

THE NIHR SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH

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Personal Social Services Research Unit
at the University of Manchester

Background

"We want to improve the evidence for social care practice so we can be sure that people in this country are provided with better and more effective services in the future. This new National School for Social Care Research will make a major contribution to improving the volume and quality of the research in the English social care sector" (Ivan Lewis May 2008).

"The new NIHR SSCR ... will give researchers the time and funding to ask the important questions and improve our understanding of what works, what doesn't work and why. This new School will provide considerable benefit to the health and well-being of the population through the new knowledge gained" (Sally Davies, Director General of Research and Development at the DH).

NIHR SSCR Parameters

- Adult social care practice in England
- £15 million over 5 yrs from Feb/Mar 09
- Wide consultation on research topics
- Broad commissioning of research

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Mission and Activities

Mission: to develop the evidence base for adult social care practice in England by commissioning and conducting world-class research.

Activities:

- **Conduct** high-quality research
- **Commission** high-quality research
- Provide **focus** for social care research within NIHR; promote general development of social care research
- Develop **methodological** rigour and broaden the methodological repertoire
- **Consult** widely on research priorities
- Contribute to ongoing efforts to build social care research **capacity** and improve research awareness
- **Disseminate** findings and support other knowledge transfer activities

Structure and Governance

- Director
- Intramural Members; School Executive
- Extramural Associates
- Advisory board
- User, Care and Practitioner Reference Group
- Administration

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Research Principles

- User, carer and practitioner engagement
- Highest ethical and research governance standards
- Pursuit of scientific excellence ... but proportionate to real-world relevance of the question
- Must have real-world impact
- Peer-review processes to ensure high standards and relevance
- Visibility and accessibility of information on projects and their findings

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Research – Some Themes

- Develop and use robust outcome measures
- Understand ‘process outcomes’ (how support is accessed and experienced)
- Examine cost-effectiveness
- Recognise cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic diversity
- Chart and evaluate interfaces between social care, health care and relevant other systems
- Understand consequences of practice changes for the paid workforce (all sectors) and unpaid carers

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Research Programmes 1, 2

1. Prevention and reduction

How can we best prevent or reduce the development or exacerbation of circumstances that lead to the need for social care?

2. Empowerment and safeguarding

How can we best empower and safeguard people who use social care services?

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Research Programme 3

3. Care and work

How can we best equip and support people – practitioners, volunteers, informal carers – to provide optimum social care?

How can we ensure that people who use social care and their carers are enabled and supported in paid work and other types of meaningful activity?

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Research Programmes 4 and 5

4. Service interventions, commissioning and change

What interventions, commissioning and delivery arrangements best achieve social care outcomes?

5. Resources and interfaces

How can social care and other public resources best be deployed and combined to achieve social care outcomes?

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Progress and Plans

- Consult widely on research priorities (Jan 09)
- Sign the contract (Feb 09)
- Start first round projects (Mar 09)
- Agree on research priorities (Mar 09)
- Establish research priorities (Mar 09)
- Finalize research priorities (Mar 09)
- Start second round projects (Sep 09)
- Commission reviews of methods (Mar/Apr 09)
- Tendering for second-round projects (May 09)
- Launch event (May/Jun 09)
- Start second-round projects (Sep 09)

**The bottom line is ...
... to generate research
... to improve services
... to improve lives**



