

# Research methodology that supports the incorporation of health and environmental impact assessment in research

## Overview

Opportunity status:	Open
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Type:	Programme
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Funding available amount:	£625000.00
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Opening date:	11 September 2025 at 1:00 pm
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Closing date:	2 December 2025 at 1:00 pm
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Reference ID:	2025/394
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## Ready to apply?

### Apply now

([https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s\\_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app\\_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722](https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722))

Our Better Methods, Better Research (BMBR) Programme (a partnership co-funded by the [Medical Research Council \(MRC\)](https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/) (<https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/>) and the NIHR) is looking to fund research into supporting the assessment of health and environmental impacts in health and social care, as part of climate health and sustainability commitments.

This is a full funding opportunity. To apply you will need to complete and submit a full application.

## Eligibility

Applications should meet the remit and eligibility requirements of our BMBR Programme.

## Key dates

**11 September 2025**

Full application opening date

**2 December 2025**

Full application closing date

**April - May 2026**

Expected full application funding decision

Apply for this funding opportunity through our online application form

## Apply now

([https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s\\_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app\\_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722](https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722))

## Research specification

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and Medical Research Council (MRC) Better Methods Better Research (BMBR) programme invites applications in response to specific research questions. These have been identified, developed and prioritised for their importance to stakeholders, including;

- Department of Health and Social Care

- NHS
- Medical Research Council (MRC)
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)
- Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
- Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW)
- Chief Scientist Office, Scotland (CSO)
- Health and Social Care, Northern Ireland (HSCNI)
- patients and public

## Research question

This funding opportunity supports research that develops new methodological tools and approaches, such as the development of metrics, modelling techniques, evaluation methodologies, and decision frameworks that support the incorporation of health and environmental impact assessments as part of our climate health and sustainability commitments to help reduce carbon emissions and achieve net zero.

Real-world service change pilots should be submitted to the annual NIHR Decarbonising the health and social care system funding opportunity.

## Background/rationale

The climate crisis is a health crisis, exacerbating existing health challenges and introducing new risks and diseases due to changing weather patterns and environmental degradation.

The healthcare system itself is also a major contributor to global emissions. In the UK, 4-5% of the UK's total carbon emissions come from the health services, and the NHS is responsible for 40% of the public sector's emissions [[NHS England 2021 blog on the NHS reaching net zero](https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/2021/10/blog-one-year-on-from-a-world-first-ambition-lets-stay-impatient-on-the-nhs-reaching-net-zero/) (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/2021/10/blog-one-year-on-from-a-world-first-ambition-lets-stay-impatient-on-the-nhs-reaching-net-zero/>)]. Recognising this, the NHS in 2020 announced plans to be the first healthcare system to reach Net Zero by 2025 with many other countries making similar commitments [[Countries commit to develop climate-smart health, WHO news 2021](https://www.who.int/news/item/09-11-2021-countries-commit-to-develop-climate-smart-health-care-at-cop26-un-climate-conference) (<https://www.who.int/news/item/09-11-2021-countries-commit-to-develop-climate-smart-health-care-at-cop26-un-climate-conference>)].

However, there is a lack of research methods that support incorporating environmental impact assessment.

Progress has already been made with reducing the carbon footprint of the NHS, with a reduction of 26% between 1990 and 2020 [[Accelerating the transition towards a net zero NHS, University of Exeter, Hopkinson 2022](#)

([https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/articles/report/Accelerating\\_the\\_transition\\_towards\\_a\\_net\\_zero\\_NHS\\_Delivering\\_a\\_sustainable\\_and\\_resilient\\_UK\\_healthcare\\_sector/29793851?file=56831372](https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/articles/report/Accelerating_the_transition_towards_a_net_zero_NHS_Delivering_a_sustainable_and_resilient_UK_healthcare_sector/29793851?file=56831372))].

However, it is important to maintain the momentum of these efforts and also extend them beyond the NHS. The social care sector has also made progress, but at a slower pace than the NHS. More than 50% of health and social care providers lack an adequate environmental strategy to measure their impact on the environment [Time to act healthcare report, Fergus 2022].

[The Achieving Net Zero report](#) (<https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/local-government-and-net-zero-in-england/#background-to-the-report>) has highlighted the critical role of local authorities in achieving net zero in the care sector. Given the complexity of health systems, decarbonisation initiatives need to adopt a whole systems approach in order to be truly effective. The supply chain, health and social care delivery, and workforce training are some of the key aspects to consider and tackle to reach net zero targets [[Decarbonising the U.S. health sector, Dzau 2021, The New England Journal of Medicine](#) (<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2115675>)].

In addition to greenhouse gas emissions, the healthcare sector significantly contributes to other forms of environmental degradation, including a variety of air, water and soil pollutants [[The environmental footprint of health care, Lenzen 2020, Lancet](#) (<https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196%2820%2930121-2/fulltext>)]. Waste generation too in the NHS is vast, with 133,000 tonnes of plastic and 156,000 tonnes of clinical waste disposed of each year, with wider implications on the environment as this is disposed of [[Design for life roadmap, 2023, DHSC](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/design-for-life-roadmap/design-for-life-roadmap--4>)].

To enable the NHS to reach its Net Zero targets, and to minimise the wider environmental impact of both health and social care, evaluating and assessing the environmental footprint of interventions within the health and care systems must be regarded as a key consideration alongside clinical and cost outcomes.

Actions targeted to enhance the environmental sustainability of health and social care delivery can result in cost savings, bringing improved productivity and efficiencies, as well as better patient outcomes [[Delivering a net zero national health service, NHS England 2020](#) (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/publication/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service/>)].

Understanding the environmental impacts alongside cost and health outcomes, which applies across care pathways, as well as individual products or interventions, is essential for accurate and informed decision-making.

Health and social care research often falls short in collecting adequate environmental data to compare treatments and guide decisions. The inconsistency in both environmental outcomes measured and their analysis poses challenges for building a comprehensive knowledge base and informing effective decision-making.

Collecting relevant environmental outcomes in health and social care research and appropriately considering trade-offs between clinical effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and environmental impact, would significantly contribute to the decarbonisation of health services, ensuring effective decisions required to deliver sustainable and equitable healthcare.

## **Funding opportunity scope**

We recognise that this funding opportunity is broad, looking for research methodology that supports the incorporation of health and environmental impact assessments to help reduce environmental impact and achieve net zero.

This is a complex and multidisciplinary area, and we would therefore encourage collaborative working. Making the findings more generalisable will support decision-makers to take evidence-based action to improve population health and social care.

Your proposed research should focus on the development or assessment of methodological solutions to ensure the appropriate incorporation of environmental impact in health and social care research in evidence-based ways, including but not limited to:

- what methodological advances will enable robust, standardised and decision-ready incorporation of environmental impacts (for example, greenhouse gas emissions, waste, pollutants) alongside clinical and economic outcomes across health and social care pathways, accelerating progress towards NHS and social care net zero targets?
- developing approaches for the incorporation of environmental impact in health technology assessments
- developing modelling approaches for evaluating environmental impact across care pathways
- understanding the domains of environmental impacts to be considered (carbon emissions, waste management, water use, air/water/soil pollution) and the weighting of these impacts relative to each other in the assessment
- developing or agreeing on acceptable data for reporting on environmental impacts
- defining requirements to ensure data quality and validity

## Study design/programme of work

A range of study designs can be used. You should clearly describe your methodological approach and the rationale for this approach. We recognise that this funding opportunity is broad and expect you to be targeted in your research. You are expected to be aware of any policy changes that may influence the research as well as other relevant studies. You should identify the gaps in the existing evidence base and articulate why your research is important for decision makers. If relevant, you are encouraged to clearly identify how a wide range of existing evidence outputs can be combined with your study to deliver a whole societal approach.

To develop your proposal, you should engage and involve relevant groups. These could include:

- methodologists
- non-methodologist researchers
- sustainability / Climate experts
- technical professionals
- health and allied health professionals
- social care professionals/practitioners
- industry
- non-expert stakeholder groups, such as: funding bodies, policy, and decision makers

Following an award, teams must begin the proposed work within 6 months to ensure that the research retains its relevance as assessed when awarded.

## Outputs

Pathways to impact – we are focused on the impact of the research we fund. You are asked to consider the timing and nature of deliverables in your proposals; and encouraged to maximise the impact of your research by explaining how you will mobilise knowledge and ensure that it is useful and relevant to stakeholders, such as;

- researchers
- policy makers
- public health officers
- special interest groups
- charities
- community audiences

- other stakeholders

## Duration and costs

You are advised that we are custodians of public funds and value for money is a key criteria that peer reviewers and commissioning committee members will assess applications against.

It is expected that applications to this funding opportunity would typically be valued up to £625,000 (100% full economic cost (FEC)). MRC and NIHR will usually fund up to 80% of your project's FEC. Following an award, teams must begin the proposed work within six months to ensure that the research retains its relevance as assessed when awarded.

## Application guidance

Please read our [domestic full application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/domestic-programmes-funding-guidance-full-applications) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/domestic-programmes-funding-guidance-full-applications>) to help you complete all aspects of your application. You must read this alongside the information below, which details specific requirements our [BMBR Programme](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/better-methods-better-research>) looks for in applications. You can also check our BMBR Programme page for details about the programme's scope and remit.

## Research plan

Write a maximum of 20 A4 pages for your research plan. When reviewing applications, we will not consider any additional information over this 20 page limit.

## Background and rationale

BMBR funds the development or improvement of generalisable methods underpinning biomedical and health research. Please provide a clear explanation of the methodological issue to be addressed, how it is generalisable and how this will underpin and impact health research. Please briefly explain:

- why is this research needed now?
- what is the knowledge gap this research will address?

## Aims and objectives

Please summarise the research question(s) and key aims and objectives.

# **Research plan/methods**

## **Research design**

Detail the design of your research ensuring it is clear how it builds on established research methods. Awareness of the current gaps in translation and uptake of methodology research should be demonstrated, and assurance provided that the project is designed to mitigate these risks to impact.

## **Statistical analysis**

Clearly state the statistical test or software package to be used. Describe the methods and timing for assessing, recording and analysing outcomes.

## **Outcomes**

Provide detail of any outcome measures and how the proposed new method/improvement in a current method will be generally applicable without significant modification, beyond a single case study or research question.

## **Proposed deliverables**

Detail the deliverables from the study.

## **Value for money**

Provide an explanation of how the project offers value for money

## **Guidance for applicants on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for study participants**

The NIHR is committed to actively and openly supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in research. This is, in part, achieved by diversifying research participants in the studies we support and the voices of those who shape our research agenda by redesigning our processes, introducing targeted interventions and the effective monitoring and evaluation of impact.

We invite you to consider how the above principles of equality, diversity and inclusion can be incorporated into your proposal.

## **Dissemination, outputs and anticipated impact**

The purpose of this section is for the applicants to describe the planned outputs of the research, how these will be communicated and to whom, and how the research may lead to short – and longer-term – impacts. NIHR understands that the impact of any research may take time to be



realised and will likely involve other funders, institutions and sustained efforts in practice. NIHR also recognises it may be difficult to provide definitive answers or guarantees on longer term impacts.

However, applicants are invited to consider various aspects of pathways below and how the likelihood of impact can be maximised. This includes considering what outputs are produced, how these can be best connected to the health and/or social care environment, what efforts and investment are likely to be needed beyond the project, what barriers are likely to be encountered and what impacts the research is seeking to achieve.

#### **a. What do you intend to produce from your guidance?**

Please provide brief details of each anticipated output. Please note that the term 'outputs' refers to any tangible product of the research, not just academic publications. Outputs can include, but are not limited to:

- conference presentation or other workshop events
- publications (academic or otherwise)
- guidelines (clinical, service or otherwise)
- other copyright (for example, questionnaires, training aids, toolkits, manuals, software)
- new or improved design of medical devices or instrumentation
- new or improved diagnostic
- trial data that could be used to support a CE mark, market authorisation or equivalent
- trial data that could be used to shape or influence a healthcare market or government
- potential new drug or health or social care interventions

#### **b. How will you inform and engage patients/service users, carers, NHS, social care organisations and the wider population about your work?**

Describe who you need to communicate with within this development of guidelines, and your plans for engaging relevant audiences. For impact, it is unlikely that simply making outputs available will be sufficient. Please consider and outline the active approach you will take to engaging key parties, or identify the process you will use to identify them and formulate an engagement plan.

See our [Plan knowledge mobilisation page](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/how-disseminate-your-research) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/how-disseminate-your-research>) for more information on how to disseminate your research.

#### **c. How will your outputs enter our health and care system or society as a whole?**

Describe the process by which the guideline will enter the health and/or social care environment, including how your outputs will be acknowledged, selected and introduced for use in the health and

care service or wider society. Where possible consider how the work will be adopted and implemented longer term. Please describe the proposed route to market (commercial or non-commercial) for your outputs. Describe who is needed to take it forward and the relationship you currently (or propose to) have with these parties. If your outputs are likely to be commercially exploitable, please include details on how you plan to develop this.

**d. What further funding or support will be required if this research is successful (e.g. from NIHR, other Government departments, charity or industry)?**

Consider what investment or support may be needed at the end of this project to maximise impact. Not all projects will require this but if so, plans should be linked to the responses in points 2 and 3 above.

**e. What are the possible barriers to the development, adoption and implementation?**

- Describe the difficulties which may be faced in generating impact from your guidelines. These may be difficulties you will face yourself, or challenges faced by those in the implementing context (for example, clinicians). How will you ensure wider implementation or learning from project outputs, including approaches for benchmarking (method performance and implementation costs), outreach and the ability to influence wider audiences?
- Will the proposed development of guidelines use data, technology, materials or other interventions that are subject to any form of intellectual property protection (for example, copyright, design rights, patents) or right owned by another organisation(s)? If yes, provide brief details including how such third party IP will be accessed (for example, collaboration agreement, drug supply agreement)
- What are the key current and future barriers to uptake of any likely output or innovation directly in the health and care service, through commercial exploitation or other means, e.g. potential regulatory hurdles?
- What are the challenges for getting your guidelines implemented in terms of acceptability, accessibility and feasibility? How will you address these?

**f. What do you think the impact of your guidelines will be and for whom?**

Describe the impacts you aim to achieve as a direct result of the project and those which are anticipated longer term. Please consider how any smaller, more immediate effects may mature over time into larger scale or more significant effects, and the steps by which this may be achieved. As far as possible, indicate anticipated timescales for these benefits and a quantitative estimate of their scale. Impacts may include, but are not restricted to:

- patient, service user or carer benefit
- healthcare or social care staff benefits
- changes in NHS or care services, including efficiency savings
- commercial return, which could contribute to economic growth
- public wellbeing

### **g. If applicable, how will you share with study participants the progress and findings of your research?**

What strategies will you use to keep your research participants informed of the progress of your project and the findings? Consider the ethical implications of informing study participants and also what the most accessible methods could be, such as newsletter, leaflets, webpages, social media and where relevant different languages and formats. The Health Research Authority provides [guidance on the information participants of trials should receive at the end of the study](https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/best-practice/publication-and-dissemination-research-findings/) (<https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/best-practice/publication-and-dissemination-research-findings/>).

## **Timeline and milestones**

### **Projects/ Research timetable**

Indicate the anticipated duration of the study. A Gantt diagram, included as a visual summary of the overall project, is considered helpful. Outline the main stages of your proposed project including regulatory steps; team recruitment; participant recruitment; data collection, access, linkage, analysis; and knowledge mobilisation. Include the expected duration of each.

### **Project management**

All project proposals should include details of how the project will be managed.

### **Project/research expertise**

Outline the particular contributions each member of the team will make towards the project. The BMBR Programme recommends teams proposing randomised controlled trials to include input from an accredited clinical trials unit, or organisations with equivalent experience. If commercial partners are involved in the study, a detailed description of the contributions and expectations from all parties must be included.

### **PPI lead**

There should be a named person with appropriate skills and experience who is responsible for leading the PPI element within the project. This role should be an adequately costed and resourced

research team member who is able to manage the PPI plans and related activities.

[Examples of the activities a PPI lead might undertake.](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/role-patient-and-public-involvement-ppi-lead) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/role-patient-and-public-involvement-ppi-lead>)

## **Success criteria and barriers to proposed work**

Please set out the measurements of success you intend to use, the risks to the proposed research and how you intend to mitigate against them.

## **Uploads**

As well as uploading references, you will need to upload the following document in the 'Uploads' section of your application:

### **CTU support letter (if required/appropriate to the study). Not a mandatory upload**

If appropriate to the study, please supply and upload a Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) letter of support.

### **Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT), if applicable**

A completed Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) is now required to be uploaded and submitted for projects that are to be registered with the NIHR portfolio. The exception to this is where no participants are being recruited and there is no Excess Treatment Cost or NHS Support Cost. This should be confirmed by an AcoRD Specialist in writing.

## **Application process**

Find out how to apply for this funding opportunity and what you need to do to get your application ready.

## **How to apply**

[Log in to our application system to apply](https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722)

([https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s\\_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app\\_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722](https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp?dest=/Apps/app_viewopportunity.jsp%3Fappid%3D105112%26nextlevel%3D1%26opportunityid%3D10174722)). This funding opportunity is on our new awards management system and you will need to create a new account if you do not have one already.

The closing date is 2 December 2025 at 1pm. Applications received after 1pm on the closing date will not be considered.

Please read all guidance detailed in the 'application guidance' section of this funding opportunity.

## Download application form template

You can download a Word document template of the application form below. Please use this template as a guide only, to help you prepare your application. For example, to see how many characters are accepted in each section and to see how information in the form is laid out. Please do not try to use this as an application form; it cannot be submitted as an application. You must submit your application online via our awards management system.

(/media/24421/download/)

### **Domestic-full-application-form-template.docx**

DOCX

Last updated: 5 December 2024

**Download document (28.31 KB)**

## Research inclusion and reasonable adjustments

At NIHR we are committed to [creating a diverse and inclusive culture](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion). We encourage applications from people from all backgrounds and communities bringing diverse skills and experiences. If you need any reasonable adjustments throughout the application process, please contact the programme team via the information in the Contact Details tab.

## Research Support Service

Got a research idea and not sure how to turn it into a funding application? The NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) supports researchers in England to apply for funding, and to develop and deliver clinical and applied health, social care and public health research post award. [Find out how the RSS can help you](/support-and-services/research-support-service) (/support-and-services/research-support-service).

## Contact Details

- For help with your application contact [bmb@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:bmb@nihr.ac.uk) (mailto:bmb@nihr.ac.uk).

- For more information about the funding programme, visit the [Better Methods Better Research programme page](#) (/node/63896).
- For help developing your application, if in England, contact the [Research Support Service](#) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/>).