

# Technology-Enabled Social Care Highlight Notice

**This opportunity is now closed**

## Overview

---

**Opportunity status:** Closed

---

**Type:** Programme

---

**Opening date:** 10 July 2024

---

**Closing date:** 30 October 2024 at 1:00 pm

---

**Reference ID:** 36303

Under its highlight notice call, “Technology-Enabled Social Care”, the NIHR Research Programme for Social Care (RPSC) is inviting proposals for collaborative research projects that examine the development and utilisation of digital technology in social care. This includes artificial intelligence prev(AI) or digital devices in the provision of social care and/or to support any aspect of the lives of adults or children with social care needs in the UK.

The call offers researchers considerable flexibility to focus on any subject area or topic providing that it falls within the remits of RPSC and the Technology-Enabled Social Care highlight notice. We particularly encourage research proposals into ambitious and novel uses of technology. This includes addressing new concepts and techniques and those with the potential for significant improvement to the lives of people with social care needs and/or economic impact, as well as developmental work potentially leading to such research.

We are keen to encourage collaborations with a range of organisations including small or medium enterprises (SMEs).

We welcome ideas from new researchers including those with limited research experience such as early career researchers, but they must be supported by an experienced, strong, and multi-disciplinary team. This call also includes an RPSC Early Career researcher sub stream: please see the RPSC scope below for further information.

## Funding

Our funding decisions are based on assessments of quality, timeliness, potential impact, and value for money.

The amount awarded and the length of the funding period depends on the nature of the proposed work. Strong justification for the research duration and funding requested is required and will be considered by the reviewing committee. Value for money is an important criterion used by the funding committee. Detailed information on eligible costs can be found in the [RPSC finance guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-programme-social-care-rpsc-guidance-stage-1-applications) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-programme-social-care-rpsc-guidance-stage-1-applications>)

## Webinar

A virtual Q&A webinar for this call took place on Tuesday 23 July from 10am to 11am for potential applicants.

A copy of the slides and a recording of the webinar are available upon request, by contacting the RPSC team at [rpsc@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:rpsc@nihr.ac.uk) (<mailto:rpsc@nihr.ac.uk>).

## Call timetable

### 10 July 2024

Highlight Notice - Call launch

### 30 October 2024

Highlight Notice - call close

### 13 February 2025

Invited to Stage 2 decision

### 15 July 2025

Funding decisions

# This opportunity is now closed

You can review information about this funding opportunity in our application system

[View details \(https://ccfrms.nihr.ac.uk\)](https://ccfrms.nihr.ac.uk)

## Key details

- The call is open to both existing and new digital technologies, AI and devices.
- Applications can include both exploratory and more experiential studies.
- The research scope is broad, and therefore includes identification of barriers to the take up and utilisation of digital technology, AI and devices, and strategies to address these barriers. It also includes ways to reduce inequalities in care access using digital technologies, as well as studies looking at AI and devices in new / little used settings.

## Background

Digital technology has the power to transform services and people's lives. It provides social care with huge opportunities. Digital, AI and technology products are recognised as key societal enablers, including in social care, for example to increase the time and/or quality of face-to-face care interactions for both carers and people who draw on social care support, to support independence and improve quality of life.

The DHSC 10-year vision set out in [People at the Heart of Care](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>), published in 2021, focuses on three objectives for people who draw on formal care and support, their families, unpaid carers and the social care workforce:

1. People have choice, control and support to live independent lives.
2. People can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support.
3. People find adult social care fair and accessible.

This call is an important part of RPSC's strategy to generate evidence to increase the effectiveness of social care services, provide value for money and benefit people who need or use social care services and carers. It supports our [strategic focus of building capacity and capability in social care research](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/best-research-best-health-next-chapter) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/best-research-best-health-next-chapter>).

Our definition of technology-enabled social care includes using technology to support the secure and effective commissioning and delivery of care services. This could encompass the [Skills for Care definition](https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Managing-a-service/Digital-technology-and-social-care/Digital-technology-in-social-care.aspx) (https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Support-for-leaders-and-managers/Managing-a-service/Digital-technology-and-social-care/Digital-technology-in-social-care.aspx): “Digital can include technology and computer systems and encompasses a variety of subjects including use of the internet, technology enabled care, social media, digital care applications, consumer or mainstream technology, cyber-security, machine learning and artificial intelligence.”

In **adult social care**, applications must describe how the research will provide a clear benefit to social care users and/or the system. Where possible applications should demonstrate how they are in alignment with one or more of the objectives set out in [People at the Heart of Care](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform) and one or more of the identified [priorities for innovation and scaling](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accelerating-reform-in-adult-social-care-in-england/accelerating-reform-in-adult-social-care-in-england-priorities-for-innovation-and-scaling) (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accelerating-reform-in-adult-social-care-in-england/accelerating-reform-in-adult-social-care-in-england-priorities-for-innovation-and-scaling) within them:

## **Objective 1 People have choice, control and support to live independent lives**

- Priority 1: community-based care models such as shared living arrangements
- Priority 2: supporting people to have greater control over their care options, such as by using digital tools to self-direct support or communicate needs and preferences
- Priority 3: investment in local area networks or communities to support prevention and promote wellbeing, enabling people to age well in their communities
- Priority 4: ways to support unpaid carers to have breaks which are tailored to their needs

## **Objective 2. People can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support**

- Priority 5: digital tools to support workforce recruitment and retention, for example through referral schemes
- Priority 6: develop and expand the impact of local volunteer-supported pathways for people drawing on care and support
- Priority 7: ways to conduct effective carers’ assessments with a focus on measuring outcomes and collaboration

- Priority 8: services that reach out to, and involve, unpaid carers through the discharge process

### Objective 3. People find adult social care fair and accessible

- Priority 9: digital workforce development and market shaping tools with capability to map, strengthen and grow local workforce capacity relative to system demand
- Priority 10: social prescribing to connect people with information, advice, activities and services in the community
- Priority 11: ways to better identify unpaid carers in local areas
- Priority 12: ways to encourage people to recognise themselves as carers and promote access to carer services

In children's social care, research must be in line with the principles of the [Children's Social Care National Framework \(.PDF\)](#)

([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657c538495bf650010719097/Children\\_s\\_Social\\_Care\\_National\\_Framework\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657c538495bf650010719097/Children_s_Social_Care_National_Framework_December_2023.pdf)). Applications will need to demonstrate how any technology-enabled social care interventions will increase the effectiveness of social care services, provide value for money, and benefit young people using children's social care services and/or carers.

## Scope

Proposals should be within the [RPSC scope](#) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-programme-social-care-scope>) and the scope of the Technology-Enabled Social Care highlight notice.

Applications should, wherever appropriate, be co-produced with people who use social care, service commissioners, providers, and carers to ensure findings are of immediate relevance and utility in policy and practice.

The RPSC call is inviting proposals to investigate any aspect of technology-enabled care in supporting adults or children with social care needs and/or their carers.

Proposals could involve new digital technology and/or AI and can use existing commercially available physical devices (which will have a digital component) and data for research with appropriate interoperability and/or in combination with new digital tech or AI methods.

The development of new **physical** devices, so called "me too" devices (e.g. room sensor or sensing bed mat or minor iterations of) will not be supported unless it is:

- In a novel, disruptive area where competitor analysis shows there is no competitor, AND
- The proposed device has significant benefits over existing physical devices or combinations of devices.
- Applicants must have established the novelty claim and competitor analysis prior to applying to the call and justify this in the application.

Consideration of the interoperability and standardisation of digital provision within the existing environmental value chain is essential, as is the sustainability of any resulting services developed.

Research methods may be qualitative or quantitative but must involve a significant element of primary research to investigate the use of digital technologies, AI or devices in supporting individuals to live independently, support the care workforce to deliver care more effectively, or support carers wellbeing.

All social care settings are in scope, including private homes, residential care homes, other specialist accommodation, day care centres and other community settings.

The research must evaluate benefits across the range of stakeholders involved and consider sustainability beyond the end of the activity.

Proposals must clearly identify the research context in terms of recent and currently funded UK and international research in the area and the potential impact of their proposed research for people with social care needs, carers, members of the social care workforce and/or services.

Where feasible applications should consider the sustainability as well as the economic implications of technologies developed or tested.

Themes of interest include but are not limited to:

1. Incorporating a technology-enabled care approach to support individuals with daily care needs to increase their independence around their physical living environment; this could include supporting self-paying individuals to make choices about their own social care goals or providing oversight / reassurance to their relatives/carers of their ongoing wellbeing. It could include proactive, prospective monitoring of physical health and mobility, and demonstrating the associated costs and benefits to all relevant stakeholders.
2. Using digital technology, AI and devices to address social care service provision to enable care workers or carers to spend greater time delivering face-to-face care across a range of

environments.

3. Using digital technology, AI and devices to enable children supported by social care to transition to adult services smoothly whilst also providing opportunities to maintain connections with age-appropriate people safely.
4. Using digital technology to address areas of inequity in recipients of care funding e.g. digital inclusivity, service and information access and employment opportunities to support independence, confidence and dignity.

Applications through the Research Programme for Social Care should have:

- A clear pathway to social care benefit that could be immediate or over a longer-term
- A strong link with people who need or use social care, carers and organisations which provide social care services or other relevant groups
- An appropriate team, likely consisting of social care researchers, members of the social care workforce, carers, methodologists and people who use social care, reflecting the nature of the application

## **Requirements for applications submitted under the highlight notice**

- Applications under the Technology-Enabled Social Care highlight notice must make it clear how the research topic fits within the scope of the highlight notice.
- The notice is open to researchers at any career stage from across the UK; standard eligibility rules will apply as detailed in the RPSC Stage 1 Applicant guidance.
- A virtual Q&A webinar for this call took place on Tuesday 23 July for potential applicants. A copy of the slides and a recording of the webinar are available upon request, by contacting the RPSC team at [rpsc@nhr.ac.uk](mailto:rpsc@nhr.ac.uk) (mailto:rpsc@nhr.ac.uk).

## Supporting Information

- [Guidance for stage 1 applications](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-programme-social-care-rpsc-tech-enabled-social-care-highlight-notice-guidance-stage-1-applications) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-programme-social-care-rpsc-tech-enabled-social-care-highlight-notice-guidance-stage-1-applications)

## Research Support Service

Got a research idea and not sure how to turn it into a funding application? The free NIHR [Research Support Service \(RSS\)](/support-and-services/research-support-service) (/support-and-services/research-support-service) supports researchers in England to apply for funding. It can help you develop and deliver clinical and applied health, social care and public health research post award.

## Download application form template

You can download a template of the application form below. Please use this template as a guide to help you prepare your application. This Word document of the Stage 1 application form is to be used as a guide only. It is designed to help you complete the online application form only. For example, to see how many characters are accepted in each section and to see how information in the form is laid out. Please do not try to use this as an application form. You must submit your application in our online Research Management System which you can access by clicking on the 'Apply now' links when a funding opportunity is open.

(/media/21891/download/)  
**RPSC-SAF-Template.docx**

DOCX

Last updated: 13 September 2024

**[Download document \(66.82 KB\)](#)**

## How to apply

Research proposals should be submitted through the [Research Management System](https://ccfrms.nihr.ac.uk/) (https://ccfrms.nihr.ac.uk/).



The deadline for Stage 1 applications is 30 October 2024.

Applicants considering submitting an application may wish to submit an outline of their proposal for guidance before official submission. This can be done using the [pre-submission form](https://forms.gle/2uhd8c8gBdFGJmLBA) (<https://forms.gle/2uhd8c8gBdFGJmLBA>). This is not mandatory and purely aimed at helping potential applicants to engage with the requirements of the call (e.g. to check for eligibility and remit). Please mention you are applying for this highlight notice in your submission.

## Contact Details

- For help with your application contact [rpsc@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:rpsc@nihr.ac.uk) (<mailto:rpsc@nihr.ac.uk>)
- For more information about the funding Programme, visit the [RPSC page](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/research-programme-for-social-care.htm) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/research-programme-for-social-care.htm>)
- Got a research idea and not sure how to turn it into a funding application? The free NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) supports researchers in England to apply for funding, and to develop and deliver clinical and applied health, social care and public health research post award. [Find out how the RSS can help you](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/>).