

FUNDING

Commissioned Research

HSC R&D believes that commissioned research provides the most direct way of ensuring that HSC R&D addresses the needs of the DHSSPS and the HSC and produces direct policy/practice impact and payback. The *Regional Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2008-2011* recognises “a simple reality that, in the new knowledge based global economy, innovation has become business critical for all sectors if Northern Ireland is to move up the value added chain”. The requirement to embrace innovation and knowledge transfer extends to the Government Departments and the wider HSC and is resonant with the OFMDFM requirement that policy is based on sound evidence.

The [HSC R&D Commissioned Research Framework](#) will help the DHSSPS and the HSC articulate the need for research and will accelerate the transition from opinion based policy/practice to evidence based policy/practice. Nonetheless the Framework will also reflect the reality imposed by:

- political imperative
- public opinion
- political timescale

and provide mechanisms that accommodate pragmatic priority determination with the more systematic/structured approaches.

The Framework will engage a wide range of stakeholders and user communities. These include: the DHSSPS; HSC Chief Executives, managers, clinicians and researchers; academic researchers; members of the public; patients and clients (including advocacy groups, charities etc); politicians; and our Minister.

Within the framework HSC R&D will support two broad categories of commissioned research: needs-led research that derives from an ongoing process to identify and prioritise research needs; and opportunity-led research that derives more from *ad hoc* opportunities to exploit partnership funding and Ministerial initiatives or imperatives. There is no predetermined balance between these two categories but HSC R&D Division will work within its budgetary constraints and with its various stakeholders to maximise its contribution to Health & Wellbeing.

Needs-led research

HSC R&D Division will deploy a variety of mechanisms to identify potential research needs and engage with a wide variety of stakeholders. In the context of needs-led research the DHSSPS is a principal stakeholder and HSC R&D Division will facilitate an episodic dialogue with the Department to discuss its research needs. That dialogue will be structured to ensure the various policy divisions are involved along with the various professional groupings. At any given point in time it is likely that this systematic dialogue will be augmented by topical concerns such as new policy initiatives/reviews or the work of specific

taskforces or implementation/advisory groups such as the new HSC Service Frameworks. The central dialogue with the DHSSPS will be complemented by conversations with the wider HSC including the five HSC Trusts, the Health & Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, the Business Services Organisation and the Patient and Client Council. HSC R&D Division will also follow up on potential needs-led research possibilities that arise from other sources/activities.

Opportunity-led Research

HSC R&D Division is only one of many funders of HSC R&D. Compared to other funders we have a limited budget. Funding partnerships serve to increase the total quantum of the HSC-relevant R&D funding within the province and amplify the impact of the HSC R&D Fund. There is, therefore, a prima facie case to use the HSC R&D Fund to lever in funding from other sources. In the context of commissioned research partnership funding is a direct means of leverage producing an immediate return on HSC R&D Fund expenditure. Existing funding partnerships are in place with the UKCRC, the MRC, the ESRC, SCIE, the NCI (US) Atlantic Philanthropies, the Health Research Board (Dublin), Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, the DHSSPS. These have produced dramatic returns such as the grants for the Northern Ireland Centre of Excellence for Public Health, the Northern Ireland Clinical Research Facility and for HSC Innovations yielding a combined total of over £10 million of additional funding for an outlay of less than £1million. HSC R&D Division is committed to expanding this list of partner organisations and will look further for local, national and international opportunities.

Any party that might be able to identify, broker or offer partnership funding is encouraged to contact HSC R&D Division at the earliest opportunity.

Translational Research Groups (TRGs)

Interest Group	Lead
Child Health & Wellbeing	Prof Michael Shields
Diabetes, Endocrinology & Nutrition	Prof Peter Maxwell
Musculoskeletal & Rehabilitation	Dr Madeleine Rooney
Infection & Immunity	Prof Jim Johnston
Vision	Dr Kathryn Saunders
Mental Health, Aging & Learning Disability	Dr Ciaran Mulholland
Cancer	Prof Dennis McCance
Critical Care	Dr Ronan McMullan

Purpose of TRGs:

To enhance Northern Ireland's research infrastructure such that locally-based researchers, working in defined areas relevant to the HSC:

- are supported to collaborate across disciplines, professions and institutional boundaries to maximise the potential for beneficial outcomes from investment in R&D;
- are incentivised to establish and maintain productive collaborations with leading research groups nationally and internationally;
- are supported to develop large research projects of sufficient quality to attract substantial funding from non-local funders;
- achieve national and international recognition for their focus on translational research;
- can become and remain members of research groupings that achieve recognition among the public, clinical practitioners and policy-makers.

Every TRG must provide active support to its members that includes:

- mentoring of early stage researchers,
- seedcorn funding for larger grant applications;
- personal and public involvement in research (PPI);
- public awareness of research;
- workshops and other fora for engaging researchers with policy-makers, practitioners and/or industry;
- support for the dissemination of research findings.

Core objectives of each TRG:

- An increased volume and quality of research relevant to health and/or social care beyond that of the individual TRG members;
- Accelerated translation of research findings into practice, into policy and/or into products (maybe involving new enterprises), including the development of studies adoptable by NICRN.

Membership

Each TRG must include members from multiple HSC bodies and both universities. They should also include researchers from a range of different disciplines and/or professions. The membership should aim to reflect all parts of Northern Ireland however it is recognised that, for some TRGs, that might not be possible.

A full TRG member whose primary employer is a university should have:

- A track record of peer reviewed publications (or awarded patents) consistent with career stage, at least two of which are dated 2007 or later;

- Been a named investigator on a project of over £100k funded by HSC R&D, NIHR or other UK Government Health Department, or a UK Research Council or charity that is a member of AMRC or the equivalent internationally e.g. NIH or EU. Funds should have been awarded in 2005 or more recently;
- Been a named member of a supervisory team for one successful PhD in the past 3 years.

A full TRG member whose primary employer is a HSC body should have:

- A track record of peer reviewed papers (or patents) consistent with career stage, including at least one dated 2007 or later;
- Evidence of contribution to the supervision of at least one PhD student who is currently registered or has graduated within the past 5 years;
- Evidence of current involvement in a research project funded from outside their employing Trust .

A relevant NICRN theme clinical lead would also be a full member regardless of her/his track record in research

Associate or affiliate members: According to criteria agreed by the TRG leadership. All HSC R&D Fellowship holders must be affiliated to a TRG.

US Ireland R&D Partnership

The US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership arose out of a US-Ireland business summit which took place in September 2002. The US-Ireland R&D taskforce was established to explore high level, world class research collaborations between centres of excellence in Ireland (North and South) and the United States. The taskforce agreed that based on the research strengths and priorities in the island of Ireland and the United States, the priorities emerging as part of the knowledge based global economy and the potential for knowledge and technology transfer in support of public good and economic development, it would be appropriate to focus on the broad areas of information and communication technology. HSC R&D Division leads the Northern Ireland contribution in biotechnology. It was agreed that in biotechnology, potential and existing synergies exist in diabetes and cystic fibrosis. Two applications were subsequently submitted and funded under this initiative by HSC R&D Division.

The potential benefits of the proposed US-Ireland collaboration identified by taskforce are:

- The bringing together of world class scientists on both parts of the island of Ireland in a shared vision on collaboration that has previously been lacking.
- An increased focus on research areas which all parties have identified as strategic priorities.

- The opportunity for the best scientific researchers in Ireland (North and South) to collaborate with their counterparts in the United States through linkages with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the best facilities in the world. This opportunity will extend to research students and scientists embarking upon research careers.
- Access to the more fully developed technology on knowledge transfer programmes in the US, linking the research base with its exploitation for economic and public good.
- The opportunity for government agencies, businesses and academics in the island of Ireland to work with their leading counterparts in the US to protect and exploit the outcomes of joint research, leading to joint business ventures between Ireland (North and South) and the US and to enhancements in health promotion disease prevention and healthcare.
- The establishment of a small scale facilitated mechanism in Ireland (North and South), attached perhaps to an existing organisation, to organise and support the interaction of researchers and the social and commercial exploitation of research in the priority areas.

Lifelong Health & Wellbeing

Lifelong Health and Wellbeing (LLHW) is a major cross-council initiative that allows HSC R&D Division, along with its partners, to support multi-disciplinary research addressing factors across the life course that influence healthy ageing and wellbeing in later life.

LLHW Research Council partners

- Arts and Humanities Research Council www.ahrc.ac.uk
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council www.bbsrc.ac.uk
- Economic and Social Research Council www.esrc.ac.uk
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council www.epsrc.ac.uk
- Medical Research Council

UK Health Departments

- Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Government Health Directorates www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk
- Department of Health/National Institute for Health Research, England www.dh.gov.uk
- Health and Social Care Research & Development Division of the Public Health Agency (HSC R&D Division) for Northern Ireland www.publichealth.hscni.net
- Wales Office of Research and Development for Health and Social Care, Welsh Assembly Government wales.gov.uk

The objectives of the LLHW initiative are to:

- Target factors over the life course that may be major determinants of health and wellbeing in later life.
- Identify and develop effective interventions that lead to improved health and quality of life in later life.
- Inform policy and practice including the development of services and technologies to support independent living.
- Increase capacity and capability in ageing-relevant research.

To date there have been 3 phases of research funding calls from 2008.

National Prevention Research Initiative

The National Prevention Research Initiative (NPRI) is a national initiative made up of government departments including HSC R&D Division, research councils and major medical charities that are working together to encourage and support research into chronic disease prevention. Its core aim is to develop and implement successful, cost-effective interventions that reduce people's risk of developing major diseases by influencing their health behaviours.

NPRI Funding partners

- [Alzheimer's Research Trust](#)
- [Alzheimer's Society](#)
- [Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council](#)
- [British Heart Foundation](#)
- [Cancer Research UK](#)
- [Chief Scientist Office, Scottish Government Health Directorate](#)
- [Department of Health](#)
- [Diabetes UK](#)
- [Economic and Social Research Council](#)
- [Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council](#)
- [Health and Social Care Research and Development Division of the Public Health Agency \(HSC R&D Division\) for Northern Ireland](#)
- Medical Research Council
- [Stroke Association](#)
- [Wellcome Trust](#)
- [Welsh Assembly Government](#)
- [World Cancer Research Fund](#)

To date there have been 4 phases of research funding calls from 2005.