

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH

RESEARCH CENTRES FOR NHS SERVICE QUALITY AND SAFETY

*(subsequently re-titled Research Centres for NHS
Patient Safety & Service Quality)*

INVITATION TO SUBMIT PRE-QUALIFYING QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTION

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This document sets out the **detailed process for the selection** of the NIHR Research Centres for NHS Service Quality & Safety and invites appropriate NHS/Academic partnerships to **submit a Pre-qualifying Questionnaire**.

BACKGROUND

The aims of the NIHR Research Centres for NHS Service Quality & Safety will be to:

- **drive forward improvements** in quality and effectiveness, particularly in the domain of safety of NHS services;
- **translate advances** in health services research² and patient safety research into benefits for patients and the public; and
- provide a key component of the NHS contribution to our nation's international competitiveness by **making the best centres even better**.

To achieve these aims we will:

- support a **critical mass** of **people and infrastructure** in Research Centres focused on **service innovation** and **evaluation** relating to **patient safety**.
- provide **substantial levels** of **sustained funding** to create an environment where **innovative safety systems** can readily be developed and evaluated, attract the foremost talent and produce world-class outputs; and
- bring together NHS professionals with other research skills including social sciences and management schools to create a **critical mass** of internationally recognised **expertise and infrastructure** focused on research into the **safety of services** and their **delivery and organisation**, to promote **quality and safety** for the **benefit of patients**.

The key characteristics of NIHR Research Centres for NHS Service Quality & Safety are therefore:

- existing **research excellence**; and
- existing **critical mass**.
- track record of excellence in **partnership** outside the NHS and mainstream academic partners.

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

² Including social sciences and management research.

The selection criteria will therefore focus on:

- existing **research quality**; and
- existing **research capacity**
- strong **forward plan**

ELIGIBILITY

In order to ensure critical mass, focus, and clarity, the funding for each NIHR Research Centre for NHS Service Quality & Safety is expected to be awarded to a single NHS organisation working in partnership with a University(s)³ or academic partner(s).

In exceptional cases, where material evidence is provided of an impending merger between two or more NHS Trusts, we will accept a consortium proposal from these Trusts with their University/academic partner(s).

NUMBER OF NIHR RESEARCH CENTRES FOR NHS SERVICE QUALITY & SAFETY

The number of NIHR Research Centres for NHS Service Quality & Safety Centres has not been determined in advance. It will be determined by the quality of the applications, in the light of the need not to spread the funding too thinly.

A preliminary analysis indicates that we are likely to fund a total of two Centres.

SELECTION PROCESS

The NIHR Research Centres for NHS Service Quality & Safety will be selected by **open competition**.

The timetable will be:

- April 2006: publish **Invitation to Submit Pre-qualifying Questionnaire**. This invites those NHS/university partnerships which judge themselves to have the most substantial portfolios of truly world-class research on NHS service quality and safety in England to complete a standardised **pre-qualifying questionnaire**
- 24th May 2006: deadline for **receipt of pre-qualifying questionnaires**
- June 2006: peer review panel identifies a **short-list** of those NHS/university partnerships which, on the basis of the pre-qualifying questionnaire, appear to have the most substantial portfolios of truly world-class research on service quality and safety in England
- June 2006: invite **full applications** from short-listed NHS/university partnerships
- September 2006: deadline for **receipt of full applications**
- September/October 2006: peer review panel identifies **final short-list** for site visit and interview
- 14th-16th November 2006: **site visits** and **interviews** with shortlisted NHS/University partnerships
- December 2006: **confirm** selected Research Centres

Pre-qualifying questionnaires and full applications will be considered by an **expert peer-review panel with international membership**.

³ The term University is used here to include all Higher Education Institutions

MINIMISING BUREACRACY AND BURDEN

We want to **minimise bureaucracy** and ensure that the selection process is as **swift and simple** as possible for those wishing to apply to become Research Centres for NHS Service Quality & Safety.

We also wish to avoid unnecessary work by NHS/University partnerships which do not stand a realistic chance of success, while maintaining the principle that all NHS/University partnerships from England may apply if they wish.

To achieve this, the process will be in two stages:

- pre-qualifying questionnaire
- full application

To further minimise the burden on applicants, we will **use information which is already available**, wherever possible.

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED BY INTERESTED NHS/UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS AT THE PRE-QUALIFYING STAGE

We want to know the **track-record** of the NHS/University partnership in conducting research on the delivery of high quality, effective and safe NHS services, the research **capacity** of the partnership and the **quality** of its research.

To assess this, we require information in four areas: **people, funding, publications, and strategic partnerships**.

Research Staff

One of the main measures of research capacity, is the number of people who are engaged in research. We are therefore asking NHS/University partnerships to tell us the number of people who are employed by the NHS Trust or by the partner University and who are conducting research on service quality and patient safety of the highest quality, as part of the partnership between the Trust and the University. We want to make this process as simple and non-bureaucratic as possible.

We therefore want to know, in the arena of service quality and patient safety and directly related, relevant research:

- the number and names of research-active staff in the above categories who are **employed by the University** and any who have an **honorary contract with the partner NHS Trust**; and, separately
- the number and names of research-active staff in the above categories who are **employed by the NHS Trust** and any who have an **honorary contract with the partner University**.

In the interests of simplicity, please state the number of individuals, not the number of whole-time-equivalent staff. This data must be auditable: should we ask for it, you must be able to provide documentary evidence of the contracts of employment (substantive and honorary) for each staff member whom you have counted.

Research Funding

The volume and source of external research funding received by the NHS/University partnership, and which drives costs in the NHS partner, provides an indication of the quality and scale of the research conducted by the partnership. Although NHS Trusts have already provided this information as part of their R&D Annual Reports to the Department of Health, this information covers all areas of research activity. Interested NHS/University partnerships are therefore asked to provide details of the external grant funding awarded for research into service quality and patient safety (and directly related, relevant, research), since 1st January 2001. The information should be provided using the proforma available on the DH website; the funding for each partner should be presented separately.

Research Publications

The number and nature of publications produced by the NHS/University partnership provides an important indication of the partnership's research productivity and quality. We are therefore asking interested NHS/University partnerships to provide a list of highly cited publications and/or high impact publications in the field of service quality and patient safety research (and directly related, relevant research), **led by** researchers from their NHS/University partnership and published since 1st January 2001. Publications must be counted only once.

The publication list should be submitted in the Vancouver format, accompanied by a link to the relevant PubMed record, using the proforma available on the DH website.

NHS/University partnerships which have undertaken a bibliometric analysis demonstrating the quality and impact of their publication output in this area of research, should submit this analysis, together with a detailed description of the way in which it was conducted.

Strategic Partnerships

Interested NHS/University partnerships are asked to describe briefly the role of the organisations which will participate in the proposed centre, outlining the strengths of the partnership and the range of skills and disciplines that will be brought to bear on the research. A brief description of the research strategy for the proposed Research Centre should also be provided.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE PRE-QUALIFYING STAGE

The selection criteria for this stage will be :

- the **track-record** of the NHS/University partnership in conducting **high-quality** research on service quality and safety (and directly related, relevant research); and
- the **research capacity** of the partnership.

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED

NHS/University partnerships that are interested in being considered for a NIHR Research Centre for NHS Service Quality & Safety should complete and submit the following documents which are available from the DH website (<http://www.dh.gov.uk/research>):

- **pre-qualifying questionnaire** in Microsoft Word
- **details of research-active staff** in Microsoft Excel
- **details of research funding** in Microsoft Excel
- **publication list** in Vancouver format in Microsoft Excel

These documents should be attached to an email and sent to: David.King@dh.gsi.gov.uk

If additional evidence is to be submitted, this should also be attached to the email.

The closing date for submission of pre-qualifying questionnaires and any related material is **Wednesday 24th May 2006 at 5:00pm**.