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Thank you

The RDS has now been in existence for two years, a landmark that has given us an opportunity to reflect on how things are going. That reflection has taken many forms, but in terms of simple numbers, the RDS has:

- been involved with over 400 projects;
- supported 170 grant submissions to the NIHR and other national competitive funding streams;
- achieved a 41% success rate with full grant submissions (where results are known)...
- ...resulting in about £12.5million of grant funding.

So I would like to extend a big “thank you” to all the staff of the RDS across the south west who are working so hard to make it a success.

Another interesting finding from our data is that, for those projects where the RDS is involved all the way through to grant submission, there is a threefold increase in the success rate when compared with projects where the investigators have sought advice on a one-off basis. Sometimes the right advice is not easy to give, and even harder to receive, in particular when that advice is to delay submission and continue working to improve the proposal. So, another thank you to investigators who have heeded that painful advice, continued to work with the RDS and given themselves a better chance of getting funded.

As in previous issues, this newsletter contains a brief description of a project

that has successfully secured funding with RDS input. The “Waste the waist” project is a true collaboration across a number of organisations, tackling an increasing problem nationally and indeed globally. We wish the team good luck with the project.

Since our last newsletter we have extended the scope of our Scientific Committee by introducing lay members – an entirely logical move given that we intend the committee to operate much like a “mock” funding committee reviewing projects. In this issue you’ll find a brief article written by Caro Ness, one of those lay members, describing her experiences on the committee to date. She is correct – the committee’s work has undoubtedly improved as a result of this broader membership, and another thank you is due to those new members who are working hard to help us improve our service.

Last but definitely not least, also in this issue are details of the next Residential Research School, to be held in May 2011, the third to be run by the RDS. We have had very encouraging results from the first school – three NIHR grants and another submission awaiting the outcome – and several submitted projects from the second School are also awaiting decisions. The School is a “flagship” event for the RDS and we are dependent on organisations providing financial support for teams of their staff to attend; so another thank you for their continued support.

Dr Paul Ewings
Director, RDS - South West

Residential Research School. May 2011 - Brittany, France

As an integral part of its work of providing advice and support to researchers developing research proposals, the RDS-SW is organising another **Residential Research School in Brittany, France in May 2011** (7th—13th inclusive).

With the support of NHS Trusts from across the South West, the Research School will build on seven years of experience of running residential research schools for health service researchers, from the South West. The Residential Research School will provide:

- protected time dedicated to the development of research projects;
- the experience of working as part of a professional research team;
- coaching in the skills of writing research proposals and grant applications;
- “hands-on” experience of the methodological, technical, and practical issues in planning and explaining research.

The aim of the Residential Research School is that, by the end of the School, participants will have developed a research proposal which they will be able to take forward as a high quality funding application.

Participants come to the Residential Research School in project teams comprising three members.

Selection for the School is through an open competition in which the teams bid for a place in the form of a research proposal. The proposals are reviewed by the RDS scientific committee with appropriate advice from clinical and academic colleagues.

“This is an exciting and unique opportunity”

The primary criterion for selection is the potential of the research ideas to attract peer reviewed funding from a major national research funding organisation.

Teams are expected to meet the costs of attendance at the School, but funding to cover the costs is often available for employees of the Trusts who support the School.



At the Research School, teams will be able to develop proposals which will be competitive for research funding, with the dedicated time and support of a team of experts who have over one hundred years’ research experience and many millions of pounds of peer review funding between them.

The Residential Research School will be held in Quimper, Brittany

from 7th - 13th May 2011 inclusive. Accommodation is at the Mercure Hotel.



This is an exciting and unique opportunity for research teams in the South West. Full details of the School can be found on the RDS-SW website at: www.rds-sw.nihr.ac.uk



Applications for the 2011 School must be made using the application form available from the RDS-SW website. The **deadline** for the submission of full applications is **5pm Friday 14th January 2011**.

For further advice or information please contact Debbie Marsh on 01823 344178 or email: Debbie.Marsh@tst.nhs.uk

We look forward to receiving many interesting applications from researchers across the South West.

Successful grants: Waste the Waist

A pilot study designed to evaluate a new approach to weight loss and physical activity in people with metabolic syndrome has been awarded £240,000 funding from the Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) programme, obtained with RDS support. Metabolic syndrome is a condition affecting approximately 1 in 5 people in the UK and is defined by a combination of risk factors associated with obesity and diabetes.

The Waste the Waist study is a collaboration between the Peninsula Medical School in Exeter, the University of Bath, Deakin University in Australia and Bath & North East Somerset PCT (B&NES PCT).

Waste the Waist is based on the highly successful LIFE! Programme which has benefited thousands of people in Melbourne, Australia. It is the latest state-of-the-art programme for supporting weight loss and a healthier lifestyle and mirrors the recommendations of the recently released European guidelines for the prevention of type 2 diabetes. It aims to encourage and support at risk individuals to implement behaviour change, resulting in positive alterations to their lifestyle in areas such as physical activity and diet. The pilot

study will work with and assess 50 NHS patients from B&NES PCT.

Previous studies have shown that those with cardiovascular conditions such as heart disease and diabetes can make a huge difference to their rates of recovery by making even small positive changes to their lifestyle.

The more changes in diet and physical activity they make, the better the results – among people at risk who made just four or five lifestyle changes the rate of progression to type 2 diabetes was reduced to zero per cent.

The pilot study will evaluate the Waste the Waist programme to ensure that the methods and procedures for assessing its impact will work as intended. For example, the pilot study will monitor ways to ensure that individuals do not drop out of the programme for preventable

reasons, such as poor communication of the level of effort required.

Once the pilot study is complete, the study team plans to conduct a large trial to assess the impact and value for money of the programme.



Left to Right - Dr Afroditi Stathi, Mr Daniel Messom, Dr Colin Greaves, Margaret Francis (Service User Representative), Dr Gordon Taylor, Lisa Austin.

Being a Lay Member on the Scientific Committee. By Caro Ness

A while back, a message was sent to Musgrove Partners, lay members of the local hospital in Taunton, to ask them if they would be interested in sitting as a lay member on the Scientific Committee for the RDS - South West. I responded positively, as did a number of others and so we were invited to a meeting to explain roughly what our role would be and because this was a new initiative, it was a bit of a learning curve for everyone.

We duly turned up at the first meeting with notes each of us lay members had made on the proposals that we had been sent, and because we each came from diverse roles, publishing, nursing, the army and so on, we inevitably had different observations, some of which others had noticed too and some which were unique to us. It was agreed unanimously by everyone at the meeting that it had gone better than ever before and that we were a welcome addition to the team.

Being a Lay Member on the Scientific Committee (continued)

All I can say is that I would recommend others to offer their services. We are paid a small stipend and expenses for giving up our time to these meetings but I would happily do so gratis, so much do I enjoy it! The fact is that you learn about the most astonishing and exciting new endeavours to improve the quality and expertise of healthcare in the South West of England, and you are part of the team that is attempting to improve the quality of these proposals so that they DO get funding and go ahead to the benefit of patients locally, nationally and on a global scale. You are therefore at the cutting edge of seeing changes made in the quality of the health service worldwide for the better.

I feel the importance of my contribution, since I am a writer and editor by profession and have worked in publishing all my life, is that I am able to make a substantial difference to the stylistic and grammatical framework of these proposals and I tend to notice anomalies in the text, from years of having to do so in a publishing field, that need ironing out of a proposal before it goes to the funding committee.

Others of my lay colleagues bring their experience of logistics or nursing or accounting to bear on each proposal and make suggestions for the better. At the end of our deliberations we give each proposal a score that indicates to its creators and champions whether we believe it has a future, how long it may take to 'tweak', and we make suggestions as to how it can be improved if necessary. It is truly rewarding work and I look forward to every meeting.

The RDS-SW is still adding to their database of people who are interested in a lay reviewer position, this includes people who are willing to provide written reviews even if they are unable to travel to Taunton to attend the monthly meetings.

Therefore, if you, or anyone you know of might be interested in becoming a lay reviewer for the RDS-SW and/or joining the Scientific Committee, please contact the RDS-SW Business Manager, Debbie Marsh, on 01823 344178 or via email at Debbie.Marsh@tst.nhs.uk

Contact Us

Each RDS office is run by an experienced researcher, well equipped to provide practical and user-friendly advice on the research process and applying for funding. If you are unsure of where your nearest office is, or who best to contact, simply get in touch with the **Co-ordinating Centre, Taunton** on **01823 342792** or rds-sw@tst.nhs.uk or visit our website at: www.rds-sw.nihr.ac.uk

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