

REMIT

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 National Institute for Health Research is now 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.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND THE DELIVERY PLAN

'[Best Research for Best Health](#)' set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England.

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Objectives

- Strengthen and focus the funding mechanisms through which research is commissioned.
- Expand and develop relevant and flexible programmes of research addressing the broad range of health research priorities.
- Target NIHR health research funding to resolve uncertainties and address areas of un-met need.
- Allocate NHS health research funding in a transparent manner based on quality and relevance.

The timetable for implementation of each of the elements of the NIHR programmes is itemised in the individual Implementation Plans available from the [NIHR website](#).

SAMPLE OF AWARDS

[Programme Grants](#) provide funding for **applied research** and are prestigious awards of up to **£2m** over a period of **three to five** years, directed towards leading researchers who can demonstrate an impressive track-record of achievement in applied health research. 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, (outline to full application).

[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 **£20k - £100k** (over a period of 6 – 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

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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](#) is a national response-mode programme for high quality investigator-led research projects that 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. 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. £250k maximum for up to 3 years

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 \(i4i\)](#) programme brings together the work of several previous programmes, including the New and Emerging Applications of Technology (NEAT) and the Health Technology Devices (HTD) programmes with a new investment stream. The programme will help accelerate the take-up and use of proven new treatments and devices by the NHS.

The i4i programme has **three response-mode funding streams:**

- **[Future Product Development Stream 1 \(FPD1\)](#)** providing Feasibility study funding for up to **1 year** academic led investigation to determine whether a piece of prior basic research or an existing technology can be used to meet a healthcare need. Funding up to **£100K** is available.
- **[Future Product Development Stream 2 \(FPD2\)](#)** providing applied research support funding for detailed investigation of up to **3 years** led by a clinician or an academic research group that builds on the results of a completed assessment of the feasibility to produce a medical device or product through technological improvements or developments and that provides further evidence of its capacity to deliver improved healthcare outcomes and commercial opportunities. Funding of the order of **£150K - £250K** per year is available
- **[Future Product Development Stream 3 \(FPD3\)](#)**
The collaborative applied research project involving collaborations between industry and research partners, a more detailed study building on the results of a completed assessment of the feasibility to provide

further evidence of the capability to deliver: improved healthcare outcomes; technical progress; commercial opportunities. Funding is 50% and, with industrial partner, £300k p.a. is typically available.

- **[Future Product Development Stream \(FPD3a\)](#)** provides funding for commercial viability studies for up to **1 year** involving collaboration between at least one industry and one research (academic or clinical) partner. The aim being to determine whether an innovative use of an existing or emerging product or technology can be used to meet a healthcare need and to identify the barriers that would need to be overcome in achieving this. Project costs can be no more than **£100K** in total, and 75% funding is available.
- **[Future Product Development Stream \(FPD3b\)](#)** provides funding for collaborative applied research projects to carry out a detailed investigation of up to **3 years** involving collaboration between at least one industry and one research partner (academic or clinical) that builds on the results of a completed assessment of feasibility. This will provide further evidence of the capability to deliver improved healthcare outcomes and commercial opportunity, delivering an advanced prototype along with plans for commercial and intellectual property exploitation. Funding to a maximum of 50% of the total project costs is available for with between **£100K - £300K** being available per year.

[Policy Research Programme \(PRP\)](#) is a national programme of research dedicated to providing an evidence base for policy-making in the Department of Health. It provides information to the Secretary of State for Health and his Ministers, both directly and through policy directorates in the Department. It works alongside other national research programmes, such as the **[Service Delivery and Organisation Programme \(SDO\)](#)**, and the **[Health Technology Assessment Programme \(HTA\)](#)**. It consults, when necessary, with policy research programmes in other government departments and a wide variety of stakeholders.

Aims

The primary objective of the PRP is to provide a service to colleagues in DH Policy Groups who are developing and formulating policy in public health, health care, and adult social care by:

- providing them with information and evidence to inform policy development, implementation, and evaluation in timely and accessible ways; and
- commissioning research evidence for policy making over the longer-term.

In order to achieve this the PRP commissions primary research, secondary analysis, formative evaluations,

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systematic reviews, and scoping papers of research needs. It funds individual projects, programmes of research, and research units based in universities.

Areas funded by the PRP

The PRP funds approximately 250-300 policy-related research projects at any one time. Currently, these provide evidence to inform policy on:

- health protection including antimicrobial resistance, healthcare acquired infections, CJD, infectious diseases, counter-terrorism;
- health promotion including obesity, nutrition, tobacco, sexual health, drugs, alcohol, foetal alcohol syndrome, teenage pregnancy;
- health inequalities;
- specific disease areas such as coronary heart disease, stroke, and diabetes;
- screening policy such as screening for cancer and hepatitis C;
- child and maternal health;
- mental health including suicide prevention, social exclusion, child and adolescent mental health, mental health legislation;
- vulnerable or at risk groups such as older people, and those with disabilities;
- adult Social Care including people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, social services provision, and modernising social care;
- services outside hospital including managing long-term conditions, and care services partnerships;
- primary care services including improving access to care;
- emergency care services;
- information and communications technology including telemedicine, health devices;
- workforce in social care, medical, nursing, and associated health professionals.

Criteria for funding

Applications will be judged on the quality of the research proposed, relevance to policy, and ability to deliver to the specified milestones and deadlines. Proposals will be expected to demonstrate feasibility of practical application, value for money, and appropriate, sound, and rigorous methodology and design.

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme 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. The programme commissions research in three different ways:

- advertising standard calls for research proposals that address specific topics;

- advertising special calls for research proposals that address themed areas; and
- by funding HTA clinical trials and evaluation studies that are proposed directly by researchers.

Calls for Proposals:

Standard Calls provide support for research proposals with four rounds per year. Further information about the type of proposals considered suitable and the assessment process can be obtained from the commissioning briefs.

Themed calls provide funding for research around identified themes where research is particularly needed. Current themes include:

- Obesity.
- Diagnostic tests and test technologies.
- Healthcare associated infection.
- Emergency medicine, pre-hospital care, trauma.
- Medicines for children.

HTA Clinical Evaluation and Trials has expanded its remit with grants now available for evaluation studies as well as the normal clinical trials on topics proposed directly by researchers. Research proposals on alcohol misuse and its clinical complications are particularly welcome as are applications in other areas of research.

Health Services Programme (HSR) has the aim of increasing service quality and patient safety through better ways of planning and providing health services. The programme will fund both primary research and evidence syntheses, depending on the availability of existing research and the most appropriate way of responding to important knowledge gaps.

The programme will fund all types of study proposals expected to enhance knowledge and understanding in the field of HSR.

The types of projects the programme may fund include:

- Cultural and organisational issues around patient safety;
- applied methodology research (that falls outside the MRC-NIHR Methodology Research Programme remit) such as development of patient-reported health status measures and specific risk adjustment models for existing databases;
- making better use of existing research knowledge through modelling;
- knowledge exchange/transfer within organisations;
- measurement of quality improvement.

Application Process

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Researchers are invited to submit expressions of interest (EOI) for primary research or evidence synthesis that are within the remit of the programme.

Prior to making an application, researchers may lodge an EOI so that a remit check can be made and advised accordingly.

Applicants who do not submit an EOI will still be able to submit when the formal call for proposals opens, but will not have benefited from the opportunity to receive early feedback on the likelihood of their proposal falling within the HSR programme's remit.

Public Health Research (PHR) Programme commissions research to provide new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider effect of non-NHS interventions e.g. prevention of obesity in children and speed humps for the prevention of road traffic accidents.

The PHR programme mainly works in responsive mode, taking applications for both primary and secondary research and assessing them at regular intervals. The programme funds primary research at all phases but especially pragmatic evaluation studies. Applicants can submit outline proposals at any time during the year, with three cut-off dates when applications will be considered by the programme advisory board

The Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (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. Its 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.

All are welcome to submit a preliminary application at any time, however there will be three submission deadlines each year.

Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) Programme commissions research on the way health services are organised and delivered by the NHS. The research is designed to help health practitioners, managers and policymakers improve the quality of patient care, the efficiency of health services and, ultimately, the health of the public.

The research is commissioned in two different ways: by advertising standard calls for research proposals that address specific topics as agreed by the panels, and by funding research proposed directly by researchers.

Call for proposals: Topics for research will be advertised regularly in calls for research proposals. Primary research submissions are first made in outline, with shortlisted research teams invited to submit full proposals for consideration by the Board.

NHS Physical Environment Research Programme aims to improve the patient environment by encouraging the exploration of topics related to the physical environment within the primary and secondary healthcare sectors. Proposals are currently encouraged in the following areas with an overarching emphasis on economic and sustainable issues: infection control, decontamination, sustainability, older people, mental health and learning disabilities, space and design, strategy for the physical environment. Please note that the examples given are a guide but are not exhaustive. Other topics will be considered for funding but they must relate directly to the built environment or address issues of practical concern. Proposals and bids are invited on a quarterly basis and are welcome from the NHS, companies, consultancies and academic institutions.

Research Capacity Development (RCD) Programme provides support, guidance and academic training pathways for the next generation of researchers as they progress through their career. The RCD programme makes research training awards to individuals who show the potential to become research leaders in their particular field and whose research is people or patient-focused and relevant to the NHS.

Under the programme, funding is available for the:

- NIHR Fellowship Scheme.
- NIHR Clinician Scientist Award (these awards are intended to build a cadre of research-led clinical academics capable of leading research in their discipline and will provide up to five years post-doctoral funding).
- NIHR Clinical Academic Training Pathway for Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professions.
- NIHR Research Methods Programme (to support the development of individuals with expertise in research methods including health statistics, health economics, clinical trial design, and operational research and modelling).

Methodology Research Programme (MRP) with the Medical Research Council (MRC) is a funding programme led by the MRC with a broad scope covering the remits of the MRC and the NIHR including research on methods development to underpin the biomedical sciences, experimental medicine, clinical trials, population

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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).

[National Horizon Scanning Centre](#)

The National Horizon Scanning Centre appraises new technological developments to provide the Department of Health and policymakers with information on their implications to the NHS both in clinical and economic terms. The centre's appraisals include new medicines, medical devices, diagnostic tests and procedures, surgical and other interventions, rehabilitation measures and new public health and health promotion messages. **The Centre is based at the University of Birmingham.**

FURTHER HELP

The Birmingham Clinical Research Academy is a joint initiative between the University of Birmingham and our local NHS partners with Professor R Lilford as its Director. Through the Birmingham Clinical Research Office it will assist academics and their NHS collaborators with NIHR funding applications. Application procedures tend to be more complex when applying for NIHR funding than when applying to a Research Council and the Academy is able to give dedicated help with completion of application forms, identification of suitable collaborators through to final sign off via both the Finance Offices of the University and the NHS Trust.

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