



**National Institute for
Health Research**

Central Commissioning Facility

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Professor Peter Blain
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11 December 2013

Confidential

Dear Professor Blain

NIHR HEALTH PROTECTION RESEARCH UNITS CALL

Priority Area: *Chemical and Radiation Threats and Hazards*

Application: HPRU-2012-10076 University of Newcastle

Thank you for submitting an application to the NIHR Health Protection Research Units (HPRU) call and attending the interview with the Selection Panel.

I am pleased to inform you that the Selection Panel has recommended your application for funding and the Department of Health has accepted this recommendation. The standard of applications was high and I would like to congratulate you on this achievement.

The NIHR is prepared to provide 5 years funding to a total of **£3,352,468** for this HPRU with effect from 1 April 2014. In the interest of obtaining the best value for money for taxpayers the funding offered has been adjusted so that total overheads do not exceed the equivalent of 30% of staff salaries for the University and 20% staff salaries for PHE. The offer does not reduce the funding provided for research activity and we therefore expect that with this budget you will deliver in full on the bid submitted.

Please let me know by **Friday 13 December** if you wish to accept. If you accept then we will be in touch soon about a plan for announcement to the media. The outcome of this Competition in relation to your application is **embargoed** until a formal announcement by the Department of Health is made. Please do not communicate or announce this publically ahead of plans to be co-ordinated by DH in collaboration with PHE.

As indicated in the *Health Protection Research Units Stage 2: Joint Application Guidance*, bids were submitted in one of twelve priority areas outlined in the brief. The assessment criteria were:

- the volume, breadth and quality of internationally-excellent health protection research and researchers of the partnership;
- the existing research capacity of the partnership and plans for increasing capacity;
- the track record of the partnership in conducting world class health protection research and translating this research into benefits for the public in the relevant priority area;
- the strength of the strategic plan for the NIHR HPRU;
- the proposed commitment and contribution to the NIHR HPRU;
- value for money.

In assessing the applications within each priority area, the Selection Panel used its professional judgement to consider the information provided in the application. Bids were also assessed against any others submitted within the same priority area.

Please find attached, detailed feedback on the NIHR HPRU Selection Panel's assessment of your application.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mags Sara

Head of Infrastructure & Research Schools

Feedback on the NIHR HPRU Selection Panel's assessment of your application

- ***The volume, breadth and quality of internationally-excellent health protection research and researchers of the partnership;*** It was agreed that the volume and quality of research on health effects of chemical exposures was strong. However, the volume and breadth of research on effects of radiation (medical radiation exposures, UVR on skin) was more limited.
- ***The existing research capacity of the partnership and plans for increasing capacity;*** Existing research capacity was considered to be very good, supported by a coherent partnership and track record of achievements. It was noted that plans for increasing capacity plans appear to focus largely on training and mentorship.
- ***The track record of the partnership in conducting world class health protection research and translating this research into benefits for the public in the relevant priority area;*** It was agreed that partners had a good track record of report generation and development of guidelines to inform public health policies. Researchers' involvement with a number of national and governmental advisory committees complemented the applicants' strength in this area.
- ***The strength of the strategic plan for the NIHR HPRU;*** The strategic plan was satisfactory and was strongest in the chemical exposure and cross cutting themes. It was considered that the application was weakened by the lack of expertise in radiation exposure and the limited epidemiological aspects. In addition, the potential cumulative public health impact of the proposed research was also considered limited. Although the application failed to emphasise and demonstrate the strength of applicants in emergency response; this had been clearly articulated during the interview.
- ***The proposed commitment and contribution to the NIHR HPRU;*** The overall proposed commitment and contribution to the HPRU was considered sufficient, although the involvement of PHE was considered limited. It was agreed that this should be addressed should the application be funded. The Panel was assured that the past level of commitment in emergency situations will be reflected in future responses. The Panel particularly commended the commitment to train toxicologists and the use of practical experience to train clinicians and scientists.
- ***Value for money;*** The application was considered to be satisfactory value for money, if it achieved its aims. The Panel noted that the level of overheads requested by the University at the full application stage was higher than that requested at Stage 1.

It was noted that the PPI/PPE plan was very good with commendable strength overall. The plain English was excellent plain English for a lay reader and was noted a rare excellent example.

In the discussion, the Panel recommended that if there was not sufficient funding to cover all the bids recommended, then the application could be funded at a reduced level with Theme 1 "Health Effects of Medical Radiation Exposures" removed.

In final discussion, the Panel agreed that the application was fundable and satisfactory. It was recommended that the application should be awarded funding at reduced of overheads.