

Research Capability Funding (RCF)

Themed Call 2026-27



Themed Call

The Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Integrated Care Board (ICB) research aim is to support *health and care research that makes a difference to those who need it most*. We have a research strategy that aims to bring research resources (academic skills and funding) to areas of high need within our Integrated Care System (ICS). To support this aim and our strategy, the ICB will invite applications to develop research in areas of high priority to the ICS through **Themed Calls**.

Information on the current Themed Call will be available on the [ICB's Research Capability Funding webpage](#). The guidance, submission dates and review process will be the same as the Responsive Call. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the full Responsive Call guidance. The Themed Call is applicable to both Type 1 (Early Ideas) and Type 2 (National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Grant Preparation) Research Capability Funding (RCF).

All applications to the Responsive Call will be reviewed and scored by a panel according to the process outlined in the full Responsive Call guidance. The highest scoring fundable application that responds to the Themed Call will be prioritised for funding. All other applications deemed fundable by the panel will then be prioritised for funding according to their scores. This may result in a Themed Call application being awarded funding when other applications scored higher but are unsuccessful.

Themed calls will be determined by the ICB Research Team, based on the needs of our population and our current portfolio of research and improvement projects.

2026-27 Themes

We have selected two themes for the academic year 2026-27. These themes emerged from extensive public engagement with under-served and under-represented communities undertaken by the Research Engagement Network's Health Ambassadors (led by Caafi Health) and the Barton Hill Coffee morning, both supported by People in Health West of England (PHWE).

Many communities in areas of high health need identified their priorities for health and care research.

Eleven themes were identified through this process. The ICB Research Team and Bristol Health Partners reviewed the current portfolio of research, improvement and research development projects across the Health Integration Teams and the ICB to match projects with identified community priorities. Nine of the priorities identified by communities are currently being addressed by research and improvement projects, and the information on these live projects is being shared with the communities that raised the issue as their priority for health research. This helps to link research with our communities.

This left two community-identified themes where further investment and work will be the most effective. These are:

1. **Improving men's health outcomes through community-based approaches**
2. **Housing conditions, affordability and security as drivers of health inequalities**

Theme 1

Improving men's health outcomes through community-based approaches

Research focusing on engagement, awareness and access to care for men's health issues, including prostate health, using trusted community messengers.

Theme Description

We invite applications that seek to develop research addressing inequalities in men's health through community-based approaches. We are particularly interested in projects that explore how trusted community settings, groups and individuals can improve awareness, engagement and access to health services among men who may be less likely to engage with traditional healthcare routes.

Relevant topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Prostate health awareness, screening and early diagnosis
- Cardiovascular health, diabetes and other long-term conditions affecting men
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Health literacy and help-seeking behaviours
- Men's engagement with preventive health services
- Use of community champions, faith groups, sports clubs, workplaces and voluntary sector organisations as trusted messengers
- Approaches to reaching men experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, homelessness, rural isolation or belonging to under-served communities.

Theme 2

Housing conditions, affordability and security as drivers of health inequalities

Research should evaluate practical, scalable interventions that improve health by addressing known housing-related risks.

Theme Description

We invite applications that will develop research examining the relationship between housing and health inequalities and generate evidence on practical interventions that can improve health outcomes through improvements in housing conditions, housing affordability, and housing security.

Research should focus on developing or evaluating scalable approaches that address known housing-related risks to health and support stronger collaboration between housing services, healthcare organisations, public health teams and community partners.

Relevant topics may include:

- Damp and mould remediation
- Improvements to warmth, energy efficiency and ventilation
- Housing quality and healthy homes interventions
- Housing insecurity and tenancy support
- Fuel poverty and housing-related financial stress
- Housing interventions for people with long-term conditions
- Housing support for vulnerable populations and underserved communities
- Integrated models involving housing providers, primary care, local authorities, public health and voluntary sector organisations.

Applications should consider impacts on:

- Respiratory health
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Health service utilisation
- Prevention of illness
- Health inequalities and inclusion
- Cost-effectiveness and system benefits.

Research Capability Funding Research Development

Applications should focus on developing a future NIHR funding proposal through activities such as evidence synthesis, data scoping, stakeholder engagement, public involvement, partnership development, intervention co-design, feasibility work or pilot studies.

Please see the full Responsive Call guidance for full details.

Assessment

Applications to the Themed Call are submitted using the same application form, in the same way and to the same deadline as the Responsive Call.

Applications will be assessed in the same manner as all other Responsive Call applications (see full Responsive Call guidance for details). Themed Call applications must be deemed “fundable” using the same standards as other applications.

The highest scoring Themed Call application for both Type 1 and Type 2 will be awarded funding before all other applications are considered for funding.