Here at the NIHR Evaluation, Trials and Studies coordinating center (NETSCC) our work is multi-faceted. We have a wide range of teams that cover the entire lifecycle of the research process - from identifying research topics right up to the publication of research. No matter which team you work in you will be at the forefront of our mission to, “improve the health and wealth of the nation through research.” Our people are pivotal to the success of our work, and as such we want to ensure they are engaged and able to develop. We actively encourage staff to express an interest to move teams to enable a greater understanding of the whole of NETSCC. Not only does this help to build relationships outside of your initial team, it can help with career development to enable understanding of the ‘bigger picture’ and to also have a wide range of skills and content knowledge.

Training and Development:

At NETSCC, we value having a workforce from a diverse background as this is the key to not only reflecting the society that we are looking to serve; but also ensuring we have the best people with a multitude of view. You do not need to have a specific work or academic background as full content training will be given. You will have a full induction to your work area and all new starters are assigned a buddy to help them settle into the role. In addition, you will have access to all University of Southampton training courses and materials, as well as being able to request funding for external training courses. You will receive regular 1:1’s and the opportunity to discuss with your manager any training and development needs you might need. More than anything we are looking for the key transferrable skills, the right values, and a passion for the work we do!
James Lind Alliance (JLA)

The James Lind Alliance (JLA) is a non-profit making initiative established in 2004. It brings patients, carers and clinicians together in Priority Setting Partnerships (PSPs) to identify and prioritise the Top 10 unanswered questions or evidence uncertainties that they would like to see answered by research. JLA PSPs provides an important opportunity for the users of research to help shape the research agenda. There have been over 100 completed PSPs in a wide range of health conditions and settings. PSPs take place in the UK and internationally.

The School of Healthcare Innovation and Enterprise (HEI) hosts the JLA Coordinating team. Activities include the management of enquiries about the JLA, acting as a central point of support and information where new PSPs can be developed and approved, as well as progress monitoring of active PSPs and the collection of feedback at the end of the PSP process.

The team plays an important role in building and maintaining key national and international stakeholder relationships, as well as the management and support of the JLA Executive and the JLA Advisory Group. Other activities include the coordination of NIHR-funded PSPs, working with JLA Advisers and PSP steering groups as well as the development of methodology and the maintenance of JLA Guidebook.

The team has responsibility for all communication activity for the JLA, producing newsletters, social media outputs and the maintenance of the JLA website. The Coordinating team also undertakes the procurement, monitoring and training of contracted JLA Advisers and overseeing their allocation of work.

Working with the wider team at the School of HEI the Coordinating team ensures PSP outputs are disseminated across relevant parts of the NIHR. Other activity includes monitoring and reporting of the impact of PSPs and working with stakeholders on the development of new innovations to support priority-setting activity.
Identification and Prioritisation

Research topics are identified by reviewing research literature recommendations and consulting widely with stakeholders within the NHS, 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 within the team include:

- working with experts and evidence users
- organising and facilitating workshops and meetings
- 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:

1. Commissioned (originating from a research brief produced in house by the identification and prioritisation team to address an important evidence gap)
2. Researcher led (a proposal originating from the applicant).

The applications and funding team ensure that applicant’s 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
- 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
  - 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 manage 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
- 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.
Global Health Research (GHR)

NIHR Global Health Research (GHR) portfolio was established to support applied health research for the direct and primary benefit of people in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list, using UK Aid from the UK government.

GHR is an exciting and rapidly growing area which currently manages three programmes of research as part of a wider NIHR GHR team:

1. Global Health Units
2. Global Health Groups
3. Global Health Policy and Systems Research

The secretariat works closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure the delivery of high-quality research that enables capacity building within LMICs.

The team coordinates and manages all aspects of the research project lifecycle from applications and funding to monitoring of active research projects, we also work closely with the publications team. We have to be available to answer queries, some of which can be complex, offer support to our colleagues based overseas, and in the UK, and work closely with various stakeholders. We actively support effective community engagement and involvement, research capacity development and equality diversity and inclusion within awards.

The team undertake annual reviews of the portfolio and project progress to provide evidence for the range of impact that the research funding is having within and across LMIC settings.

GHR is a diverse work area with many challenges; however, it is extremely rewarding and allows us to see the impact to others of the work we support.
Patient and Public Involvement in External Review

The team contributes towards ensuring that NETSCC funds and manages patient centric research. Evidence users of this research include:

- Patients
- Carers
- service users
- public
- clinicians
- methodologists
- researchers.

The team manages the implementation of the NETSCC PPI Framework and is supporting the development and implementation of the NIHR’s Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy.

The team coordinates and manages PPI advisory groups including the reference group and the virtual network to ensure effective PPI is embedded throughout the research management process. The team also supports local NIHR infrastructure organisations through the regional Wessex Public Involvement Network to carry out activities and events to further EDI activity.

The team oversees expert (peer) and public review, providing support across NETSCC to anyone working with reviewers or recruiting prioritisation and funding committee members. The team lead the NIHR Reviewer Development Scheme, creating opportunities for junior researchers to get involved in reviewing and, once eligible, to apply for trainee committee memberships. The team also oversees the development, planning and implementation of relevant training and learning opportunities for reviewers, committee members and staff.

The team works in partnership with colleagues across the organisation and wider NIHR to review and refine processes, and develop efficient, consistent and joined up ways of working with experts and the public. PPIER works with various regional, national, and international partners to encourage a culture of mutual learning and continuous improvement, to support adding value in research, and aid the NIHR in positing itself as a global leader in PPI.
Evidence Synthesis Programme

Evidence Synthesis identifies, evaluates, combines and summarises information from a range of sources to provide decision makers with the best possible information about the effects of tests, treatments and other interventions used in health and social care.

Sitting alongside the main functional teams, the Evidence Synthesis Programme manages two main workstreams – Cochrane and Technology Assessment Reviews (TARs).

The Cochrane activity includes the management of infrastructure contracts until April 2023. From April 2023, new Evidence Synthesis Groups will begin their contracts, providing research which will be of immediate use to the Department of Health and Social Care, and key stakeholders/audiences across all four UK nations, alongside evidence which will contribute to building and enhancing world knowledge. All topics will take account of “Best Research for Best Health: The Next Chapter” and other evolving NIHR priorities.

The TAR teams produce independent academic research which forms an important part of the decision making by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in producing evidence-based guidance and advice for health, public health and social care practitioners. You will be responsible for managing the infrastructure contracts with the teams and working closely with NICE in the allocation of research topics.

Developing and maintaining excellent external relationships are essential in both streams of work.