**NIHR Three Research Schools’ Mental Health Programme**

**Improving mental health and wellbeing in underserved populations through collaborative research**

Masters Scholarship 2024/25

The NIHR Schools for Primary Care Research (SPCR), Public Health Research (SPHR) and Social Care Research (SSCR) (“three schools”) have joined together in a unique collaboration between leading academic centres in England to collaborate on three programmes of work funded through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR): one on mental health led by SPCR, the second on dementia led by SSCR and the third on prevention led by SPHR.

**Background:**

At least one in four people experience mental health problems, many of whom never access care and treatment. There are also large numbers of people with learning disability (prevalence c.2%) and autism (prevalence c.1%). Mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism generate challenges for individuals with these conditions, their families and the wider society, with often quite high utilisation of health, social care and other services. Those challenges are seen across the life course.

The impacts of mental health problems on individuals and the wider societal and economic consequences are multiple and vast and include above-average rates of concurrent physical illnesses, shortened life expectancy, social exclusion, socioeconomic disadvantage, and the need for health and welfare support. Despite the high prevalence, many people do not receive the support they need and there are significant inequalities in access. These underserved groups include, but are not limited to, people with learning disabilities, older people, parts of the autistic and neurodiverse community, people from Black and other ethnic minority backgrounds. There are also other geographical, demographic and socioeconomic inequalities which this call addresses.

By working collaboratively across primary care, public health and social care, we aim to address problems in a multi-professional, multi-disciplinary way and at the individual, family, group and population levels using a variety of methodological approaches. Research will be underpinned by strong and diverse public, carer, service user and patient, and, as appropriate, practitioner involvement and engagement. Our research will prioritise those groups with high needs for treatment and support, and that have been underserved by research to date.

**The requirement:**

Phase 1 of funding awarded to the Three Schools has supported 53 projects ([Three NIHR Research Schools' Mental Health Programme — NIHR School for Primary Care Research)](https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/research/three-research-schools-mental-health-programme). Funding was awarded to a diverse range of partners, including practitioners, local authorities and those working in the third sector. Funding also achieved a wide geographical reach, actively working with populations and communities not traditionally engaged in research. We have established a Fellowship scheme to develop new research capacity in key topic areas and localities in need of capacity development.

Research funding in phase 2 would build on our early successes, supporting the implementation of evidence into practice and policy. As part of our second year monitoring, we identified a number of areas that are not significantly represented in phase 1. These include suicide prevention in high-risk groups (including those working in the agricultural sector and young men), mental health in pregnancy, prison mental health, mental health in different religious groups and mental health in military veterans, but applications are not limited to these areas.

**The Opportunity**

The Three NIHR Research Schools are pleased to announce that funding for up to eight Masters scholarships is available. This opportunity is particularly relevant to those working in frontline health and care positions who want to gain expertise in research methods relevant to mental health but have limited opportunities. Applicants must demonstrate a clear commitment to establishing a long-term interest in mental health research.

The scholarship will cover the tuition fees for a UK based Master's programme.  Funding may also be available to backfill substantive employment costs (if applicable).

Applications are particularly welcomed from health and care professional groups not traditionally involved in research.

* Eligible courses include Master’s level programmes focussing on research and or research training
* Courses can be studied full-time for one or two academic years or part-time for a maximum of two academic years but STRICTLY must not extend beyond **31 March 2026**.
* You must be a home student paying home-level tuition fees and have been resident in the UK for at least five years prior to starting your undergraduate course for a purpose other than study.
* You must not hold a Master’s qualification or higher.

Successful applicants will be asked to provide confirmation that they have employer agreement for undertaking this period of study, if relevant.

You will need to have a Batchelors degree at a grade of 2:1 or above in a health, social care, or related topic. Please note that some of the Master’s courses have specific entry requirements.

The Three NIHR Research Schools are committed to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion for all staff, members and students. Applications for scholarships for part time study are welcome where the course allows.

**How to apply**

An application for these scholarships can be made by emailing a two-page CV (including relevant CPD) and letter of application (maximum of 2 pages, no smaller than 12pt font).

The letter should outline your reasons for applying for the scholarship, details of the proposed Master’s programme, start date, programme tuition fees, your health research topic/interest and the value you would get from the award with your future career aspirations.

Please email your final documents as detailed below to [c.ashmore@keele.ac.uk](mailto:c.ashmore@keele.ac.uk) by 3.30pm on 28 March 2024.

Please state ‘Masters scholarship 2024/5’ in the subject line and your documents as:

* SURNAME\_Masters\_CV
* SURNAME\_Masters\_Letter

If you have any questions, please email Claire Ashmore, Programme Manager, Three NIHR Research Schools’ Mental Health Programme [c.ashmore@keele.ac.uk](mailto:c.ashmore@keele.ac.uk)

**Selection process**

All applications will be assessed by members of the schools who have a role in career development and capacity building and will be reviewed by the Three NIHR Research Schools’ Mental Health Programme Steering Group.

TIMETABLE

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| Monday 19 February 2024 | Competition launch |
| Thursday 28 March 2024 at 3.30pm | Closing date for submission of applications |
| Wednesday 8 May 2024 | Panel to discuss applications |
| May 2024 | Competition outcomes will be announced |
| September/October 2024 | Awards may start from this date |