

Translational and Strategic Project Grants

Eligibility criteria and application guidance

Overview of the NIHR Exeter 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 Cornwall Hospital Trust, Devon Partnership Trust, Cornwall Partnership Trust, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and, *St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (*for Clinical Mycology related research only).

The aim of NIHR Exeter BRC 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 for world-leading researchers to thrive and contribute significantly to the local and national economy. Further details of the NIHR Exeter BRC can be found [here](#).

The NIHR Exeter BRC focuses on five major 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 includes using technology to improve movement, maintain brain health and prevent falls.
- **Diabetes:** We improve the way diabetes is diagnosed and treated, and 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 are building capacity in emerging themes of research including respiratory medicine, psychiatry/mental health and surgery.

About the Translational and Strategic Project Grants

The aim of this call is to provide support for proof-of-concept studies to strengthen external grant applications or to help leverage a successful outcome of ongoing research.

The proposal should be aligned with the strategic objectives of the theme within you are applying.

The proposal should have a strong translational potential.

If the work proposed is depending on regulatory and/or ethics approval, this needs to be in place at the time of submitting the application.

A maximum of up to £25,000 can be applied for.

The duration of the project cannot extend 12 months and will have a start date of 1 April 2026.

We encourage applications from any members of the BRC not being PhD students or postdocs.

Eligibility

The lead applicant must be employed by the University of Exeter and/or one of our NHS Partner Trusts, hold a contract of employment for the full duration of the award and be a member of the NIHR Exeter BRC.

*We define NIHR Exeter BRC members as individuals whose research aligns with our aims and objectives.

Postgraduate students may be named as co-applicants; however, they are not eligible to act as the lead. Individuals from other institutions, companies or equivalent can be named as co-applicants. You can list up to two co-applicants.

Funding exclusions include:

- Animal work of any description
- Principal Investigator time
- Recruitment of new staff members
- Computer or laptop costs, including any hardware
- Equipment costing greater than 20% of the total amount requested
- University overheads

Project costing

Lead applicants employed by the University of Exeter must complete a **standalone budget** (***note this is NOT a project, but can be found under the project tab, fourth option down***) on Worktribe to ensure an accurate costing of your project as possible (refer to guidance on [SharePoint](#)) and enable an efficient project set-up if awarded. Please select the 'National Institute for Health Research' as your funder and 'Grant (100% direct costs & DA staffing). No overheads' as the appropriate 'Scheme.' Please add BRC Research and Reporting Manager Claire Rosslee (C.Rosslee@exeter.ac.uk) as an editor.

We ask that your budget matches the outline of the total funds requested in your application and that you provide a breakdown of costs within the NIHR financial year. NIHR Exeter BRC has very stringent in-year spending requirements and, therefore, it is essential that investigators spend according to the expenditure profile detailed in the application. Significant underspend at the mid-point review may result in funding being withdrawn.

For non-University of Exeter based lead applicants, please complete the financial template provided in the application form.

All applicants can cost the time of an existing UoE or partner NHS Trust staff member to support the delivery of the project if applicable. Staff costs via casual claims are also supported.

A range of infrastructure and facilities are accessible to support your research and can be costed onto your grant. Further details can be found in appendix 2.

When costing PPIE activities, we ask that you use the [NIHR payment guidance](#).

Should you have any questions surrounding costings, particularly with respect to staffing, please contact your Research Development Manager (HLS-ResearchCluster@exeter.ac.uk) or NHS Trust equivalent.

Selection process

Each Translational and Strategic Project Grant application will be shortlisted by theme leads, before shortlisted applications move to panel evaluation. The panel, comprised of members of the BRC leadership team, will review the projects against the below criteria. Outcomes will be disseminated via email to the lead applicant.

Assessment Criteria:

- Alignment with NIHR Exeter BRC research priorities
- Translational research impact with clear relevance to practice in alignment with theme objectives
- Scientific excellence
- Potential to leverage external funding and opportunities, such as commercial sector collaborations
- Potential to leverage a successful outcome of ongoing research
- Strength and expertise of the research team
- Realistic budget and timeline, demonstrating value for money
- Clear approach to Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE), with a focus on inclusivity and meaningful integration

Timeline

Application window: 19th September – 9th November 2025 (11.59pm)

Selection window: 10th November – 22nd November 2025

Panel decision: 24th November 2025 – 5th December 2025

Outcomes disseminated: 8th - 12th December 2025

Award start: 1st April 2026 for twelve months maximum.

How to apply

Applicants should discuss their application with the relevant theme lead(s) (contact information outlined below) who can provide guidance on whether the proposed research area aligns with theme specific strategic aims and objectives.

We will be accepting applications up until **Midnight Sunday 9th November 2025**. For general enquires about the application process, please contact NIHRExeterBRC@exeter.ac.uk.

Applications should be submitted on the Application Form, and emailed to NIHRExeterBRC@exeter.ac.uk marked FAO Lucy Hodges

Theme lead contact details:

Rehabilitation:

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

Professor Helen Dawes: H.Dawes@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

Emerging themes:

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

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

Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment

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.

Appendix 1. Infrastructure and facilities

The BRC supports a range of infrastructures and facilities across the faculty who provide specific expertise in areas which may be of relevance for your proposal. These include:

- Research Software Engineers – contact rse-group@exeter.ac.uk
- The BRC is a strategic partner of the South West Secure Data Environment (SWSDE). SWSDE is part of the NHS Research Secure Data Environment Network. SWSDE aims to make data access safer, faster, fairer. As part of the strategic partnership, SWSDE welcomes small project applications that might make use of its emerging infrastructure. SWSDE recommend contacting NIHRExeterBRC@exeter.ac.uk to confirm your project is in scope, before seeking direct feasibility discussions.
- Statistics/Data Management – contact Chrissie Walker at C.J.Walker@exeter.ac.uk
- Bioinformatics support within the neurodegeneration theme – please complete [this webform](#)
- Commercial and IP – contact Matt Anderson at M.W.Anderson@exeter.ac.uk
- [Mireille Gillings Neuroimaging Centre](#) - contact is Dr Lisa Cashmore at L.A.Cashmore@exeter.ac.uk.
- [VSimulator](#) – contact Katy Manning at K.L.Manning@exeter.ac.uk.
- [NIHR Exeter Clinical Research Facility](#) - contact crf@exeter.ac.uk.
- [Exeter Sequencing Facility](#) - contact quotations-sequencing@exeter.ac.uk.

Appendix 2. Research Delivery Network Portfolio

Project adoption to the Research Delivery Network portfolio:

- Information about the RRDN can be found here: <https://rdn.nihr.ac.uk/region/south-west-peninsula>
- If you are intending to have your project adopted by the Research Delivery Network portfolio, please note that an external project review by at least three reviewers will be required – this is the responsibility of the lead applicant to organise, and they should be aware that this could incur a delay.
- Please contact the RRDN on swp.rrdn@nihr.ac.uk.