



Medical
Research
Council

MRC Mental Health research

Dr Karen Brakspear

Head of Programme – Mental Health

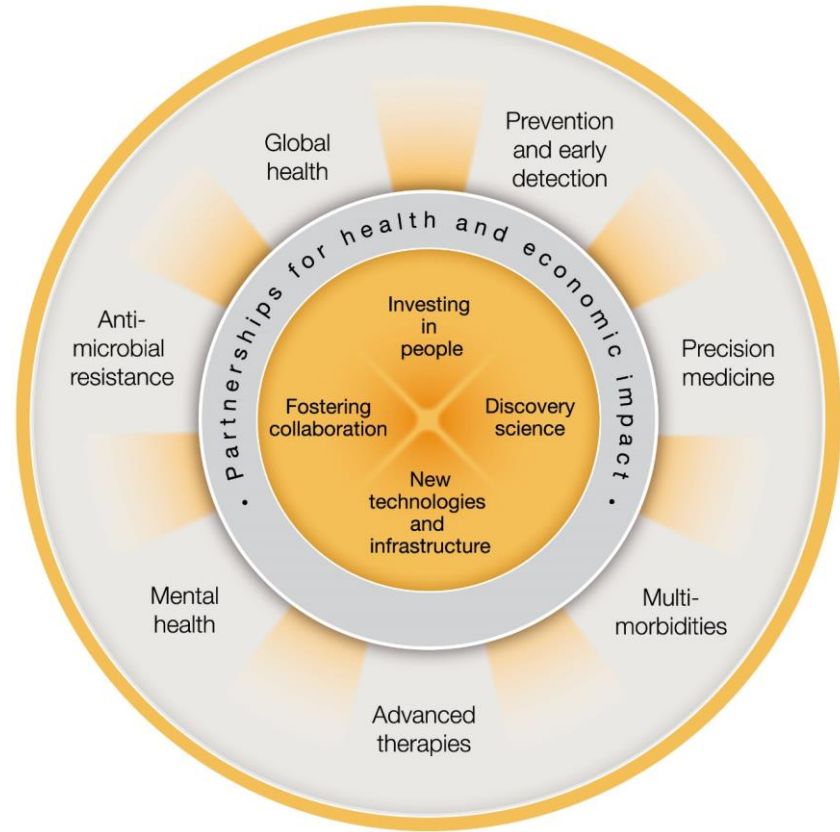
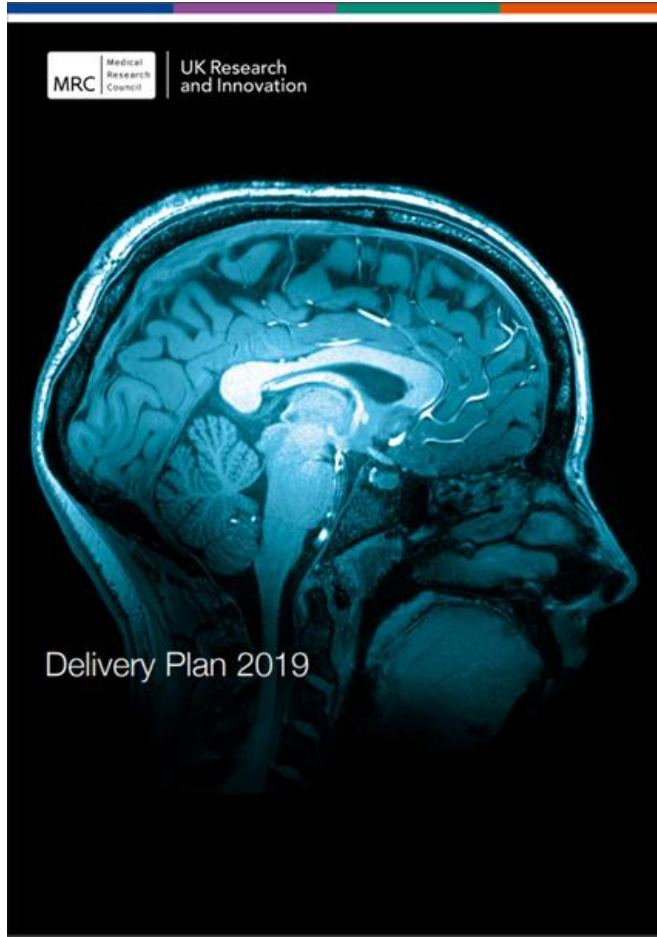
February 2021



Medical
Research
Council

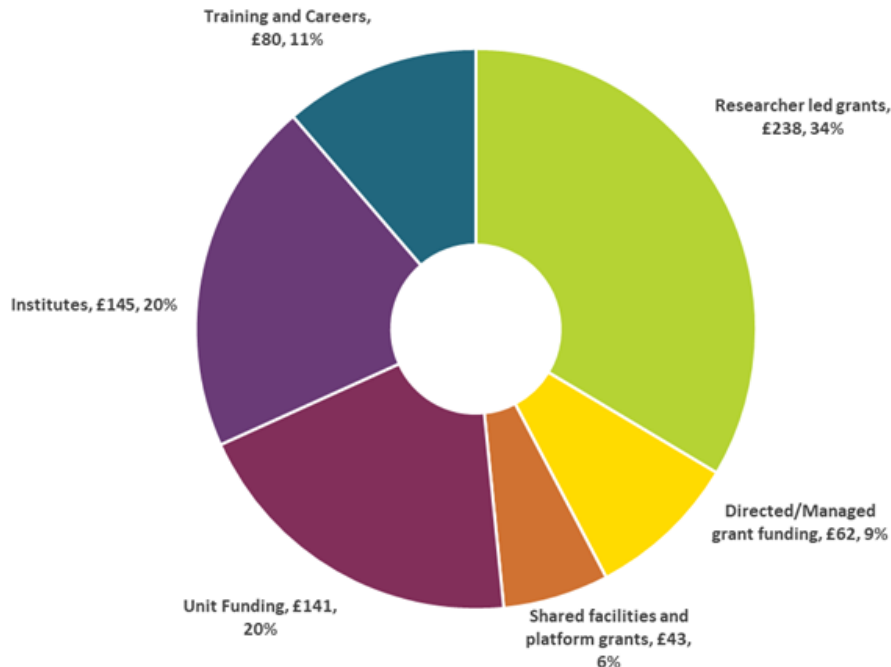
About the MRC

MRC Delivery Plan 2019: Priorities



2018/19 MRC Research Programme Expenditure

UKRI/MRC 2018/19 Research Expenditure (£ Million) by Funding Mechanism



C. **£700m** of expenditure by funding mechanism across the MRC portfolio

These different mechanisms allow for a balance between strategic direction, open funding streams and an agile response to new opportunities

- Researcher led grants
- Directed/Managed funding
- Shared facilities and platforms
- Units
- Institutes
- Training and Careers



Medical
Research
Council

MRC and Mental Health research

- MRC is one of the leading UK funders of mental health research and in the **top 10 global funders**
- Mental health has long been a key strand of MRCs strategy.
- **MRC Neurosciences and Mental Health Board** remit is to fund excellent, novel research across the spectrum mental health and neurosciences
- MRC spent **£48m on mental health research** in 2018, with a portfolio of approx. **350 grants and fellowships**. *In addition* to underpinning neuroscience and cognitive research, cohorts, imaging facilities, tissue banks, etc.

Mental health

- In 2017 MRC launched the **Strategy for Lifelong Mental Health Research**:
 - Life course perspective with a **focus on children and young people**
 - **Precision medicine** approaches for mental health research
 - Harness data using **informatics**
 - Develop **new interventions** for mental disorders
 - New investment in **global mental health**
 - **Prevention** of mental illness
 - **Building capacity** for mental health research
- **Strategic activities**
 - MRC/AHRC/ESRC Adolescence, Mental Health and the Developing Mind
 - Building a Mental Health Research Platform



UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund: Adolescent Mental Health

- **£35 million over 5 years**
- MRC in partnership with AHRC and ESRC, with support from the Department for Education, Department for Health and Social Care, and Welsh and Scottish Government.
- Director: Professor Eamon McCrory, UCL
- Multidisciplinary programme to better understand the developing adolescent mind, and how different factors interact to influence lifelong mental health and wellbeing.
- Driving engagement with stakeholders and young people to generate better interventions that promote good mental health, including in education and healthcare.
- To be delivered through:
 - Community building
 - Multidisciplinary research and method/tools development
 - Knowledge mobilisation and transfer

Mental Health Research Platform

- Coordinated and integrated data platform for mental health research
- Linking longitudinal cohorts and multidimensional data with stratified medicine capabilities
- Call for a national Mental Health data research hub currently open to establish core informatics infrastructure
 - In partnership with Health Data Research UK
 - Improve usability, quality and discoverability of mental health data
 - Building on MRC Mental Health Data Pathfinder scheme

COVID-19 and Mental Health

- Direct and indirect impacts and mechanisms
- UKRI and UKRI/NIHR calls for rapid response – mental health research funded across MRC, NIHR and ESRC remits.
- Long-COVID call (closed Dec 2020)
- COVID related proposals now being routed through standard Board processes

Future opportunities

- **Mental health Board opportunity**
 - children and adolescents;
 - co-morbidities of physical and mental health;
 - stratification based on ‘symptom/behaviour/genetics’ not ‘diagnosis’
- **Adolescence, Mental Health and the Developing mind** – funding call in methodology
- **Mental health research platform** scoping

