



**National Institute for
Health Research**

BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 6.11

NIHR HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH PROGRAMME

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This Implementation Plan provides details on one of the key components of that strategy: The NIHR Health Services Research Programme. This document will be regularly updated. The latest version should be used.

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The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) has established a new Health Services Research (HSR) programme to fund health services research projects that are not currently being funded by the existing NIHR, DH and MRC programmes.

Aims

- The HSR 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 health services research.
- Health services research is intended to produce rigorous and relevant evidence regarding use, costs, quality, access, planning and organization, financing, and outcomes of services that will lead to improvements in health and health services. Health services research addresses the broad range of aspects of the quality of services: access and equity in provision, relevance and appropriateness to the needs of individuals and communities, effectiveness and efficiency, how services are experienced. The Health Services Research Programme will therefore clearly address all three of the main dimensions of quality that currently are of central concern to the NHS: patient safety, patient experience and effectiveness of care.
- The programme will not support research that is covered by the remits of the existing health services research related NIHR programmes, including the Health Technology Assessment (HTA), Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO), Methodology Research and Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) programmes, or of the DH Policy Research Programme.

¹ Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy. The NHS contribution to health research in England. Department of Health. 2006.

Funding

- The funding available will be up to £5 million per year.
- We expect that primary projects will cost between £100,000 and £2 million, while evidence syntheses will cost in the region of £250,000.
- The budget of the Programme will enable it to fund single large studies of national or international importance that would be beyond the capacity of most other funders.

Selection Process

- The programme will operate in researcher-led mode accepting applications for both primary research and evidence synthesis studies.
- A two-stage assessment process will usually be followed with an outline application followed by shortlisting and a request for full applications to be considered by the HSR Board.
- In the first instance, researchers will have the option to use a single stage or two-stage process. A call has just closed which invited researchers to submit proposals for consideration by the HSR Board early in 2010. The next call for proposals will be for two-stage applications and is likely to open at the end of February 2010, closing in April for first consideration at the July 2010 HSR Board meeting.
- Expressions of interest submitted to the programme via the website will be used to help to guide researchers. Applicants will be able to submit outline research applications to the programme at any time via an electronic application form. A number of cut-off dates will be given in any twelve-month period.
- The programme may also make a call for proposals seeking to commission research in a particular area or with a particular theme.

Eligibility

- NHS organisations, Universities, and other public sector research organisations are eligible to apply.

Selection Criteria

- In assessing proposals, the HSR Board will use the following criteria:
 - Whether the proposed research addresses a particular research need for the NHS
 - Scientific quality of the proposal including the likelihood of the study:
 - making a substantial advance in scientific understanding and knowledge;
 - leading to a substantial improvement in health or health services;
 - increasing our understanding of the broader topic area
 - Feasibility of the proposed study
 - Demonstration of the necessary skill mix, experience, project management and infrastructure for success.

Post-award management and publication

- Successful applicants will follow standard NIHR contracts and payment schedules.

- The HSR programme will offer support to ensure that research projects are successful and timely. Communication will be maintained with research teams through advice, regular and ad hoc progress reports and teleconferences.
- Projects will provide progress reports at least six-monthly, with some projects providing more frequent updates.
- Applicants will need to submit a final report in line with standard NIHR processes, and which will go through an expert review process. The NIHR contract withholds 5-10% of any award subject to receipt of a satisfactory report.
- Researchers will be expected to follow good clinical practice guidance and other research governance standards where relevant.
- There will be a public record (archive) of all HSR programme outputs, through either the NIHR website or another public access site. Applicants will be expected to submit papers for publication in relevant peer-reviewed journals, and details of these will be published on the website.
- Final reports and research papers that have been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal will be deposited at the earliest opportunity – and in any case within six months - in UK PubMed Central www.ukpmc.ac.uk.

Public involvement call

- The NIHR Public Involvement Research Programme, funded by NIHR through Involve, will be delivered by the HSR programme with a total budget of £1million.

Implementation Timetable

- Jan 2009 – Call for expression of interest.
- September 2009 – Close for expression of interest.
- October 2009 – Call open for outline and full proposals.
- December 2009 – Close of call for outline and full proposals.
- January 2010 – First meeting of HSR Board.
- February 2010 – Second meeting of HSR Board.
- March 2010 – Public involvement call open for outline proposals.
- March 2010 – Third meeting of the HSR Board.
- April 2010 – Public involvement call closes.
- July 2010 – Fourth meeting of the HSR Board.

Further Information

Further information about the NIHR HSR programme is available at www.hsr.nihr.ac.uk/.

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