Identification and Prioritisation

Research topics are identified by reviewing research literature recommendations and consulting widely with stakeholders within the NHS and public health communities and through the NIHR. External engagement is also undertaken with organisations representing health professionals, commissioners, patients and carers and with policy makers.

Activities include working with experts and evidence users, organising and facilitating workshops and meetings, and undertaking analysis and managing/developing a portfolio of research topics. The ultimate focus is on ensuring that any commissioned research will deliver real benefits to the health of patients and the public and improvements in the delivery of health and social care.

Potential important research questions, addressing evidence gaps, are developed into research briefs through a process of extensive background reading, critical appraisal and input from experts. These briefs provide detailed background information on the rationale for the proposal and are used to inform the decisions of expert committees on the importance and need for the proposed research. Once prioritised, these funding opportunities are advertised as open calls on the NIHR website, which may also be supported by further promotional events, information and webinars.

Applications and Funding

The team commission research proposals via two routes commissioned (originating from a research brief produced in house by the identification and prioritisation team to address an important evidence gap) and researcher led (a proposal originating from the applicant). The applications and funding team ensure that applicants’ proposals for research address issues that matter to health and social care services, public health or Global Health, have a methodologically sound approach, are costed to deliver value against the requested investment, have appropriate team expertise and will ultimately yield impactful research. A key requirement for NETSCC is to effectively manage the use of public money on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care.

The Application and Funding team are the first point of call for applicants, covering five NIHR programmes. Our main responsibilities include the scheduling and launch of new funding opportunities, management and oversight of the external peer review of applications, application scrutiny - flagging issues to assessment committees that could impact on delivery of research, supporting applicants and organising external advisory meetings and managing the membership of committees and which assess the quality of applications for shortlisting and funding recommendations.

The application process is comparable across the NIHR programmes managed by NETSCC but may vary within a programme depending on the subject or specific requirements of a call.

Monitoring

The primary role of the monitoring team is to support projects recommended for funding through the contracting and start up process, support delivery over the live phase of the project and on to submission of the final report for publication in the NIHR journal series.

The team has many internal and external stakeholders. Internally we work closely with the Application and Funding team, Editorial team, Finance team, Communications team and Reporting team all of whom regularly use information generated during the monitoring phase.

Externally we are in regular contact with funding committee members and Chairs, project teams and host institution contract offices over the post board, contracting and start-up phase of a project to resolve committee queries and ensure projects start in a timely manner.

The active phase of a project is, for most projects, by far the longest phase in the research pathway. Throughout this phase we are in regular contact with chief investigators and trial/study managers to monitor delivery against project plans, review proposed changes to protocols and provide support when issues arise.

An important part of the monitoring role is also to monitor project compliance with the Department of Health and Social Care research contract and respond to information requests and parliamentary questions about our large and important portfolio of ongoing projects.

Portfolio Insight and Publications

The publications team manages the outputs of our research, some of which we produce, some which we support research teams to produce, and some we harvest from external data sources.

Key areas of work include managing the publication of reports in the NIHR Journals Library; tracking the outputs and outcomes from our funded research; and, undertaking analysis of our portfolio and assessing its impact.

The team manages the production and publication of the NIHR Journals and manages the NIHR Journals Library website - a key repository for findings of real importance to everyone who needs to access health research evidence and provides a full and permanent record for research funded by the NIHR. In line with the NIHR’s commitment to open access and transparency, the journals are freely available to search, view and download from the NIHR Journals Library website.

Our team actively contributes to the NIHRs adding value in research agenda, curates key thematic portfolios (e.g. Public Health, Trials), supports the NIHRs annual Researchfish submission, undertakes portfolio analysis and responds to information requests. The team undertakes multi-method research impact assessment projects that enhance our understanding of the difference NIHR funded activity makes. The team reaches well beyond NETSCC and works closely with NIHR managing centres and the NIHR Centre for Business Intelligence, Department of Health and Social Care, and other research funders.
Research Managers in each of these teams play a key role in making sure each research programme delivers a balanced portfolio of research that is important to health and social care stakeholders, patients and the public, nationally and globally.

Candidates could be based in any one of the above functions or occasionally may have a role split across more than one function. All Research Manager posts have a generic job description and person specification to support a flexible and adaptable workforce where staff at all levels may be asked to work in other functions to meet changing business or personal development needs. Typical tasks which could be part of a Research Manager role across any of the above functions are:

- **Responsibility for timely and efficient management and administration of external advisory committee meetings or project review meetings.** Related activities could include:
  - Preparing briefing papers and information packs including management of External Peer Review.
  - Attending and minuting complex discussions.
  - Accurate communication of outcomes to external stakeholders.
  - Ensuring actions are followed up and completed.

- **Responsibility for oversight of a portfolio of topic areas, applications, projects or draft journals library publications.** Related activities could include:
  - Understanding scientific content of applications, progress updates or requests for additional resources to allow high level decision making by internal and external stakeholders.
  - Understanding, communicating and responding to complex queries or issues seeking advice where appropriate.
  - Using/gaining sufficient expertise in intellectual property to act as a source of knowledge and to take appropriate action on your portfolio.
  - Ensuring research applications and projects comply with national and international guidelines such as Good Clinical Practice and the UK Policy framework for health and social care research, or requirements around use of Official Development Assistance funds for global health projects.
  - Liaising with project teams to agree feasible project plans to complete contracted work within the allocated resource envelope.
  - Monitoring progress against key milestones and deliverables. Where targets are not being met taking appropriate action with advice from colleagues as necessary.

- **Search and review health and social care research and scientific information.** Related activity could include:
  - Planning and carrying out searches of health research and related literature.
  - Critical appraisal of research evidence, reports and data.
  - Preparing and presenting briefing papers, reports and analysis.
  - Summarising potentially conflicting health and social care views and issues to support, stimulate and develop research topic ideas.

- **Building and maintaining excellent internal and external working relationships and as necessary represent NETSCC and the NIHR at nationwide events.**
- **Initiate, contribute, collaborate and facilitate external engagement activities to develop networks and support and develop the delivery of the research management function.**
- **Contributing to metrics, statistics and other management information to inform colleagues at all levels across NETSCC and to feed into external reports.**
- **Line management of staff at MSA levels 3 and/or 2b.**
- **Regular review of processes to continually identify improvements and efficiencies.**
- **Working with others across NETSCC, the NIHR and beyond on strategic and cross cutting projects.**