



**National Institute for  
Health Research**

**BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH**

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 6.5**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH  
PROGRAMME GRANTS FOR APPLIED RESEARCH**

*Best Research for Best Health*<sup>1</sup> set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This Implementation Plan provides more details on one of the key components of that strategy: **PROGRAMME GRANTS FOR APPLIED RESEARCH**. This document will be regularly updated. The latest version should be used.

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**Aims**

- National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Programme Grants for Applied Research will provide evidence to improve health outcomes in England through promotion of health, prevention of ill health, and optimal disease management (including safety and quality), with particular emphasis on conditions causing significant disease burden, where other research funders may not be focused, or there is insufficient funding available.
- Programme grants will be prestigious awards supporting teams of leading researchers, from the NHS and academia working together, who can demonstrate an impressive track-record of achievement in applied health research.
- These grants will allow some stability of funding to support the long-term development of top quality research groups working in the NHS.

**Purpose**

- Programme grants will support a series of high quality related projects, and associated infrastructure, which form a coherent theme in an area of priority or need for the NHS.
- These grants will support applied health research, and the programme's infrastructure needs, including: health services research; public health research; behavioural research; health economics; and modelling.

<sup>1</sup> Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy. The NHS contribution to health research in England. Department of Health. 2006.

- These grants will replace, in part, programmes of research currently supported by the Priorities and Needs (PNF) component of NHS R&D Support Funding for NHS Providers.

### **Funding**

- We will allocate funds of £75 million per year to this scheme when it reaches full capacity.
- The funding will increase over the three years of the NHS R&D transition period.
- Individual awards will be for a maximum of £2m over a period of up to five years (*ie* a maximum of £400k per annum). The amount of funding awarded will, however, be determined by the scale and nature of the research activity to be conducted.
- In all cases, funding will be awarded to an NHS organisation.
- Funding must only be used to support the recurrent costs of patient- and population-focused research.
- Eligible costs include:
  - research staff (clinical and non-clinical)
  - research support staff (clinical and non-clinical)
  - other direct research costs, including infrastructure, essential to deliver the programme
- Service Support Costs and Treatment costs are not covered by this scheme.

### **Eligibility**

- All NHS providers (including research general practices) in England may propose programmes, in collaboration with an appropriate academic partner or partners. Bids may be submitted by consortia including more than one NHS organisation. Bids may include support for patient/consumer groups leading or participating in programmes of research.

### **Selection Process**

- There will be an annual, national competition.
- The NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF) will manage the scheme.
- Application for the first round will be a two-stage process. Potential applicants will be required to submit to the NIHR CCF a brief outline of their proposal and short CVs of the principal applicants. The NIHR CCF will then invite a full application from those who meet the criteria below and are short-listed
- In order to ensure a controlled transition from the present R&D funding system to the new system, we are limiting the number of areas in which we will be awarding programme grants for the first round:
  - Mental health
  - Medicines for children
  - Diabetes
  - Stroke
  - Dementias, neurodegenerative diseases and neurology

In subsequent funding rounds (starting April 2007) we will accept outline applications in all areas of research.

- All applications will go through a rigorous peer review process by a Selection Panel that will include a broad range of expertise in applied health services research.
- For the first round only, a series of expert Sub-Panels will be convened to assist the Selection Panel by reviewing proposals in the five specific topic areas.
- An annual progress report will be submitted to the NIHR CCF who will monitor the use of funds and ensure that continued funding is justified.
- As a condition of funding, all awardees will be required to submit an 'end of programme report'.

### **Selection Criteria**

- The specific selection criteria at the outline application stage are:
  - The track-record of the applicants in conducting high-quality applied health research, as judged by publication output and previous research funding;
  - The relevance of the proposed research to the priorities and needs of the NHS;
  - The likelihood of significant benefit to the NHS and patients within a three to five year timescale;
  - The quality of the outline proposal.
  - The value for money provided by the proposal.

### **Implementation Timetable**

The planned implementation timetable is:

- 25th January 2006 - R&D strategy published confirming intention to establish the Programmes Grants for Applied Research scheme
- May 2006 - call for outline applications through the NIHR Central Commissioning Facility
- July 2006 – short-listing and call for full proposals
- October 2006 - deadline for receipt of full proposals
- January 2006 – first Panel meetings
- February 2007 – first awards confirmed
- April 2007 – first awards commence
- April 2007 – call for second round of applications

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