Develop a research question from an idea or observation

- identify a priority area or topic that is important to the NHS and patients and there is a gap in current evidence
- ensure that your question is feasible, interesting, novel, ethical and relevant
- discuss your research ideas with your colleagues
- contact your local R&D department or CCG
- patient and Public Involvement (PPI): seek feedback on existing questions and new ideas stemming from patient experience.

Perform a scoping literature review to ensure novelty

- develop a search strategy
- ask an institutional librarian for help
- search relevant electronic databases and websites, e.g. MEDLINE, Embase, Cochrane Library etc.
- search for relevant systematic reviews.

Refine your research question and consider the funding stream

- identify experts in field and discuss your idea with them
- PPI: consider lay research that supports your question.

Decide on the appropriate research study design

- decide on the appropriate study design and statistical analysis
- consider feasibility and ethical aspects
- think about the sampling and recruitment
- form a team with the relevant expertise
- identify the additional input you may need from a statistician, health economist, methodology expert etc.
- PPI: involve service users in defining patient samples and ensuring appropriate recruitment terms.

Write the research proposal

- look at successful applications on the funders website
- follow the application guidelines carefully
- write clearly
- ask someone to peer-review your proposal
- think about the ways to disseminate your research findings
- PPI: involve service users to ensure appropriate language, lay summaries and user-friendly presentation of findings.

RDS Support:
Advisers can provide guidance on how to translate an idea or observation into a well-focused research question that is considered a clinical or service priority, novel, ethical, feasible to test and answerable in the time period of the research.

RDS Support:
Advisers can provide guidance on the literature search and appraisal strategies to help inform and focus developing research ideas.

RDS Support:
Advisers will ensure that the proposed study is within scope of the targeted funding programme, or support the identification of a suitable alternative scheme.

RDS Support:
Advisers can provide guidance on the appropriate use of experimental, epidemiological and qualitative research methods, or the use of mixed methods.

RDS Support:
Advisers can review the application and help develop a strong case for conducting further research.

R&D department or CCG

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Advisers can review the application and help develop a strong case for conducting further research.

*This is a simplified version created with the aim of providing a general idea of the research process. In reality, there are various feedback loops during the research process (e.g. revising the question and the design based on the input from the collaborators, RDS and PPI input) and some parts happen in parallel (e.g. ‘Write the research proposal’ and ‘consider the funding stream’ and ‘confirm the costing of the project’.*