, conducting leading edge research focused on the needs of patients and the public. The NHS reputation for international excellence is growing as it gains recognition for being the preferred host for collaborative and multi-centred research in the public interest in partnership with and for industry. This will benefit patients, society, the NHS and stakeholders.

The NIHR funds a range of programmes addressing a broad range of health priorities. Funding is based on the quality and relevance of the research to personal social services and the NHS.

The NIHR was established as a part of the Government's strategy, 'Best Research for Best Health'. Together they are committed to establishing the NHS as an internationally recognised centre of research excellence through supporting outstanding individuals, working in world-class facilities, conducting leading-edge research focused on the needs of patients and the public.

A number of the NIHR programmes are co-ordinated and managed by the NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF) and the NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC).

NIHR – CCF managed programmes

Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) is core to CCF’s review and commissioning process. Engaging patients and members of the public in research leads to treatments that meet their needs, is more reliable and more likely to be put into practice.

Programme Grants for Applied Research

These provide funding for applied research and are prestigious individual awards of up to £2m over a period of three to five years. They are directed towards leading researchers who can demonstrate an impressive track-record of achievement in applied health research, including:
The awards will provide support for research that will have practical application for the benefit of patients through improved health care or better health care delivery.

All NHS organisations and other providers of NHS services in England may apply, in collaboration with an appropriate academic partner or partners. Programme grants will be awarded by an open competition held throughout the year. The application is a two-stage process.

**Programme Development Grants**

Programme Development Grants provide funding to enable a research team to undertake preparatory work that will position them to submit a successful Programme Grant application in a subsequent funding competition.

Awards provide funding of a maximum of £100,000 over a period of six to 18 months. The amount of funding awarded will, however, be determined by the scale and nature of the preparatory work to be conducted.

Programme Development Grants will be awarded by an open competition held throughout the year.

Potential applicants are required to complete an application form detailing both the preparatory work to be undertaken and a summary of their proposed research programme.

**Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) Programme**

The RfPB is a national response-mode programme for high quality, investigator-led research projects which address issues of importance to the NHS.

It funds research into everyday practice in the health service. Proposals are identified by health service staff, and developed by them with appropriate academic input. All proposals must show evidence from systematic reviews to ensure patient safety and value for money.

Applications are accepted at any time and will be considered at the next available Regional Committee and will award up to £350,000 for up to three years.
All researchers in England are eligible to apply. Joint applications from NHS researchers with academic partners are welcome, although funding is awarded to the NHS partner.

Applications are judged on the quality of the research proposed and the significance and potential benefit of the research to the NHS.

**Invention for Innovation Research Programme (i4i)**

The i4i programme is positioned to transform the translation of healthcare technologies for increased patient benefit through guided progression of innovative medical product prototypes, and provision of business advice to the medical technology professionals it funds.

The programme will help accelerate the take-up and use of proven new treatments and devices by the NHS. Individual awards are for a period of one to three years.

The amount of funding awarded is determined by the scale and nature of the research activity to be conducted. Applicants should cost their projects to the appropriate amount.

The i4i programme has various funding streams:

- **i4i Product Development**
- **i4i Challenge Awards**

  The i4i Challenge Awards is the newest i4i funding stream which aims to bridge the gap between the innovation and development of new medical technology and its adoption into clinical pathways.

  The i4i Challenge Awards will hold one competition per year that will address a particular ‘challenge’ that is a priority for the NHS.

  The programme will seek to identify those medical technologies with the greatest potential clinical benefit, along with how they might be integrated into clinical decision and treatment pathways and how they might be implemented on a large scale.

  A typical Challenge Award project will look at technologies that have, in the first instance, been developed to aid the identification, diagnosis, and monitoring of a single disease.

**NIHR – NETSCC programmes**

NETSCC is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and was established at the University of Southampton in 2008.
UK government support for medical research is channelled primarily through the NIHR and the MRC.

NIHR funds later-phase health research which has the potential to influence the delivery of healthcare to patients, while the MRC supports basic and early clinical research.

The two bodies work together closely, overseen by the Office for Strategic Coordination of Health Research (OSCHR) to ensure that there is a continuum of research opportunities along the translational pathway and to ensure activities are coordinated.

NETSCC now manages four distinct but interconnected evaluation research programmes.

**Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme**

The HTA funds research to ensure that healthcare professionals, NHS managers and the public and patients have the best and latest information on the costs, effectiveness and impact of developments in health technology. HTA produces independent research information about the effectiveness, costs and broader impact of healthcare treatments and tests for those who plan, provide or receive care in the NHS.

The programme commissions research in three different ways:

- **Standard Calls** - commissions research proposals that address specific topics. Further information about the type of proposals considered suitable and the assessment process can be obtained from the commissioning briefs.

- **Clinical Evaluation and Trials** - invites research proposals for evaluation studies and clinical trials on topics proposed directly by researchers. Proposals can be submitted on an ongoing basis. There are three cut-off deadlines a year.

- **Themed calls** - one-off invitations for proposals to fund research in areas where a particular need has been identified.

**Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) programme**

The EME programme is broadly aimed at supporting 'science driven' studies with an expectation of substantial health gain and aims to support excellent clinical science with an ultimate view to improving health or patient care. The aim is to secure the progress of new technologies and interventions through their early clinical trials and on to larger, later clinical trials. Its remit includes evaluations of new treatments, including therapeutics (small molecule and biologic), psychological interventions, public health, diagnostics and medical devices. Treatments or interventions intended to prevent disease.
The EME programme funds research through two work-streams:

- Commissioned work-stream - commissions research about the effectiveness, costs and broader impact of healthcare treatments and tests. There are three calls for proposals a year.

- Researcher-led work-stream - is an on-going research funding opportunity funded by the MRC, which considers research questions proposed directly by researchers. The remit includes clinical trials and evaluative studies - in patients - which:
  - evaluate clinical efficacy of interventions (where proof of concept in humans has already been achieved)
  - add significantly to our understanding of biological or behavioural mechanisms and processes
  - explore new scientific or clinical principles
  - include the development or testing of new methodologies.

**Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme**

The HS&DR programme funds research to improve the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of the NHS, including evaluations of how the NHS might improve delivery of services.

The audience for this research is the public, service users, clinicians and managers.

The HS&DR programme is the result of the merger of two former NIHR programmes, the Health Services Research programme (HSR) and the Service Delivery and Organisation programme (SDO). The aims of both programmes will be carried forward into the HS&DR programme.

The HS&DR programme aims to produce evidence on the quality, access and organisation of health services, including costs and outcomes. The programme will enhance the strategic focus on research that matters to the NHS including research on implementation and a range of knowledge mobilisation initiatives. It will be keen to support ambitious evaluative research to improve health services.

The programme has two workstreams:

- Health services research workstream, researcher-led; will fund both primary research and evidence syntheses, depending on the existing research and the most appropriate way of responding to important knowledge gaps. The aim is to fund research that will lead to improvements in health services that will be of greatest benefit to the NHS and to patients.
• Healthcare delivery research workstream, commissioned: Specific topics will be advertised under each call for funding. These topics will be identified mainly through stakeholder consultation and research to establish the knowledge gap and importance of the topic to decision-makers, and where the findings are most likely to be of benefit to the NHS.

The HS&DR programme aims to support a range of types of research including evidence synthesis and primary research. This includes large scale studies of national importance. This means primary research projects which:

• Address an issue of major strategic importance to the NHS, with the cost in line with the significance of the problem to be investigated
• Are likely to lead to changes in practice that will have a significant impact on a large number of patients across the UK
• Aim to fill a clear ‘evidence gap’, and are likely to generate new knowledge of direct relevance to the NHS
• Have the potential for findings to be applied to other conditions or situations outside the immediate area of research
• Bring together a team with strong expertise and track record across the full range of relevant disciplines
• Will be carried out across more than one research site.

If you are planning a project of this type you may wish to refer to the MRC Complex Interventions Framework.

Public Health Research (PHR) Programme

The PHR programme evaluates non-NHS, public health interventions, providing new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider impacts of non-NHS interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health.

The scope of the programme is multi-disciplinary and broad, covering a range of interventions that improve public health.

Examples include examining whether regeneration programmes improve public health and reduce health inequalities, evaluating employer schemes to encourage walking or cycling to work and assessing interventions that encourage healthy eating among school children.

The main focus of the Public Health Research programme is to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of public health interventions. However, broader impact, as well as acceptability to the target community and wider society, are also
important to the impact and sustainability of public health programmes and, where relevant, are also investigated.

The Public Health Research programme operates via two workstreams - researcher-led and commissioned-led.

**Methodology Research Programme (MRP)**

The Medical Research Council (MRC) programme is a funding programme led by the MRC with a broad scope covering the remits of the MRC and the NIHR, including research on method development to underpin the biomedical sciences, experimental medicine, clinical trials, population health sciences, health services research and health policy.

The MRP will fund investigator-led and needs-led research proposals from across the UK.

- Investigator-led research: A research grant can be awarded for any period of up to five years, but those of two years or less are for proof of principle or pilot work only

- Needs-led research: Applicants should follow the normal application process for MRC research grants, (any UK-based researcher who can demonstrate that they will direct the proposed research and be actively engaged in carrying it through).

**NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre (TCC)**

NIHR TCC makes training awards to researchers whose work focuses on people and patient-based applied health research. The NIHR funds this research training in order to build a leading NHS Research Faculty, develop research careers, research leaders and collaborators.

The research must be relevant to the NHS, focused on the current and future needs of patients and the public and expected to have an impact within 5 years of its completion. The NIHR does not fund basic research or work involving animals and/or animal tissue.

There are a large range of awards available: at different levels, to suit different work arrangements, types of NHS staff and career paths.

- NIHR Integrated Academic Training Programme

- NIHR Fellowships - support the development of outstanding individuals to become the health research leaders of the future. Four levels of NIHR
Fellowship award are available - click on the links below for guidance notes for each level.

- **NIHR Research Methods Programme** - support the development of individuals with expertise in research methods including medical statistics, health economics, clinical trial design, operational research and modelling. There is currently a relevant shortage of individuals with the necessary training and expertise in these key areas to support the volume of applied health research that is needed.

- **Clinical Academic Training Programme for Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals** - integrated clinical academic training programme for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals.

- **CSO Healthcare Scientists Research Fellowship Programme** - supports the development of healthcare scientist research capacity and capability building, by providing funding to undertake research for patient benefit.

**Further help**

**Protocol Development Service (PDS)**

The PDS is a joint initiative between University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Birmingham. The PDS is a member of the joint research office between these two organisations and a member of Birmingham Health Partners (BHP).

Professor Richard Lilford, Vice-Dean for Applied Health Research, provides academic leadership and support to the PDS.

PDS provides dedicated help to identify funding streams, complete application forms, identification of suitable collaborators through to final approval and finance sign off's.

Assistance from the PDS is available using the following contact information:

- Email [PDS@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:PDS@uhb.nhs.uk)
- Call:
  - Clinical Research Officer Dr Daljeet Bansal on 0121 371 4209
  - Clinical Research Officer Dr. Victoria Aldridge on 0121 371 4209

**Links**

- National Institute for Health Research ([NIHR](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/))
- Government's strategy, *[Best Research for Best Health]*
• NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF)
• Programme Grants For Applied Research
• Programme Development Grants
• Research for Patient Benefit (RPB) Programme
• Invention for Innovation Research Programme (i4i)
• Patient and Public Involvement (PPI)
• NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC)
• Health Technology Assessment (HTA)
• The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme
• Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR)
• Public Health Research Programme
• Methodology Research Programme (MRP) with the Medical Research Council (MRC)
• NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre (NIHR TCC)
• Birmingham Health Partners (BHP)