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**‘FIRST STEPS INTO RESEARCH’ PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH**

**WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE PROGRAMME?**

The aim of the programme is to ignite passion and interest in research and give staff the motivation, skills and knowledge so that we can help create an interest in research to support NIHR studies, help embed research within the local authorities and create pathways for future careers in health and social care research.

**WHAT THE PROGRAMME ENTAILS?**

The programme allows staff to attend **10 days over a five-month period** to get exposure and gain awareness of research opportunities, basic research skills, understand research in practice and how they may be involved. The CRN SWP will pay for the staff time for the 10 days and their travel for a small number of face to face session. Applicants will be supported by a mentor identified by the CRN. There is no assessment at the end of the course, but applicants will create a poster to showcase their learning. Most of the course will be delivered virtually, but there will be two face to face meetings to allow applicants to meet with others completing the programme. We will also create a virtual community of practice so that applicants can access resources and connect with each other.

**WHY WE ARE RUNNING THE SCHEME?**

Research and development is an integral part of ensuring that health and care services are of the highest quality and informed by the best available evidence. Undertaking research is also a very strong motivational factor for staff who want to support the development of better health and care practices and can support staff retention. We know that some of services can be improved, or abandoned altogether in favour of others for which research provides evidence of effectiveness. Health and social care research also has a fundamental role to play in helping to reduce the disparities that exist in health outcomes caused by socio-economic factors, geography, age and ethnicity.

There are many opportunities to be involved in research across the South West Peninsula (SWP) and it is important that staff across the local authorities and within the voluntary and charitable sectors are aware and supported to access these. The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Best Research for Best Health: the Next Chapter outlines the priorities for DHSC <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/about-us/best-research-for-best-health-the-next-chapter.pdf> one of which is building capacity and capability in preventative, public health and social care research.

To support this objective in the South West region the NIHR Clinical Research Network South West Peninsula (CRN SWP) in collaboration with Local authority partners, Skills for Care, members of the public, CRN SWP Social Care, Public Health and Health Services Research Speciality Leads have developed the First Steps Programme. Content for the programme is also supported by the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC), the NIHR Research Design Service (RDS) and local Universities.

**TYPES OF STAFF ELIGIBLE TO APPLY**

This programme is open to anyone working in local government or the voluntary and charitable sector in the South West Peninsula region, so we are looking for people working in these areas/ job roles;

* Social worker
* Public Health
* Occupational Therapist within the social care field
* School nurse
* Health visitor
* Data analyst in public health and social care
* Community engagement officer
* Community development
* Leisure or culture services
* Care home staff

The above list are examples, but is not an exhaustive list of suggested job roles.

**SUPPORT FROM MANAGERS**

Applications for the programme will open in June 2023 and it will run from September 2023 until January 2024. We want to ensure that all of the region is represented and are hoping to have successful applicants from each Local Authority. We hope that managers can support the release of the staff to attend the programme and we are happy to be contacted to discuss the programme in more depth. This is a pilot and so the programme will be evaluated at the end of the financial year and we will share this report with you.

If you would like to learn more please contact helen.chenoweth@nhs.net/ elly.french@nhs.net or pauline.mcglone@nhs.net