



Medical  
Research  
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**NIHR** | National Institute for  
Health and Care Research

# 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

# Better Methods, Better Research

## 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

# Better Methods, Better Research

## Panel remit and aims

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

Experimental design	Data interrogation	Implementation	Knowledge management
Synthesis Approaches Conduct	Analyses Integration Inference	Context Evaluation Management	Dissemination Visibility Usability

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

# Better Methods, Better Research

## 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



# Better Methods, Better Research

## 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.

# Better Methods, Better Research

## Strategy

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

### Strategic Opportunities

#### Understanding remote approaches to qualitative health research

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	<a href="#">Medical Research Council (MRC)</a>
Co-funders:	National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
Funding type:	Grant
Maximum award:	£500,000
Publication date:	7 May 2021

### Guidance development

#### Develop guidance for better research methods

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	<a href="#">Medical Research Council (MRC)</a>
Co-funders:	National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£120,000
Maximum award:	£60,000

# Better Methods, Better Research

## Previous public involvement awards

- **Patient and public INvolvement In target differencEs in Trials (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](#)  
*“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).

# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

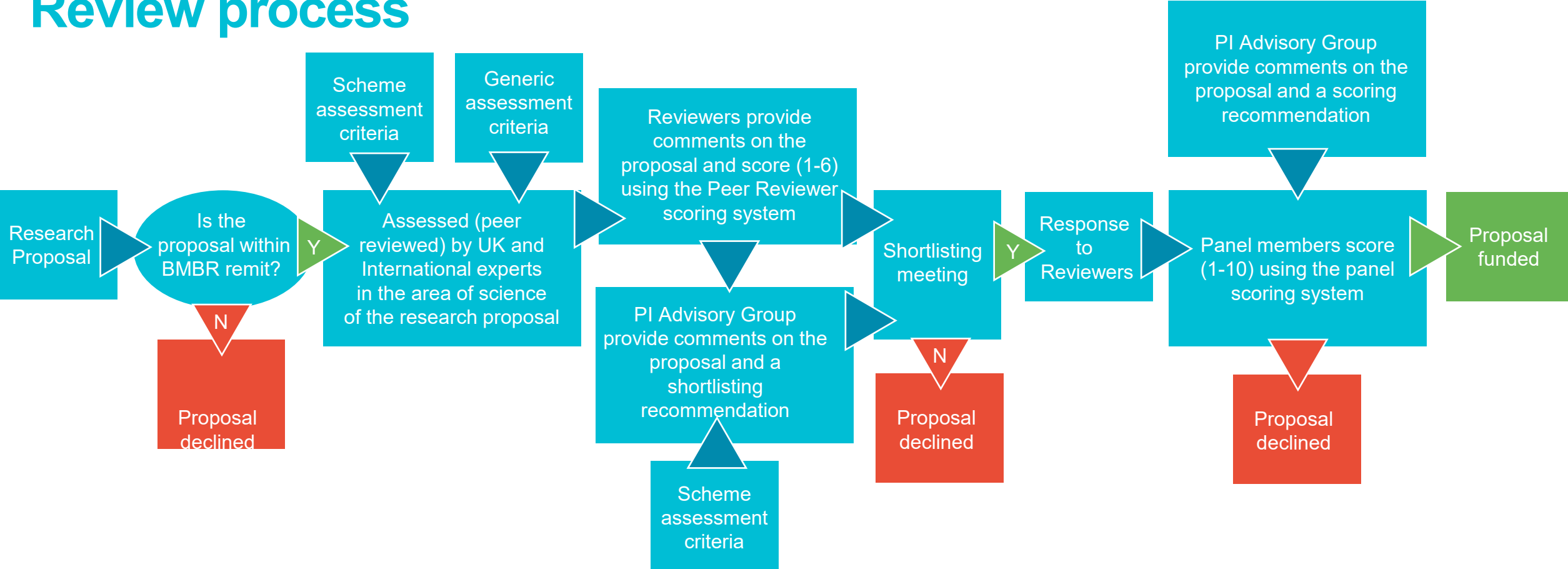
## Eligibility criteria

- 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.



# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

## Review process



# Poll 5

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

# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

## 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

# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

## 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.

# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

## Risks and resources:

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

# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

## Ensuring uptake:

- Consider the pathway to implementation and uptake
  - validation, calibration, benchmarking, dissemination, access, etc.
- Demonstrate meaningful public involvement and engagement with end-users.

# Understanding public involvement in non-clinical research

## Key dates

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



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# Thank you

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