

## NIHR Three Research Schools

### Fellowships 2021

#### Mental Health Research Programme 2021-2024

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

#### 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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 two programmes of work funded through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR): one on **mental health** hosted by SPCR and the second on dementia hosted by SSCR. This document concerns the mental health programme.

The research and the capacity development strands of the programme form a matrix, with primary care, social care and public health working together to address challenges faced by those living with a range of mental health problems and their families, friends and carers. This will not only provide a new approach to tackling the issues identified but also promote broader multi-professional working.

The funding will support proposals addressing a range of conditions within the HRCS mental health category, including depression, schizophrenia, psychosis and personality disorders, addiction, suicide, anxiety, eating disorders, learning disabilities, bipolar disorder, autistic spectrum disorders and studies of normal psychology, cognitive function and behaviour. It will also include a focus on the wider determinants and prevention of poor mental health, and reduction of mental health inequalities and subsequent outcomes.

Research addressing an alternate HRCS code (such as HRCS neurological category, which includes dementia) are out of scope for this programme.

The scope of this programme is aligned with other NIHR mental health funding streams. NIHR would like to encourage research hosted based in areas identified by the NIHR ‘heat map’ as being underserved, although not all such studies need to be hosted in this way collaborators outside of these areas are welcome. (Appendix One)

We encourage organisations based in underserved regions to play a key role in hosting and leading research where appropriate (building on similar Mental Health activity, such as the RfPB/RfSC calls). We have a clear focus on capacity building in under-served areas.

Participant recruitment to studies is encouraged from underserved regions although this can be in conjunction with sites located in other regions and we recommend that mapping tools like the Research Targeting Tool are used to justify recruitment within fellowship proposals.

Special consideration should be given to the inclusion of people from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and other underserved communities that are more affected by mental health problems.

To support underserved communities, we need to better understand their needs, which are likely to be complex and span traditional health and social care boundaries. This will allow us to co-create research that has a greater impact on local populations. We will establish a series of workshops, attended by academics, practitioners, users, carers and patients or other experts by experience from the NIHR Schools for Primary Care, Public Health and Social Care Research to identify, prioritise and design mental health research meeting the needs of underserved areas.

Building on the success of the NIHR SPHR Public Health Practice Evaluation Scheme ([PHPES](#)) scheme we will develop a new programme addressing the challenges faced by front line health and social care professionals, wherever they work: in local authority teams or other departments; in the third sector; in the private sector, or in the NHS and other social care settings. More information on this will be published shortly.

## 2. BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY

To develop a critical mass of mental health research in underserved communities it is essential to build strong capacity with the expertise and local knowledge needed to make an impact.

We aim to do this by establishing:

- **Bespoke fellowship scheme** to develop new research capacity in key topic areas and localities in need of capacity development
- Masters/post-graduate training to increase research capability
- Dedicated service user, carer patient and public involvement and engagement expertise
- Early career research forum

## 3. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Three Schools aim to foster an environment of trust and co-production in mental health-related research, building on the existing involvement strategies in place within each School and following guidance and standards from NIHR.

All individual projects will be required to have appropriate and meaningful involvement; proposals that are co-produced with relevant individuals and groups will be welcomed.

## 4. SUPPORT FOR FELLOWS

All Fellows and early career researchers will be part of an early career mental health research forum. This group will meet twice a year (either face-to-face or virtually) providing additional training opportunities, networking and dissemination activity. This group will access the on-line and face-to-face training opportunities provided by the Schools. Funding for training bursaries will be provided to allow skill development in key methodological areas (e.g., systematic reviews, quantitative research, qualitative methods, trials).

Fellows will be part of the workshops and will be involved in progressing the ideas identified during them, ensuring a strong connection between research and capacity building. Fellows will be appointed to ensure a balance across both the Schools and different mental problems (as described in the background section). This approach will help Fellows rapidly develop new partnerships and allow them to gain experience in a range of methodological approaches. The

Fellows and early career researchers appointed will form a network, promoting cross-disciplinary working and to link the different strands of the programme together.

We also plan to work with the NIHR Mental Health Incubator. <https://mentalhealthresearch.org.uk/>

## References:

1. <https://hrcsonline.net/health-categories/mental-health/>
2. <https://hrcsonline.net/health-categories/neurological/>
3. [https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20201124\\_cmh20\\_statisticalrelease.pdf](https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20201124_cmh20_statisticalrelease.pdf)
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/better-mental-health-jsna-toolkit/3-understanding-people>
5. <https://acmedsci.ac.uk/file-download/63608018>

## 5. FELLOWSHIPS

Applications are invited from health and care professionals working in mental health but without a strong track record of mental health research (including but not limited to social work, nursing, midwifery, pharmacy, public health practitioners, housing providers, care home managers, paramedics) and methodologists (including social scientists, statisticians, economists and evidence synthesis experts) wishing to develop research careers in the area spanned by this programme.

There are 12 career development fellowships available: six with a starting salary of around £37k pa and six senior awards with starting salary of around £47k. The award duration is between 24 and 30 months depending on the availability of the fellow. Part time fellowships will be considered (0.6FTE minimum).

Fellows will be based across the three Schools' Departments to ensure they receive the academic support needed to develop a strong research career within the remit of this programme. Cross-institutional supervision and exchange placements will be encouraged. Awards will typically be made to those wanting to develop doctoral training opportunities (support will be available to develop an application) and to postdoctoral researchers developing a career in mental health research.

Each Fellow will become a member of one of the NIHR Schools and be able to access the wider resource available, which School will depend on professional background and research area. Fellows will also be allocated a second supervisor / mentor who is based in one of the other Schools, promoting cross-school working and awareness of the importance of cross-sector working. Each Fellow will have a personalised training budget to provide access to development activities including (and not limited to) leadership programmes and dissemination opportunities. It is anticipated that fellows will also work on and lead other initiatives associated with this programme including workshops, dissemination and networking events.

### Selection process

Applications will be considered in two groups: one for the senior fellowships and one for the earlier career fellowships. All applications received will be reviewed by a panel using these selection criteria. There will be no interviews for these awards. The outcome of your application will be communicated by the end of October.

PERSON
Commitment to research career in mental health research in the UK, particularly with reference to social care, primary care and/or public health and their interfaces
Knowledge of mental health priorities in England
Excellent written and verbal communication skills

Ability to manage own work with excellent organisational skills and attention to detail
Ability and motivation to pursue an independent research project
Evidence of ability to work as part of a team
Knowledge of some research methods
Previous research experience or formal training
<b>PROJECT</b>
Relevance of proposed project to the three Schools mental health programme
Clarity of project aims
Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) - quality of plain English summary
PPI - involvement of practitioners/users/carers/patients/other experts by experience/the public in developing this proposal and active involvement throughout the proposed project
Appropriate methodology proposed
Feasibility and likelihood of completion in available time
Fit between proposed project and proposed supervisory team interests and expertise
Attributes of the research environment to support the person and the proposed research project
Likelihood of being able to secure a further personal award or research funding at end of this fellowship

## 6. HOW TO MAKE AN APPLICATION

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to make contact with a member of the relevant School members to discuss your proposed project and agree supervisory arrangements.

<https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/news-and-events/nihr-announces-25million-funding-for-the-school-for-public-health-research-2022-2027/>

<https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/partners>

<https://www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/about-sscr/>

To apply for one of these fellowships, please complete and submit an application form and email it along with a short CV (two pages maximum) and a covering letter (one page maximum) to [e.g.fletcher@keele.ac.uk](mailto:e.g.fletcher@keele.ac.uk) by **12 noon on Thursday 7 October 2021**.

Please name your documents using the following naming convention:

Surname\_letter\_MHF

Surname\_CV\_MHF

Surname\_SAF\_MHF

## 7. TIMETABLE

13 September 2021	Pre-announcement
16 September 2021	Competition launch
7 October 2021 12 noon	Closing date for submission of applications
31 October 2021	Competition outcomes will be announced

## 8. CONTACT INFORMATION

Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact their [local Research Design Service \(RDS\)](#) for advice.

For general queries relating to the call, including queries relating to the administrative process of applying, please contact [e.g.fletcher@keele.ac.uk](mailto:e.g.fletcher@keele.ac.uk)

## Appendix One

### Analysis of Regional Mental Health Burden and Research Activity

Extracted from NIHR webpage

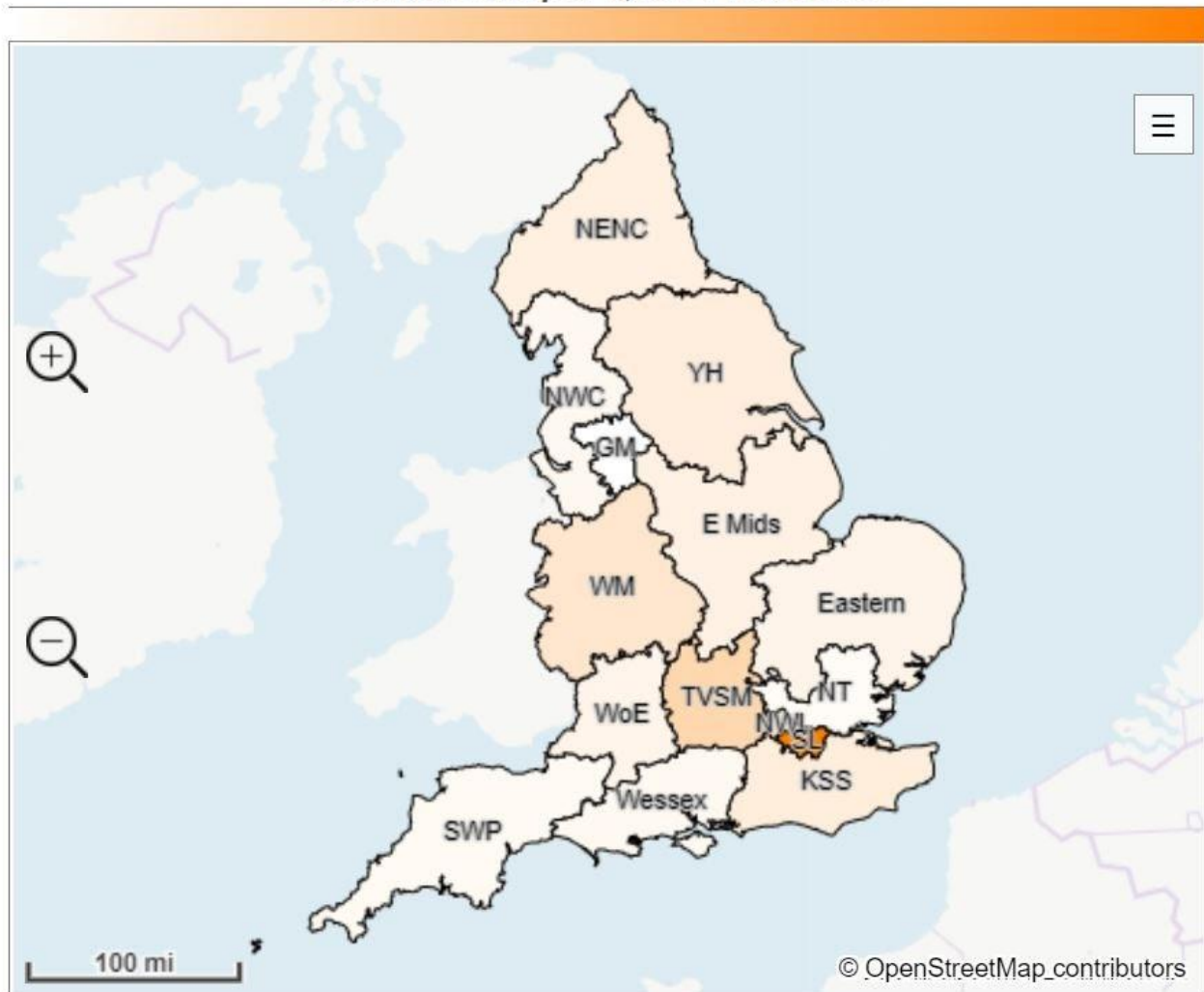
[https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/research-for-social-care-research-specification-for-mental-health-research-in-northern-england-call/28219#Analysis\\_of\\_Regional\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Burden\\_and\\_Research\\_Activity](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/research-for-social-care-research-specification-for-mental-health-research-in-northern-england-call/28219#Analysis_of_Regional_Mental_Health_Burden_and_Research_Activity)

There is a mismatch between regional research activities (measured by patient recruitment per 100,000 patients) in mental health and the prevalence of mental health conditions in England in the past 10 years (2010-19). The recruitment per 100,000 prevalence map shows where the highest proportion of people with mental health conditions are being recruited to research studies (figure 1).

The areas of highest prevalence per 1,000 map shows where mental health conditions are most prevalent, with the shade becoming paler as prevalence drops (figure 2).

Where are the highest proportions of people with common mental health conditions being recruited into mental health studies?

**Figure 1: Recruitment per 1,000 prevalence**  
**- Recruitment per 1,000 Prevalence +**

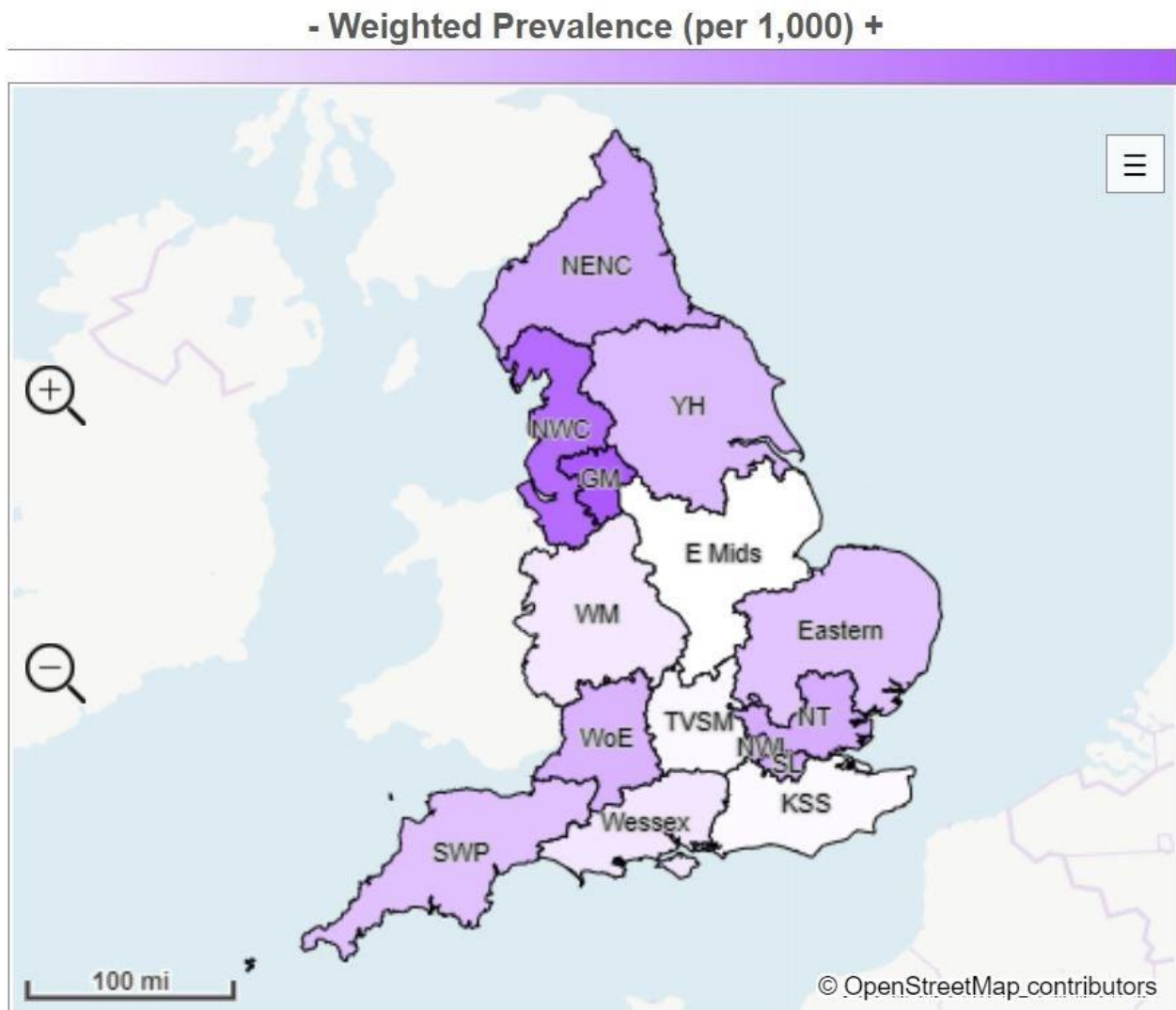


Local Clinical Research Network region	Recruitment	Prevalence	Recruitment per 100,000 prevalence
South London	22,101	387,025	57.1
Thames Valley and South Midlands	4,332	222,443	19.5
West Midlands	7,484	568,463	13.2
North West London	2,869	250,377	11.5
Kent, Surrey and Sussex	4,286	426,269	10.1
Yorkshire and Humber	6,145	630,356	9.7
North East and North Cumbria	3,427	383,540	8.9
East Midlands	3,442	420,127	8.2
Eastern	3,108	418,186	7.4
West of England	1,888	256,886	7.1
North West Coast	2,929	521,317	5.6
Wessex	1,559	289,753	5.4
South West Peninsula	1,251	250,971	5.0
North Thames	2,803	648,839	4.3
Greater Manchester	1,133	430,692	2.6
England total	68,757	6,114,244	11.2



Where are common mental health conditions most prevalent?

Figure 2: Weighted prevalence (per 1,000) +



Local Clinical Research Network region	Prevalence	Adult population	Weighted prevalence (per 1,000)
Greater Manchester	430,692	2,146,470	200.7
North West Coast	521,317	2,707,490	192.5
North East and North Cumbria	383,540	2,296,045	167.0
North West London	250,377	1,505,994	166.3
South London	387,025	2,328,617	166.2
North Thames	648,839	3,952,295	164.2

West of England	265,886	1,644,509	161.7
Yorkshire and Humber	630,356	3,971,913	158.7
South West Peninsula	250,971	1,611,110	155.8
Eastern	418,186	2,704,008	154.7
Wessex	289,753	2,065,847	140.3
West Midlands	568,463	4,088,391	139.0
Thames Valley and South Midlands	222,443	1,637,712	132.9
Kent, Surrey and Sussex	426,269	3,218,657	132.4
East Midlands	420,127	3,236,427	129.8
England total	6,114,244	39,151,485	156.2