

**Commissioning Brief  
13/05 - Call for Expressions of Interest: Production of Evidence Syntheses for the  
HS&DR programme**

**Closing date: 21 March 2013**

**Call**

The HS&DR programme wishes to produce evidence syntheses which will be of immediate use to the NHS in order to improve the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of the NHS including delivery of services.

The purpose of this call for **expressions of interest** is to identify suitable applicant teams or reviews units able to undertake batches of evidence syntheses for the HS&DR programme. Whilst in the main syntheses will be drawn from existing work, on occasion there may be a case for doing a small proportion of fieldwork in order to improve the usability of the final output.

Teams expressing an interest should demonstrate the following:

- Expertise in review methods
- A proven track record in producing evidence syntheses in health services research topics. Key skills will include information science and retrieval expertise, critical appraisal and knowledge/understanding of evidence sources.
- Evidence of access to a network of experts in various health service delivery and organisational disciplines (content expertise) as well as in health services research.
- Established links with the NHS - familiarity with service issues is essential.
- Familiarity with Department of Health and NIHR policy and goals would be helpful.

The Policy Research programme has a call closing on Tuesday 19 March 2013 for “review facility to support national policy development and evaluation.” For information on the differences between the calls, please contact [hsdrinfo@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:hsdrinfo@southampton.ac.uk)

**Scope**

The aim of the reviews is to address knowledge gaps for the programme’s audiences in key areas spanning the full range of its remit, which will be specified by the HS&DR programme. These will be areas of importance to the service, where there is a reasonable level of published evidence but these may be dispersed, with useful lessons for the NHS from other sectors, countries or a broad range of literature. The finished products are designed to summarise key evidence for busy managers and clinical leaders, while evaluating the quality of information and strength of findings. The aim is for an authoritative single-source document which provides simple top-line messages in complex areas.

The output will be an evidence synthesis – that is, a comprehensive review of published literature with explicit search strategy, appropriate range of sources and critical assessment of quality of evidence and strength of findings. This will not be restricted to systematic reviews based solely on clinical trials, and the programme is not specifying methodology for synthesis; this will depend on the subject and nature of available evidence. These will typically relate to complex health service topics as diverse as the programme’s research users including busy NHS managers and clinical leaders.

The NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC), based at the University of Southampton, manages evaluation research programmes and activities for the NIHR

In commissioning a centre with critical mass of reviewers, we would expect there to be efficiencies in activity. As a rough guide, under present ad hoc commissioning arrangements, each review would take around six to nine months (usually with one dedicated research fellow or equivalent doing most of the core review work). We will be commissioning for expertise in reviewing complex literature and in general knowledge of health service research and management topics. Subject experts may need to be co-opted by the centre for particular topics.

Successful applicants will be expected to deliver up to five evidence syntheses a year depending on the size of the reviews<sup>1</sup>. Therefore an adequate core team needs to be demonstrably in place at the start of the contract. However there will be a need to bring in additional specific expertise for certain topics.

### **Assessment process and timetable**

Expressions of interest will be considered by the programme directors and a number of teams will be invited to submit a full application form to the HS&DR commissioning board. One representative from each team submitting an application form is likely to be invited to interview by the board.

Expressions of interest must include:

- Consideration of the criteria set out in this call for expressions of interest
- A statement of the general approach to be adopted
- A description of the centre or team; its overall capacity and ability to recruit/supervise/direct resources as needed
- Brief CVs of the likely lead applicant and two other likely to be named as co-applicants should a full application be invited. The roles of these individuals and their level of input must also be stated
- Arrangements for project management of the work and contract
- Details of the resources required to undertake the work over the life of the contract

The on-line expression of interest application form should be completed and submitted by **1.00pm on 21 March 2013**.

### **Probity & handling conflicts of interest:**

A competing interest will include any financial or other relationship with, or interest in, an intervention or service or application to be reviewed.

Any competing interests will be adjudged against individual syntheses. Any possible conflict of arising from a particular topic should be declared to the HS&DR programme at the time of scoping the review.

### **Transparency agenda**

In line with the government's transparency agenda, any contract resulting from this tender may be published in its entirety to the general public. Further information on the transparency agenda is at:

<http://transparency.number10.gov.uk/>

[http://www.ogc.gov.uk/policy\\_and\\_standards\\_framework\\_transparency.asp](http://www.ogc.gov.uk/policy_and_standards_framework_transparency.asp)

<http://www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk/>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: This is a maximum. The final number of reviews to be delivered will be determined by negotiations as to the size and resource required for each review agreed on a case by case basis during the lifetime of the contract.