



**Report for:  
ACTION**

**Item Number:**

<b>Contains Confidential or Exempt Information</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Plans to develop an Ealing Building Blocks of Health Research Collaboration (BBHRC) – Pending funding from National Institute of Health Research</b>
<b>Responsible Officer(s)</b>	Amanda Askham, Strategic Director of Strategy and Change and Anna Bryden, Director of Public Health
<b>Author(s)</b>	Dr Maddy Gupta-Wright, Consultant in Public Health Dr Vaishnavee Madden, Consultant in Public Health
<b>Portfolio(s)</b>	Cllr Josh Blacker and Cllr Jasbir Anand
<b>For Consideration By</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date to be Considered</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
<b>Implementation Date if Not Called In</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> January 2024
<b>Affected Wards</b>	All
<b>Keywords/Index</b>	Research capacity building, research infrastructure, academic collaborations, evaluation and systems research, participatory action research, data systems and community public involvement

**Purpose of Report:**

Pending a successful funding outcome from the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), this report recommends that the council enter into a contract with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to establish a Health Determinants Research Collaboration in Ealing using funding of £5 million, to build sustainable research capacity and infrastructure in the council over the next 5 years.

This will be an exciting and significant opportunity for Ealing. If successful, our bid will allow us to create a step change in our learning culture, embarking on a journey to develop and embed our own research capacity and infrastructure within the council and with our communities.

The purpose of this funding and programme of work will be to:

- Create a research-active council equipped to lead and collaborate on high quality research of the wider/social determinants of health ('building blocks of health'), using a range of research and evaluation methods.
- Build a culture of community involvement and co-production of research with residents to ensure we address the issues important to local people.

- Use the findings of research in Ealing to influence and impact policy, strategy and service change affecting building blocks of health through a stronger learning and innovation culture in order to enable more thriving, healthy communities in Ealing.

The Ealing collaboration will be named the Ealing Building Blocks of Health Research Collaboration (BBHRC).

## 1. Recommendations for DECISION

### That Cabinet:

- 1) Authorise the council to enter into a funding contract with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) for NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaboration (“the Funding Contract”) to receive funding of £5m to establish the Ealing’s Building Blocks of Health Research Collaboration (BBHRC), if the outcome of the bidding process is successful.

And in this event:

- 2) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Strategy and Change and the Director of Public Health to commence work on establishing Ealing’s Health Determinants Research Collaboration, called ‘Ealing Building Blocks of Health Research collaboration (BBHRC)’ from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, in line with its aims, objectives and deliverables set out in section 3 of this cabinet report.

and

- 3) Authorise the Strategic Director of Strategy and Change and the Director of Public Health following consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Director of Strategic Resources to enter into such partner agreements, research project agreements and model research agreements with research partners including without limitation Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, Imperial College London (ICL), and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and other organisations as part of the BBHRC pursuant to the Funding Contract, as required.

## 2. Recommendations for NOTING

n/a

## 3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered

Ealing council has applied for, through a highly competitive process, Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) funding of £5 million from the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), to build sustainable research capacity and infrastructure in the council over the next 5 years. This was in collaboration with academic and community co-applicants and followed a competitive application process. It will be named the Ealing Building Blocks of Health Research Collaboration (BBHRC). This is an exciting opportunity for a step change in our learning culture.

In stage 1 of the application process, the NIHR commended Ealing for the “*well-written and timely proposal with a strong team of co-applicants*”. They noted our “*strong focus on the wider determinants [of health] and fighting inequalities and [our] conveyed sense of positivity and commitment to working with, and for, the borough’s ethnically mixed population*”. They also commended the “*strong participatory angle to research proposed and the legacy that the HDRC will have*” in Ealing.

**Ealing BBHRC’s vision** will be to develop a collaborative, impactful research partnership focused on promoting the building blocks of health and equity.

The **aims** of the BBHRC will be to:

1. Transform Ealing’s research system and infrastructure.
2. Strengthen and grow Ealing’s research collaborations.
3. Drive organisational capacity building and culture change.
4. Embed diverse and inclusive community involvement in our transformation.

The **objectives**, aligned with these aims, are to:

1. Establish the **foundational structures**, roles, governance and partnership arrangements, to operate a centre of excellence in applied research on the building blocks of health.
2. Improve the capacity and culture for **community involvement and co-creation of research** with residents and community groups ensuring research addresses issues important to local people, particularly from underserved communities.
3. Improve accessibility and quality of our **data, including data linkage and integration**, to inform staff, partners and our communities.
4. Develop capacity to use a **plurality of innovative research methodologies** for different research questions, including social science and complex systems-informed research and evaluation methods.
5. Work with academic partners to embed **high quality research training and development**, with a focus on building capacity at all stages of the career pathway for council staff, and community groups.
6. **Strengthen our research collaborations** so there is alignment of vision, priorities, and work for academics, council staff, local partners and our communities.
7. **Disseminate and share learning** of our approach, activities and academic outputs, through our networks, building our reputation as a centre of excellence for applied health equity focused research.
8. Leverage the learning culture enabled by BBHRC to focus the role of the council as **enabler of systems change approaches** to improving the building blocks of health.

In addition to creating the necessary infrastructure and processes to build the research collaboration, **the main transformative deliverables** include:

1. Developing a sustainable systemic Participatory Action Research infrastructure. This includes training a network of community researchers. They will participate in action research alongside council staff, to co-create new knowledge and action together.
2. Integrate health and council data and co-produce a community data dashboard.

3. Conduct an in-depth baseline assessment of the council's current system of evidence use and creation.
4. Develop a bespoke and curated training and development offer for staff at all levels and community partners.

If successful, the BBHRC bid will directly support the Council Plan 2022-2026 and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 as it focusses on building capacity for research that will inform the council's approach to tackling inequalities through the building blocks of health.

Three academic partners, offer unique and complementary expertise to build Ealing's research capacity (Institute of Development Studies - participatory action research; Imperial College London - epidemiology and data linkage; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine - systems thinking and evaluation). Collaborating with communities is central to BBHRC's vision and embedded throughout, including inclusive and best practice community and public involvement, ensuring that research is relevant to, and works with, Ealing's underserved communities.

The leadership of the collaboration will sit within the council's Strategy and Change Directorate with significant input from Public Health in the Adults and Public Health Directorate in the council.

The intention is for Ealing BBHRC to impact Ealing residents and staff, with improvements to policy and services as a result of the research partnership. There will be a greater culture of evidence use and creation, on the building blocks of health, shifting systems towards greater health equity.

Dissemination of the work of Ealing BBHRC will also include sharing learning and approaches for the benefit of people and organisations in Ealing, regionally, nationally and internationally by publishing and sharing through regional and national networks.

NIHR are proposing to announce the outcome of the funding application process by the end of November 2023.

If Ealing is successful in securing NIHR funding, Option 1 will be to enter into a contract with the Department of Health to establish a National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) Health Determinants Research Collaboration in Ealing (the Ealing BBHRC).

Option 2 will be to decline the contract.

#### **4. Key Implications**

The bid is to develop the council's capacity and infrastructure to conduct research which will inform work to create greater health equity via the 'building blocks of health'. It will impact the whole council, and the capacity will support the council's

existing strategies that aim to address inequalities, including Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 and Council Plan 2022-2026, as well as the council's ambition to further develop and embed greater community participation and involvement.

### Culture Change and Capacity Building

Ealing BBHRC will create organisational culture change in the use and creation of research evidence to inform our work on the 'building blocks of health'. Staff across the organisation will be able to access a range of training and development opportunities that will be developed in collaboration with our academic and community partners. Residents and voluntary and community sector organisations will also have capacity building opportunities.

### Collaboration

The Ealing BBHRC will establish partnerships with three Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), for their specific and renowned expertise:

- Institute of Development Studies (IDS) to develop our community and staff participatory action research infrastructure.
- Imperial College London to support our data integration aspirations, particularly around health and wider determinants of health data.
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) for their expertise assessing the use of evidence in local government, research using systems thinking and stronger evaluation.

Memorandums of understanding or collaborative or other agreements will be entered into with each of these bodies during the first year of the programme of work. The partnerships will also be managed through a number of governance mechanisms.

Inclusive, consistent, best practice communities and public involvement (CPI) will be core to the development of the Ealing BBHRC, its governance structures, decision-making processes and future research, putting communities at the heart of research in Ealing.

### Human resource and Governance implications

The BBHRC will be led by the Strategic Director of Strategy and Change, the Director of Public Health and a part time Research Director (to be recruited). The bid for the BBHRC had a strong team of officer co-applicants from core functions across the council including strategy and change, community engagement, strategic intelligence, organisational development, and public health, who, if successful, will be central to delivering a sustainable, integrated, and long-term research collaboration. Officers have carefully considered the roles required to deliver the workstreams for the BBHRC to create the necessary impact and ensure future sustainability.

There will be a number of specific new posts created and funded through the NIHR grant.

## 5. Financial

There are no direct financial consequences for the council of this project as it would be funded from an NIHR grant and there is no requirement for specific match funding. The requirements of the bid are that no inflationary funding, including for pay awards, is included. These costs will be provided by additional grant over the lifetime of the project in consultation with NIHR.

As the project is over a period of five years, there is a risk of the council incurring on-going commitments and liabilities, such as redundancy costs. The project will be managed to minimise or eliminate these liabilities, for example through the use of redeployment. Regular and transparent monitoring and reporting throughout the lifetime of the project will increase the likelihood of this being successful.

After allowing for any additional funding for inflation, the grant will be cash limited, which will require the council to contain costs within the overall grant total each year.

The council will incur indirect costs through the oversight and strategic leadership provided by Strategic Director of Strategy and Change and Director of Public Health. Recruitment of posts for the BBHRC will be managed by HR within existing resources. Ealing's Finance service will provide financial oversight of the programme from within existing resources.

There are a number of ICT infrastructure costs that are included within the investment for the Ealing's data & analytics strategy and its council funded budget. This will also support the data linkage element of the EBBHRC programme. There will be three academic institutions that will be partners through the programme. Some degree of financial oversight of these bodies will be required from the council to ensure total costs are within the terms of the grant.

The table below summarises the costs and funding of the project by year.

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Total research costs	1,021.0	1,150.0	1,021.1	930.5	876.7	4,999.4
Funding from NIHR	-1,021.0	-1,150.0	-1,021.1	-930.5	-876.7	-4,999.4
	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## 6. Legal

The council has the statutory power to receive grants and enter into contracts and agreements with third parties.

## **7. Value For Money**

We have considered carefully the resources required to deliver the ambitions and activities of the BBHRC. Our approach has the following strengths:

- A strong team of internal council co-applicants across the main council functions will ensure sufficient integration and alignment of the BBHRC adding value to the council's work as a whole.
- Partnership with 3 higher education institutions offering leading expertise in complementary areas of research capacity building. Each workstream has an ambitious and transformational agenda, and the salary costs of academics who will support us to achieve these ambitions, represents value for money.
- A number of new dedicated posts will be created throughout BBHRC's initial 5-year duration, with careful thought given to the requirement for each dedicated role, in order to ensure effective delivery of our workplans and achieve the necessary research transformation required.
- As an exercise in research system transformation and culture change, we are prioritising substantial investment in our training and development element, aimed at a range of staff, including senior management levels and building different levels of research expertise.

## **8. Sustainability Impact Appraisal**

It is expected that the delivery of the Ealing BBHRC will support the council's sustainability objectives by adhering to the system-wide principles that also address the climate crisis.

In addition, the BBHRC will enable the council to undertake research on climate action as a key building block of health both internally regarding its own approach to sustainability and externally in terms of the policies and strategies that relate to addressing the climate crisis for Ealing's residents.

## 9. Risk Management

Risk	Mitigation
Lack of joint and shared understanding of vision of BBHRC	Core module on building blocks of health and research co-produced with academia, communities & council. Embed the development and work of the BBHRC into all council strategic and operational work through senior leadership
Lack of staff capacity to engage with research and development opportunities	Organisational plans to incentivise staff engagement in this work, including restructure, new resources, releasing time, discussion of training needs during annual appraisals, embedding BBHRC development and work into work plans
Resource capacity constraints on interventions that tackle the building blocks of health that research can inform	All council plans/strategies are developed based on Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Council Plan; resources re-aligned over time where needed. BBHRC will enable us to apply for further funding for research into action grants
Lack of alignment of research and policy/decision-making cycles	Annual research priority setting processes help to prioritise research that will make an impact on policymakers and practitioners, in line with policy and commissioning cycles

## 10. Community Safety

Community safety is a key building block of health and may emerge as a research theme allowing the BBHRC to impact more effective strategy and policy on community safety for Ealing residents.

## 11. Links to the 3 Key Priorities for the Borough

The BBHRC will enable the council to conduct its own high-quality research/evaluation of council work addressing all three key priorities for Ealing's administration: fighting inequality; tackling the climate crisis; and creating good jobs, the latter two as key building blocks of health.

In particular, the BBHRC will address 'fighting inequality'. By having capacity to conduct our own research on the building blocks of health, which are root causes of inequality, we will be able to understand our local inequalities in more details and learn of more effective and sustainable ways to address them.

## 12. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

A full Equality Analysis Assessment (EAA) is not required for this work at this stage.

The BBHRC's core aim is to address health equity through greater capacity and infrastructure to do locally meaningful research with a diverse range of residents on a diverse range of building blocks of health. These include structural discrimination



and community development issues. Attention to equality, diversity and inclusion will be embedded into the core work of the BBHRC. As such the BBHRC will conduct an annual iterative process of analysing equality diversity and inclusion impacts of the programme.

Drawing on NIHR guidance on inclusivity in research and their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion toolkit, the BBHRC will ensure that communities and public involvement opportunities in the building of research capacity and future research itself, are accessible and inclusive. For the development of the collaboration itself, this means wide representation of our diverse communities in CPI activities and roles. The BBHRC will address practical and structural barriers to involvement, e.g. payment for time (guided by NIHR payment guidance, and factored into the grant-funded costs), cultural competence of communications and branding of research.

The BBHRC will ensure that recruitment processes for recruiting community members are fair and transparent, reflecting equality and diversity duties, including members of recruitment panels from diverse backgrounds.

The BBHRC will ensure that choice and flexibility in opportunities for the CPI are explicit.

The BBHRC will review research protocols from an EDI perspective, including the study design, recruitment approaches or inclusion/exclusion criteria.

In addition to the above the BBHRC set up can draw on the full EAA completed for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 as the BBHRC delivers several actions in the first-year action plan of the strategy, against its commitments.

### **13. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:**

See section 4 Key implication for specific staffing implications.

New staff will be based in Ealing council buildings and the community.

### **14. Property and Assets**

There are no property or asset implications.

### **15. Any other implications:**

N/A

### **16. Consultation**

The proposal for BBHRC built on community and partner intelligence from other recent consultation processes, most notably, that which informed the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028.

Extensive consultation with all co-applicants including from academic partners (IDS, LSHTM and ICL), Ealing and Hounslow Community and Voluntary Service (EHCVS), Golden Opportunity Skills and Development (GOSAD), Southall Community Alliance (SCA), Ealing Citizens tribunal, and also Cllr Blacker, was carried out for the development of the proposal.

High quality community and public involvement (CPI) has been essential throughout the development of the BBHRC proposal. We have undertaken this through our voluntary and community sector partners and their connected community groups and residents, and also our community champions programme of volunteers, our existing peer researchers and the Citizens Tribunal for Ealing's Race Equality Commission.

Co-development of the proposal's content with our 4 co-applicants representing community voices (3 in VCS (EHCVS, GOSAD and SCA) and 1 as chair of Ealing's Citizen's Tribunal), has been key and these partners have facilitated the involvement of communities' and residents in Ealing's bid through a series of virtual community conversations. These have included:

- Workshop session online with EHCVS Mental Health Forum
- Workshop session online with EHCVS' wider community of volunteers, funded VCS organisations, and community leaders including the council's community champions
- Discussion online at Ealing Community Network's AGM
- Discussion at Ealing's young people event
- In person workshop with 14 participants re: setting up coproduction of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy action plan – discussion with community leaders.

## **17. Timetable for Implementation**

If successful in the funding application, the work to begin delivery of the first year of the programme will start from 1 January 2024, with initial mobilisation activities taking place across November and December. The proposed implementation plan will be based on these key areas across the 5 years:

Years 1 and 2 will focus on recruitment of new staff, developing governance arrangements and performance, financial, ethical and information governance frameworks. The communications, community and public involvement and dissemination strategy will be developed, alongside the BBHRC website.

Years 2 and 3 will focus on developing the community participatory action research infrastructure, the data linkage and sharing elements including developing an internal platform for sharing qualitative insights across the council, integrating council data with health data and co-producing the community data dashboard. Staff development opportunities will be more broadly rolled out, and the best practice standard for community and public involvement in research will be co-developed.

Years 4 and 5 will focus on dissemination of learning and research outputs, embedding the training and development offer into core training, evaluating impact of BBHRC and considering options for future sustainability.

BBHRC's anticipated impact will be:

- 1) Better evidence informed policy and practice on the building blocks of health
- 2) Greater research evidence creation on the building blocks of health
- 3) Greater learning from BBRHC locally, regionally and nationally.

## 18. Appendices

None

## 19. Background Information

[Call for proposals: NIHR Health Determinants Research Collaborations \(HDRC\) specification document | NIHR](#)

References from Ealing application:

1. Source: Simpson's Diversity Index, Census 2011 (awaiting 2021 scores)
2. Source: Census 2021 and Ealing Schools Census 2021
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4. Source: Trust for London 2022
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7. Source: Ealing Council schools data 2022
8. Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Segment Tool 2022
9. Source: OHID Public Health profiles (2021/22)
10. Source: Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2021/22)
11. Source: Nomis labour market statistics (2021/22)
12. Ealing Council Plan 2022-26
13. Ealing Independent Race Equality Commission Report 2021
14. Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-28
15. Ealing Community Champions Programme
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27. UK Standards for Public Involvement

28. NIHR Involve

29. NIHR Being Inclusive in Public Involvement in Health Research

30. NIHR Resign Design Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion toolkit

31. NIHR Payment Guidance

32. Holman, D., Salway, S., Bell, A., Beach, B., Adebajo, A., Ali, N. and Butt, J., 2021. Can intersectionality help with understanding and tackling health inequalities? Perspectives of professional stakeholders. Health Research Policy and Systems, 19(1), p.97.

## Consultation

<b>Name of consultee</b>	<b>Post held</b>	<b>Date sent to consultee</b>	<b>Date response received</b>	<b>Comments appear in paragraph:</b>
<b>Internal</b>				
Amanda Askham	Strategic Director for Strategy and Change	11 Oct 2023	12 Oct 2023	/
Anna Bryden	Director of Public Health	27 Sept and 3 Oct 2023	27 Sept and 3 Oct 2023	/
Kevin Kilburn	Interim Assistant Director Strategic Finance	27 Sept and 3 Oct 2023	27 Sept and 3 Oct 2023	Financial
Cllr Blacker	Cabinet Member for Healthy Lives	4 Oct 2023		/
Cllr Anand	Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality	4 Oct 2023		/
Chuhr Nijjar	Senior Contracts Lawyer	5 Oct 2023	9 Oct 2023	Legal
SLT	/	18 Oct 2023	18 Oct 2023	/
<b>External</b>				

## Report History

<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Urgency item?</b>
Key decision	Yes
Report no.:	Report author and contact for queries:
	Maddy Gupta-Wright, Consultant in Public Health, Public Health <a href="mailto:guptawrightm@ealing.gov.uk">guptawrightm@ealing.gov.uk</a>