

Mental Health Research Network Cymru Clinical Research Groups

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Mental Health Research Network Cymru (MHRN-C) provides a national infrastructure for large-scale research in mental health. The Network currently involves three Research centres which coordinate the recruitment of patients, participants or clinical teams for the large-scale research studies 'adopted' by the Network. To supplement the Research Centres the Network is has established Clinical Research Groups (CRGs). The purpose of CRGs is to provide the creative drive of the Network. Each CRG is expected to turn research ideas into funded studies that are suitable for running on the MHRN-C. The funds provided are specifically not to enable groups to carry out research, but rather to enable them to write and submit bids for large scale research projects.

Membership

CRGs may consist of from five to twenty senior researchers (at senior lecturer level or above) 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. CRGs should also be able to demonstrate input from service users, carers, mental health practitioners/service managers who have shown an interest in research in the topic covered by the group. Each CRG must have a Convenor who will accept responsibility for organising Research Group Meetings and for liaising with the MHRN-C. CRGs are open to members of existing MHRN-C CRGs and Centres. However, CRGs do not have to include members from any of the MHRN-C Centres.

Topic areas

Suitable topics are in areas 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 Welsh Assembly Government or other major funding body. Applicants should be aware of other current Funder priorities including experimental medicine, along with research priorities identified in the MHRN-C sponsored scoping exercises, which can be found on the MHRN-C website: <http://www.mhrnc.org>. The topic should not be too ambitious in scope, for example, a disease specific 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. Examples of existing Research Groups in England can be seen on their website at:

<http://www.mhrn.info/dnn/CreatingNewResearch/ClinicalResearchGroups/tabid/174/Default.aspx>

Current MHRN-C research groups include:

- Addressing the health risks of antipsychotic medication
- Adolescent depression
- Developing innovative psychological interventions
- Neighbourhood determinants of the common mental disorders
- Pathways from psychosis to serious violence: understanding and interventions
- Perinatal psychiatry
- Psychosis investigation
- Service delivery and organisation
- Suicide and self-harm
- Traumatic stress

As far as possible the MHRN-C seeks to ensure that the topics of new Research Groups do not overlap with each other or with those of existing research groups.

Selection process

CRGs are approved on a competitive basis by a group nominated by the MHRN-C Executive Team. Applications take the form of an **Expression of Interest** which consists of:

- A brief outline of the scope of the Research Group including a description of the types of participants, research questions and research methods covered (200 words)
- A statement describing why the topic is of major clinical importance (100 words)
- A brief outline of three ideas for large scale research in the topic (150 words)
- An explanation of why these ideas are considered likely to obtain funding (100 words)
- A description of the proposed membership of the research group to include:
 - (i) full CV of the proposed convenor;
 - (ii) brief CVs of other participating researchers;
 - (iii) proposals for obtaining service user and carer input.

Support Provided to Research Groups

A total of **up to £5,000** is available to support each CRG over a two year period. The grants awarded to the CRGs are for the specific purpose of research development. Any expenditure which can be justified in the context of this will be considered appropriate use of funds. For example, the money should be used to facilitate joint working between institutions, practitioners, service users etc. Therefore, we would expect to see travel costs, meeting costs, venue hire, catering and other subsistence items included.

Responsibilities of the Research Group

CRGs are expected to convene one or two fairly large initial meetings to which a range of researchers who are interested in the area covered by the group are invited. The initial meetings should also include some clinicians, service users and carers with an interest in the area. From these initial meetings a number of much smaller Writing Groups should emerge, whose purpose will be to work up one or more research applications on behalf of the group.

Within six months of inception, each CRG is required provide the MHRN-C 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-C 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 CRG is expected to have submitted two **Protocols** the MHRN-C 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-C 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;
- (vi) an estimated schedule for the recruitment of participants.

Within 18 months of inception, each CRG is 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-C. Each CRG is also expected to demonstrate how it is continuing to liaise with clinicians who are active in the area covered by the group.

Enquiries about MRHN-C Clinical Research Groups should be directed to Phil Jones on 01792 602190 or at p.a.jones@swansea.ac.uk.