

NIHR Themed Call: Specification Document

Promotion of good mental health and the prevention or treatment of mental ill health

A call for research for the promotion of good mental health and the prevention or treatment of mental ill health ¹ across the whole life course.

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) welcomes proposals for clinical and applied health research that evaluate healthcare interventions, health services, social care or public health measures operating at either the individual, or the population level. Issues of particular interest include proposals that utilise new digital health technologies or investigate their effects.

Studies may include individuals with co-morbid conditions included in HRCS category 'Neurological' provided the main focus remains the mental health condition.

Applications are encouraged that include geographic populations with high disease burden which have been historically under served by NIHR research activity. Relevant information is available as a guide for applicants at <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/atlas-of-variation> (2015 Compendium) and [NIHR recruitment data](#) provided by the CRN.

Applicants should justify the importance of their proposed research and identify how these support aspirations for research in mental health set out in the [Five Year Forward View For Mental Health](#) and the 'Framework for Mental Health Research in the United Kingdom' led by the Department of Health.

Supporting information:

Mental ill health is the largest single cause of disability in the UK and represents around 28% of the national disease burden. It is the nation's leading cause of sickness absence, accounting for 70 million sick days in 2007 and also costs the UK economy £70-£100 billion per year; 4.5% of Gross Domestic Product (Chief Medical Officer's report, 2014 [annual report on Public Mental Health](#)).

According to the CMO's report, there is a very significant overall treatment gap in mental healthcare in England, with about 75% of people with mental ill health receiving no treatment at all as well as a large 'premature mortality gap': people with mental ill health die on average 15-20 years earlier than those without, often from avoidable causes.

¹ The remit for this call are conditions included in the Health Research Classification System (HRCS) category 'Mental Health'; Depression, schizophrenia, psychosis and personality disorders, addiction, suicide, anxiety, eating disorders, learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders and studies of normal psychology, cognitive function and behaviour.

Proposals focussing on conditions within the 'Neurological' category may apply to the participating programmes' open calls at any time.

How to apply:

Research proposals must be within the remit of at least one participating NIHR programme. Applications which span the remit of one or more NIHR programme will be welcomed. In these cases proposals should be submitted to the programme within whose remit the major part of the work lies. The inclusion of patient and public views and experiences are considered important by each participating programme.

Applicants who are unsure which programme to apply to may wish to send a short summary (maximum 1 page) of their research proposal to themedcalls@nihr.ac.uk

Applicants from England may wish to contact their local RDS to discuss their application.

All applicants should take note of:

- the remit of each of the [participating programmes](#) (see list below)
- the [existing NIHR portfolio](#) of published and funded projects in these areas to avoid duplication of research.
- the current programme [funding opportunities](#) and [potential research topics](#) under development. Some of the NIHR programmes have open calls in Mental Health, and applicants should avoid submitting dual bids.
- that after the initial call close dates, the participating programmes will continue to be interested in receiving research proposals for the promotion of good mental health and the prevention or treatment of mental ill health in areas not otherwise well covered in their portfolios.

Participating Programmes:

The following seven NIHR managed research programmes:

- Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME)
- Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR)
- Health Technology Assessment (HTA)
- Invention for Innovation (i4i)
- Programme Grants for Applied Research (PGfAR)
- Public Health Research programme (PHR)
- Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB)

The following two NIHR research training programmes:

- Research Professorships
- Clinician Scientist

For areas of specific interest to the programmes please see below. For further information on the remits and call open and close dates of the participating programmes please see:

<http://www.themedcalls.nihr.ac.uk/>

EME Programme:

Applications to the EME Programme may test interventions for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of mental ill health, or the promotion of good mental health. Applications should examine the efficacy of interventions, and may explore the mechanisms underlying possible

efficacy. Applications may investigate novel or repurposed interventions and technologies, but studies of incremental or minor improvements to existing technologies or the discovery of new biomarkers are not within the remit of the EME Programme.

Particular areas of interest include personalised or stratified care, and the use of novel study designs or existing data where their use can help deliver robust findings more quickly or with better value for money.

HS&DR Programme:

The HS&DR Programme funds research to produce evidence on the quality, accessibility and organisation of health and social care services. Robust mixed methods studies are invited for the following topics with a focus on organisation and delivery of services, costs, quality and patient experience. Issues of particular interest include services for people of any age with an eating disorder (including the integration of tertiary care with local services); service models to improve the assessment and management of individuals with serious mental health problems presenting to emergency services in the community, and service models and interventions for the assessment and management of PTSD in armed forces veterans in the UK.

HTA Programme:

As part of this wider call for research for the 'promotion of good mental health and the prevention or treatment of mental ill health' the HTA Programme is particularly interested in receiving applications that address the issues identified as priority areas for research by relevant James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnerships. The HTA Programme also has a number of specific mental health commissioning briefs, currently open or planned, which may be applied to separately from this themed call.

i4i Programme:

The i4i Programme supports the development of innovative technological solutions with potential to influence the care pathway, improving outcomes for mental health service users. Applications fitting the i4i programme remit are encouraged but not limited to the following areas: more effective screening and diagnosis of mental health conditions; the treatment and management of mental health conditions; and improvement of the physical well-being of those with long term mental health conditions. Applicants are encouraged to contact the i4i secretariat before submitting an application. The i4i programme will not support basic research activities such as biomarker discovery.

PGfAR Programme:

Applications to the PGfAR Programme are likely to describe substantial programmes of research involving a number of discrete but inter-related components or activities which together have potential for benefits to patients and the NHS within 3-5 years of the end of the grant.

PHR Programme:

The PHR Programme evaluates non-NHS public health interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health. The programme is keen to consider proposals that operate at a population level and which focus on environmental and social determinants of mental health. We are interested in scalable interventions to promote good

mental health or prevent mental ill health across the life-course. We are also interested in population interventions aimed at reducing the impact of poor mental health and/or the health inequalities characteristic of mental health issues. Where justified proposals may focus on populations that are defined by social determinants, rather than by mental health disease. Health economic evaluations are of interest and we recognise that interventions may be multi-component and that long term follow-up may be necessary to demonstrate effect.

RfPB Programme:

Applications to the RfPB Programme should arise from daily practice in the NHS and must demonstrate a trajectory to patient benefit. The programme supports applications which are regionally derived and are concerned with studying the provision and use of NHS services, evaluating the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of new innovations and interventions, and developing and refining new interventions, scales or outcome measures. The programme also welcomes applications for feasibility studies, and applications exploring the potential for improving patient health and wellbeing through needs assessments, evidence synthesis, systematic reviews, and qualitative, mixed methods and exploratory studies.

NIHR Research Training Programmes:

All NIHR research training programmes are aimed at developing tomorrow's research leaders and are available at a range of levels depending on the applicant's background and experience. Research Professorships and Clinician Scientists will participate in this call, and further NIHR training awards will be potentially involved in the call at a later date.

The opening and closing dates for the participating research training programmes is available at: <http://www.themedcalls.nihr.ac.uk/>