

NIHR SCHOOL FOR PRIMARY CARE RESEARCH

Call for Statements Demonstrating Eligibility for Membership of the NIHR School for Primary Care Research

Introduction

The establishment of a new School for Primary Care Research within the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) was announced in *Best Research for Best Health*. The aim of the NIHR School for Primary Care Research, which will be the first research school to be established within the NIHR, is to increase the evidence-base for primary care practice. This will be achieved by increasing the volume of high-quality research focused on improving practice in primary care for the benefit of patients, and by providing a focus for applied research in primary care within the National Institute for Health Research. The School will be comprised of the leading academic centres of primary care research in England, and its funding (£3m *per annum*) will be used to support the conduct of clinical trials and other well-designed studies in primary care and at the interface with secondary care. Following the next RAE (due in 2008), the membership of the School will be revised accordingly.

Definition of Primary Care Research

We will apply the definition of primary care research used in the report of the National Working Group on R&D in Primary Care (the Mant Report), which recognised the following categories:

- research by primary care practitioners
 - *research initiated in primary care, where at least one principle investigator is a primary care professional*
- research through primary care
 - *research initiated by others, but where patient recruitment and data collection is mainly carried out in primary care*
- research on primary care
 - *research initiated and carried out by others, but relating specifically to the activities of primary health care professionals*

The Mant Report (and also the MRC for its primary health care topic review) defined primary care as follows:

“Primary care is first contact, continuous, comprehensive and co-ordinated care provided to individuals and populations undifferentiated by age, gender, disease or organ system.”

Primary care research areas were identified as including general practice, nursing, midwifery, health visiting, pharmacy, dentistry, optometry, and the professions allied to medicine (physiotherapy, speech therapy, chiropody, dietetics and occupational therapy). The activity of other professionals working in primary care (e.g. counsellors, social workers, community psychiatric nurses) were excluded¹.

¹ Best Research for Best Health makes clear that we intend the School for Primary Care Research to be a pilot, which, if successful, could pave the way for other Schools in the future including social care.

Selection Criteria

All academic departments of primary care in England are eligible to apply. The academic departments of primary care which were rated as 5 or 5* in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise will be invited to become founding departments of the NIHR School for Primary Care Research.

Selection Process

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has already judged the quality of the research conducted in English Higher Education Institutions through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). We intend to minimise unnecessary bureaucracy by using the outcomes of this assessment to identify the leading university departments of primary care research.

Four academic departments of primary care received a 5* rating under the Community-based Clinical Subjects Primary Care Subpanel (UoA 2s2) in the 2001 RAE:

- University of Birmingham
- University of Cambridge
- University of Manchester
- University of Oxford

On this basis, these four departments will be invited to join the NIHR School of Primary Care Research and **do not** need to make a formal submission, other than a letter of interest.

Other departments of primary care that were not submitted for assessment under UoA 2s2, but can demonstrate that they were rated as 5 or 5* in the 2001 RAE, are invited to submit a short statement to that effect. This statement should include the following information:

- The name of the department of primary care, and its head (both now, and at the time of the 2001 RAE, if different)
- The relevant RAE Unit of Assessment under which the primary care research was submitted, and its rating in 2001
- A statement of why the research was not submitted for assessment by the Primary Care Subpanel (UoA 2s2) in RAE 2001
- A list of the individuals engaged in primary care research (as defined above) submitted for assessment in 2001, indicating:
 - a) what proportion of the total staff submitted under the relevant UoA this represents
 - b) what proportion of the staff employed on academic contracts (Category A and A* research active staff) within the department of primary care were submitted for assessment under the relevant UoA
- A copy of the staff and output details for each individual submitted for assessment.
- A statement of the total research income declared for the relevant UoA in 2001, which relates to primary care research.

The DH Director of Research and Development will validate these statements and confirm acceptance to the NIHR School of Primary Care Research.

Submission Details

The deadline for submissions in response to this call is **12 noon on Friday 17th March 2006**. Submissions received after this date will not be accepted. **Only electronic submissions will be accepted and should be sent by email to kumar.kadungala@dh.gsi.gov.uk**.

Any queries should be directed towards Dr David King (david.king@dh.gsi.gov.uk).