



## RCN Foundation call for applications

The RCN Foundation seeks an organisation to undertake a research study which will:

Analyse and evaluate the impact of the annual health check on reducing health inequality and premature death whilst enhancing health related quality of life outcomes for individuals with a learning disability across the UK.

### Introduction

The RCN Foundation is an independent charity (1134606 – England and Wales, SC043663 – Scotland) and a company limited by guarantee (7026001). It was set up in 2010 and aims to support and strengthen nursing to improve the health and well-being of the public. The Foundation delivers its purpose by:

- **Supporting** individual members of the nursing team (nurses, midwives and health care support workers) by providing grants for hardship and education purposes.
- **Investing** in the nursing profession to improve patient care by funding research and practice development projects in our priority areas.
- **Championing** nursing by raising the profile of the profession and public understanding of its contribution to improving the nation's health.

Our grants are open to any current or former nurse, midwife, nursing associate or health care support worker, and they do not need to be a member of the RCN to receive support from the Foundation.

### Background

A priority area for the RCN Foundation is the contribution of the Registered Nurse Learning Disability (RNLD) to addressing health inequalities and improving health related quality of life outcomes for individuals with a learning disability. To support this, in 2023 the Foundation launched a £300,000 grant programme [\*Inclusive Health - enhancing the lives of individuals with learning disabilities\*](#), which



consists of nine research studies and an education grant programme. One of the studies within the programme is to focus on the area of the annual health check for individuals with a learning disability from across the United Kingdom (UK).

### **The Annual Health Check**

Annual health checks aim to reduce health inequalities experienced by people with a learning disability (NHSE, 2023). As part of the co-design approach to the Inclusive Health programme and having listened and learnt from individuals with a learning disability, there is a significant variation relating to the implementation of annual health checks across the UK. In general, individuals from England report few if any issues accessing their annual health check by their GP or a nurse in the surgery. However, individuals living in other areas of the UK described a different experience with many not receiving any annual health check.

Despite annual health checks in England being established practice, the research demand signalling for the National Learning Disability and Autism Programme, (NHSE, 2022) identified the need improve the uptake of the existing health checks in primary care for people aged over 14 years with a learning disability. It currently sits at 72% and the target is at least 75%.

Anecdotally it is reported that often nursing associates (NA) in England are undertaking these checks. There is no evidence which underpins the role of the NA for these assessments, and it is unclear what education they have received in this type of assessment. Little is understood as to how effective a range of healthcare professionals, including NAs are, at identifying and escalating any co-morbidities identified through the assessment, which could contribute to reduced health outcomes and increased health inequality.

Drawing upon a recommendation by NHSE Research Demand Signalling (NHSE, 2022), a review of the health assessment model in England is planned, however this will solely focus on practice within England. Discussions with the Scottish Government Learning Disability group identified the need for a nurse-led



research study, through which the Foundation could drive the development of a wider, nationally recognised model for annual health assessments (or checks) for individuals with a learning disability and to enhance the uptake of this health screening. The research will aim to identify the most effective, evidence-based model for the annual check-up, based upon a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the models currently in use, and consider how digital technology can support the assessment, record keeping and communication of need, through the pilot and evaluation of an integrated digitalised health passport.

An understating of the nursing roles currently undertaking this assessment is also essential so that recommendations can be made which support the education, training and development needs of those undertaking the health checks.

### **Call for applications**

The RCN Foundation is now seeking to fund research that will have two parts.

*First, to analyse and evaluate the impact of the various annual health check models available across the UK, on reducing health inequality and premature death whilst enhancing health related quality of life outcomes for individuals with a learning disability. Secondly, to demonstrate how digital technology can support the assessment, record keeping and communication of need resulting from the assessment through mechanisms such as digital health passports as an example.*

### **Broad objectives of the study are to understand:**

- The level and accessibility of annual health checks across the United Kingdom for individuals with a learning disability.
- Which health professionals are undertaking the assessments and the education they have received to underpin their practice of assessments.
- The effectiveness of the different models and approaches for health checks across the UK including the use of digital technology.
- How digital technology can support the assessment, record keeping and communication of need, through an integrated digitalised health passport.



- How the impact of the intervention has been evaluated across the UK.
- How annual health checks address health inequalities as demonstrated through the Learning from lives and deaths – ‘People with a learning disability and autistic people’ (LeDeR) reports.
- How the outcome of the health check translates into a person-centred care plan for individuals with a learning disability, especially for those with long-term conditions and other co-morbidities.

## Impact

- At the end of the project, there should be a report setting out an analysis and evaluation of the impact of the various annual health check models available across the UK, on reducing health inequality and premature death whilst enhancing health related quality of life outcomes for individuals with a learning disability.
- This should include recommendations for the education, training, and development needs of those undertaking the health checks, to ensure appropriate, effective, and timely escalation based upon the results of the assessment.
- A further output will be a substantive, evidence-based model for best practice in relation to the annual health check, which makes best use of digital technologies for the assessment, record keeping and communication through an integrated digitalised health passport for use between the individual, carers and members of the multidisciplinary team.

The lived experience of individuals with a learning disability must be central to the study, with their voice being present throughout the research. In addition, all four countries of the UK should be considered, and the research should include consultation with nurses, nursing associates, and healthcare support workers caring for individuals with a learning disability working across health and social care settings.



The RCN Foundation is seeking applications from organisations to work over a 12-month period on this study. Funding available is up to the value of £30,000. The study should aim to start in late spring 2025 and complete twelve months later. The funding available could cover direct research and development-related salaries and dissemination costs. The funding will not cover indirect costs such as organisational overheads, capital costs or purchase of non-specialist equipment.

Applicants will attend regular virtual meetings with the Foundation. The successful organisation will be required to submit an interim report mid-way through the study, and a final report presenting the outputs and outcomes of the work. A payment schedule will map to the reporting deadlines.

Examples of RCN Foundation funded research studies can be found [here](#).

## **Application**

To apply for this funding call, please submit a proposal to:  
[grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk](mailto:grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk)

The proposal should address the following headings:

### **Section A: Application details**

Please include the details of the project lead and the organisation from which you are applying. Please give a brief description of the organisation and list the team. In addition, please list any partner organisations involved in the project.

The application should demonstrate:

- Considerable experience of carrying out evidence-based research around learning disability and related issues in nursing, including how people with learning disabilities have been engaged in this research.



- Experience of producing influential reports at a policy or programme design level.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Experience of providing written reports and presenting findings to both nursing professionals and non-specialists.
- Understanding the equality, diversity and inclusion issues relating to individuals with a learning disability across the four countries of the UK.
- How the research design will aim to include hard-to-reach groups and those who do not easily engage and become involved with research but who remain key stakeholders to this piece of work.
- How the impact of external pressures such as the current economic volatility within the Higher Education sector will be mitigated and managed across the term of the study.

## References

NHSE 2023 Annual Health Checks and people with learning disabilities. Available at: [Annual health checks and people with learning disabilities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/annual-health-checks-and-people-with-learning-disabilities) accessed 25/5/23

NHS 2022. Research demand signalling: National Learning Disability and Autism Programme. Available at: [NHS Accelerated Access Collaborative » Research demand signalling: National Learning Disability and Autism Programme \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/research-demand-signalling-national-learning-disability-and-autism-programme/) Accessed 25/5/23



## Section B: Project Details

### Research design and methods

This section will introduce the aim and objective(s) of the project along with the research questions. It should identify the research design and methods you plan to use to demonstrate the impact of RNLDs on health inequalities and individuals with lived experience of a learning disability.

### Ethical approval

Please indicate what type(s) of ethical approval are required for the project. It would be helpful to understand the timelines for any ethical approval processes.

### Safeguarding

Please include any safeguarding policies from your organisation and any safeguards which will be in place to support the research team and participants.

### Timescales and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Please present the timescales of the project in a Gantt chart. This should include the key phases, deadlines and milestones of the project, as well as any other relevant information.

In your application document, please use the following table format to outline the proposed KPIs and timelines.



<b>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</b> <i>e.g. x number of participants recruited; x number of research sites recruited; ethics approval secured</i>	<b>Date</b> <i>Please provide the date by which each KPI is expected to be achieved</i>





## Impact

### Outputs, outcomes and impact assessment and evaluation

Please describe what the expected outputs and outcomes of the study will be and how these meet the priorities of this call. the RCN Foundation's priorities. Please explain how the short, medium, and long-term impact of the study's findings will be captured and reported and how recommendations will be demonstrated and measured.

Please also explain how the study will be evaluated.

### Dissemination

Please outline a proposed dissemination plan, identifying the key activities, and the audiences at whom the outcomes will be targeted. Please include details of the communications which will be required to support the dissemination.

### Equality, diversity and inclusion

Consideration needs to be given to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion within the proposal. Please provide information on how this project will address and incorporate these principles within the research design.

### Environmental Sustainability

Does your organisation have an environmental sustainability policy and how does this project adhere to this?

### Risks

Please set out any risks and mitigations relating to the project.



## **Section C: Project Costs and Resources**

The maximum budget for this call is £30,000. Please provide a detailed breakdown of costs in the format used for the table below:



**Budget:**

Item	Cost £	Explanatory note	Funded by? <i>i.e. RCN Foundation/another organisation/applicant organisation</i>



## Next Steps

Applications open on **13 January 2025** and close at **5pm on 21 February 2025**

Interviews will be held week commencing 17 March 2025

Proposals received after the closing date will not be considered.

Completed proposals should be submitted by email to:

[grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk](mailto:grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk)

Should you have any questions about this funding call please contact Dr Sarah McGloin, Head of Grants and Impact at the RCN Foundation:

[sarah.mcgloin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:sarah.mcgloin@rcn.org.uk)

Thank you for your interest.

## Application checklist

Please ensure that you have included the following in your application:

Does the research require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health Research Authority (HRA) approval for England and Wales</li><li>• NHS Research Ethics Service approval for Scotland</li><li>• HSC Integrated Research Application System in Northern Ireland</li><li>• University ethical approval</li><li>•</li></ul>	Yes/No
A comprehensive proposal including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research design and methods</li><li>• Evaluation method</li><li>• Comprehensive dissemination plan</li><li>• Impact measurement</li><li>• Sustainability of the project</li></ul>	Yes/No
A clear and comprehensive indicative budget	Yes/No



CVs for the research / project team	Yes/No
A timeline presented in a Gantt chart	Yes/No
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) presented in a table	Yes/No