

NIHR SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH

Call for Research Proposals

4 August 2020

The NIHR School for Social Care Research (NIHR SSCR) invites full proposals for research projects to address priorities for improving the evidence base for adult social care (ASC). We are seeking innovative, original, high-quality proposals which represent good value for money.

This is a one-stage call for research proposals for up to £100,000 with a submission deadline of 16.30 on **Monday 30 November 2020**.

Applicants are asked to provide an expression of interest by **16.30 on Monday 12 October 2020**. This is to support NIHR SSCR in estimating the number of applications and does not commit any individual to submit an application.

1. Background

NIHR SSCR aims to develop the evidence base for adult social care practice in England by commissioning and conducting high-quality research. Over the last 11 years we have commissioned a number of research studies, and numerous methods and scoping review papers across the scope of adult social care. Further information is available on our [website](#). Our business plan for this third phase can be found [here](#).

We use a broad, inclusive description of adult social care, encompassing the wide range of care and support available to and used by adults; the diversity of services and service providers of adult social care; and care and support provided through and with unpaid care, communities, self-care and self-funded care. We are interested in all aspects of this plurality of care and support arrangements, and their development in the current context of adult social care in England. Areas of overlap and/or integration with other sectors also fall within our remit.

This call is being issued following ongoing consultation and review of the needs for ASC research.

2. The requirement

We are seeking to commission high-quality studies with the potential to influence and improve practice and outcomes in adult social care in England, to start no later than 1 April 2021.

All applications must demonstrate relevance for, and potential to improve, adult social care practice and outcomes for people in England. We accept that proposals in this call may be developmental applications for longer-term research plans in ASC.

The School is committed to commissioning research across the full spectrum of adult social care practice (user groups, carers, workforce, and settings), and will consider all proposals directly relevant to adult social care practice in England.

Before developing their ideas, applicants should consider research commissioned by the School, including its current research portfolio, and work commissioned by other relevant research funding streams such as NIHR Research for Social Care Research. Applicants are advised to consider the results of the James Lind Alliance (JLA) Priority Setting Partnership for Adult Social Work, other JLA priorities as relevant to adult social care, NIHR SSCR's [scoping review of research priorities for ASC](#) and evidence gaps identified by, for example, completed NIHR SSCR studies and other funded research and NICE social care guidance.

As well as enduring issues in adult social care, the context continues to be one of change and we are mindful that any research we commission needs to be aware of the dynamic nature of the sector. We are especially mindful of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ASC and society in general. This call is not specifically concerned with the pandemic, especially as we are aware of other funding that has sought to address COVID-19 priorities. Applications to this call do not need to be specifically about the impact of COVID-19, but nor will we exclude applications that do address this issue. What is more important is that the application addresses the other criteria of the call, sets clear foundations for considering the future of adult social care and is developmental of longer-term research to assist improving practice in the sector.

Focus on supporting new and developing principal investigators

We are seeking to encourage new and developing adult social care researchers to lead studies through this call.

We welcome proposals led by practice researchers, social care professionals (including managers and commissioners), and people who use services and/or carers, as well as researchers.

Applicants should demonstrate effective links to, and understanding of, adult social care practice in England and reflect this in their research proposal. Applicants also need to demonstrate robust methods to address the focus of their proposal.

Research proposals will need to meet our selection criteria and new/developing principal investigators should demonstrate appropriate methodological understanding/support and strong organisational support for their proposal.

Applicants should utilise the support available through NIHR for developing their proposal and, if needed, delivery of the research (see Annex I).

3. Selection criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- proposed research that is likely to have impact on improving adult social care practice in England, including that it will be timely research, or will set a clear path to further research to achieve this;

- research with a clear focus/question, and aims, objectives and appropriate methodology to achieve these;
- value for money;
- understanding of, and commitment to, equality issues and inclusion and their relevance to research;
- a commitment to impact and high-quality communication of research, through all appropriate means including traditional publication routes and directly to audiences of practitioners, managers, commissioners, and service users and carers, and policy makers;
- involvement of users, carers and practitioners in the proposed research and/or outputs;
- ethics and research governance plans;
- a team with relevant expertise and experience to support the principal investigator to deliver the proposed study.

4. Duration

Successful proposals can start on or after 1 April 2021 but must commence no later than 1 June 2021. All research projects must be completed by 31 December 2023.

5. Funding available

Funding is available for proposals up to £100,000. The School has a total budget of £800,000 available for this call and expects to commission *a range of projects* within this budget.

NIHR SSCR does **not** provide full economic costs. Universities, other HEIs and other applicants can request up to 25% of salary costs in overheads. All other costs can be included as direct costs for proposals as far as possible and fully justified.

6. Eligibility

This call is open to all organisations that can confirm they meet the requirements set out in the accompanying *Pre-qualification questionnaire*. Organisations who have not previously had contracts through NIHR SSCR or the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) will be required to complete the questionnaire and provide supporting evidence as appropriate if their proposal is shortlisted for funding.

7. Commissioning process

This is a one-stage call.

All proposal submissions will be initially assessed to ensure that they are within the remit of this call, meet required criteria and that the form has been fully completed.

All applications successfully passing this triage will be externally reviewed against the criteria set out in this research brief. Views will be sought from representatives in the field of adult social care research and user, carer, or practitioner perspectives.

Applicants will be sent reviewer comments as part of the commissioning process and provided with the opportunity to respond to this feedback in January 2021.

Eligible proposals will be considered by NIHR SSCR's Commissioning Panel with applicants informed of the Panel's decision in **February 2021**. Should further clarification be required for proposals recommended for funding applicants will be provided with time to respond to the Panel's queries in February 2021.

8. Contractual arrangements

Research agreements will be between LSE on behalf of NIHR SSCR and the host organisation. NIHR SSCR's terms and conditions are provided with the call documentation.

Successful applicants will be required to provide evidence of their organisation's employer's liability and professional indemnity insurance and a letter from their project sponsor as part of the contractual process.

Ethics

Applicants are required to demonstrate they have fully considered potential ethical issues and ethics approval processes relevant to their proposal. This includes a realistic timetable for any necessary ethical approvals to ensure a prompt start and end to the proposed project. Full details are required in the application.

Research in adult social care falls under the scope of the [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](#) and, as such, plans for ethics and governance approval need to be in line with its requirements.

Where ethics approval is required for any/all activities within the proposal, please be aware that we can only release funding for those activities once ethics approval has been provided by an appropriate research ethics committee. Funding can be released for activities not requiring ethics approval where these are stand-alone activities (such as secondary data analysis) with independent outputs. Funding cannot be provided for preparatory activities for ethics applications.

Data

We are committed to making data as openly available as possible, and for data to be re-used and archived where appropriate. All proposals will be required to demonstrate they have fully considered potential data management and archiving possibilities in their proposals. Specific arrangements will form part of research study agreements.

9. Application process

The proposal submission form, finance form and accompanying details are available on our website at <https://www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/call-for-proposals-august-2020>.

Expressions of interest should be submitted using the "Expression of interest" form on

the School's website [here](#) by **16.30 on Monday 12 October 2020**. This will enable us to plan our administrative work for processing proposals received through this call.

The deadline for full proposals is **16.30 on Monday 30 November 2020**. Completed proposals (including financial form) should be uploaded and submitted through the School's website [here](#).

No submissions can be accepted after this deadline.

Declarations on the application form need to be signed by the main host organisation. Applicants should submit the form electronically - electronic signatures are acceptable. Where the declarations are signed in hard copy, a scanned version of these should be submitted alongside a PDF of the final application (scanned versions of the full PDF should not be submitted as they are not easily readable).

For queries please email sscr@lse.ac.uk and the most appropriate person will reply as soon as possible.

Annex I: NIHR support for the development of proposals

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) regional **Research Design Services** (RDSs) offer advice to those applying for research grants from the NIHR. We strongly advise consulting your local RDS for advice, particularly methodological, before completing an application to NIHR SSCR.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-design-service.htm>

Studies funded by the NIHR SSCR are eligible to access **NIHR Clinical Research Network** (CRN) support, which is provided to social and health care research teams both in and outside the NHS. Where appropriate we expect you to apply for NIHR CRN support and subsequent inclusion in the NIHR CRN Portfolio of studies to fully benefit from the support that the CRN offers through their Study Support Service.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/study-support-service.htm>

Guidance from the **Health Research Authority** is helpful in considering ethical issues and scrutiny processes. To help avoid unnecessary delays in starting projects, before commissioning a project we may ask for reassurance that the lead applicant understands this and is fully prepared for an application for ethical scrutiny from a national research ethics committee (as appropriate to each proposed study).

<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/>

NIHR SSCR requires all commissioned research to be conducted in accordance with the **UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research**.

<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/>

The **UK Standards for Public Involvement** are a framework to help in planning how the public (i.e. in ASC people needing support and care, their carers, and practitioners in the sector) will be involved in research. NIHR SSCR is committed to the highest standards of involvement and recommends the UK Standards and supporting material to help plan this.

<https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/pi-standards/home>