

NIHR Exeter BRC Pre-Application Support Fund

Overview and Application Guidance

Overview of funding scope

The NIHR Exeter BRC Pre-Application Support Fund provides funding that individuals across the South West Peninsula can use to help prepare a larger application for either a NIHR Pre-Doctoral, Doctoral or Advanced Fellowship career development scheme. It is aimed at those that require additional support to submit a competitive application, where they would have otherwise not had the opportunity to do so.

The provision of these funds aims to enhance clinical academic career-building capacity across the region, identifying a need of healthcare professionals from both medical and non-medical disciplines, to have protected time to develop their academic career in parallel with their clinical practice. Specifically, allocated time to conceptualise and write high-quality funding applications is essential to be competitive for the NIHR career development funding schemes. The scheme, therefore, directly addresses this critical bottleneck by providing these individuals dedicated time and space to draft competitive applications.

Overview of the BRC

The National Institute for Health and Care Research Biomedical Research Centre for Exeter (NIHR Exeter BRC) is a collaboration between University of Exeter (UoE), The Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (Royal Devon), Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust (RCHT), Devon Partnership Trust (DPT), Cornwall Partnership Trust (CPT), Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (SFT) and St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

The first of its kind for the South West peninsula, its fundamental objective is to improve health outcomes for patients and the public by translating scientific breakthroughs into potential new treatments, diagnostics and medical technologies. The NIHR Exeter BRC creates an environment in the South West for world-leading researchers to thrive and contribute significantly to the local and national economy. Further details of the NIHR Exeter BRC infrastructure can be found [here](#).

The NIHR Exeter BRC focuses on five major, complementary research themes:

- **Neurodegeneration:** We find and test new, better drugs that prevent and treat major brain conditions in older adults such as dementia and Parkinson's disease.
- **Rehabilitation:** We use exciting new approaches to help older people to recover from illness or manage their long-term conditions like dementia and arthritis. This will include using technology to improve movement, maintain brain health and prevent falls.
- **Diabetes:** We improve the way diabetes is diagnosed and treated, and we will explore how to help those most at risk of developing the disease.
- **Genetics and Genomics:** We unlock the power of genetics, using it to improve diagnosis of rare illnesses in children and rare cancers, and to create treatments for common diseases that can be tailored to different people based on their unique genetic profile.

- **Clinical Mycology:** We seek better treatments to prevent and manage fungal infections that are common in the UK and understand better how fungi become resistant to drug treatments.

In addition, we aim to build capacity in other areas including respiratory medicine, psychiatry and surgery. We also encourage applications from research areas that are complementary to our five core research themes, such as microbiology (aligning with clinical mycology) and geriatrics (aligning with rehabilitation). This is not an exhaustive list so please do get in touch to discuss the fit of your research area ahead of submitting your application.

About the Pre-Application Support Fund

We have funding available for two awards, to be started by the end of September 2025.

Funding can be requested for up to 6 months, for 0.2FTE from the award start date, with flexibility within that period for when funding is required.

In addition to the contribution of funds to buy out the necessary time to prepare a competitive NIHR career development scheme application, the funds outlined below are also available to apply for. Please refer to appendix 1 for guidance on costings.

- Up to £1,000 to support training
- Up to £500 for supervisory and mentoring input
- Up to £500 for Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (including funds to support accessibility needs for public collaborators)
- Up to £500 to support accessibility requirements

All costs requested should be specific to preparing your future application for an NIHR career development scheme. A brief justification of how requested costs will enable this should be provided in the application form. It should be noted that any support requests, including a contribution towards salary costs, should be completed during this time period.

Awardees will become part of the NIHR Exeter BRC community where support will continue, and regular contact maintained to monitor career development and the outcome of submitted applications. To complement the support offered by the BRC, additional training opportunities will be available across our Exeter NIHR infrastructure group for academic career development. We will also provide awardees with a mentor to support the development of writing their fellowship application.

Expectation

It is expected that awardees submit their NIHR career development scheme application within 6 months after the funding period has ended, and open lines of communication maintained with the NIHR Exeter BRC to provide updates on application status and outcome.

Eligibility Criteria

This round of fellowships is specifically aimed at registered healthcare professionals working in nursing, midwifery, allied health professions (AHPs), healthcare sciences, pharmacy and psychology roles employed by a partner NHS Trust of the NIHR Exeter BRC (part- or full-time). Candidates employed by the St Georges University Trust can only apply when their scope of

research falls within the Clinical Mycology theme. Prospective candidates must be contracted for the duration of the award and are expected to continue with elements of their current clinical activities alongside the activities as proposed in this application.

We will actively encourage and prioritise applications from disciplines (including nurses, AHPs, pharmacists and healthcare scientists) and demographics underrepresented in research.

We expect applicants to have discussed their application with their Head of Department, Senior Manager or clinical director/lead or postgraduate dean if applicable with confirmation that, if successful, they would be released from their current position for the requested time to enable them to write a competitive NIHR career development scheme application.

We expect applicants to meet the following essential criteria:

- You must hold a relevant research degree or doctorate (PhD, MD, DPhil) depending on the level of fellowship you are aiming for.
- Demonstrable commitment to pursuing a clinical academic career.
- Evidence of research activity and original research publications in peer-reviewed journals when aiming for a post-doctoral fellowship.
- Evidence of presenting work at national and/ or international meetings or conferences.
- Able to build contacts and participate in internal and/or external research networks.
- Strong potential for leveraging an external fellowship.
- Potential for becoming an independent clinical academic.

Eligible programmes:

- [Pre-Doctoral Award](#)
- [Doctoral Award](#)
- [Advanced Fellowship Award](#)
- [Global Advanced Fellowship Award](#)

The Pre-Application Support Fund may not be held alongside another NIHR career development award. If you have recently had an NIHR award, clear justification will be required as to why further support from the Pre-Application Support Fund is needed.

Please note, a successful Pre-Application Support Fund application does not guarantee eligibility for the NIHR career development scheme to which you apply. Please ensure your project proposal is within the [NIHR Remit for Personal Awards](#). If you have any questions about the remit of your proposal, please contact the programme team responsible for the NIHR Career Development Scheme you plan to apply to by emailing academy-awards@nihr.ac.uk.

Finally, it should be noted that the NIHR Exeter BRC are NOT able to support any animal work.

Selection process

All applications will undergo an initial screen for eligibility and compatibility with the [NIHR remit for personal awards](#) for the relevant schemes listed in this competition.

Following this, applications will be reviewed by an independent Selection Committee, and outcomes disseminated to applicants. If you are not successful, you will receive written feedback.

Assessment criteria:

- A clear explanation as to why additional support is required to submit an application and why now is the right time for this support.
- An outline of how the funds will be used to enhance an application for an NIHR career development scheme.
- The likelihood that the requested support will enable you to prepare a competitive application for NIHR career development funding and that this will further develop your career in research within the NIHR's remit.
- Appropriateness of the proposed support and mentorship and the provision of a strong research environment.
- Translational research capability and alignment to NIHR Exeter BRC area(s) of research.

Timeline

Application window: 12th May – 2nd June 2025

Selection window: 3rd June – 19th June 2025

Outcomes disseminated: 20th June 2025

Award start: August – September 2025 (no later than September 30th)

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The NIHR Exeter Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) and Clinical Research Facility (CRF) strongly adhere to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) principles. They share a fundamental objective to empower better health outcomes for all patients and the public by translating scientific breakthroughs into potential new treatments, diagnostics and medical technologies.

We are committed to ensuring that the consideration of EDI is second nature to all members of our experimental medicine and translational research community, fostering a fully inclusive environment where everyone feels supported, valued, and is provided the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our [strategy](#) purposefully shares overarching EDI visions with those of the NIHR, UoE and NHS Trust partners to allow for collaborative working to reach our mutual goals. Whilst all applicants will be judged on merit alone, we particularly welcome applications from groups currently underserved within our working community.

We will endeavour to make adjustments to remove barriers in the application process. If you have any support, access or communication needs throughout the application process, please contact NIHRExeterBRC@exeter.ac.uk. If appointed, we will also work with you to identify adjustments to carry out the award.

How to apply

Candidates will be expected to be nested within one of BRC research themes/areas as outlined above and should discuss their application with the respective theme leads, or with the BRC

ACD lead, Prof Adilia Warris (A.Warris@exeter.ac.uk) if the research area falls outside the 5 BRC research themes.

We will be accepting applications up until **5pm Monday 2nd June 2025** with funding decisions anticipated to be communicated 20th June 2025. For general enquires about the application process, and to submit your application, please contact NIHRExeterBRC@exeter.ac.uk.

Theme lead contact details:

Rehabilitation:

Professor Helen Dawes: H.Dawes@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Sallie Lamb: S.E.Lamb@exeter.ac.uk

Neurodegeneration:

Professor Clive Ballard: C.ballard@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Jon Mill: j.mill@exeter.ac.uk

Diabetes:

Professor Andrew Hattersley: a.t.hattersley@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Ines Barroso: ines.barroso@exeter.ac.uk

Clinical Mycology:

Professor Adilia Warris: a.warris@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Gordon Brown: gordon.brown@exeter.ac.uk

Genetics and Genomics:

Professor Emma Baple: E.Baple@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Caroline Wright: Caroline.Wright@exeter.ac.uk

Appendix 1

Salary costs

You can apply for 0.2FTE for up to six months.

A contribution to the salary of the applicant to buy out the necessary time to prepare and submit a competitive application for an NIHR career development scheme. Please clearly state the length of time and full time equivalent (FTE) that will be used to prepare an application, the total salary cost (including any relevant oncosts), alongside the preferred start date.

Advisement should be sought from your NHS Trust to ascertain accurate salary costings.

Training and Development

Training and development costs up to £1,000 may be requested, providing access to necessary training resources that will benefit the planned application.

This includes travel and subsistence related to training and development. Conference costs, including related travel and subsistence, may also be requested here.

Please note that approximate costings are acceptable here and it is not a requirement to have, identified a specific training course, for example.

E.g. Training course in qualitative research methods – approximate cost £500.

Supervision and Mentorship

Supervisory and mentorship input costs of up to £500 may be requested.

For example, this could include contribution to supervisory support to provide expertise on the planned application or further costs associated with gaining necessary mentor/supervisory support. Application development support costs include travel and subsistence related to mentorship and supervisory support.

This funding may be used freely to facilitate the time spent with mentors or supervisors. It may cover various expenses related to mentorship such as travel expenses, meeting costs, mentor fees and professional development events.

Please name all supervisors/mentors identified, including their current workplace and role they will play in this capacity.

Costings can be approximate.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)

PPIE input costs of up to £500 may be requested.

Application development support costs include travel and subsistence related to PPIE. Please consider allocation of funds to support the accessibility needs of public collaborators.

Costings can be approximate.

Accessibility

Accessibility costs of up to £500 may be requested.

This fund is to remove barriers that you would otherwise face in preparing an application for an NIHR career development scheme.

Examples of requests:

- Costs relating to caring responsibilities beyond usual care costs for activities undertaken through the award.
- Additional support for applicants with a disability to enable attendance at training courses or events related to their planned application.
- Additional support for applicants with a disability to enable attendance at training courses or events related to their planned application.

Support can be requested for caring responsibilities beyond your usual care costs normally incurred that arise as a result of activities undertaken during the award. This may include attendance at conferences or training courses that are directly related to the project. You cannot claim childcare costs associated with your normal working patterns.