MRC Mental Health research

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About the MRC
MRC Delivery Plan 2019: Priorities
2018/19 MRC Research Programme Expenditure

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.
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
The MRC is part of UK Research and Innovation