

Public Health Research Programme

Researcher-led call for proposals

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & GUIDANCE NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

The Public Health Research programme is part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The programme evaluates non-NHS public health interventions, providing new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider impacts of non-NHS interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health. The scope of the programme will be multi-disciplinary and broad.

This document contains information and guidance to applicants submitting a Public Health Research programme OUTLINE proposal to the researcher-led call only:

- **Part One – Useful Information for Applicants** (pages 2-4)
- **Part Two – Completing your application form** (pages 4-10)
- **Part Three – Submitting your application** (page 11)

It is important that you read these guidance notes when completing your application to ensure you provide the correct information to enable the Public Health Research programme to consider your research proposal. Further information is also available from the Frequently Asked Questions section on the PHR programme's website: <http://www.phr.nihr.ac.uk/faqs>. Applications which are not fully or correctly completed will be rejected.

To be considered in the next assessment round, applications must be received by
1pm, 10 May 2010.

Part One – Useful Information for Applicants

Remit

The main focus of the Public Health Research (PHR) programme's evaluation of public health interventions will be on effectiveness and cost-effectiveness. However, broader application, as well as acceptability to the target community and wider society, are also important to the impact and sustainability of public health programmes, and, where relevant, will also be investigated.

Applications to the PHR programme will include both primary research and evidence synthesis. The precise methods will need to be appropriate to the question being asked and the feasibility of the research, but we expect the primary research to include RCTs, natural experiments, cohort studies, registry/database studies and qualitative methods.

The evidence syntheses will need to use the most appropriate methods in systematic reviews, cost-effectiveness studies and modelling of long-term outcomes.

Eligibility

The NIHR Public Health Research programme is funded by the NIHR, with contributions from the CSO in Scotland, WORD in Wales, and HSC R&D, Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland. Researchers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are eligible to apply for funding under this programme.

Criteria for assessment of proposals

Proposals submitted to the PHR programme will undergo a two stage assessment process, using the criteria below. The Programme Advisory Board will apply criterion 1 and the Research Funding Board will apply criteria 2, 3 and 4.

1. Improving the health of the public:
 - a) What is the public health importance of the research proposed?
 - b) How far will the new knowledge gained help to improve the health of the public?
 - c) Will the research help to reduce inequalities in health?
2. Scientific quality of the proposal:
 - a) What is the likelihood of the study increasing our understanding of the topic area?
 - b) What is the likelihood of the study making a substantial advance in scientific understanding and knowledge?
3. Feasibility of the study:
 - a) Demonstration of the necessary skill mix, experience, project management and infrastructure for success
High quality studies often need a multi-disciplinary team. Applicants need to show a commitment to team working and may wish to consider a collaborative approach between several institutions. Where appropriate, the PHR programme recommends applicants engage an experienced study manager during the start up phase of the project.
 - b) Explanation and justification for estimated recruitment rates.

The PHR programme wants studies to achieve their aims. Researchers should demonstrate that they can recruit the necessary number of participants.

c) Consideration of the ethical, legal and social implications of the research proposed.

4. Reasonable costs and value for money.

There are no fixed limits on the duration of projects or funding and proposals should be tailored to fully address the problem.

Required expertise

Public health evaluations are typically multi-disciplinary enterprises and are likely to draw on the expertise of numerous disciplines. The PHR programme suggests that teams proposing randomised controlled trials include input from an experienced trials unit. A commitment to team working is encouraged and applicants should consider a collaborative approach between several institutions.

Partner collaborations

The PHR programme expects that applicants will collaborate, where appropriate, with partner organisations, such as local government and voluntary organisations.

Governance and regulation

The PHR programme expects applicants to follow ethical guidelines appropriate to the study and setting proposed. We will scrutinise proposed ethics arrangements as part of the assessment of applications. Applicants must either comply with the research ethics framework formulated by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) or obtain approval via the National Research Ethics Service. Ethical approval need not be sought prior to submission of the proposal but details of how ethical approval will be obtained should be included as part of the application.

Useful links:

- Department of Health's Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care - http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/publicationsandstatistics/publications/publicationspolicyandguidance/dh_4108962
- ESRC Research Ethics Framework - <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/research%5Fethics%5Fframework/>
- National Research Ethics Service - <http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>.
- Medical Research Council's GCP guidelines (www.mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC002416) in planning how studies, particularly RCTs, will be supervised.
- The Department of Health/MRC website (www.ct-toolkit.ac.uk/) also contains the latest information about Clinical Trials regulations and a helpful FAQ page.

Public Involvement

Public involvement is important and will be actively sought across the PHR programme. Evidence of public involvement will be sought in applications, and comments from reviewers who are members of the public will be regularly obtained.

The PHR programme recognises the importance of active involvement of members of the public in research and would like to support research projects appropriately. The PHR programme encourages applicants to consider *how* the scientific quality, feasibility or practicality of their proposal might be improved by involving members of the public. Research teams wishing to involve members of the public should include in their application: the aims of active involvement in this project; a description of the members of the public (to be) involved; a description of the methods of involvement; and an appropriate budget. Applications that involve members of the public will not, for that reason alone, be favoured over proposals that do not, but it is hoped that the involvement of members of the public will improve the quality of the application.

One Useful Resource is:

INVOLVE (<http://www.invo.org.uk>) is a National Advisory Group funded by the Department of Health, which aims to promote active public involvement in NHS, public health and social care research. INVOLVE have published a number of documents aimed at researchers seeking to involve the public in their research including:

- [Involving the public in NHS, public health, and social care research: Briefing Notes for Researchers](#)
- [Suggested guidance for grant applicants about involving the public in research](#)
- [A guide to reimbursing and paying members of the public who are actively involved in research: For researchers and research commissioners. \(who may also be people who use services\)](#)

INVOLVE also produce a useful publication aimed at members of the public wishing to get actively involved in research (other than as a study participant) [Getting Involved in Research - a Guide for Consumers](#).

Making an application

Outline proposals will be accepted on an ongoing basis. There are, however, cut-off deadlines for proposals to reach the PHR offices so they can be assessed. Applications received after the stated deadline **will not be considered** in the next assessment round and will be held over for consideration in a future cycle. Please see the PHR website (www.phr.nihr.ac.uk) for further information and updates on future deadlines. Applicants that are successful at the PHR Research Funding Board will be invited to develop their outline proposals into full proposals for consideration at a subsequent Board meeting.

Outline proposals which are deemed as outside the PHR programme remit will be assessed as to their suitability for other programmes managed by NETSCC and applicants will be kept informed. If an application form has been incorrectly completed, it will be rejected without further consideration.

After review by the Programme Advisory Board, lead applicants will be informed of whether or not their outline proposals have been shortlisted. The successful outline proposals will then be considered by the Research Funding Board. Proposals shortlisted by the Research Funding Board will be given eight weeks to prepare a full proposal for consideration at its subsequent board meeting.

If you have queries or problems preparing your proposal please use our online FAQs which provide general advice and guidance based on previous queries we have received (<http://www.phr.nihr.ac.uk/faqs>).

If you have any questions not answered in the FAQs please contact:

Public Health Research programme, NETSCC, Alpha House, Enterprise Road, University of Southampton Science Park, Chilworth, Southampton SO16 7NS. Tel: 023 8059 9697 (24 hour answer phone), Fax: 023 8059 5639, or email: info@phr.ac.uk

Part Two - Completing your Electronic Application Form

To submit an outline proposal you must complete all the appropriate sections of the online form available from the PHR website <http://www.phr.nihr.ac.uk/fundingopportunities>. We recommend that, if appropriate to your proposal, you provide a flow diagram in order to help the programme understand your study design. (This should be a single side of A4 as a .pdf file, please include the project title as a heading for the flow diagram)

Please note that the PHR programme will only accept and consider the outline application form and the flow diagram. Any other documents submitted will be removed and not considered in the assessment process.

On-screen help is provided by the 'Assistant', shown as a ? mark on screen, and you should refer to this for guidance on specific questions as you complete your application form.

Before you begin

It is advisable to save your form soon after you begin. To do this, click save and follow the instructions, making sure that you take note of your Save ID. Guidance on completing specific sections is provided below.

Research Type

Please indicate whether the proposed study is primary research or evidence synthesis. If there are any elements of primary research, please select 'primary research'.

Section A: Details of Lead Applicant

Please complete all sections and state the contribution towards the proposed project (e.g. lead applicant, principal investigator, data collection, co-ordination and project management, analysis, methodological input, consumer input). Please note that all correspondence will be addressed to the lead applicant. The lead applicant is responsible for communicating decisions from the PHR programme to members of the project team.

Section B: Project Details

Start Date

Please note that successful projects are expected to start within a reasonable time following a decision to fund.

Research Costs Requested

Applicants should note that it is in their interests to undertake a thorough, realistic and accurate costing. The PHR programme expects that costs identified should not differ between outline and full proposal stage. The Board will pay close scrutiny to increases and applicants must provide a clear and full justification for any differences. Applicants from Higher Education Institutions should enter the research grant figure as 80% of the Full Economic Cost. Applicants from other organisations (such as local government) should enter 100% of the research cost. A brief description of the research costs must be included.

<p>IMPORTANT: Please do not include intervention costs in this section. The Public Health Research programme will fund research costs but not intervention or other non-research costs.</p>
--

Although there is no limit to the amount of money you can ask for in one proposal, applicants **must demonstrate value for money**.

Please note: The Programme Advisory Board will use this section (Section C) of the form only, to assess the public health importance of the proposal. They will not see any other part of the application form. You must complete this section of the form in an anonymised format - there must not be any information that enables any individual, team or institution associated with your application to be identified.

Section C: Project Details & Justification

This section is used in the first stage of assessment of your application and it allows you to demonstrate why your chosen research area is of importance to public health. Please only provide the information requested. There must not be any information that enables any individual, team or institution associated with an application to be identified. **Your application may be rejected if such identifying information is included.** This includes any references which would enable the identification of your or your unit / team (this information is provided in other sections).

C1 What is the main research question?

Please provide a short description (in one sentence) of the main research question.

C2 Describe the intervention being evaluated.

Please provide the information requested about the intervention: what it is, the setting in which it will be delivered (for the study and, if different, when the intervention is fully developed and implemented), who will deliver it and who will provide funding.

If there are **any NHS components** (including funding and organisational support) within your proposal:

1. before continuing with your application, please refer to http://www.phr.nihr.ac.uk/fags/remit_of_public_health.asp to ensure your proposal falls within the remit of the PHR programme;
2. if you consider it to be within remit, please characterise NHS components clearly in this section to enable us to assess your application.

C3 For the main research question, please state:

- (1) the participants
- (2) the comparator (if relevant)
- (3) the outcomes

Please ensure that your proposal has clearly described health outcomes which support the remit of the PHR programme.

C4 Are there any other questions the research project aims to answer?

Please state any subsidiary questions your project seeks to answer.

C5 Please state why the research questions are important now for improving the health of the public, and will they address inequalities in health?

Please provide a clear explanation of the problem to be addressed and why it is important to public health. You should also include an explanation of how the research results will be used.

C6 Summary for the non-expert

Please provide a summary of the project to enable a non-expert reviewer to understand the following:

- How the proposal addresses the research proposed.
- How and where the research will be carried out.
- What outcomes will be used to assess the success of the research.
- What, if any, are the ethical issues involved in this study and the arrangements for handling these.
- Why this team is well placed to carry out the research.
- How the costs requested are justified.

More detail on writing for public consumption is available from the Plain English Campaign. A free guide designed specifically for the Health Sector can be found at:
www.plainenglish.co.uk/medicalguide.pdf.

Please note: The second stage of the assessment process is where the study design and scientific merit are scrutinised by the Research Funding Board and referees. They will review the whole application form, mainly using the Sections D onwards of the form, in conjunction with the earlier sections. You should provide a clear explanation of your intended study.

Section D: Summary of Evidence and Project

D1 Please provide a summary of evidence explaining why this research is needed now

Give reference to any relevant systematic review(s) and discuss the need for your study in the light of the(se) review(s). If you believe that no relevant previous studies have been done, give details of your search strategy for existing studies. Please give details of other studies currently underway, both nationally and internationally, which are relevant to the proposed study. Please explain why this research is needed now.

D2 Summary of Project

The Research Funding Board requires a clear and succinct summary of your proposed research. Please use the following headings as appropriate.

For Primary Research proposals:

- *Design:* Give a brief statement on the type of study design to be used
- *Setting:* State the setting(s) in which the study will occur
- *Target population:* Define the population from which the study sample will be recruited (e.g. women over 60, people with learning disability, deprived urban communities)
- *Intervention being evaluated:* Give a clear definition of the intervention to be evaluated and include a rough estimate of its cost.
- *Measurement of outcomes and duration of follow up:* Details should include justification of the use of outcome measures where a legitimate choice exists between alternatives, the proposed duration of the intervention and frequency and duration of follow up. Validated surrogate markers are acceptable, where appropriate

- *Sample size:* State the required sample size, giving details of the estimated effect size, power and/or precision employed in the calculation. A full justification of the estimated effect size must be provided
- *Planned analyses:* Please give details of the planned analyses
- *Project timetables including recruitment rate:* Indicate the anticipated duration of the study, paying particular attention to the expected recruitment rate and a justification for your estimate. Outline the main stages of the proposed project with expected durations.

For Evidence Synthesis proposals:

- *Methods:* Give a brief statement of the methods to be used
- *Target population and Setting:* Specify the population from the original studies to be included.
- *Intervention being evaluated:* Give a clear definition of the intervention to be evaluated and, where possible, include a rough estimate of its cost.
- *Search strategy:* Provide details of the body of existing evidence that will be covered and access arrangements (e.g. use of databases, hand-searching, communication with authors).
- *Review Process:* Explain the criteria applied to assess the quality and relevance of studies identified by the search strategy. Provide an explanation of how these will be decided if these are not yet known.
- *Expected output of research:* Outline how report conclusions will be presented: synthesis type (qualitative / quantitative) and recommendations for further research.
- *Project timetables:* indicate the anticipated duration of the study. Outline the main stages of the proposed project with expected durations.

Section E: Team Expertise

Outline the particular contribution each member of the team will make towards the project. The team should be multidisciplinary and include all relevant expertise to enable delivery of the proposed research. You are advised to consider appointing a study manager (for small studies this might be one of your co-applicants, rather than a dedicated post) – a generic job description is available here: http://www.phr.nihr.ac.uk/fundingopportunities/pdfs/studymgr_genJD.pdf. The PHR programme also suggests that teams proposing randomised controlled trials should include input from an experienced trials unit. The Research Funding Board welcomes information on your or your team's wider research activities. We are particularly keen to hear about how your previous or current work will fit with this application

Section F: Details of Co-applicants

Complete personal details for all co-applicants (other than the lead applicant who has been identified in Section A) and state their contribution towards the proposed project (e.g. data collection, co-ordination and project management, analysis, methodological input, consumer input). Please note you are limited to a maximum of 12 co-applicants at this stage. If you are invited to submit a full proposal you will be given the opportunity to increase the size of your team. Do not include collaborators (individuals who will contribute to the research but do not have responsibility for its management) in this section. You will have the opportunity to include them, if your proposal is shortlisted, at the full proposal stage.

Section G: Partner Collaboration

The Research Funding Board expects that applicants will work, where appropriate, with the relevant partnership organisations. Please state which partner organisations you intend to work

with and indicate the level of progress in developing this collaboration, specifying what role any partner(s) will have in the proposed research. Please supply as much detail as you can.

Section H: Other Key Information

H1 Please note that the PHR programme will not accept applications that are currently pending with other research funding organisations (unless under shared funding arrangements).

H2 Please provide full details on any patents (or other exploitable results) that may arise from the research.

H3 Please declare any interests that you or any of your other applicants might have. This includes, but is not limited to, any facts that, should they come to light at a future date, would embarrass either the programme or the individual who withheld the fact (e.g. if a member of the team holds a patent or has a financial interest within the research area).

Section I: Details of Suggested Referees

If your outline proposal is shortlisted by the Research Funding Board and you are invited to submit a full proposal, it will be subject to external review. You should provide details of three expert referees who will be able to provide an independent assessment of your proposal. Please note that the referees may not be from your host institution, or those of your co-applicants. You can nominate experts based outside the UK. Referees suggested will only be contacted if your proposal is shortlisted and developed into a full proposal.

You must complete the tick box at the bottom of the page to confirm that the experts listed have agreed to this nomination.

FLOW DIAGRAM

As part of your submission, if appropriate to your study, we recommend that you provide a flow diagram as this will help the programme to understand the study design. (This should be a single side of A4 as a .pdf file, please include the project title as a heading for the flow diagram) This should illustrate the study design and the flow of participants. Applicants should also describe complex interventions and controls as accurately and fully as possible within their diagram. If proposing a RCT, we advise you refer to the CONSORT statement and website for guidance (www.consort-statement.org). The .pdf file should be submitted along with your application form (details are provided below in Part 3 of this document).

**PHR Programme
December 2009**

Data Protection Act (1998): The Public Health Research programme is a Department of Health funded research programme. The NIHR Coordinating Centre for Public Health Research (NETSCC, PHR) has a contract with the government to manage the Public Health Research programme on its behalf. NETSCC, PHR is based at the NIHR Evaluations, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC) at the University of Southampton.

Your name and address and other personal information that you provide will be held on a database in our password protected network. Your details and those of your co-applicants will be retained in order to facilitate the running of the PHR programme. If your application is successful, at any stage of our process, your name and organisation details will appear on the PHR website (www.phr.nihr.ac.uk). In addition, once funding has been agreed and the contract signed, your details will appear in other PHR literature as a grantholder and may be passed to the NIHR. Your name and those of your co-applicants will be put on our mailing list. We may send you information about the PHR programme and related events in healthcare research.

For any queries or concerns about the use of your personal data, please contact info@phr.ac.uk

Part 3 – Submitting Your Application

The PHR programme requires your application form and, where appropriate, flow diagram .pdf to reach our offices before the stated deadline in order to process your application. Please note that we cannot grant any time extensions beyond this deadline and that any additional documents included will not be seen by the Board.

**The deadline for submitting applications for this call is
1pm, 10 May 2010**

Please ensure that before you submit your application, you have completed the necessary fields and saved a version of your form.

Confirmation of receipt: The PHR programme will acknowledge all submissions by email. If for any reason you are concerned that your submission has not reached us, please contact a member of the team at info@phr.ac.uk or on 023 8059 9697 (24 hour answer phone).

If, after carefully reading all the instructions, you still have difficulties completing your application, please visit the PHR programme website (www.phr.nihr.ac.uk.) which contains a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and answers. If your particular query or problem is not addressed, please telephone 023 8059 9697 and leave a message or email info@phr.ac.uk. A member of the team will contact you as soon as they are able to.