

**NIHR
SSCR**

NIHR School for Social Care Research

BUSINESS PLAN

2009–2014



Improving the evidence base for adult social care practice

The School for Social Care Research is a partnership between the London School of Economics and Political Science, King's College London and the Universities of Kent, Manchester and York, and is part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/>.

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1. BACKGROUND

“We want to improve the evidence for social care practice so we can be sure that people in this country are provided with better and more effective services in the future. This new National School for Social Care Research will make a major contribution to improving the volume and quality of the research in the English social care sector.”

The Care Services Minister,
announcing the establishment of the new School

“The new NIHR SSCR ... will give researchers the time and funding to ask the important questions and improve our understanding of what works, what doesn't work and why. This new School will provide considerable benefit to the health and well-being of the population through the new knowledge gained.”

Professor Dame Sally Davies,
Director General of Research and Development at the Department of Health

In June 2008, the National Institute for Health Research¹ (NIHR) announced its intention to establish the NIHR School for Social Care Research (NIHR SSCR) following the success of its first research School: the NIHR School for Primary Care Research.² The setting of the new School within the NIHR is an acknowledgement of the central contribution made by social care to the nation's health. The NIHR School for Social Care Research has existed in shadow form since September 2008, signing formal contracts in April 2009, and officially launching on 1 May 2009.

The NIHR SSCR operates as a virtual body within the NIHR, bringing together the leading researchers and research groups in the social care field in England. It combines a group of *Executive Members* – individuals heading teams or units working in social care research – with a network of *Extramural Senior Fellows* and *Fellows* – research collaborators, including specialists in other areas of expertise relevant to social care.

This Business Plan sets out the School's mission, activities, governance structure, research programmes, budget and timetable.

1. The NIHR provides the framework through which the research staff and research infrastructure of the NHS in England is positioned, maintained and managed as a national research facility. It provides the NHS with the support and infrastructure it needs to conduct first-class research funded by the Government and its partners alongside high-quality patient care, education and training. Its aim is to support outstanding individuals (both leaders and collaborators), working in world class facilities (both NHS and university), conducting leading edge research focused on the needs of patients. <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/>.

2. Department of Health (2006) *Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy*. The NHS contribution to health research in England, Department of Health, London (http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4127127); Department of Health (2009) *Best Research for Best Health: Implementation Plan 6.10*, NIHR School for Social Care Research, Department of Health, London (<http://www.nihr.ac.uk/files/pdfs/Implementation%20Plan%206.10%20School%20for%20Social%20Care%20Research.%20Final%20July%202009.pdf>).

2. MISSION AND ACTIVITIES

2.1 Mission

The mission of the NIHR School for Social Care Research is to develop the evidence base for adult social care practice in England by commissioning and conducting high-quality ('world class') research to produce new knowledge (including, where appropriate, reviews and syntheses of existing evidence), in order to inform the future development of adult social care practice in England.

2.2 Activities

The School is pursuing this mission through a number of activities:

- Conducting high-quality research to produce new knowledge including, where appropriate, reviewing and synthesising existing knowledge, in order to inform the future development of social care practice
- Commissioning high-quality research through competitive tendering
- Providing a focus for social care research within the NIHR, as well as strategic leadership for the development of social care research more generally
- Developing methodological rigour and broadening the methodological repertoire, including bringing into social care research a number of disciplinary perspectives currently not well represented
- Consulting widely on research priorities
- Contributing to ongoing efforts to build social care research capacity and improve research awareness
- Disseminating findings and supporting other knowledge transfer activities.

The first three of these activities are the core activities of the School, and others listed above are mainly to be carried out in support of them.

The approaches that the NIHR SSCR is employing in respect of these activities are described in sections 4–10 below.

3. MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

3.1 Structure of the School

The NIHR SSCR is structured as follows:

- A Director of the School, supported by a Senior Scientific Administrator, a Finances and Communications Administrator and other resources at LSE
- Individuals appointed as Associate Directors of the School
- The NIHR SSCR Executive, comprising the Director and Associate Directors of the School (the Intramural Members of the School)
- Individuals appointed as (Extramural) Senior Fellows or Fellows
- An independent Advisory Board
- A User, Carer and Practitioner Reference Group
- Ad hoc working groups
- Formally established links with the DH/NIHR

NIHR SSCR Director

The NIHR SSCR Director is Professor Martin Knapp (London School of Economics and Political Science – LSE). He has overall responsibility for leading, managing and directing the School, its affairs and activities and is accountable to the Director of NIHR for all aspects of the operation of NIHR SSCR. He devotes 2.5 days a week to the role. His period of office is five years in the first instance.

Associate Directors

The Associate Directors of the NIHR SSCR are university-based individuals who have made a sustained high-quality contribution to research on adult social care practice in England. They are leaders of established research units or groups. The Associate Directors – the Intramural Members of the School – were selected following an open call for applicants by the Department of Health in February 2009.

Associate Directors provide intellectual leadership for the School. They are responsible – alongside the Director – for guiding projects conducted or commissioned by the School, in particular by contributing to the scoping of research questions, preparation of requests for proposals, identification of potential reviewers, consideration of reviewers' comments, guidance and support for Fellows, assessment of completed reports, and dissemination and knowledge transfer. They are fully committed to the mission of the School and its activities.

The Associate Directors are Professor David Challis (University of Manchester), Professor Caroline Glendinning (University of York), Professor Jim Mansell (University of Kent), Professor Jill Manthorpe (King's College London) and Professor Ann Netten (University of Kent).

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Executive Group

The Executive Group supports the Director, provides academic leadership for the NIHR SSCR, including the work of School Fellows, and is responsible for running the School and reporting on its activities. Advised by the Advisory Board and by the User, Carer and Practitioner Reference Group (see below), and operating within established NIHR procedures, the Executive Group makes decisions on what research questions are to be examined, commissioning processes, appointment of reviewers for proposals, commissioning decisions, monitoring of ongoing studies, assessment of final reports, and decisions regarding dissemination and knowledge transfer.

The Executive Group comprises the Director and all current Associate Directors for a 5-year funded period. Executive Members are supported by the School's Senior Scientific Administrator (Gill Hastings) and Finances and Communications Administrator (Anji Mehta).

The Executive may seek expert advice from relevant individuals and invite such individuals to Executive meetings where this will be helpful.

The Executive meets every two months or more frequently if required. The Director chairs meetings of the Executive Group. Quorum is 60% of current membership. (In the event of a meeting not being quorate, decisions are taken by either teleconference or email discussion.) Substitutes and co-opted members may attend Executive meetings under special circumstances, as agreed in advance by the Group. Decisions are made by simple majority voting.

Senior Fellows and Fellows

There are two additional categories of researcher associated with the School:

- (a) principal investigators (PIs) of projects commissioned by the NIHR SSCR for the duration of their projects – these are called SSCR Fellows; or
- (b) advisors and external experts (funded or otherwise by the School) who support the School – these are called SSCR Senior Fellows.

Senior Fellows and Fellows will include leaders of research groups, individual researchers with strong track records of work in the social care field, and individuals without previous social care experience but who have disciplinary, subject or methodological expertise that will enhance the work of the School. They are not necessarily university-based. The number of Fellows, although not limited, is subject to the terms of specific calls for tenders (see Section 5 below).

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Advisory Board

The role of the independent Advisory Board is to advise and support the Director of the NIHR and NIHR SSCR Director and Executive on:

- the programmes of research undertaken by NIHR SSCR research teams;
- the development of research capacity and research literacy;
- the strategic development of the NIHR SSCR in the context of national and international opportunities; and
- other matters concerning the development of social care research capacity and capability.

Board members³ play an ambassadorial role. They work to ensure optimal partnerships with key stakeholders, including people who use services, carers, practitioners, the broader research community, independent and third sector providers of social care, local government and the NHS. Membership of the Board is for three years in the first instance.

Meetings are held twice yearly to advise the NIHR SSCR Director and Executive on the operation and strategic direction of the School, in particular its programmes of research. On an annual basis, the Board will review progress of the NIHR SSCR against the Business Plan and receive for discussion the NIHR SSCR Director's short written assessment of progress and future opportunities.

Board meetings are held in London. Reasonable travel, care expenses, and subsistence expenses of Board members will be met by the NIHR SSCR, in line with LSE policy.

Board members are appointed as individuals and substitutes will not normally be allowed.

User, Carer and Practitioner Reference Group (UCPRG)

A key aim within the NIHR SSCR is to involve people who use services, carers, practitioners, policy makers and relevant others in all the stages of research. The NIHR SSCR therefore aims to ensure the active, informed engagement of each of these groups in all of its activities. For example, all research projects (and hence all research proposals) must demonstrate evidence of meaningful user, carer and practitioner involvement.

In addition to representation on the Advisory Board, the School has established a User, Carer and Practitioner Reference Group coordinated by the School's Senior Scientific Administrator. The role of the UCPRG is to advise the School's Executive on all research and related activities, including identification of research questions, reviewing proposals, participating in other ways in the commissioning of research, reviewing reports and other outputs, and communicating findings so as to have an impact. One of the key roles of the UCPRG is to advise the Executive on ways to continue to develop its engagement with people who use services, carers and practitioners. The School welcomes advice on innovative ways to develop such engagement.

3. The Members of the Advisory Board are listed at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NIHRSSCR/advisoryboard.htm>.

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The UCPRG is invited to submit a report to the School's Advisory Board for consideration at the Board's six-monthly meetings.

Terms of reference for the UCPRG were discussed and agreed by the Group at its first meeting in July 2009, and approved by the Advisory Board in October 2009.⁴

Ad Hoc working groups

Time-limited working groups may be convened to support or deliver the NIHR SSCR's strategic objectives. They will be appointed by the NIHR SSCR Executive as needed.

Links with the DH/NIHR

Links between the NIHR SSCR and the NIHR are maintained between the Director and Executive Group of the School and identified representatives of the NIHR at the Department of Health.

3.2 Administration

The Director is supported by a full-time Senior Scientific Administrator (SSA), Dr Gill Hastings. The SSA ensures that adequate structures and processes are in place for the NIHR SSCR to pursue its agreed activities and to achieve its objectives, and serves as the main point of contact for the NIHR SSCR. Specific responsibilities include:

- Operational planning and organisation, including monitoring and regulating all research and related activities funded by the School;
- Managing the commissioning of research;
- Reporting on NIHR SSCR activities;
- Facilitating representation from people who use services, carers and practitioners in the work of the School
- Identifying further funding opportunities and, in collaboration with the Executive Group, developing joint funding opportunities with external funding bodies
- Supporting the Director on research activities and research programme leadership.

The Director is further supported by a half-time Finances and Communications Administrator, Angela Mehta, whose primary responsibilities are financial administration of the School, communications and knowledge transfer. (The School is developing collaborative links with other organisations with expertise in knowledge transfer; see Section 9 below.) A part-time junior Administrative Assistant may be appointed.

4. The terms of reference are available at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NIHRSSCR/UCPRG.htm>.

3.3 Monitoring and reporting

The NIHR SSCR's performance is reviewed regularly. A business report is submitted to the Director of NIHR every six months, following consultation with the Advisory Board. In addition, an annual report will be published by the School; the first such report will be made publicly available in Spring 2010. In preparing its reports, or for other monitoring or reporting purposes, the Executive has the facility to call upon individuals or project teams funded by the NIHR SSCR for reports or information at any reasonable time, and will ensure that relevant information on activity and projects is maintained. The Executive will also ensure that Members, Senior Fellows, Fellows and staff of the NIHR SSCR adhere to all appropriate monitoring and reporting requirements, including those of organisations hosting the research.

Reporting requirements for individual projects are described in Section 5.

A set of performance indicators are being developed.

3.4 Regulation and transparency

The NIHR SSCR is fully committed to compliance with guidance issued from the DH and other statutory bodies such as EU regulations on clinical trials, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Mental Health Act 2007 with regard to the conduct and administration of research. All research funded by the NIHR SSCR will need to comply with the Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care (2005)⁵ (including research ethics) and with the requirements of equality and human rights legislation.

The School is developing a detailed generic intellectual property (IP) agreement with NIHR SSCR Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows. IP agreements will be drawn up in accordance with standard NIHR procedures.

All journal articles and other forms of dissemination based on work commissioned by the NIHR SSCR are required to acknowledge funding from the School and the NIHR.

All NIHR SSCR members are expected to comply with guidance with regard to the conduct and administration of research set out by the institutions hosting the research. Where guidance from an individual institution differs from that of the lead partner, the lead partner's internal guidance will be deemed applicable.

The NIHR SSCR adheres to the Freedom of Information Act as applicable. Requests for information will be dealt with in line with LSE's Freedom of Information principles.⁶

5. See http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4108962

6. See <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/FOI/>

3.5 Contractual arrangements

The main contract with the DH is held with the London School of Economics and Political Science, with sub-contracts from the LSE to the host institutions of other Executive members and Fellows.

Funding started in May 2009, and will run for five years.

3.6 Financial arrangements

Allocation between Members and Fellows research

After accounting for LSE and other running costs for the NIHR SSCR, it is intended that, over the five-year contracted period, approximately 50% of the remaining budget will be allocated to research carried out by Executive Members and 50% to research carried out by Senior Fellows and Fellows, usually in collaboration with Executive Members and linked to one or more programmes, as noted previously. Non-programme work by Senior Fellows and Fellows could include methodological reviews and consultation exercises.

Decisions on funding are taken by the Executive Group in relation to individual projects after full consideration of the current state of evidence in that field, the type of research to be undertaken, the best design for that type of research, the expected value for money of that work and, most importantly, its relevance to the improvement of social care practice in England.⁷

Associate Director budget

A total budget of £100,000 per annum (inclusive of travel, subsistence and other costs, and Full Economic Costing (FEC) overheads) is available for allocation to support Associate Directors in their management responsibilities, including those activities described in section 3. The allocation of this *Associate Director budget* will be decided annually by the Executive Group, and will be influenced by the relative scale of research managed by individuals and the expected responsibilities of leadership.

FEC/overheads

Funding for all projects, reviews and other research-related activities is on the basis of lump-sum amounts: the School does not get involved in detailed negotiations about FEC/overhead rates with organisations hosting commissioned research or with other Executive Members' universities. The School may, however, take such rates into consideration when deciding what work to commission. Executive Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows leading projects,

7. The NIHR SSCR Executive Group is closely monitoring expenditure patterns (and particularly the overall 50:50 split) and the consequences for research quality and the distribution of resources across programmes, and may make recommendations to the NIHR for change if necessary.

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conducting reviews and carrying out other activities funded by the School are responsible for negotiating the FEC/overhead percentage with their own institutions, payment coming from this lump sum.

In issuing calls for proposals, the School (through the Executive Group) may identify target costs for projects of different sizes and types. Proposals need to include full details of planned expenditure, and a detailed statement of expenditure is required at each reporting stage. It is made clear to individuals and organisations tendering for NIHR SSCR funding that value for money is one of the criteria used to assess proposals.

Financial management and regulations

The financial arrangements for the School, including the allocation of funding to projects and programmes, are overseen by the NIHR SSCR Executive. The Finances and Communications Administrator is required to submit an account of all income and expenditure to meetings of the Executive.

Any Executive Member, Senior Fellow or Fellow engaged on NIHR SSCR-commissioned work who additionally receives funds from elsewhere which contribute to that work is asked to notify the Finances and Communications Administrator who maintains appropriate records.

Funding regulations for Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows are set out in the tender documentation and in the contracts.

Invoicing

Payment to NIHR SSCR Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows is made quarterly from the LSE upon receipt of invoices detailing actual expenditure. Payment schedules will be set out in individual subcontracts with NIHR SSCR Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows.

Each Executive Member, Senior Fellow and Fellow receiving funding from NIHR SSCR is required to nominate a finance manager or appropriately qualified individual from their organisation to liaise with the NIHR SSCR Finances and Communications Administrator to provide twice-yearly updates on expenditure, project and activity finances. Each must keep records which are transparent, auditable and compatible with good financial practice.

Auditing

The Director of the School reserves the right to appoint an independent chartered or certified public accountant through the LSE at the NIHR SSCR's expense to examine all relevant books and records of Executive Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows, provided:

- reasonable prior written notice is given to the Finances and Communications Administrator;
- access is only required during normal working hours;
- the Director and the auditor will make all reasonable endeavours to keep confidential any information that they may require in the exercise of their rights under this Clause.

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For all Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows audit principles as set out by their host institution will be applicable. Where an institution's policies may differ from the lead institution's policies, the lead institution's principles will apply.

Indemnity and insurance

Issues of indemnity and insurance are set out in the individual contracts with Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows, and it is the responsibility of the individual host institution to ensure that all staff engaged in programmes have the appropriate indemnity for the conduct of research. Proof of indemnity is required upon signature of subcontracts with the LSE for NIHR SSCR records.

Arrangements for withdrawal

In the event of a withdrawal of an NIHR SSCR Member, Senior Fellow or Fellow, the Executive Group will make all reasonable attempts to reallocate their funding to other Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows, or a third party acceptable to the remaining Members, who remain bound by this Agreement. Any reallocation must be agreed with the NIHR. A withdrawing Member, Senior Fellow or Fellow will not be entitled to receive any additional payment for costs incurred from NIHR SSCR activities that were carried out before the withdrawal.

The process for terminations relating to breaches with extramural research will be stipulated in the relevant subcontracts and dealt with accordingly.

4. CONDUCTING HIGH-QUALITY RESEARCH

4.1 Aims

The core aim of the NIHR SSCR is to carry out high-quality ('world class') research to produce new knowledge (including, where appropriate, reviews and syntheses of existing evidence), in order to inform the development of adult social care practice in England. The School is pursuing this aim by conducting research 'in-house', and commissioning research 'externally'. The other activities described in Sections 6 to 10 are intended to contribute to this main activity. Each of them – consultation on priorities, methodological investment, developing research capacity, dissemination, and providing research focus and leadership – is essential to the success of the School.

The NIHR SSCR:

- undertakes and commissions primary research on adult social care practice in England, covering the delivery of social care by professional and non-professional staff working in both the statutory and independent sectors; and
- reflects the profile of modern social care, which is provided by a range of different agencies in a variety of contexts.

The School's work is intended to help to improve the quality of care and support services for all those people who use them.

The NIHR SSCR draws on a wide range of academic disciplines and research methods. It endeavours to strike the right balance between world class science (of a standard that will warrant publication in the best academic journals in the field) and research that will have an impact on real-world social care practice, noting of course that there is not necessarily always a tension between the two. The School will ensure that its findings are translated into outputs that are accessible and usable by all relevant stakeholders (see Section 9). It will also ensure that its research response to any particular social care practice question is proportionate: the resources and effort devoted to addressing a research question should be in proportion to the likely implications of the findings for social care practice.

The quality of the research commissioned by the NIHR SSCR will be monitored by the Executive Group, through independent reviewing of research proposals and assessment of final reports.

4.2 Research programmes and projects

Research to be conducted or commissioned may be grouped within programmes so as to improve the scope for cross-fertilisation and coordination, and to help identify topics in need for further research. These could be theme-based collections of research questions. The precise specification of those programme areas and their periodic updating will be finalised following consultation with key stakeholders, discussion with the Advisory Board, reviews of the relevant literature, and identification of gaps in the evidence base.

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Projects, located within one or more programmes, will generally be shorter than five years in duration, and of course also generally narrower in ambition and scope. The type of project needed to address an identified social care practice question will be considered carefully. Each individual project will have an identified Principal Investigator (PI) – who will be an Executive Member, Senior Fellow or Fellow of the School – and co-principal investigators as appropriate. The PI is responsible for the effective management and successful delivery of the research project, against the agreed plan of work, working in close liaison with an identified Executive Member.

4.3 Over-arching principles and cross-cutting themes

A number of principles are adhered to throughout the School's research activities, and a number of themes are common to many of its research studies.

- User, carer and practitioner engagement is required throughout the School's activities. Procedures are being set up, for example, to allow the participation of people for whom standard methods of communication are inappropriate.
- The highest ethical and research governance standards must be achieved.
- The pursuit of scientific excellence is imperative, but must be proportionate to the real-world relevance of the question.
- Research commissioned and conducted by the School should have real-world impact.
- Peer-review processes are being finalised to ensure that funded proposals are of a high standard and are relevant.
- Completed reports will be similarly assessed.
- The details of commissioned projects and the findings of completed studies should be highly visible within the public domain, and accessible to all relevant stakeholders.

Among the themes that will pervade much of the work of the School are:

- Development and utilisation of robust outcome measures, not just for the people who use services but also for their carers and perhaps others.
- 'Process outcomes', reflecting how individuals access and experience care and support.
- Cost-effectiveness, ensuring that resource impacts are addressed alongside outcome impacts, and that any trade-offs are transparent.
- Recognition of cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity.
- Interfaces between social care, health care and relevant other systems (such as housing, pensions and benefits).
- Consequences of practice changes for the paid workforce in the statutory, third and private sectors, and for unpaid carers.

5. COMMISSIONING RESEARCH

5.1 Commissioning principles

The NIHR SSCR aims to commission research from Executive Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows that is of the highest quality, ethical, independently peer-reviewed, widely disseminated, and fully engages with people who use services and other stakeholders. All projects commissioned by the NIHR SSCR will have their details lodged on the central Research Register for Social Care.⁸

5.2 Commissioning of Member research

For each research question identified as suitable for funding, a decision is taken by the Executive Group as to whether the work should be carried out by one or more Executive Member(s) or put out to tender to external competition.

In the case of the former, the Executive Group decides which Member's are invited to lead or themselves carry out each study. For such internally commissioned research, Members are required to complete full proposals which are peer-reviewed (see section 5.4 below). The appropriate steps are taken to ensure confidentiality. Monitoring of progress will be carried out (see section 5.6). Reports from completed studies will be sent to independent assessors, and a set of outputs will be required as part of the contract with the School (see section 5.7).

5.3 Commissioning of external research

Opportunities to apply for research identified by the Executive Group as suitable for carrying out externally will be advertised widely.

Calls for Proposals (CFP) will detail the research questions, the design or approach to be followed (where relevant), the expected duration of the study, financial rules and regulations, and an indicative cost. Specifications will be in line with all relevant EU regulations, and any additional LSE and NIHR regulations. The CFP will be set up on the LSE's online tendering system,⁹ working in close liaison with the LSE's Purchasing Manager. A Selection Panel, led by the Director, will be responsible for short-listing outline proposals, considering full proposals and selecting successful applicants.¹⁰

The first such Call for Proposals was published in July 2009.

8. <http://www.researchregister.org.uk/>

9. <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/lse/>

10. A decision to be taken by the Executive Group will be whether to employ a two-stage process for some RFPs: an outline proposal stage, followed by full proposals only from short-listed applicants.

5.4 Peer review

Each commissioned piece of work will be peer-reviewed. Except under exceptional circumstances, each piece of work will be peer-reviewed by a member of the UCPRG and one or two researchers with particular expertise in the area. User and carer members of the UCPRG members will be paid for carrying out reviews; standard NIHR operating procedures concerning the payment of other reviewers will be followed. Provided that there are no conflicts of interest, the Executive Member(s) with managerial responsibility for a project will play a key role in the interpretation of reviewers' comments and recommendations. Decisions on which proposals will be funded, and any conditions attached to that funding, are the responsibility of the Executive Group. These decisions are informed by the following criteria:

- feasibility, excellence and originality;
- relevance to adult social care practice in England;
- potential to have an impact on practice and on the lives of people using services and their carers;
- value for money;
- strength of the research team;
- contribution to the coherence of the programme and to the work of NIHR SSCR more broadly.

5.5 Research ethics and governance

All projects must apply for research ethics approval from the National Social Care Research Ethics Committee¹¹ or, in the case of studies 'in or with' the NHS, to the NHS Committees within the National Research Ethics System (NRES). All work supported by the School will be carried out in accordance with the RGF (2005), the Implementation Plan for Social Care (2004), the Mental Capacity Act (2005), the Mental Health Act (2007), and the Data Protection Act (1998). Funding for research project activities requiring ethics approval will follow once such approval has been granted.

A guide to research ethics and governance is in preparation to support the School's research activities.

5.6 Monitoring of research projects

Stringent targets and indicators are being drawn up to monitor progress of funded projects. A key element will be the biannual production of brief reports. Failure to achieve these targets may require remedial action by the School, firstly to identify any problems, time pressures and other issues that the NIHR SSCR may be able to resolve, and secondly (if appropriate) to involve other researchers, subject to contract regulations, in the production of some of these outputs.

11. <http://www.screc.org.uk/>

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For ongoing commissioned research, any substantive variations to research projects need to be approved by the Director following peer-review of the revised proposal where the work to be undertaken is substantially different to the original proposal.

5.7 Reporting

A contractual requirement for each research project commissioned from Executive Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows is the preparation of the following outputs:

- a short administrative report, including a financial statement;
- one or more peer-reviewed paper(s) submitted to top quality journals (in pre-submission manuscript form);
- a short note reflecting on the methods used and any issues/lessons that arise (things that did and did not work); and
- a brief, accessible 'Findings' document to be placed on the School website.

These four outputs together comprise the 'final report' of the project, and will be peer-reviewed. Final payment will be contingent on delivery of all of these outputs of satisfactory quality. Additional or amended reporting requirements may be set out in contracts for commissioned research.

All journal articles and other outputs are required to acknowledge support from the NIHR SSCR, using the wording provided by the School.

5.8 Joint commissioning

The NIHR SSCR is exploring joint or coordinated commissioning possibilities with other research-funding bodies such as the ESRC and other parts of the NIHR such as the Health Technology Assessment Programme, Public Health Programme and the Service Delivery and Organisation Programme. More generally, Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows of the School are encouraged to seek further funding to pursue research on social care practice. The aim is to expand the volume and improve the quality of social care research that is undertaken.

6. METHODOLOGICAL REPERTOIRE AND RIGOUR

A number of methods have been used in social care research, but have not always been selected appropriately, nor always employed adequately. This has left some of the empirical evidence in the field lacking in the rigour needed to offer relevant and useful findings to inform the development of social care practice. The disciplinary base from which social care research has been built will also benefit from broadening, and the repertoire of theoretical and conceptual frameworks and research methods thereby expanded. An important aim of the new School is therefore to improve the quality of the research undertaken on social care practice by helping to broaden the range of research designs and methods, and by helping to ensure that these are applied appropriately. As with many of the School's activities, greater success is likely to follow from good collaboration with other bodies (such as the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods and SCIE).

If necessary, Executive Members of the School will work closely with short-listed or funded applicants to ensure that the work to be undertaken is of the highest scientific standards. To support ongoing development of the methodological base for social care research, the NIHR SSCR requires a short note at the end of each commissioned study which will give the researchers an opportunity to reflect on the methods employed, and to make recommendations that could help future work.

7. CONSULTATION ON PRIORITIES

The NIHR School is actively consulting with a wide range of stakeholders in social care about research questions, the methods needed to answer them, the processes through which these methods are to be implemented, and the ways that findings are to be translated into a form that can aid the development of practice. The purpose is to identify priorities for topics, methods and processes, not just at the outset but at various points during the five-year period.

A range of processes are being utilised, including discussions with the User, Carer and Practitioner Reference Group, open consultation with researchers, commissioners, providers, people who use services, carers, frontline professionals and other key individuals in order to develop the School's research and capacity-building activities.¹² Work is underway to identify evidence gaps or 'grey areas'.

12. Consultation is underway through an online consultations form (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NIHRSSCR/researchsuggestion.htm>), information about which has been circulated through an electronic mail-out, and through Community Care magazine; discussions with key organisations and individuals, and presentations at relevant organisational meetings.

8. BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY

Social care research in England is conducted by quite a small group of people, certainly in comparison to the number of health services researchers. In support of its principal aims to conduct and commission world class research, the NIHR SSCR aims to contribute to the development of greater capacity, in terms of both the generation of research and its utilisation by decision-makers throughout the statutory, third and private social care systems.

9. DISSEMINATION

The NIHR SSCR has an important communications function, both in respect of its research programme, but also in relation to its various leadership roles. An effective dissemination strategy is crucial – ensuring that the work of the School is communicated and has an impact.

A Communications Strategy for the NIHR SSCR has been prepared outlining the School's approach to communications and dissemination.¹³

10. RESEARCH FOCUS AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

The NIHR SSCR aims to provide a focus for social care research within the National Institute of Health Research, helping to encourage greater understanding and awareness of social care research. Developing greater awareness of social care and social care research within NIHR is an important constituent task. The NIHR offers many channels to support research and researchers, but most of its resources to date have been directed at health and health services research.

More generally, the establishment of the NIHR SSCR offers a rare opportunity to all partners in the School (Executive Members, Senior Fellows and Fellows, Advisory Board, UCPRG and the NIHR) to support, encourage and in some respects lead the development of adult social care research in England, and to forge productive links with social care research communities outside England. Many of the activities described in earlier sections of this Business Plan will help in this regard.

13. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NIHRSSCR/communications.htm>

11. RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

11.1 Research programmes

In formulating a set of proposed research programmes, the views of Advisory Board members and a number of other people have been sought. Wider consultation on research questions is an important part of the ongoing programme of the School.

Five (overlapping) programme areas have been identified. Each is practice-facing. The programmes are not exhaustive, and are likely to develop through consultation and as the School develops. Each programme is best described in terms of a core summary question:

- A. How can we best prevent or reduce the development or exacerbation of circumstances that lead to the need for social care? For short, we are presently referring to this as the **Prevention and Reduction** programme.
- B. How can we best empower and safeguard people who use social care services? This is the **Empowerment and Safeguarding** programme.
- C. How can we best equip and support people – practitioners, volunteers, informal carers – to provide optimum social care? How can we ensure that people who use social care and their carers are enabled and supported in paid work and other types of meaningful activity? This is the **Care and Work** programme.
- D. What interventions, commissioning and delivery arrangements best achieve social care outcomes? This is the **Service Interventions, Commissioning and Change** programme.
- E. How can social care and other public resources best be deployed and combined to achieve social care outcomes? This is the **Resources and Interfaces** programme.

The term 'social care' refers to potentially the full range of care and support arrangements made available or possible for adults with the widest range of needs, characteristics and circumstances. It includes care and support provided by families and communities, and whether publicly funded or privately purchased.¹⁴ The term 'best' will include such criteria as effective, cost-effective, and equitable (in terms of opportunity/access, and/or in terms of resources used or outcomes achieved).

The type of research to be undertaken – for example, a review, an initial 'scoping' of the issues, an exploratory study or a full evaluation – will be considered by the Executive Group before work is commissioned. The types of studies that will be used to inform NIHR SSCR consideration are set out at www.lse.ac.uk/collections/nihrsscr/typesofresearch.htm.

The Executive Group will ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved between these programmes.

14. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NIHRSSCR/research.htm>

11.2 Research projects

First wave projects began in autumn 2009. These include:

- Individualisation of services – a scoping study
- Social care practice with carers: an investigation of practice models
- Care and support for people with complex and severe needs: innovations and practice. A scoping study
- Costs and outcomes of skilled support for adults with complex needs in supported accommodation

Project outlines for these are available at
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NIHRSSCR/research.htm>

Second Wave projects are due to begin in March 2010 following completion of the Second Wave commissioning process.

12. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The School is in the process of agreeing a number of performance indicators with the Advisory Board and the NIHR. These indicators will span the activities set out in Section 2, and will inform the regular monitoring of the School's activities. Further details will be posted in due course.

Business Plan

13. BUDGET

The NIHR SSCR will be funded to a total of £15m over five years, uplifted annually for inflation. The allocation of the budget over financial years will be:

2009/10	£0.95m
2010/11	£3.8m
2011/12	£3.8m
2012/13	£3.5m
2013/14	£2.91m
2014/15	£0.04m

Subject to the approval of NIHR, it will be possible to re-profile funding between years.

The budget for the School is set out in the following table.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
	1 May 09 to 31 Mar 10	1 Apr 10 to 31 Mar 11	1 Apr 11 to 31 Mar 12	1 Apr 12 to 31 Mar 13	1 Apr 13 to 31 Mar 14	1 Apr 14 to 30 Apr 14	
Budget allocation	950,000	3,800,000	3,800,000	3,500,000	2,910,000	40,000	15,000,000
Core management costs	328,104	365,891	381,066	395,016	407,290	34,609	1,911,976
Consultation and dissemination costs	19,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	2,000	101,000
Advisory Board and UCPRG costs	11,500	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	300	59,400
Intramural research (50%)	295,698	1,701,105	1,693,517	1,536,542	1,235,405	1,546	6,463,812
Extramural research (50%)	295,698	1,701,105	1,693,517	1,536,542	1,235,405	1,546	6,463,812

14. TIMETABLE

The timetable of activities for Year 1 is set out below. The timetable for future activities is being finalised and will be discussed with the Advisory Board.

School started formal operation	May 2009
Establishment and first meeting of User, Carer and Practitioner Reference Group	July 2009
Second Wave research projects announced: proposals invited	July 2009
First Wave research projects commence	September 2009
Fourth meeting of Advisory Board	October 2009
Commissioning of reviews of methods	October 2009
Launch of School website on NIHR portal	December 2009
Reviews of methods completed	February 2010
Second Wave research projects commence	March 2010
Fifth meeting of the Advisory Board	March 2010
First NIHR SSCR Annual Conference	30 March 2010
First Annual Report sent to DG NIHR for sign off	April 2010