

North Yorkshire Council

Executive Member for Health and Adult Services

20 December 2023

Acceptance of funding from National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to establish a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) in North Yorkshire

Report of the Corporate Director for Health & Adult Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To request approval from the Executive Member, Health and Adult Services to accept grant funding of five million, fifty thousand, four hundred, eighty-two pounds and 11 pence (£5,050,482.11) to support the establishment and delivery of a NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration North Yorkshire for 5-years (January 2024- December 2028)
- 1.2 The decision is being taken by the Executive Member, Health and Adult Services under their power in the Executive Members' Delegation Scheme, after consultation with the relevant Chief Officer to determine any Executive matter which is of such urgency that it is not practicable to refer it to the Executive for determination

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following an expression of interest to the NIHR for funding of £5 million to develop a HDRC we were invited to submit a full application and attended a subsequent interview. Following a Key Decision to apply for the funding award (9th June 2023) we have been informed that our application was successful, and we now request approval from the Executive to accept the funding.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The NIHR are investing in Local Authorities, to enable them to become more research active and to generate an evidence base to inform their decision making. A significant new funding stream was launched by the NIHR in 2021, for the development of HDRCs which are intended to address the wider determinants of health across all council services to lead to better health outcomes for all.
- 3.2 The HDRC funding stream enables Councils to work in partnership with universities and wider partners, to develop a culture of engaging in, and using, research within a Council. It enables infrastructural change, to create a HDRC team within a Council, who will lead Council-wide research developments.
- 3.3 In 2021, North Yorkshire Council partnered with the University of Hull to submit an expression of interest for this funding. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful, and we did not progress to stage 2 of the funding application process. However, we have worked together since then to action the feedback that we received and to develop and strengthen our bid for the 2023 funding call. This has involved mapping our shared priorities and securing additional partnerships with the University of York and from public involvement and community and voluntary sector organisations.

4.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE

4.1 North Yorkshire Council have been awarded HDRC funding of £5,050,482.11 over 5 years, to be spent on developing our collaboration and delivering our aim and objectives. Around a quarter of the funding will go to our academic partners, to provide expertise and support to us to help improve our research capacity and capability.

4.2 The aim of our HDRC is: 'To embed a strong research culture across the council, that generates robust evidence to inform strategy and decision making, ensuring efficient use of resources to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.'

4.3 The objectives of our HDRC are:

- Culture change: Promote and foster a council-wide culture that is curious and creative in how it utilises research and seeks evidence-based approaches to inform decision making
- Capacity & capability: Develop the confidence and competence of NYC staff to utilise, engage and excel in research activity, with support from additional specialist research expertise and resource
- Collaborations & co-production: Foster and develop collaborative research partnerships both internally and externally, including co-production with underserved communities
- Champions of research: Be catalysts for change driven by strong, committed and highly motivated leadership, to embed research into strategic and policy development
- Communication: Develop high-quality processes to facilitate knowledge exchange, effective dissemination, and impact of research outputs to a range of audiences locally, regionally, and nationally

4.4 We will achieve our objectives through implementing four Council-wide work packages:

- Infrastructure & Governance – Developing and implementing internal systems and processes for research, creating a research leadership structure, and building wider research networks
- Capacity & Capability - We will support staff to engage with and utilise research and evidence in everyday practice through a tailored offer of support to meet the needs of each Directorate
- Dissemination & Impact – We will develop communication strategies and systems to enable knowledge exchange of impactful research activities and evidence internally, locally, nationally, and internationally
- Learning & Evaluation - We will learn, and make sure through assessments, that the work of the HDRC meets the needs of the council and our residents, both now and in the future

4.5 Our HDRC will deliver an organisational culture shift to embed co-creation, research, and action. This will enable the generation and dissemination of evidence and knowledge, which will positively impact the council, our residents, our County, and our Country.

5.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES

5.1 Relevant internal colleagues and external partners were consulted and provided letters of support. A key decision was sought and approved by Health and Adult Services Executive for the submission of the bid.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

6.1 The local government re-organisation provides a timely and unique opportunity, a new start, to build on existing good practice and truly embed a strong research culture across the whole Council aligned to Council priorities and our new values: Inclusive, Ambitious, Creative, and Together.

- 6.2 The HDRC will support NYC to be more inclusive by facilitating research that leads to evidence-based interventions to tackle the particular issues faced by disadvantaged groups, both internally within the council and within communities across the local authority.
- 6.3 The HDRC will support NYC to be ambitious by facilitating research that helps NYC to understand the market and customer needs, identifies trends and new opportunities and make data driven decisions at a localised level.
- 6.4 The HDRC will support NYC to be creative by facilitating research that enables the council to pilot new approaches to practice and seek the most cost-effective ways to deliver services.
- 6.5 The HDRC will encourage teams and directorates to work together through cross-directorate research, seeking to tackle specific issues faced by each directorate that would also concomitantly positively influence the health of North Yorkshire residents.

7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 No other funding initiatives of this scale are currently available to local authorities to develop research infrastructure and embed a research culture. Therefore, no other options were considered.

8.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

- 8.1 The HDRC provides the opportunity to create a positive, council-wide impact, supporting the vision of the Council Plan 2023-27 (for place and environment, economy, health and wellbeing, people, and organisation). Engagement from all directorates will be required to enable the HDRC to be delivered and ensure maximum impact.
- 8.2 The University of Hull have already invested funds and time into developing this collaboration and are committed to supporting NYC in achieving our ambitions for research. The University of York are also committed to the HDRC project as collaborative partners.
- 8.4 We have engaged with a number of public involvement organisations and voluntary and community sector organisations, who are keen to become a part of our collaborative partnership.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The total grant covering 5 years is £5,050,482.11. The Council will monitor costs and take steps to ensure that there is no ongoing cost to the Council once the grant ends in December 2028.
- 9.2 Requirements placed on the Council include that it is required to provide an annual report to the Secretary of State including a statement of expenditure. If spending is less than funding in any one year, funding in future years could be reduced. At the end of the Contract (December 2028), the Council will have to provide a final expenditure statement. If the total expenditure is less than the funding received, this will be returned. Finally, it should be noted that funding could be clawed back if central government deems that satisfactory progress has not been made against the agreed Work Programme objectives.
- 9.2 The initial HDRC funding would allow time to demonstrate the economic benefit of research-informed decision making. Additionally, through the delivery of the proposed activities, NYC will be strongly placed to draw in external research funding to help ensure the HDRC becomes self-sustaining beyond 5 years.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Final Grant terms have not been yet provided for review. Any Grant terms will be reviewed by Legal in due course and if those terms present an unacceptable risk to NYC it will be recommended the Grant is not entered into.

10.2 Any expenditure of the Grant will be in line with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The opportunities arising from the HDRC funding will be accessible and inclusive to all, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and NYC Equality and Diversity policies. An equality impact assessment is provided at Appendix A.

12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The purpose of a HDRC is to increase research capacity and capability at a local level to focus on what can be done to address the wider drivers of population health and health inequalities. Climate change is a key driver of health currently and is expected to pose a greater threat in the future, as the effects of climate change are realised.

12.2 The HDRC will enable opportunity to undertake research to address the wider determinants of population health, including climate change. A climate change impact assessment is provided at Appendix B. The formation of the HDRC would have no immediate impact on climate change, but the subsequent research projects that we may engage in may have the potential for impact and will therefore require further impact assessments to be completed in the future, subject to research proposals being developed.

13.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no policy implications for submitting the grant application. However, receiving the HDRC funds will enable to us undertake and use research that would have the potential to inform policy decisions.

14.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 If the Council does not comply with the contract, the Secretary of State may reduce, suspend or withhold grant payments.

15.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

15.1 The HDRC will grow and develop the NYC workforce, including creating new posts and recruiting new staff. This was appropriately costed into the application, as per standard corporate financial protocol. The intention is for the HDRC to become financially self-sustaining at the end of the 5-years. However, it should be noted that employees who accrue two years continue service will acquire full employment rights, including the rights to a redundancy payment.

16.0 ICT IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There will be the standard ICT implications resulting from the recruitment of new members of staff i.e., provision of IT equipment. This was appropriately costed into the application, as per standard corporate financial protocol.

17.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 17.1 The funding award will provide the opportunity to enable NYC to become more research active, to generate and use evidence to provide the most efficient and effective services for North Yorkshire residents to improve health outcomes.
- 17.2 The funding award will provide the opportunity to upskill the NYC workforce to engage in bid writing for future research grant applications increasing the likelihood of drawing in external funding.

18.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend:

- i. To accept the grant funding of £5,050,482.11 over the 5-years (Jan 24 – Dec 28) to deliver a HDRC, subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.
- ii. To agree to allocate the grant of £5,050,482.11 per the proposal outlined in the funding bid.
- iii. To agree to delegate decisions around the establishment of the HDRC to the HDRC Director (Public Health Consultant, Katie Needham) in consultation with the Director of Public Health (Louise Wallace).

Richard Webb
Corporate Director – (*Health and Adult Services*)
County Hall
Northallerton

8 December 2023

Report Author – Katie Needham, Public Health Consultant
Presenter of Report – Louise Wallace, Director of Public Health

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix B – Climate Change Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.