Can you provide further details around what would be considered a severe mental illness and in scope?

We are looking to support research that will ultimately benefit individuals who are most in need of mental health support i.e. mental illness that causes serious functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. Diagnostic categories have been provided within the call scope as a guide only and are not exclusive. Indeed, research could focus on one or more diagnostic categories, sub-diagnostic categories, groups with comorbidities and/or transdiagnostic symptoms/mechanisms. It will be up to the applicant team to make the case for how the research proposed addresses key research challenges in serious mental illness.

Do you expect funded hubs to address all three areas (in-depth phenotyping, intervention targets, exploratory studies)? Would applications that focused on 1 or 2 be seen by UKRI as less competitive?

Applications for hubs must incorporate one or more of these three themes. The rationale for the overall vision and approach of the proposed hub should be clearly described, as well as how this meets the aims of the call and the plans for a UKRI Mental Health Platform.

Given that you anticipate the hubs forming a Platform, is there scope to consider hubs that focus on providing a resource that would be essential to the functioning of the Platform as a whole?

Provision of a resource may constitute part of a hub's activities but should not be the sole focus. Hubs are expected to generate a long-lasting legacy of leadership, infrastructure and capability that extends beyond the funding period; however, any resource provision should be clearly linked to the hubs overall aim of addressing a key research challenge and advancing understanding of severe mental illness.

How do you view the hub as different from a Centre of Research Excellence or a programme grant or equivalent?

Hubs will support research activities that would not be possible through other funding routes. Multi and interdisciplinarity approaches as well as multi-organisation teams are requirements and the scope of the call stretches across the full breadth of research supported by UKRI, with focus on mental health. Hubs will be outward looking and networked under the leadership of a Director to form a national platform which brings together the best tools, resources, expertise and infrastructure to accelerate progress across the mental health field. Research within the hubs will be expected to advance, or act as an exemplar of approaches to advance, the wider field of SMI research and accelerate progress more broadly.

How can we balance specificity in our proposals with the need for design to be informed by co-production?

It is expected that the aims and objectives of the proposals will be informed by people with lived experience. Proposals may also include elements where it is intended that the final design of the study would be developed through co-production. In this case the methodology for the co-production

should be clearly described, including how it is expected to integrate into the hubs research plans and any key parameters to the process.

Will applications be accepted that don't include one or more of these areas, e.g. biological, digital? Is brain imaging expected as part of the detailed assessment process?

Applications and the work packages and methodological approaches proposed should be defined according to the vision and objectives of the Hub, the strategic themes and the breadth of research to be taken forward. Applications for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary hubs should provide a holistic approach from across the breadth of arts and humanities, biological science, social science, data science, environmental science, medical science and physical science. Digital and digitally based approaches is one of a number of avenues and solutions which may be taken forward in proposals.

Proposals should be multi and interdisciplinary, but they do not need to include all the exemplar disciplines noted in the call specification.

Are you able to indicate which other councils have invested in funding this call or has it been determined centrally via UKRI? Does inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary relate to the other funding councils? i.e. should applications include academics/approaches that fit with AHRC, ESRC, EPSRC?

While the call is being administered by MRC, proposals can be submitted across the full remit of UKRI and do not necessarily need to fall primarily into the remit of MRC. The call is aligned with the Health, Ageing and Wellbeing strategic theme set out in UKRIs strategy.

Proposals should be multi and interdisciplinary, but they do not need to include all the exemplar disciplines noted in the call specification.

Can you explain what you mean by the strategic focus on 'lack of diversity in consented research studies'. What other strategic areas apart from those listed on the call website can be considered?

Those living with severe mental illness are often from the most disadvantaged populations, and the combination of illness and disadvantage means they face additional challenges accessing support and have particularly poor outcomes overall. They are also less likely to be recruited or retained into research studies. Your application should clearly describe how the research approaches and outcomes will tackle the breadth of inequalities (such as socioeconomic, urban or rural, early life disadvantages and co-morbidities) that exist, with an ambition of benefitting the populations most in need across the UK. Additionally, your plans for engaging PWLE should include a description how under-represented communities will be incorporated.

Proposals are expected to align with the scope of the call as outlined within the specification.

Do you envisage the platform generating new recruitment of participants and data generation or is it more about the use of existing cohort data? I wonder where the balance is with respect to collecting new data for sharing (i.e. a data resource) and hypothesis driven experiments that answer distinct mechanistic questions?

The use of existing rich sources of longitudinal cohort or household panel data is encouraged. The generation of new or supplementation of valuable data sets is within scope e.g. recruitment of a broader range of participants, enhanced capture of measures within an existing cohort.

The balance in activities within the hub will depend on the hubs proposed vision and objectives and the strategic themes of the call being addressed. However, each hub is expected to generate a long-lasting legacy of capability, infrastructure and leadership which will help accelerate progress in mental health research for serious mental illness.

Establishment of new large-scale longitudinal research cohorts which will require follow-on funding to maintain the resource and realise its benefits is **not** in scope

Will a list of attendees or EoIs be made available to facilitate networking/collaborating?

Unfortunately, in this instance we do not have sufficient time to complete the required GDPR compliance for this to have a reasonable potential for impact on proposal development prior to the deadline for submission of the full proposal.

How much detail are you looking for in the EoI? Is it used as part of the selection process?

The EoI will not be formally assessed and will be primarily for administrative purposes, enabling us to prepare for the assessment stage of the process. As such we are looking for an outline of the key objectives of the hub and the research challenges to be addressed. However, if the description appears to be out of scope of the call, we will get in touch with the PI to provide this feedback and encourage careful consideration of the call text in developing any full application.

If you receive very similar applications, will you be suggesting collaboration at the full application stage?

We will not be merging similar proposals prior to the assessment panel. Each application will be assessed in accordance with the aims of the call and the assessment criteria provided. The assessment panel will make final funding decisions and we will aim to support a portfolio of investments across the scope of the call.

Could you clarify whether multiple organisations should be part of each application and if so how many organisations e.g. would two be sufficient if that was justified by the science/expertise at those two institutions?

Each application needs to have more than one research organisation as part of the applicant team. The Mental Health Platform is intended to be a national asset that is outward looking and supports research that benefits the breadth of the UK population. As such we have made it a requirement that applications should reach out beyond one research organisation and bring the best people, tools and skills together to address the key challenges that are holding mental health research back.

Does 'multiple organisations' include NHS Trusts and voluntary agencies?

NHS Trusts and voluntary organisations are welcome to participate in a hub application. It is expected that the research proposed in the hub will be conducted across more than one organization to allow the best people, tools and skills to be brought together and for the network of hubs to reach widely across the UK.

Are AHSNs considered eligible orgnanisations to participate with an institution?

Eligibility information can be found at [1.1 Types of research organisations – UKRI](#)

NHS bodies with research capacity are eligible to apply as lead applicants.

Can Early Career Researchers apply for this?

Yes, if you have the support of your Research Organisation you may be able to apply as an investigator or researcher co-investigator. You need to include evidence of the appropriate support from your Research Organisation (RO) in the application if you don't have a contract with the RO or a short-term contract. There is a question in the application asking for this.

Is it right that only the PI can edit the proposal on the new funding application platform?

The person who starts the application will be the only person able to edit the application, it is strongly encouraged that the PI is the person who creates the application in the "Funding Service"

Can the lead Co-I be in a different organisation to the Lead contracting organisation/research office?

Yes, Co-Investigators can be from any eligible organization

Can charities be Co-Investigators or Partners in the application?

It is possible to include non-academic partners, such as policy makers, local and national government, third sector and voluntary organisations as co-investigators. Where justified, the time of these partners will be funded at 100% full economic cost (identified as staff exception costs). Salary costs for new staff to be recruited for the proposed work can be submitted as part of the application. Travel and subsistence costs and overheads will be allowable if appropriately justified.

We recognise that some partners may be employed by a government-funded organisation. Applicants must therefore avoid the double counting of public funds in costings.

The combined costs for non-academic co-investigators must not exceed 30% of the total 100% full economic cost of the grant application.

Can you have international partners? Can funding go to overseas organizations or should be restricted to UK HEIs?

You can include international co-investigators if they provide expertise not available in the UK. The inclusion of an international co-investigator must be discussed and agreed with the relevant MRC programme manager before you submit the application. Please email your request to include international co-investigators to **support@funding-service.ukri.org** Directly incurred costs for international partners (an exception funded at 100%) may be requested, up to a maximum of 30% of the FEC requested.

It is expected that the research outputs of these awards stand to benefit those most in need across the UK. While we are keen for generalisable knowledge, understanding and benefits to other countries, we expect that where evidence-based impacts have the potential to emerge from the research that these should have applicability to the UK.

Is there a Word template with all of the sections (plus guidance) already available?

All of the sections and guidance are available on the funding finder page under how to apply https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/mental-health-platform-hubs/

Are high performance computing costs an eligible expense?

Yes as long as they are justified

Is it ok to include Datamind as a partner?

All funded hubs will be expected to make their data available through DATAMIND, the mental health data research hub. The mental health research data hub will work in partnership with each of the hubs to facilitate working across different types of data (molecular, cellular, phenotypic, administrative, health, social data and so on).

Once established, the hubs will be expected to network with each other, and with DATAMIND, to address shared challenges and develop common approaches, such as those with respect to harmonised data collection. Future funding will be made available through a separate process to enable this aspect.

DATAMIND does not need to be a partner on all proposals, however individual researchers within DATAMIND may be investigators or collaborators within a personal capacity.

Does the funding cover overall management/directorship of the hub?

Yes. Directly allocated contributions to salaries of the leadership team and other established researchers can be requested, usually between 15% to 30% of their time, in line with their research contribution

The expectation is that a Platform director and leadership team will be formulated through a competitive process from the awarded principal investigators, with assessment by representatives from a scientific advisory and oversight board members. The director will work in conjunction with the scientific advisory board and oversight board to ensure that the MH platform hubs, including DATAMIND:

- are networked and work together effectively to build consensus in key areas
- effectively link to other major activities in the landscape
- support training
- maximise the potential of the collective investments

The director will be supported with an administrative and networking budget (up to £3 million total).

Can we employ a Research Assistant from the fund

Yes research staff can be requested where justified

Are there expectations for any financial or in-kind contributions from applicants' orgnanisations?

No formal expectation for research organisations beyond the 20% to FEC. Project partners should bring contributions to the hub in cash or in kind - details of PP contributions are requested in the application

As with partnership grants is there a limit on the number of Co-Is who can be costed in?

No limit on number of Co-Investigators, the number should be as justified by the research and skills required within the hub budget available

What is expected in the training element - should this include plans for e.g. doctoral training?

The current hub call will **not** provide funds for studentships or fellowships although we hope that students and Early Career Researchers become involved in funded programmes and benefit from interacting with them. We expect the hubs to offer dynamic and nurturing multidisciplinary environments and therefore excellent career development opportunities for all those involved, including people with lived experience.

The hubs should develop and nurture career paths and a training environment which supports a positive research culture and build interdisciplinary research capacity.

What do you see as the role of industry?

Industry can be project partners however this is not a requirement for the call. Industry may provide expertise, materials or IP and help further development and translation of the research.

Industry as a collaborative partner is defined as being actively involved in the project contributing intellectually as well as financial (including in-kind) resources. A service provider giving a discount on materials or services is considered to be a supplier.

All applications with one or more industrial partners should review the information below to decide if they should submit their proposal under the ICF.

[MRC Industry Collaboration Framework (ICF) – UKRI](#)

How should this be structured -- how much should it include specific projects?

Hubs will be expected to bring together leadership, tools, skills, data and infrastructure to address key challenges in SMI research and demonstrate how these will underpin ambitious research that will transform our understanding of the mechanisms of SMI. Proposals should be challenge led and aim to enhance the capability and understanding of the wider SMI research field rather than focused on hypothesis-led studies within a narrow research area.