



**National Institute for
Health Research**

BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 6.3a (established)

NIHR HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT 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 more details on one of the key components of that strategy: NIHR HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT (HTA) PROGRAMME.

The NIHR HTA programme has been fully implemented.

Version: 5

Issue date: July 2009 (final)

Aims

- The National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment (NIHR HTA) programme aims to deliver high quality outputs of relevance to the NHS. Research outputs cover the effectiveness, costs and broader health impact of health technologies, and are communicated to those who use, manage and work in the NHS.

Purpose

- The NIHR HTA programme seeks to ensure that high quality information on effectiveness, costs and broader health impact of health technologies is produced in the most effective way and is brought to the attention of those who use, manage and work in the NHS.
- The programme considers the effectiveness and appropriateness of technologies by asking four fundamental questions:
 - does the technology work?
 - for whom?
 - at what cost?
 - how does it compare to alternatives?

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

- The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is a key strategic partner. The NIHR HTA programme supports the development of NICE guidance. Work has been undertaken to take forward prioritised primary research identified by NICE. The HTA programme also considers other relevant NICE research recommendations with a view to commissioning further research when possible
- Technology Assessment Reports (TARs) aim to produce reviews for NICE within six months of commissioning through the HTA programme. In addition, and in response to the Single Technology Appraisal process developed by NICE, TAR teams are delivering assessments of single technologies within eight weeks.
- In response to the public health white paper and the Wanless Report, a HTA new panel was established in 2005 to identify and prioritise research in public health of relevance to the NHS, with £9.2 million invested. The panel is also developing close and complementary links with the recently established NIHR Public Health Research programme, which evaluates non-NHS public health interventions.
- The HTA programme makes an annual themed call for research proposals: In 2006 this supported the new Medicines for Children Research Network and eight projects were funded at a cost of over £5 million; in 2007 nine projects in the area of emergency medicine, pre-hospital care and trauma were funded at a cost of over £9 million; in 2008 six projects in the area of healthcare associated infection, were funded at a cost of over £5 million. The 2009 call is in the area of diagnostic tests and test technologies for which 66 outline proposals are being considered.
- An important new area of work for the NIHR HTA programme is the HTA Clinical Evaluation and Trials (formerly HTA Pragmatic Clinical Trials) funding stream, established in 2006, and operating solely in researcher-led mode. Grants for 54 projects have been awarded and are currently being negotiated, with 37 of the studies now underway. This is a rolling funding stream and grant applications can be made at anytime. More recently the remit of this funding stream has broadened and grants are now also available for evaluation studies falling within the remit of the HTA programme, as well as normal clinical trials.
- The HTA programme continues to commission clinical trials through its established commissioning routes where research priorities of importance to the NHS are identified by engagement with specialist groups, the NHS and the researcher community.
- Funding for clinical trial units (CTUs) in England with provisional or full NIHR CRN (previously UKCRN) registration through the provision of advanced 'support' funds has been established. This will allow funded units to develop their staff and skill mix, increase capacity and in turn increase the volume of quality NIHR trials on their portfolios. This funding will help ensure sufficient research capacity to support expansion in clinical trials activity. A budget of £3.5 million has been committed in phase one with funding awarded to 18 units.

Funding

- The programme's annual budget is planned to grow by a further £29m as a result of the *Best Research for Best Health* Research Strategy; and a further £48m following the Comprehensive Spending Review and the increase in the Joint Health Research Fund, both by 2012/13 compared to 2005/06 levels. This overall budget of £88m by 2012/13 will support more HTA trials in all commissioning routes.

Process

- The NIHR HTA programme currently operates mainly by open calls for proposals answering specific questions, following topic identification and prioritisation, which will continue.
- HTA Clinical Evaluation and Trials operates solely in researcher-led mode.
- The programme publishes around 50 monographs a year in the internationally acclaimed series *Health Technology Assessment*. The journal's 2007 Impact Factor of 3.87 (received in June 2008) ranks it in the top 10% of health and medical related titles in terms of influence and citations.
- The programme also produces a series of Update Newsletters, detailed case studies of research areas, and a quarterly CD-ROM of published research.
- The Programme Director is Professor Tom Walley, CBE.

NIHR TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT REPORT (TAR) TEAMS

Aims

- To produce reviews for NICE within six months of commissioning for their Multiple Technology Appraisal process.
- To produce Evidence Review Group reports in support of Single Technology Appraisals within eight weeks of commissioning.

Purpose

- The TARs commission research in the form of assessments of clinical and cost-effectiveness through the NIHR HTA programme. TARs are primarily produced for NICE and other policy customers as appropriate.

Process

- Currently seven university teams are contracted to undertake TARs and Evidence Review Group (ERG) reports on specific topics.
- TARs support NICE appraisal committees and are published in the *Health Technology Assessment* journal.

Funding

- The planned budget for 2009/10 is £5.02 million.

Further information about the NIHR HTA programme

Further information about the programme is available at www.ncchta.org/.

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