



PUBLIC HEALTH LIMITED OPEN CALL SCHEME (LOCS) – PHA202

RESEARCH BRIEFING

Introduction

Following publication of its new national health research strategy *Best Research for Best Health* (DH 2006a), the Department of Health has announced increased funding to enable the SDO Programme to commission further research on service delivery and organisation issues in national priority areas. One of these is research related to public health.

The SDO Programme has a funding mechanism called the Limited Open Call Scheme (LOCS). Through this scheme we are now seeking outline applications from researchers interested in developing projects that **address issues of service delivery and organisation** in this national research priority area.

Further details on the Scheme are contained in this document. For those interested in making an application, First Stage Outline Application Forms and associated Guidance Notes are available from the SDO website (www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk/pha202.htm) and should be read in conjunction with these Briefing Notes.

The SDO Programme

The NHS Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) Programme is a national research programme that has been established to consolidate and develop the evidence base on the organisation, management and delivery of health care services. Further information on the Programme, including a list of past, current and recently commissioned projects, can be found on the SDO website (www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk).

Work commissioned by the SDO is generally clustered into five key themes, together with an additional cross-cutting theme on methodology development to support SDO work. These themes are listed below, but potential applicants are encouraged to explore further the previous and ongoing work carried out under each theme by browsing project descriptions and associated materials on the website.

- 1. Patient and carer-centred services**
- 2. Workforce issues**
- 3. Evaluating models of health service delivery**
- 4. Change management**
- 5. Studying health care organisations**
- 6. Research methods**

Public Health Service Delivery and Organisational Research

Public health covers a wide range of activities. The Faculty of Public Health has identified three domains - health improvement, improving services, and health protection. The specific concern of the SDO programme is the implementation and the delivery of public health services within these three domains rather than simply the efficacy of specific interventions.

In June 2006, the SDO Programme held a consultation workshop attended by representatives from policy, research and public health service organisations to advise the SDO Programme on public health service delivery and organisation research priorities. As a result of this consultation process the SDO Programme has commissioned a scoping study on the current organisation of the public health system in England and the impact of recent policy initiatives and organisational reform. The review will be conducted in two stages, with an interim report mapping the existing public health system available in January. The final report, which will include an initial assessment of the impact of current policy and organisational changes on the public health system, is expected in mid 2007. We now wish to commission further research on public health service delivery and organisation and are seeking applications for innovative proposals related to the following themes:

1. Incentives, performance and governance

This is a key area identified in the Wanless Report on Public Health (Wanless 2004). There is a need to know how different performance and quality incentives impact on the delivery and organisation of public health at a local level. Three broad areas are of interest:

- Inter-sectoral arrangements: How is public health delivered across different sectors and organisations and how can performance in arrangements such as Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements be measured. How are individual organisations collectively incentivised to address key public health issues and what kinds of governance arrangements promote inter-sectoral public health service delivery? What impact do joint Director of Public Health appointments have on local public health agendas?
- PCTs: What priority do PCTs place on public health and how do PCT boards and managers balance public health priorities against other performance measures and targets? Key research questions relate to what kinds of values and ethical frameworks guide decision making; how public health commissioning is being undertaken; how national targets and performance systems affect the relative priority given to public health; how successful are Directors of Public Health in influencing developments in public health

- Primary care/general practice: How are the new arrangements for general practices affect public health service delivery and organisation? What impact will practice based commissioning have on public health services? What is the role/impact of the new performance frameworks for general practice in shifting towards a public health approach? Is the Quality Outcome Framework being used to increase public health activity?

2. Workforce

A key area highlighted in the Wanless Report (Wanless 2004) is that much of the focus in Department of Health policy documents, workforce reports, and research papers has been on the professional or specialist public health workforce, resulting in less being known about the wider public health workforce as defined in the report of the Chief Medical Officer for England's project to strengthen the public health function (Department of Health 2001). A key priority for the SDO workforce research programme has been the impact on the patient experience and patient outcomes (<http://www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk/cpworkforce.html>). To complement this previous research this SDO public health research programme has a specific emphasis on the impact of workforce on community and population health outcomes. Proposals are invited that address any aspect of public health workforce issues, including areas such as:

- examining what kinds of roles the wider workforce plays and what they provide to whom. In particular, more needs to be known about the standards and skills required by the non-specialist workforce, and the extent to which existing training programmes engage with this public health resource.
- the impact that programmes such as Communities for Health have had in terms of supporting and developing a wider public health workforce.
- how the wider workforce is recruited from local communities and what kinds of role can such public health workers play (eg Health Champions).
- supply and retention of the public health workforce

3. Evaluating models of public health delivery at a local and national level:

Research has been commissioned within other funding programmes that examines the effectiveness of specific interventions that aim to promote public health. However, to date there has been little research that examines how such interventions can be best organised and delivered. Therefore, within the SDO public health research programme, we are interested in funding projects that:

- evaluate discrete models of public health service delivery which will help develop the evidence base for service delivery in this area;
- examine partnership models of public health delivery and organisation. While it is recognised that there is already a substantial amount of research on partnership and collaboration, the focus has been health and social care partnerships or urban/neighbourhood policy and action. Research drawing on this existing body of knowledge and contextualising this for public health would be useful as would projects evaluating partnership models of service delivery.
- evaluating public health interventions in terms of their economic effectiveness and value for money

4. Public and lay perspectives/engagement in public health services delivery:

Lay people and communities contribute to their own health and therefore have a key public health role. It is therefore important to engage both practitioners (as research users) and lay/public in this area of research. Areas of particular interest are:

- research that examines the relationship between lay people and public health services in order to help identify how public health services can best support community public health activity
- research that examines the extent to which community views and lay perspectives inform the delivery of public health services and influence public health commissioning.

The SDO Programme particularly welcomes research proposals that address existing or potentially emergent public health service delivery issues in one or more of the Department of Health's public health priority areas identified in policy documents such as *Choosing Health* (DH 2004) and *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* (DH 2006b).

Call for Proposals

The SDO Programme is seeking applications for innovative research building on previous SDO work and linked to the priority area of public health. Projects of one, two, or three years' duration may be funded up to a maximum of £400,000 per project.

Applicants should note that value for money is an important consideration in respect of this research. The application process will be in two stages, with outline proposals being invited in the first instance. A maximum of £2 million over three years is available for research in this area and it is likely that between five and eight projects will be commissioned.

In developing new projects, proposal applicants are invited to take into consideration the following important points of guidance.

Appropriate areas of investigation:

- Proposed projects should be clearly linked to the priority area of public health.
- Projects should develop work clearly located within one or more of the key themes identified above.
- Applicants should familiarise themselves with relevant earlier work by the SDO Programme, including previous Research Funding Briefs, Scoping Papers, Research Reviews and completed and ongoing empirical research projects. Work that builds on, elaborates, extends and deepens the ideas explored in the current SDO portfolio will be welcomed (www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk). However, applicants are also invited to propose the development of research in new areas that are currently under-explored.
- Proposed projects should be fully cognisant of current policy priorities, managerial concerns and practice-level preoccupations. They should draw

on and clearly relate to, for example, National Service Frameworks (NSFs), national implementation programmes, pressing and emergent policy issues, and the research priorities as articulated by other important national bodies such as the Department of Health's Policy Research Programme (PRP) and The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

- Although there is no restriction on where in the UK funded work can take place, all work proposed should have clear and demonstrable relevance to the English health care system.
- Please note that an evaluation of the health trainer scheme is being planned and is likely to be the topic of a separate SDO call in the new year. Such proposals will not therefore be considered under the present call.

Involvement of stakeholders:

- SDO research is largely stakeholder-driven. Applicants should demonstrate clear involvement of all relevant stakeholders (including where relevant, local communities, lay people, service users, carers and minority ethnic communities as well as public health practitioners) during the design, execution and communication of the research.
- A core issue is the practical application, communication and uptake of research findings. Applicants are invited to consider the nature of expected research outputs and how these might be better communicated to important policy, managerial and practice audiences in ways that are likely to enhance impact.
- Given the core research concerns of the SDO Programme, and the need to build robust bodies of knowledge, successful projects are most likely to involve partnership working between experienced academic teams and those more closely involved in the design and delivery of services.
- It is a core concern of the SDO Programme that all commissioned projects should pay full attention to the needs and experiences of services users and their carers. Thus proposed projects should be explicit in communicating how the proposed work has potential implications for service delivery that could lead to enhanced public and community engagement.

Nature of the investigations:

- The research proposed can be literature-based (e.g. scoping study or systematic review), secondary analysis of existing data, or new primary empirical research. Combinations of these and projects with multiple strands of work are also welcomed.
- In addressing issues in a way likely to lead to the wide applicability of findings, firm theoretical and conceptual underpinnings in tandem with substantial empirical work are likely to be important features.
- Empirical projects are likely to use a wide diversity of methods, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches, carefully matched to study questions and with clear understandings as to how findings from different empirical approaches will be integrated.

- Substantial empirical projects are likely to utilise broad teams with significant input from diverse disciplines and a commitment to developing robust inter-disciplinary approaches. It is frequently necessary to involve researchers with skills in organisational issues, although skills in health economics, sociology, psychology or other disciplines may also be required depending on the proposed study.
- Empirical work will need to address complex issues of service design, delivery and management, paying attention to inputs (including costs), processes, outputs and outcomes. Processes and outcomes should be addressed from varying perspectives including, importantly, those of front-line staff and those of patients and carers.

Outputs from the proposed work:

- In outlining their research plans, the applicants should make clear how findings will be communicated effectively to a wide variety of academic, policy and service audiences.
- At a minimum, researchers will be expected to deliver the following written outputs from any proposed research: an executive summary with clearly identified policy, managerial and practice implications; a full report detailing all the work undertaken; supporting technical appendices.
- In addition, on completion of projects, successful applicants should be prepared to work with the SDO to develop summaries of their work for wider audiences (for example, see the *Research Briefings* already developed from many completed SDO projects; www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk).
- Applicants should outline plans for conference, seminar and other forms of dissemination to go alongside written communications.
- Where appropriate, the proposed work should be designed and delivered in a way that is likely to lead to significant high-quality peer-reviewed publications.
- Projects lasting more than one year may be expected to deliver interim reports on progress and provisional findings (approximately annually).

References:

Department of Health (2001) *The Report of the Chief Medical Officer's Project to Strengthen the Public Health Function*. London: Department of Health.

Department of Health (2004) *Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier* Cm 6374. London: TSO.

Department of Health (2006a) *Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy* London: Department of Health.

Department of Health (2006b) *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* CM.7637. London: TSO.

Wanless D (2004) *Securing good health for the whole population* HM Treasury: HMSO

Application process and schedule

The application process is in two stages. Initial outline submissions should be made on the **First Stage Outline Application Form** (www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk/pha202.html). This redesigned shortened form has been carefully configured to minimise the burdens of making an initial application. Because of this, and because of the expected high level of initial applications, the SDO Programme will not be providing customised feedback on unsuccessful outline bids.

To ensure the efficient and equitable answering of additional queries, all questions about this new scheme should be sent by e-mail only to sdo@LSHTM.ac.uk with the words 'PHA202 Question' in the subject header.

Questions received by **8 November 2006** will have generic answers posted on the SDO website (www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk) by **15 November 2006**.

No other correspondence about this scheme can be entered into.

First Stage Outline Applications should be submitted by **1pm on Wednesday 22 November 2006** and successful short-listed applicants will be notified by early January 2007. For those invited to submit a full application, these will be required by mid February 2007. It is expected that final decisions will be made in April 2007, with successful projects to commence in July 2007 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Applicants are asked to submit **First Stage Outline Applications** by **1pm on Wednesday 22 November 2006** to:

Genevieve Casey

Commissioning Manager
NCCSDO
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
99 Gower Street
London
WC1E 6AA

TWENTY HARD COPIES of the completed **First Stage Outline Application** should be submitted together with a copy on disk or CD. Guidance notes for completion can be found at the front of the application form.

Please note we will not accept electronic submissions or hand written proposals. No late applications will be considered.

Applicants should also note that value for money is an important consideration in respect of this research.

Please clearly label the outside of the envelope in which you submit your proposal with the following: **'PHA202'**. This will enable us to identify proposals

and keep them aside so that they may all be opened together after the closing date and time.

Teams should ensure that their proposal complies with the Research Governance Framework, which can be found on the Department of Health website, or via a link on the SDO website under the 'Call for Proposals' page.

Successful teams will be required to provide proof of research ethics committee approval for their project, if this is required (information regarding this can be found on the SDO website under the 'Calls for Proposals' page).

We anticipate that there will be informal discussions with NCCSDO throughout the duration of the project regarding the final report.

Applicants should visit the SDO website: <http://www.sdo.LSHTM.ac.uk> to familiarise themselves with the work of the SDO Programme.

This document was published by the National Coordinating Centre for the Service Delivery and Organisation (NCCSDO) research programme, managed by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

The management of the Service Delivery and Organisation (SDO) programme has now transferred to the National Institute for Health Research Evaluations, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre (NETSCC) based at the University of Southampton. Prior to April 2009, NETSCC had no involvement in the commissioning or production of this document and therefore we may not be able to comment on the background or technical detail of this document. Should you have any queries please contact sdo@southampton.ac.uk.