

CRN Funding Call to meet local priority health needs: Guidance 2021/22

Introduction

In 2017, Professor Chris Witty identified the need for research to be conducted with and in the populations most affected. He stated '*Research activity should go to populations who most need it, and we would like to encourage the best researchers to undertake clinical and public health research in the areas of England with the greatest health needs*'.

To this end, a LCRN Contract Support Document was released in January 2019 enunciating a 'Programme for Change' with two linked strands of work to change the pattern of research:

1. Providing tools and support for NIHR to undertake research in the populations with the most need (identified as a CRN Coordinating Centre [CC] responsibility). An example of a valuable tool available in ODP is the Research Targeting Tool:

https://odp.nihr.ac.uk/QvAJAXZfc/opendoc.htm?document=crncc_users%5Crsearch%20targeting%20tool.qvw&host=QVS%40crn-prod-odp

2. In the 2020-21 budget a new national metric was designed to account for 4% of the overall variable national budget, as one of 5 component areas, in relation to meeting Local Health Needs. to address areas of unmet need. The CRNCC has developed a metric that compares the disease prevalence and research activity for the nine 'priority' health conditions (compressing Type I and II Diabetes into a single area) against which LCRN and CCG level ODP data is available
 - Respiratory (Asthma)
 - Respiratory (COPD)
 - Cancer
 - Diabetes (Type 1 & Type 2)
 - Cardiovascular (Heart failure),
 - Stroke
 - Dementia
 - Mental health (Common)
 - Mental health (Severe)

In developing this metric, the CRNCC has been mindful that recruitment activity is recorded in the LCRN where the participant is consented which may not be the same as the LCRN where the participant lives; that over-recruitment to a 'priority' health condition could be considered to be as unfavourable as under-recruitment; and that LCRNs can only recruit to open studies on the CRN Portfolio and cannot influence the wider NIHR infrastructure.

The metric has been applied to these health conditions and provides a score for each LCRN for each health condition. This new component addresses the request to encourage research to take place in areas with the greatest health needs and aims to incentivise:

- LCRNs to develop or maintain local Portfolios that are relevant to local populations
- Local investigators and Chief Investigators to conduct research in regions with above-average concentrations of specific health conditions in the population.

The Table below shows the current unaltered status of CRN NENC across this metric, with 0% being the optimal level, -x% shows prevalence is higher than research activity and +x% shows the converse. These figures have not been updated in 2020 due to COVID 19 work.

Disease	Asthma	Cancer	COPD	Dementia	Diabetes	Heart	MH Com	MH Sev	Stroke	CRN NENC Median	CRN NENC Mean
CRN NENC	-2%	-1%	-3%	4%	-3%	-5%	-2%	-1%	-4%	-2%	-2%

N.B. It was acknowledged that LCRNs may have other areas of health need where supporting research could be a priority.

In December 2020 CRN:NENC Partnership Group agreed that this work should be supported by a focussed call in relation to local needs given disease prevalence areas, taking into account priority and opportunity in relation to prevalence data, AHSN/ STP priority, ARC theme priority and taking into account the new metric for national funding model allocation for 2020-21:

Priority Health area	Identified AHSN/STP priority	ARC Theme	Research performance *
Respiratory (COPD)	Yes	Yes	Low

Cardiovascular(Heart failure)	Yes	Yes	Low
Respiratory (Asthma)	Yes	Yes	Low
Diabetes	No	Yes	Low
Mental health	Yes	Yes	Medium/ Low
Cancer	No	No	Medium
Stroke	Yes	Yes	Low
Dementia	Yes	No	Medium
Multimorbidity	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Public Health - Prevention	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Deprivation and Social Inequality	Yes	Yes	Unknown

*As calculated from the national metric described above

Unlimited numbers of bids can be submitted for this call but each bid can not exceed £30,000 spend within the financial year. Preference will be given to bids which target more than one priority area, are utilising digital technologies or recruitment strategies to enhance their recruitment potential or are effectively engaging with the under-served populations within the NENC region. Correlation with other in-region NIHR funding calls would also be a desired outcome where possible e.g. NIHR Applied Research Collaborative (ARC) or Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) bids.

The total spend for this call was agreed by Partnership Group in December 2020 and has been capped at £200,000 for this call. There are two further elements of Targeting Health Needs funding to be awarded in 2021-22 in addition to this call and already agreed by Partnership Group.

Funding Principles

Before a proforma is submitted, please ensure consideration has been paid to the following aspects:

- Bids must be submitted via relevant Specialty Group Leads and Research Delivery Managers, in collaboration with relevant Partner Organisations, other Speciality Groups and/or Primary Care, to support research in the priority areas (with up to £30,000 awarded to each area).
- Correlation with other in-region NIHR funding calls where possible would be prioritised e.g. NIHR ARC or AHSN bids
- Bids must demonstrate:
 - how they seek to build capacity/capability in the area of health need

- likely additional impact on either (a) recruitment into area of priority health need and/or (b) development of investigators in designated area of priority health need and/or (c) work in a new setting or accessing an under-served research population
- evidence of engagement with relevant PO/Alliance/ SGs
- evidence of collaboration with relevant primary care/ public health/ social care/ non-NHS organisations (if appropriate)
- actions to mitigate risk of underspend as this award must be spent prior to 31st March 2022
- Awards could be renewable for 2022/23 dependent on the receipt of a formal report to the LCRN Executive in March 2022 demonstrating achievement of one or more of the key objectives:
 - (a) an increase in recruitment to NIHR portfolio studies in the specialty area in more than one Partner Organisation/ Alliance within the NENC
 - (b) an increase in research capability (as measured by the number of Principal or Chief Investigators) within the specialty area(s) across the NENC
 - (c) research activity within a new setting within NENC (NHS or non-NHS) NB New is defined as a research setting with either no previous NIHR portfolio research or no research within the last 3 years (2018/19; 2019/20; 2020/21)

Notes on financial principles of CRN monies

This funding is part of the CRN North East and North Cumbria core funding allocation and as such the principles which apply to other elements of infrastructure funding also apply to this funding, these are detailed below.

- All funding MUST be used within the financial year it was provided and cannot be carried over
- Funding must be used for NIHR study delivery only
- All costing must be within the AfC/HEI salary range
- Once detailed budgets have been agreed, funding allocations should be used in line with budget plans
- The funding should not in any way be used to contribute to commercial research

Funding Timelines

Funding Approved for Call - 20th January 2020

Funding Call Opened - 1st February 2020

Funding Call Submissions Closed - 28th February 2021

Panel Meeting - W/C 8th March 2021

Executive Decision Making Board - 17th March 2021
Awards Made - 01st April 2021
Awards Completed Spend - 31st March 2022