



Consultation Responses  
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10 July 2006

Dear Sir David

**Response to Chancellor's announcement of a single ring-fenced budget for health research funded by MRC & NHS R&D**

The Open University appreciated the opportunity to comment on the Chancellor's announcement of a single ring-fenced budget to support health research funded by the MRC and the NHD R&D Programme.

We are trying to develop Health research and we are concerned about the relationship between health and social care research with regard to services. Indeed we are concerned with the social complexities, and while we recognise the needs as described, we believe that some services where the responsibility is coming together in Trusts may be in danger of being denied the benefits of research. In particular we are concerned for the areas of learning difficulties, gerontology, and mental health research.

We realise that in these areas the connections made between the Research Councils and the MRC/NHS R & D role are crucial. This will lead to more multi-disciplinary/cross HEI research which we welcome. We have had experience of putting forward proposals in the recent New Dynamics of Ageing programme - across MRC/ESRC/EPSRC/BBSRC. Over a period of two years we have seen 80 plus proposals (including 3 of ours) get through the first round of review and then 10 proposals (all cross HEI, multi-disciplinary) go through the second round. In the end 2 proposals have been funded and we wonder about the enormous amount of time that people have spent doing this work as well as the good ideas that have been generated. There is a need to capitalise and reap the benefits of all this effort.

In bringing the MRC and NHS R&D together we welcome the need to bring research, policy and practice together but believe there is a need to further develop communication between scientists, applied researchers and practitioners. There is a need for practitioners to be seconded to join researchers in their R & D work, and for researchers to gain greater insight into policy and practice. In relation to developing research areas in nursing, social work and professions allied to medicine this relationship is crucial.

Cont./

10 July 2006

2

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We would also like to see research and capacity building for systems thinking and practice in the NHS to address joined-up working, organisational learning and change (managing complexity) and to understand and avoid 'systemic failure'.

I hope that you find these comments helpful in undertaking your review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brigid Heywood". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Professor Brigid Heywood  
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Staff)