



Cross-disciplinary mental health network plus call Call specification

Summary

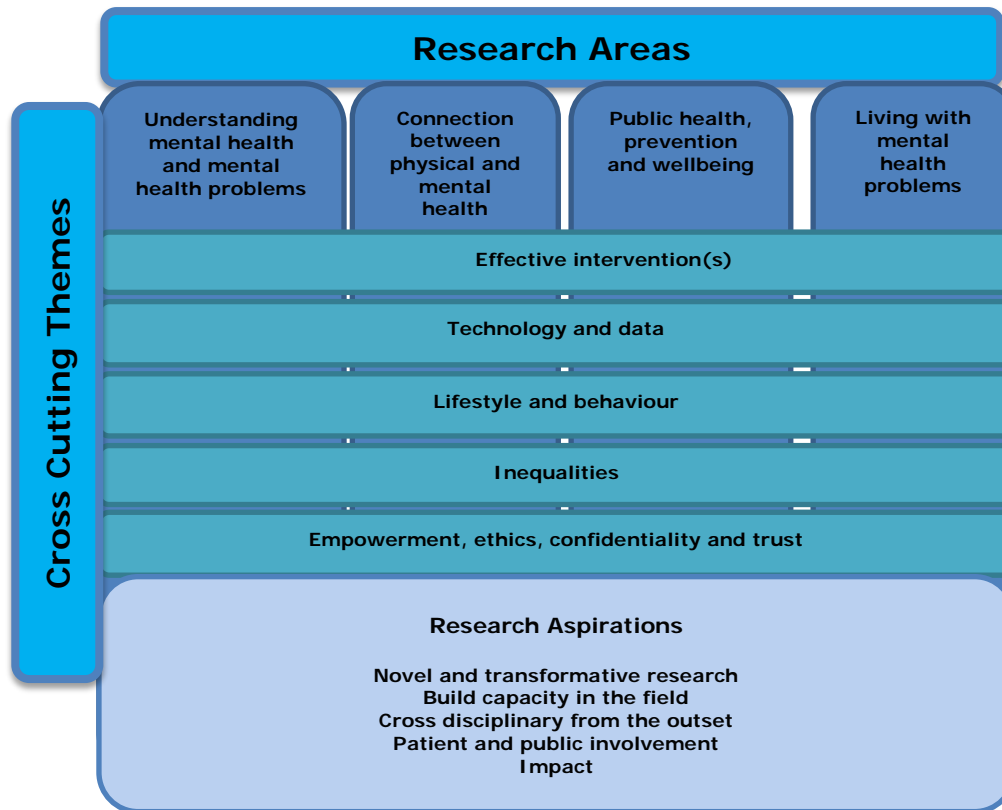
The research councils (AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC and STFC) are pleased to invite proposals for cross-disciplinary mental health network plus awards.

The research councils have recently worked together to publish a Cross-disciplinary Mental Health Research Agenda (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/1708171/>). The research agenda has been developed to highlight research areas that require novel and cross-disciplinary approaches to strengthen mental health research and to inform future cross-disciplinary research council investments. To support the research agenda the ESRC is administering this network plus call on behalf of the research councils and as such invites cross-disciplinary teams to apply. Throughout this document network plus awards may be referred to as networks or network plus awards.

It is expected that project teams will involve disciplines that cross multiple Research Council boundaries. The aim of the call is to encourage the creation of networks to address mental health research questions that require an innovative, cross-disciplinary approach to accelerate progress; to build cross-disciplinary research capacity in the field and to strengthen the UK mental health research base.

It is intended that through novel and transformative engagement and research, these awards will collectively and collaboratively bring together the relevant expertise to address specific research questions that are relevant to the research areas identified within the Cross-disciplinary Mental Health Research Agenda. In addition to this the networks should also consider the cross cutting themes when addressing their research questions.

The below diagram details the research areas and cross cutting themes:



Research areas:

- Understanding mental health and mental health problems
- Connection between physical and mental health
- Public health, prevention and wellbeing
- Living with mental health problems

Cross-cutting themes:

- Effective intervention(s)
- Technology and data
- Lifestyle and behaviour
- Inequalities
- Empowerment, ethics, confidentiality and trust

These and the research aspirations are described in more detail in the Research Agenda publication.

As well as helping to build cross-disciplinary capacity within the mental health research field and facilitating knowledge exchange, the successful networks will be able to fund small research projects that will answer specific research questions relevant to one or more of the research area(s) listed above. Their additional planned activities and objectives could include running workshops and other networking events, funding short discipline hops, and feeding into policy and practice.

The total funding available through this call is £9-10 million, with network plus applicants able to bid for up to £1.25 million (100% fEC) per network for up to 48 months' duration.

We expect to fund between six and ten awards that will, collectively, address the breadth of research areas listed above.

Applicants should submit proposals by **16:00 on 22 March 2018**, with projects expected to commence during 2018.

Background and scope

The research councils collectively have an interest in mental health research.

Through a consultation process with academics, service user organisations, charities and funders the four overarching research areas and five cross-cutting themes were identified. These are potential areas where there is scope for enhanced collaboration across different disciplines and sectors. Full details of these broad topics are listed within the Cross-disciplinary Mental Health Research Agenda and form the basis of this call.

It is estimated that 23% of the UK population is affected by mental health problems at some point each year. In spite of recent progress, more research is needed to better understand how to prevent, diagnose and treat mental illness¹.

We acknowledge that excellent research is taking place currently within the area of mental health. To complement this, the research councils are seeking to bring together researchers from across disciplines. It is anticipated that the successful networks will form specific communities of researchers, but will also work together to form a wider community that will cover the four research areas identified within this call.

It is envisaged that the partnerships built across disciplines and sectors through the formation of these networks, could enable groups to be in a position to apply for larger funding bids in the future (potentially but not necessarily through the research councils).

Call details

Network Plus

We expect successful network plus awards will bring together relevant researchers and stakeholders that cross multiple research council boundaries, in order to address specific research questions. Networks should also consider the cross cutting themes when addressing their research questions to further scope and understand the respective research area(s) they are addressing. Applications for a network plus award should set out a clear strategy and vision for the network with clear objectives, how it addresses the Cross-disciplinary Mental Health Research Agenda and the aims of this call.

¹ MQ report on UK Mental Health Research Funding, 2015 - http://b.3cdn.net/joinmq/1f731755e4183d5337_apm6b0gll.pdf

Applications can include core costs for investigator salaries, travel and subsistence, administrative support, general management of the network and also planned activities that can be defined from the outset. In addition each network will set aside an appropriate amount of 'plus' funds that can be used for organising activities open to the whole research community throughout the period of the award. These activities are expected to include the funding of small research projects, but could also include running seminars, lectures, expert working groups, placements or exchanges, sandpits, skills training sessions etc. It is expected that the application process for network plus funded activities will allow for applicants from outside of the network to participate, thereby drawing more people into the community of researchers. Applications for network plus awards should outline appropriate plans, including timelines, governance and assessment criteria, for the distribution of 'plus' funding.

Applicants are encouraged to be innovative in the kinds of user engagement, communications and knowledge exchange/impact generation activities they plan to undertake as part of the network activities. As well as academic representation, networks should include a range of non-academic representatives where appropriate, from policy organisations, service user organisations, industry and also people with lived experience of mental health problems. The management team should be able to articulate how they intend to recruit a diverse membership for the network and its management structure. We would expect this diversity to reflect different genders and ethnicities as well as the representation of different disciplines and organisations, and those at varying stages of their career. Associated studentships will not be eligible for funding through the network awards however we would encourage the involvement of early career researchers in the networks.

Applicants should clearly set out who they see as the network's stakeholders, and how they intend to engage and work closely with those stakeholders.

Network plus awards can be local, regional or national. International researchers would not be eligible to be funded as an Investigator within the leadership team however international researchers could be included as members of the wider network. The size of the network plus is expected to be commensurate with its reach. Applications are expected to take an open and inclusive approach and to grow and evolve over the lifetime of the award. Applications for network plus awards based within one institution will be considered where a strong argument can be made for the specific expertise that particular research organisation holds, and the added value of that model.

Networks should convene an advisory committee to support and advise the leadership throughout their award.

Leadership team

Each principal investigator (PI) must contribute a significant proportion of their time to the overall leadership and co-ordination of their network plus award. ESRC are leading this call on behalf of the research councils; however the PI does not need to have had previous ESRC funding or fall within the ESRC remit. The proposal should outline a clear management structure for the network. Networks will also be expected to participate in collaborative activities organised by the research councils or the Network Plus co-ordinator.

While the PI will be ultimately responsible for the administration of the grant and collaboration arrangements, they should work on this with a team of co-investigators (the

number should be appropriate for the size of the network) which should reflect the cross-disciplinary nature of the network. The proposal should clearly explain the division of roles between the PI and the rest of the leadership team.

Eligibility

Proposals must be submitted from an RCUK-eligible research organisation (higher education institution or recognised independent research organisation). Further details can be found at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/eligibilityforrcs/>

The network plus leadership team (PI and Co-Is) should be UK-based. Applicants are encouraged to read the ESRC's Co-Investigator guidance for further information on eligible co-investigators, including non-academic co-investigators, at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/inclusion-of-uk-business-third-sector-or-government-body-co-investigators-on-proposals>.

Associated studentships, international PIs and international Co-Is are not eligible to apply for funding through this call. This call is focused on building UK capacity and other calls are available focussed on global mental health. Networks may still include international members.

Network Plus co-ordination

It is expected that the successful network plus awards will work collectively as a group to identify synergies between them and to maximise their potential.

Shortly after announcing the successful network plus awards, the research councils will be inviting proposals for a network plus co-ordinator. Applications for this co-ordination role will be accepted from individuals or small teams where there is added value from that approach. The successful candidate(s) will co-ordinate activities that will allow the networks to share knowledge and work collaboratively, and will help to maximise the impact of the full portfolio of mental health network plus awards.

The call will be open to applicants from eligible organisations. Investigators of the successful network plus awards will be eligible to apply for this co-ordinator position.

Funding

The research councils have £9-10 million to invest in this call. However, use of the full budget will be contingent on the quality of the applications and the successful awards collectively engaging the range of disciplines covered by the research councils.

We aim to fund a balanced portfolio of awards that align to the four research areas specified in the Cross-disciplinary Mental Health Research Agenda at <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/1708171/>.

We anticipate funding between six and ten awards for up to 48 months in duration.

Applicants can apply for up to £1.25 million (100% fEC) of which the research councils will contribute 80% fEC.

We encourage network plus applications to include the use of research council funded datasets and facilities to address research challenges, including STFC funded facilities such as

Hartree. Further details can be found in Annex I of this document and at <https://www.hartree.stfc.ac.uk/Pages/home.aspx>

How to apply

All proposals must be made through the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system, at <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/eforms/secure/login.asp>. Proposals must be costed and approved by the relevant institutional authority at the research organisation before submission.

Je-S is the electronic submission system which is used by all research councils to provide a common electronic system that supports research administration. More detailed information can be found at <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk>

In order to use the Je-S system, principal investigators, co-investigators and their organisations need to register on the system. Registration of both the principal investigator's organisation and their own details must be completed before the proposal can be formally submitted to us. **Applicants should note the registration requirements for making a Je-S submission.**

Care and attention must be given to completing the online form correctly. We may reject proposals that are not completed correctly, or ask them to amend parts of the proposal as a condition of accepting the proposal for processing.

All applicants are strongly advised to follow Je-S guidance when preparing to submit their application. The full Je-S guidance for this call is available at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/funding-opportunities/cross-disciplinary-mental-health-network-plus-call/>.

Assessment

This open call for Network Plus proposals closes **16:00 on 22 March 2018**.

Proposals submitted to this call will initially be reviewed and shortlisted by an expert panel of academics and potential users of the research, during May 2018. Following this panel meeting, the shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview in late May/early June 2018. It is expected that the Principal Investigator will be available to attend these interviews along with up to two additional members of their team.

Assessment criteria

The shortlisting and interview panel members will assess proposals against the following criteria:

| Criteria | Suggested considerations for the panel |
|-------------------------|---|
| Fit to research area(s) | To what extent does the network plus satisfactorily address a research question or questions that fall within one or more of the research areas and the cross-cutting themes? |
| Research excellence | Are the research question(s) important, novel and likely to lead to significant new understanding? |
| Cross-disciplinarity | Does the Network encompass the relevant |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| | <p>combination of expertise, across multiple academic disciplines, needed to address the proposed research question(s)?</p> <p>Does the Network intend to include participants from a number of differing academic disciplines?</p> <p>Do the represented disciplines cross multiple research council remits?</p> <p>Does the Network include appropriate representation from non-academic users and stakeholders eg service user organisations, industry, policy organisations, and people with lived experience of mental health problems?</p> |
| Leadership Team | <p>Is the leadership, expertise, skills and experience of the network core team appropriate?</p> <p>Is the leadership team cross-disciplinary?</p> <p>Are the proposed management structure and governance plans appropriate?</p> |
| Network Activities | <p>Do the work programmes have a clearly articulated strategy and vision, with clear objectives and a well-defined purpose?</p> <p>Do the planned activities allow for the generation of ideas to address the needs of the relevant research area(s) OR do the planned activities have the potential to provide a step-change in capacity/capability through cross-disciplinary research collaborations and enable high quality cross-disciplinary research?</p> <p>Are there appropriate plans (eg timelines, governance, assessment criteria) for funding small projects as well as additional activities and clear plans for how these will be open beyond the network membership?</p> <p>Are there appropriate plans in place to encourage and support Early Career Researchers?</p> <p>Are there appropriate plans for engagement with broader non-academic users and</p> |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | <p>stakeholders?</p> <p>Is there clear articulation on how the network will remain 'open' and engage new membership over the duration of the funding?</p> |
| Impact | <p>Is there evidence of early engagement and co-design plans with stakeholders?</p> <p>Is the Pathways to Impact plan clearly thought through and appropriate?</p> <p>Are the communication plans appropriate?</p> <p>Will the proposal add value to the mental health research field?</p> <p>Are there appropriate plans in place for cross-disciplinary skills development and training?</p> |
| Value for money | <p>Are the funds requested essential for the work and justified by the importance and potential of the network?</p> <p>Is the balance and scale of funding between core and 'plus' activities appropriate?</p> <p>Is the stated time commitment of the leadership team appropriate and sufficient?</p> <p>Does the proposal demonstrate value for money in terms of the resources requested?</p> |
| Ethical issues | <p>Are there ethical and/or research governance issues?</p> <p>Are there satisfactory plans in place to address any ethical issues?</p> |

Additional award conditions

Successful network plus leadership teams will be expected to attend various meetings planned by the research councils or the Network Plus co-ordinator.

Awards will be issued by ESRC as the administering organisation for this call. This will be done on behalf of all of the research councils and successful networks will be identified as cross-council awards.

Networking event

We are holding an informal networking event in London on **31 October 2017**. The aim of this event is for potential applicants to learn more about our expectations of the successful network plus awards, as well as meeting potential collaborators.

Attendance at this event will be capped at 100 spaces. In the event of oversubscription, we will limit the number of attendees per organisation, and also by discipline to allow for even representation across the remits of the research councils. Therefore attendees will be expected to represent the wider interests of their organisation as well as their individual interests. Due to the cross-disciplinary nature of these awards, the aim is for attendees at the networking event to span the remits of the research councils.

Registration for this event will close at **16:00 on 12 October 2017**.

We welcome attendance from potential applicants and collaborators representing academia and also charities, service providers, businesses, clinicians etc.

Please register for this event by completing an expression of interest form available at <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-events-and-publications/events/cross-research-council-mental-health-networking/> and email it to us at mentalhealth@esrc.ac.uk.

This information will be used to determine final attendees and also within a delegate list for the event. If you do not want your details to be circulated please inform us.

Commissioning timetable

- Call for proposals opens - October 2017
- Deadline for registering for the networking event - 12 October 2017
- Networking event - 31 October 2017
- Call closes - **16:00 on 22 March 2018**
- Panel shortlisting meeting - May 2018
- Interview panel meeting - May-June 2018
- Applicant outcomes communicated - June-July 2018

Contacts

If you have any queries regarding this call please email mentalhealth@esrc.ac.uk

For Je-S system queries, please contact the Je-S helpdesk at jeshelp@rcuk.ac.uk or on 01793 444164

We will include all queries and answers within a FAQ document. This FAQ document will be updated every few days and added to the ESRC website (on behalf of all of the research councils) for applicants to view. Queries will be added to the document anonymously, however please do keep this in mind if your query is specific to your individual research.

Annex I – Additional information

Hartree

We would like to encourage network plus applications to consider the use of STFC funded facilities such as Hartree: <https://www.hartree.stfc.ac.uk/Pages/home.aspx>. Backed by over £170 million of government funding and significant strategic partnerships with organisations such as IBM and Atos, the Hartree Centre is home to some of the most technically advanced high performance computing, data analytics, machine learning technologies and experts in the UK. From early stage SMEs to international corporations, Hartree works with industry and the research community to address real life challenges and accelerate the adoption of high performance technologies, delivering transformative gains in performance, productivity and time to market. Expertise relevant to mental health is Data Science, from cognitive computing for natural language processing, augmented and virtual reality, AI, digital health and health informatics.

To learn more about the Hartree Centre's capability please contact Tom Kirkham (tom.kirkham@stfc.ac.uk).

Environmental Datasets

We would also encourage the use of environmental datasets to address the research challenges. NERC has a network of environmental data centres, details of which can be found at <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/sites/data/>, that provide a focal point for NERC's scientific data and information, maintaining environmental data and making them available to all users. These centres hold a vast range of datasets covering all aspects of environmental science from scientists working in the UK and around the world.

For general enquiries about the Centres please contact NERC's data management coordinator, Kay Heuser (data@nerc.ac.uk)