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NIHR Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR) programme
Researcher-led workstream: Specification

1. Remit

The HS&DR programme funds research to improve the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of the NHS, including evaluations of how the NHS might improve delivery of services. The audience for this research is the public, service users, clinicians and managers.

The HS&DR programme aims to produce rigorous and relevant evidence on the quality, access and organisation of health services, including costs and outcomes. The programme will enhance the strategic focus on research that matters to the NHS including research on implementation and a range of knowledge mobilisation initiatives.

The NIHR HS&DR programme is funded by the NIHR, with contributions from NISCHR in Wales, the HSC R&D Division, Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland, and case by case contributions from the CSO in Scotland.

The programme operates two funding streams; researcher-led and commissioned. Researchers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are eligible to apply for funding from either workstream under this programme. Researchers in Scotland may apply to the researcher-led workstream but are not eligible to respond to the commissioned workstream and should contact the CSO to discuss funding opportunities for healthcare delivery-type research.

2. The researcher-led workstream

The researcher-led workstream focuses on research into the quality, appropriateness, effectiveness, equity and patient experience of health services. The aim is to fund research that will lead to improvements in health services that will be of greatest benefit to the NHS and to patients. We are interested in a range of types of research including primary research and evidence synthesis.

We are particularly keen to see large scale studies of national importance. This means primary research projects which:

- Address an issue of major strategic importance to the NHS, with the cost in line with the significance of the problem to be investigated
- Are likely to lead to changes in practice that will have a significant impact on a large number of patients across the UK
- Aim to fill a clear 'evidence gap', and are likely to generate new knowledge of direct relevance to the NHS
- Have the potential for findings to be applied to other conditions or situations outside the immediate area of research
- Bring together a team with strong expertise and track record across the full range of relevant disciplines
- Will be carried out across more than one research site.

If you are planning a project of this type you may wish to refer to the MRC Complex Interventions Framework

Areas of interest: The researcher-led workstream has a continued interest in applications for research in areas highlighted as a priority in previous NIHR themed calls.

NIHR Themed call	Close date
Dementia	May 2011
Surgical and implantable devices	May 2012
Primary Care Interventions	May 2013
Very Rare Diseases	Feb 2013
Antimicrobial resistance	Jan 2014
Long Term Conditions in children	May 2014

The HS&DR programme will fund both primary research and evidence syntheses, depending on the existing research and the most appropriate way of responding to important knowledge gaps. NHS organisations, universities, and other organisations are eligible to apply, though applicants must demonstrate that the research team includes the range of expertise necessary for the work proposed.

3. Assessment criteria and process

The HS&DR programme is Needs-led, Science-added and Value for Money.

- We are **Needs-led** because we assess what questions are important to the NHS, and in what priority they should be answered.
- We are **Science-added** because we ask whether the proposal meets the scientific quality we insist on, and we support the delivery of quality research through our monitoring process.
- We provide **Value for money** because assessment of need and scientific support maximises the relevance and benefits achievable within the funds available.

Applicants must submit an outline proposal which will be subject to a remit and competitiveness check prior to consideration by the HS&DR Researcher-led Panel. Proposals shortlisted by the Panel will be required to submit a full proposal which will be subject to external review prior to consideration by the HS&DR Researcher-led Board. For applications for evidence synthesis research the researcher-led workstream now operates a one stage straight to full application process (this does not apply to evidence synthesis applications responding to a call in the commissioned workstream). Evidence synthesis applications submitted via this route will be subject to a remit and competitiveness check prior to consideration by the HS&DR Researcher-led Board.

<u>Selection Criteria</u>

In assessing proposals, the Board will use the following criteria:

- Importance of the suggested research to the needs of the NHS and delivery of health services;
- Scientific quality of the proposal including the likelihood of the study:
    - making a substantial advance in scientific understanding and knowledge;
    - leading to a substantial improvement in health or health services;
    - increasing understanding of the broader topic area;
- Feasibility of the study;
- Demonstration of the team's skill mix, experience, project management and infrastructure for success;
- Whether costs of the proposed research are realistic and value for money.

4. General guidance for applicants

The programme aims to commission high quality, well designed research which will be carried out by effective and efficient research teams, providing findings which meet the needs of NHS managers and leaders. NIHR experience suggests the importance of the following:

Theoretical framing and empirical methods

Issues should be addressed in a way likely to lead to the wide applicability of findings. Applicants should clearly demonstrate links between theoretical and empirical work. Large projects will need various methods, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches matched to study questions and with clear understanding as to how findings from different approaches will be integrated.

Research team makeup and expertise

Large projects are likely to need teams with significant input from a number of disciplines. All project proposals should include details of how the project will be managed including who will be the project manager, a role which should be appropriately costed where necessary. This role may be played by the Chief Investigator or another designated team member. A Project Manager role description is included in the full proposal guidance notes. For projects involving a number of institutions or component parts, effective project management is essential to ensure the work is completed within the planned timeframe.

Stakeholder and public involvement

Applicants should demonstrate involvement of all relevant stakeholders (including, where appropriate, local communities, ethnic groups, patients and the public, carers as well as health care practitioners and managers) during the design, execution and communication of the research. Projects should explicitly outline how the proposed work could lead to enhanced public and community engagement.

Partner

Given the aim of the HS&DR programme, successful projects are likely to involve partnership working between experienced academic teams and those involved in the delivery of services.

Research governance

Applicants should ensure their proposal complies with the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care. Successful applicants will be required to provide proof of research ethics committee approval for their project, if required.

Costs and value for money

We will fund a range of projects in both size and duration. Value for money will be an important consideration and project costs will be carefully scrutinised and must be well justified. NIHR programmes fund Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at a maximum of 80% of Full Economic Cost (except for equipment over £50,000). For non-HE Institutions, NHS R&D may fund 100% of costs. The HS&DR programme reserves the right to award a grant for less than the amount sought by applicants where appropriate.

5. Dissemination and knowledge mobilisation

Applicants should make clear how findings will be communicated effectively to a wide variety of academic, policy and public audiences. Researchers should recognise that the HS&DR programme funds projects which show a creative and proactive approach to engaging with the NHS management and leadership community. Researchers of successful projects will be expected to deliver the following written outputs: an executive summary with clearly identified policy, managerial and practice implications; a full report detailing all the work undertaken; and supporting technical appendices.

Applicants should outline plans for conference, seminar and other forms of dissemination to go alongside written communications. Where appropriate, the proposed work should lead to peer-reviewed publications.

6. Further information

Any questions in relation to this call for proposals should be sent by email to hsdrinfo@southampton.ac.uk. Applicants should be aware that while every effort will be made to respond to enquiries in a timely fashion, these should be received at least two weeks before the closing date.

Full details regarding closing dates, selection criteria and assessment processes, guidance on completing the online application form, FAQs and other relevant information are available on the website. We strongly recommend that you review this information before completing your application form.