

Consultation Responses
Cooksey Review Secretariat
HM Treasury, 4th Floor
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Dear Sir David

Consultation on Cooksey Review of UK Health Research

I am responding to this consultation on behalf of the Health and Offender Partnerships Directorate Research Forum.

The Health and Offender Partnerships Directorate (HOPs) brings together Home Office and Department of Health functions to deal with key aspects of their shared agenda – notably dealing with the high levels of health problems and personality disorders among offenders across the criminal justice system.

The HOPs Research Forum has developed a research strategy which identifies and prioritises the research needs of the Directorate's constituent functions. This strategy has highlighted key gaps in the evidence base for working with very high risk individuals and with wider offender populations in order to reduce morbidity and to reduce offending amongst those with mental illness and personality disorders.

Our main concerns about the establishment of a single fund for health research are (a) the extent to which timely research funding is likely to be available to support evidence based practice in the diverse but inter related areas required to improve the pathways of care for offenders at risk and (b) the availability of specialist input to commission, manage and support this research.

A review of the existing research available to support the HOPS agenda showed the majority of this was either funded or commissioned by the National Programme on Forensic Mental Health R&D which has had a relatively small budget and is now ending.

We are aware of the funding opportunities created by the implementation of Best Research for Best Health. We are also aware of the fragility of the academic base in forensic mental health as it is almost entirely funded by NHS Trusts. In the short term it is difficult to see how the available funding schemes will facilitate strategic commissioning of research for an agenda which addresses both public safety and the multiple health needs of some of the most vulnerable people in society.

The new funding structure needs the capacity to prioritise and manage complex areas of research which involve multiple stakeholders with health and security priorities across departments and sectors. The difficulties and complexities of undertaking research in multiple prison, community and secure hospital settings should not be underestimated.

Work is underway to address some relevant structural issues but several problems are endemic to the secure situation and characteristics of the offender populations being researched.

The actual structure of research funding is, in our view, less important than the ability to fund a coherent set of research priorities responding to complex policy and stakeholder needs in relation to Health and Offending and to manage this body of research to a successful conclusion. We look forward to learning about how this will be attained under any revised arrangements.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the research strategy for Health and Offender Partnerships Directorate please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clair Chilvers".

Professor Clair Chilvers
Chair, Health and Offender Partnerships Research Forum