

NIHR Three Research Schools' Mental Health Programme

Improving mental health and wellbeing in underserved populations through collaborative research

Impact Accelerator Award for Phases I and II award holders

RESEARCH BRIEF

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 NIHR Research Schools' Mental Health Programme](#) has supported 53 projects. 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.

Research funding in phase 2 would build on our early successes, supporting the implementation of evidence into practice and policy.

The Opportunity

These awards will support and enhance the development and realisation of the impact of research in the NIHR Three Research Schools' Mental Health Programme from Phases 1 and II.

These awards have been developed to address a gap, as we recognise that the 'best way' to share and support the use of research findings may not be well understood at the outset of a project when funding for these activities is usually secured. These awards can be considered for dissemination and communication activities identified during and at the end of a project. They could also be used to track future impact. These awards enable flexibility and development of dissemination and impact after the research has been initiated or ended (please note, this funding will not support additional open access funding requests).

Funding:

Impact acceleration funding should be used to:

- Strengthen engagement with users (non-academic partners) in order to accelerate the translation of research outputs into impacts
- Support, develop and foster strategic partnerships for knowledge exchange and impact, including across disciplines and sectors
- Build and maintain an environment and culture that enables effective and ambitious knowledge exchange and impact, including development of skills, capacity and capability within research organisations
- Provide early-stage support for progressing research outputs towards the next stages in the impact pipeline,

We expect to receive a variety of applications ranging from £20,000 to £40,000 per proposal. The Programme will fund:

- 100% of the directly incurred staff time on the project
- 100% of the directly allocated staff time on the project
- Overhead of 30% of the directly incurred staff cost
- Overhead of 30% of the directly allocated staff time cost
- 100% of the directly incurred non-pay items

Awards can be of any duration but **STRICTLY** must not extend beyond **31 March 2026**.

Applications should be emailed to c.ashmore@keele.ac.uk by **Thursday 17 April 2025 no later than 12.30pm**.

TIMETABLE

Monday 10 March 2025	Competition launch
Thursday 17 April 2025 at 12.30pm	Closing date for submission of applications
April/May 2025	Panel meeting to discuss applications
April/May 2025	Competition outcomes to be announced
June 2025	Awards may start from this date