

Guidance notes for Clinical Research Group Convenors

Terms of Reference of MHRN Clinical Research Groups

Purpose

The purpose of Clinical Research Groups is to provide the creative drive of the Mental Health Research Network. Each Clinical Research Group is expected to turn research ideas into funded studies that are suitable for running on the MHRN.

Membership

Clinical Research Groups may consist of from five to twenty senior researchers (at senior lecturer level or above), service users and carers who have a research track record in the topic covered by the Group.

The researchers should be from at least three academic disciplines and no less than three academic institutions. The group will ideally have representation from Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland. Clinical Research Groups should also include service users and carers who have shown an interest in research in the topic covered by the group. For guidance and support on involving service users and carers please contact FACTOR/ Service Users in Research at the MHRN Coordinating Centre.

Each Clinical Research Group must have a Convenor who will accept responsibility for organising Clinical Research Group Meetings and for liaising with the MHRN. Clinical Research Groups are open to members of existing MHRN Research Groups and Hubs. However Research Groups do not have to include members from any of the MHRN Hubs. *Research Groups should be as inclusive as possible.*

Topic Areas

A suitable topic will be in an area of mental health where large scale research projects are likely to obtain funding in the near future. This means that the topic will involve a mental illness that has a major health impact and is in a priority area identified by the Department of Health or other major funding body.

Clinical Research Groups should be aware of other current Funder priorities including experimental medicine, along with research priorities identified in the MHRN sponsored scoping exercises, which can be found on the MHRN website: <http://www.mhrn.info/>.

The topic should not be too ambitious in scope, for example, a disease specific Clinical Research Groups such as “Schizophrenia” or “Health Services for People with Schizophrenia” would not succeed. On the other hand the topic should not be so narrow as to preclude a program of large scale research.

Terms of Reference continued.....

Responsibilities of the Clinical Research Group

Each Clinical Research Group is expected to convene one or two fairly large initial meetings to which it will invite a range of UK researchers who are interested in the area covered by the group. This initial meeting should also include some clinicians, service users and carers with an interest in the area. From these initial meetings it is anticipated that a number of much smaller Writing Groups will emerge, whose purpose will be to work up one or more research applications on behalf of the group.

Within six months of inception, each Clinical Research Group will be required to provide the MHRN with at least two Titles. A Title will consist of a formal indication of an intention to develop a study for running on the MHRN and will contain: a statement of the question to be studied, the participants, the study method, and the membership of the Writing Group who are developing the proposal.

Within eight months of inception each Clinical Research Group will be expected to have submitted two Protocols to the MHRN Adoptions Committee. A Protocol will contain: (i) one or more hypotheses; (ii) a structured abstract; (iii) a power calculation (if necessary); (iv) a summary of the MHRN resources required, including any resources required to help develop the full grant application; (v) an intended submission date for the full grant application, with details of the body to which the application will be submitted; and (vi) an estimated schedule for the recruitment of participants.

Within 18 months of inception, each Clinical Research Group will be expected to have submitted two protocols for funding and to have obtained funding for at least one large scale research project suitable for running on the MHRN. Each Clinical Research Group will also be expected to demonstrate how it is continuing to liaise with clinicians, service users and carers who are active in the area covered by the group. It is anticipated that Clinical Research Groups will go on to develop programs of research that will continue to run on the Network beyond the duration of the initial studies.

Reporting

The Convenor will be responsible for providing the MHRN with regular feedback on the progress of the Clinical Research Group including information for inclusion on the MHRN webpages and in the MHRN annual report. The Convenor will also be responsible for reporting the Clinical Research Group's involvement of service users and carers in its work on request.

Advising

One of the conditions of support for the Clinical Research Group from the MHRN is that the Research Group will be able to advise the MHRN Executive regarding studies submitted for adoption to the network – particularly from industry – in the Research Group's topic area. This will be required on only a limited number of occasions but may involve providing rapid

feasibility assessments on protocols and ad-hoc participation in the Industry Adoptions Committee teleconference.

Support Provided to Research Groups

A total of £5,000 is available to support research groups over the two year period.

Duration

Clinical Research Groups are funded for a fixed term of 2 years, with possible renewal on a competitively basis at the end of the tender. This 2 year cycle allows Groups to re-evaluate the research environment and reconvene as appropriate to continuously address cutting edge research priorities.

