The NIHR Public Health Research Programme

The NIHR Public Health Research Programme (PHR) funds evaluations of public health interventions delivered in settings outside the NHS, and is multidisciplinary and broad in scope. The PHR programme complements the work of the NIHR Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme, which funds evaluations of public health interventions delivered within, or commissioned by, the NHS.

PHR funds evaluations of the effectiveness, including acceptability and wider impacts, and the cost effectiveness of non-NHS interventions. It does not, as a rule, fund developmental research. Whilst the primary setting for the intervention must be outside the NHS/healthcare system, the project may receive partnership funding from the NHS.

The programme is open to researchers from both academic and non-academic settings. Applications from researchers from non-academic settings will be strengthened if they include academic partners. The lead applicant must be from a non-NHS organisation.

Applicants to PHR need to demonstrate how the intervention and its evaluation will improve the health of the public and reduce health inequalities.

As with all NIHR funding programmes, evidence of public involvement in the development of the research will be a key criterion for success.

Examples include examining whether regeneration programmes improve public health and reduce health inequalities, evaluating employer schemes to encourage walking or cycling to work and assessing interventions that encourage healthy eating among school children.

For more information on PHR: http://www.phr.nihr.ac.uk/

For more information on HTA: http://www.hta.ac.uk/

NIHR SDO and HSR funding streams merging

From January 2012 these two programmes will merge and issue joint calls. The aim is to reduce bureaucracy and simplify the funding streams, with the process more evolution than revolution. The merged programme will be known as Health Services and Delivery Research (HS&DR). Existing projects will continue unaffected and the merged budgets of the two Programmes will be retained but not ring-fenced.

The HS&DR Programme (http://www.netscc.ac.uk/hsdrr/) will support pilot and feasibility studies, definitive primary research projects and secondary research (systematic review). Single primary research projects will be funded to a maximum of £2m. Like the existing Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Programme, bidding will be a two-stage process with outlines prior to full submission.

There will be two panels to consider proposals. A largely commissioned research stream will consider proposals in the area of Health care Delivery Research (HDR panel) under the leadership of Kieran Walshe. Ray Fitzpatrick, Director of the HS&DR programme, will continue to lead on Health Services and Delivery Research (HSR panel), considering predominantly researcher-led proposals.
In the last newsletter we reported on progress with the Bursary scheme. This is being piloted in the North West to support research funding applicants with up to approximately £350 to facilitate public involvement in the development of applications for research funding streams, such as the NIHR for Patient Benefit scheme. Since April 2011 fifteen bursaries have been awarded totalling £4553. The Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) team have recently made revisions to the bursary form and application process after reviewing its first year of use. We are also devising a means of evaluating the scheme from the perspectives of successful and unsuccessful applicants. We are planning our approach to monitoring how the bursary is used and what difference it makes. If you think you would like to access one, contact the coordinating office at rds-nw@lancaster.ac.uk for details of how to apply.

The PPI team have been busy working with other RDSs nationally and with INVOLVE to share good practice, explore concerns and develop initiatives to further promote public involvement in research. Activities include exploring the ongoing issue of training for public involvement and debating the need for national or regional databases to assist researchers with public involvement. Additional activities by PPI team members include (for Tracey Williamson) contributing to INVOLVE’s new Briefing Notes for Researchers (handbook); organising the next invoNET event (http://www.invo.org.uk/invoNET.asp); recruiting of new INVOLVE members; and re-wording of the lay CV section of NIHR research application forms; as well as publishing (Staniszewska, S et al 2011, ‘Developing the evidence base of patient and public involvement in health and social care research: the case for measuring impact’, International Journal of Consumer Studies, 35 (6), pp. 628-632.). Sara Morris has been closely involved in the development of applications for research funding.

The NWPiR Forum has Working Groups that take forward issues prioritised as a result of stakeholder consultation. The Training Working Group has been busy developing a North West patient and public involvement Training Route Map that covers (1) what training is needed for commissioners, researchers, patients and the public at each stage of the research process, (2) what training is already available and (3) where there are gaps in provision. The Route Map will be circulated to all Forum members for their comments before being published on the NWPiR website. The closing date for responses by email or telephone is the end of January 2012. Responses should be sent to t.williamson@salford.ac.uk or tel. Tracey Williamson PPI adviser on 0161 295 6424.

Individual and organisational membership of the North West People in Research (NWPiR) Forum has been growing since the launch of its website in August: http://www.northwestpeopleinresearchforum.org. The NWPiR Forum has also started to send bi-monthly e-bulletins that keep members updated on patient and public involvement and engagement news, events that are taking place across the region, and opportunities for involvement in research projects.

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The Events Working Group has also been looking at putting together a programme of events that the NWPiR Forum will host or co-host over the next year. These events will be advertised to the Forum membership and via the NIHR Research Design Service for the North West, so look out for them!

You can register as a member via the NWPiR Forum website (as above) or by contacting the Forum Facilitator Marisha Palm at marisha.palm@northwest.nhs.uk or on 07554413269.
My name is Dr. Beverley French and I am a Reader in Evidence-based Healthcare at the University of Central Lancashire. I am a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Research Design Service for the North West (NIHR RDS NW - http://www.rds-nw.nihr.ac.uk/) specialist adviser for systematic review. I share the adviser role with Dr. Chris Sutton who is a statistician and specialist in the design of complex intervention trials, Dr. Lois Thomas who has experience of systematic review of professional interventions and Dr. Michael Leathley who has experience in cost-effectiveness analysis. Together we have undertaken systematic reviews for the NIHR Health Technology Assessment (HTA - http://www.hta.ac.uk/) programme, The Cochrane Collaboration (http://www.cochrane.org/), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE - http://www.scie.org.uk/), the Department of Health (http://www.dh.gov.uk/), the Stroke Association (http://www.stroke.org.uk/) and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE - http://www.nice.org.uk/).

My particular area of expertise would be in mixed methods reviews—i.e. including forms of evidence from different types of research to maximize the ability of the findings to inform policy and practice (Harden 2010). When we think of systematic review we tend to think only in terms of mainstream Cochrane type reviews using meta-analysis. However, mixed methods reviews are increasingly being used to underpin policy. For example, a rapid review to underpin the NICE guidelines for community engagement led by Professor Jennie Popay (http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/11929/44494/44494.pdf) included a review of the evidence for client experience and the process of implementing community engagement interventions, as well as a review of effectiveness. As part of an NIHR Programme Grant for Applied Research (PGfAR - http://www.pgfar.nihr.ac.uk/) led by Professor Caroline Watkins and Dr. Lois Thomas (http://www.trialsjournal.com/content/12/1/131), the programme of research included review components for: predictors of client adherence and treatment outcome; implementation processes and feasibility; and staff and client experiences of the intervention. These combined reviews then underpinned modifications to the trial design and intervention to be tested including how to deliver the intervention; improve recruitment and adherence; ensure fidelity of intervention delivery and maintain staff and client involvement.

As an NIHR RDS NW adviser for systematic review I will be able to support your research bid in other ways such as checking information searches, or helping with information synthesis strategies for complex intervention trials. The inclusion of research synthesis in PGfAR or NIHR Programme Development Grants (http://www.ccf.nihr.ac.uk/PGfAR/PDG/) is fairly well established, but is less common in NIHR Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB - http://www.rfpb.nihr.ac.uk/) grants although some reviews have been funded. The guidance states that RfPB will fund stand-alone systematic reviews where the likely outcome is aligned with RfPB programme aims, i.e. reviews that are likely to provide a guide to action, such as where it is important to have clarity about the best evidence available. Systematic review could also be funded as one element of a research plan.

Reference

For advice on systematic review during your proposal development please contact rds-nw@lancaster.ac.uk

Calling all previously unsuccessful research proposals

• Do you have a project that was not successful in being awarded funding but yet the funding body thought it was still an important area to research and the research design needed strengthening?

• Would you like to obtain funding for this project?

• Do you need help responding to reviewers comments concerning the research design?

If you answer yes to any of these questions then the NIHR Research Design Service for (NIHR RDS NW) is here to help. Our free expert advice service can help you turn your originally unsuccessful proposal into a proposal that is more likely to receive funding.

For ways to access our advice service go to http://www.rds-nw.nihr.ac.uk/about/contact.php
For advice on any aspect of your research proposal please contact the NIHR RDS NW at rds-nw@lancaster.ac.uk. Further contact details are available on our website at www.rds-nw.nihr.ac.uk.

NIHR RDS NW health economics advisers from the Mersey and Cheshire local office provided health economic support to Dr Conor Malluci from Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust for the design of the economic evaluation planned as part of the multicentre randomised controlled trial comparing antibiotic and silver impregnated catheters for ventriculoperitoneal shunts. The economic analysis will adopt the perspective of the NHS and Personal Social Services, and will estimate the incremental cost per QALY gained to inform policy on the cost-effectiveness of the two technologies.

The Development of a Parental Suicide Bereavement Training Pack for Health Professionals’ led by Dr Sharon McDonnell, a Research Associate from the University of Manchester in collaboration with Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust.

The research team were successful in their application for RfPB funding for the study titled after attending NIHR RDS NW RfPB proposal development sessions, where advice was provided on structuring and writing the proposal from NIHR RDS NW Advisers. In order to receive funding, some RfPB panel comments needed to be addressed in the area of patient and public involvement and costings. The NIHR RDS NW provided advice on the panel comments which were successfully addressed.

Are you to be involved in an application for research funding such as the NIHR RfPB programme in the coming months? If so you can influence the content of bespoke Public and Patient Involvement Facilitation events we are planning for the first few months of 2012. If you are a potential or definite applicant or will be involved with a bidding team in any way, we are here to help. Simply let us know of any suggestions for what to include that would best help you and as an experienced PPI team of advisers, we will do our best to meet your requirements. Contact us using the details below.

For advice on any aspect of your research proposal please contact the NIHR RDS NW at rds-nw@lancaster.ac.uk.

Further contact details are available on our website at www.rds-nw.nihr.ac.uk.