MRC-NIHR
Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

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Webinar outline – yes, it will be recorded 😊

- Overview of Better Methods, Better Research
- Overview of strategic opportunity
  ‘Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research’
- Review process
- Top tips
- Questions – please put them in Q&A (as opposed to Chat)
Poll 1

Were you previously aware of Better Methods, Better Research (BMBR - formerly Methodology Research Programme, MRP)?

• Yes - I have applied to BMBR before
• Yes - I was aware of BMBR
• No - I was not aware of BMBR prior to this opportunity
Poll 2

What is your primary role?

• Member of a research team
• Public involvement and engagement professional
• Member of the public or a public partner
• Member of a voluntary, community or social enterprise organisation
• Research office
• Other
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Aims

- Improving the methods underpinning biomedical and health research.
- Supporting implementation and uptake of better methods.
**Better Methods, Better Research**

**Annual budget: £5m**
- £4m MRC, £1m NIHR - without ring-fence

**Funding rounds:**
- Two per year (May, November decisions)
- 20-40 applications each meeting
- Funding 4-6 awards each meeting

**Awards:**
- £200k to £750k
- 1.5 to 3 years
- Project Grants, ICFs, NIRGs and Partnership Grants
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Panel remit and aims

- Funds the development or improvement of generalisable research methods across the breadth of MRC and NIHR remit…

- …with the aim of improving the efficiency, impact, reproducibility and rigour of health research.

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Panel remit and aims

1. Challenge-led, with evidenced need

2. Engaging and understanding end-user needs for outputs
   (including public, regulators & policy makers where appropriate)

3. Evidences research improvement

4. Designed for general learning in others

5. Includes support for dissemination, and uptake by others
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Areas out of scope

- Development of methods not generalisable beyond a single application.
- Novel applications of existing methods.
- Lab based method development; assay or protocol development.
- Generation or refinement of cellular or animal models.
- Platform or resource development.
- Technology development.
- Biomarker identification and validation.
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Strategy

- BMBR Panel and Stakeholders (MHRA, NICE, CSO, HCRW, HSCNI) form strategy group to guide priority setting for addressing methodological challenges

![Strategic Opportunities Diagram](image)

Understanding remote approaches to qualitative health research

- Opportunity status: Closed
- Funders: Medical Research Council (MRC)
- Co-funders: National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
- Funding type: Grant
- Maximum award: £300,000
- Publication date: 7 May 2021

![Guidance development Diagram](image)

Develop guidance for better research methods

- Opportunity status: Closed
- Funders: Medical Research Council (MRC)
- Co-funders: National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
- Funding type: Grant
- Total fund: £120,000
- Maximum award: £60,000
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Previous public involvement awards

- Patient and public INvolveMent In target differeNces in Trails (The PINpoINT Study)
  PI: Beatriz Goulao, Aberdeen (NIRG)

- Exploring patient and public perspectives on recruitment and consent in cluster randomised trials involving children
  PI: Kerry Woolfall, Liverpool

- What are the impacts of user involvement in health and social care research and how can they be measured?
  PI: Jennie Popay, Lancaster
  Public Involvement Impact Assessment Framework (PiiAF)
Poll 3

Have you participated in any public involvement in the past?

- Yes, as a public/patient contributor
- Yes, as a researcher
- Yes, as a PPIE professional
- No
Poll 4

What do you think is the key benefit of public involvement in research?
Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

BMBR strategic opportunity

- Co-developed with a Public Involvement Advisory Group (public contributor & PPIE professional members).

- Aims to address gaps in public involvement in non-clinical health and biomedical research

- Forms part of the response to the [MRC public involvement landscape review](https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/understanding-public-involvement-in-non-clinical-research/)

  “supporting the development of reflective and collaborative practice to enable research teams and MRC staff to prioritise public involvement, by where it’s most needed or meaningful”
Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

Definitions

Public involvement
Active collaborative partnership between researchers and members of the public, patients, carers and communities, working alongside research teams and as part of research organisations.

Non-clinical biomedical and health research
Fundamental discovery research ("basic science"), such as:
- Laboratory-based research (e.g. cell biology, biochemistry).
- Data science research (e.g. statistical modelling, machine learning).
- Methodology research (e.g. epidemiology, health economics or clinical trials methodology research).

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/understanding-public-involvement-in-non-clinical-research/
Eligibility criteria

- Usual MRC applicant eligibility criteria apply.
- Applicant teams must include public contributors.
- Applicant teams can be led by or include PPIE professionals.
- Projects should develop supporting evidence, tools and/or guidance.
- Design outputs and disseminated to improve practice across stakeholders.

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/understanding-public-involvement-in-non-clinical-research/
Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

Review process

Research Proposal

Is the proposal within BMBR remit?

Y: Proposal funded

N: Proposal declined

Assessed (peer reviewed) by UK and International experts in the area of science of the research proposal

Scheme assessment criteria

Generic assessment criteria

Reviewers provide comments on the proposal and score (1-6) using the Peer Reviewer scoring system

PI Advisory Group provide comments on the proposal and a shortlisting recommendation

Scheme assessment criteria

Shortlisting meeting

Response to Reviewers

Y

Panel members score (1-10) using the panel scoring system

Proposal funded

N

Proposal declined

N

Proposal declined

N

Proposal declined
Poll 5

What do you think is the biggest challenge for developing public involvement practices that can be used in non-clinical research?
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Pre-application:

- Talk to us! (far in advance of your application!)
- Engage public contributors, end-users and collaborators
- Internal peer review, if possible (essential for NIRGs)
- Include ‘HPI:’ at the beginning of the project title

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Framing:

- Be clear – in content and formatting!
- Outline public involvement in project development and execution in summary as well as ‘Vision’ & ‘Approach’
- Pitch your proposal to a non-specialist audience –the majority of the Panel and PI Advisory Group will not share your expertise.
- Frame your application around existing research and knowledge - describe the gaps you intend to fill and why.
Risks and resources:

- Describe what you actually plan to do, accounting for risks and including mitigation strategies.
- Value for money ≠ lower cost (necessarily).
- Build in adequate resources (and justify them) so that others can understand and build on your work later.
Ensuring uptake:

- Consider the pathway to implementation and uptake – validation, calibration, benchmarking, dissemination, access, etc.

- Demonstrate meaningful public involvement and engagement with end-users.
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Key dates

- Opening date: 17 April 2024
- Closing date: 12 June 2024

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/understanding-public-involvement-in-non-clinical-research/
Thank you

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