Doctoral Award cohort 1

Overview

Opportunity status:	Open
Opening date:	9 April 2025 at 1:00 pm
Closing date:	10 June 2025 at 1:00 pm
Reference ID:	2025/121

Ready to apply?

Apply for this scheme through our new online application platform.

Apply now
(https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp)

The NIHR Doctoral Award is a 3-year funding opportunity designed to support the career development of all health and social care professionals through PhD research.

This award replaces the NIHR Doctoral Fellowship, NIHR Doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship, and NIHR Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship. It merges the former fellowships into a single, streamlined scheme to enhance accessibility and simplify the application process.

The award supports research in any scientific discipline or sector that contributes to improving health, including public health and social care, within the NIHR's funding remit (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/nihr-academy-remit-personal-awards).

Clinical or practice time:

If you are a clinician or a practitioner, or a local authority applicant, you can apply for up to 20% clinical or practice time as part of your award.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Doctoral Award, you must:

- hold a 1st class or 2:1 bachelor's degree or equivalent. If you do not meet this requirement, you must normally have a master's degree
- your proposed host organisation must be a recognised Higher Education Institution (HEI), NHS body, local authority, social care organisation, or another provider of health or care services in England
- you should have some prior research experience or research training
- if you are already registered for a PhD (or MPhil with transfer to PhD), you must not have been registered for more than 12 months full-time (100% WTE) by the time the award starts
- your proposed research must be within the NIHR remit (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/nihr-academy-remit-personal-awards)

Further details on eligibility can be found on the Doctoral Award page (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/research-career-funding-programmes/doctoral-award).

What is available through a Doctoral Award?

The Doctoral Award provides comprehensive funding to support you in undertaking a PhD by research. Funding covers:

- the full salary of the award holder for the entire duration of the fellowship at the requested WTE
- costs for the approved research project
- associated conference fees
- costs for a suitable training and development plan which will lead to further professional development including overseas placement.
- working with people and communities costs

There is no set limit on the total budget you can request, as long as your costs are fully justified to support your research and can demonstrate value for money.

However, some costs have specific caps:

- conference attendance – capped at £3,000 for the entire award duration
- computer – capped at £1,000
- PhD fees – must be costed at the UK Home Fees rate

If your application is successful, we will review your budget in line with the funding committee's recommendations and conditions to ensure value for money and alignment with NIHR requirements.

Full details of costs for this scheme are available via the Doctoral Award page (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/research-career-funding-programmes/doctoral-award). Guidance about how to cost your application is available in our finance guidance. (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/finance-guidance-for-applicants)

Themed calls and highlight notices

NIHR themed calls are funding opportunities focusing on a particular priority research area. Highlight notices call attention to areas of ongoing health research priorities for NIHR. Full details on both are available on our themed calls (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/themed-calls) webpage.

We are particularly interested in receiving applications that will develop skills and experience within our strategic themes:

- social care
- mental health
- public health
- health data science
- researchers working in a Local Authority setting
- applicants hosted by post-92 HEIs and non University Hospital practice settings

Applications received under these strategic themes will still have to meet the same quality threshold required for funding but will be given priority if the number of fundable applications exceeds the maximum that can be funded.

Partnership awards

Partnership awards (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/nihr-academy/partnership-awards) are funding opportunities offered jointly by the NIHR and our charity partners. Charities offering a partnership award for the Doctoral Award cohort 1 are:

Motor Neurone Disease Association

The Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association (https://www.mndassociation.org/research/for-researchers/apply-for-funding) funds cutting-edge MND research, facilitating ground-breaking international research collaboration. The association recognises that health and social care professionals supporting people living with and affected by MND have a unique understanding of the condition and the challenges of providing best care and want to fund research proposals that improve the care of people living with and affected by MND.
Sophie Nyberg

Programmes and Partnerships Manager

sophie.nyberg@mndassociation.org

01604 611782

Royal College of Radiologists

The award is open to UK based Clinical Radiologists who are Fellows of the [Royal College of Radiologists](https://www.mndassociation.org/research/for-researchers/apply-for-funding) (https://www.mndassociation.org/research/for-researchers/apply-for-funding). You must be within the first ten years of your consultant practice in the UK and be on the GMC specialist register for Clinical Radiology. The RCR is seeking to expand diversity in the work of the College and actively encourages those from all backgrounds, including underrepresented groups, to apply for this award.

Mariam Butt

RCR Governance Assistant

020 7405 1282

mariam_butt@rcr.ac.uk

Kidney Research UK

[Kidney Research UK](https://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/) (https://www.kidneyresearchuk.org/) is interested in funding research that focuses on the immediate priorities in its research strategy: Transforming Treatments, Multiple Health Conditions and Health Inequalities.

Elaine Davies

Director of research operations

elainedavies@kidneyresearchuk.org (mailto:elainedavies@kidneyresearchuk.org)

01733 367835

Moorfields Eye Charity

[Moorfields Eye Charity](http://www.moorfieldseyecharity.org.uk/) (http://www.moorfieldseyecharity.org.uk/) is interested in funding research in eye health, vision research, ophthalmic related service improvement, education or clinical practice. Please note: applicants will normally be hosted by either the Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust or its main HEI partner (University College London). If hosted by another institution a direct collaboration with and benefit to Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust must be demonstrated in order to be eligible to apply for a Partnership Fellowship.

Martin Cordiner

Funding Manager

martin.cordiner@nhs.net

0207 566 2565

Timeline

Application opening

9th April 2025

Application close

10th June 2025

Webinar

10th April 2025 - 1-2pm

Shortlisting

September/October 2025

Application funding decision

November - January 2025

Award Start Date

1st April 2026 - 1st September 2026 (on the first of each month)

You must propose to commence your award on the following dates:

- 1st April 2026
- 1st May 2026
- 1st June 2026
- 1st July 2026

- 1st August 2026

- 1st September 2026

You cannot defer your start date unless for statutory reasons.

Apply now (https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp)

Application guidance

Please read our application form guidance to help you complete all aspects of your application. You must read the application guidance alongside the information on this tab, which details specific requirements for this award.

You must also check our award page for additional application guidance, including eligibility:

- Doctoral Award page (/career-development/research-career-funding-programmes/doctoral-award)

- application form guidance (/research-funding/guidance/domestic-personal-career-development-award-research-funding-application-guidance)

- Doctoral Award assessment criteria (/career-development/research-career-funding-programmes/doctoral-award/doctoral-award-assessment-criteria)

- chair's reports and public minutes (/doctoral-award-chairs-reports-and-public-minutes)

- Doctoral Award webinar (https://zoom.us/webinar/register/3617418603590/WN_kT3S5JvQRjmumFa1s-XCPA)

Application form uploads

You must provide the following uploads as part of your application:

- narrative CV

- letters of support from your contracting organisation and your partner organisation (if applicable)

- research area of interest

- career development programme

- gantt chart of project plan document

- letters of support

Choosing a contracting organisation

The Doctoral Award is a personal research training award, meaning you must write and submit your proposal yourself. However, you are required to propose an organisation that will sign off and host the contract of the award.

Your proposed contracting organisation must be:

- a recognised HEI based in England
- an NHS body based in England
- an English local authority
- any other third sector or publicly funded provider of health and/or social care services based in England, such as a hospice or commissioned social enterprise

You must be based in England at your contracting organisation for the duration of the award, except for travel for research, training or development activities as outlined within the proposal.

You must also choose a partner organisation if:

1. your employer for the duration of the award will not be your contracting organisation.
2. you are requesting salaried clinical or practice time through the award, but you will not undertake it within your contracting organisation

The choice of host organisation and employer is up to you, in discussion with your supervisors, line managers, and mentors. The decision should be based on what is best for your career development and your proposed research and training. We will not support applications in which the individual is living overseas from their contracting organisation.

Read more about [choosing your contracting and partner organisations (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/nihr-academy/apply-nihr-career-development-awards/choosing-contracting-organisation-career-development-awards)](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/nihr-academy/apply-nihr-career-development-awards/choosing-contracting-organisation-career-development-awards).

How to fill in the 'Budget' section of your application

You must request funding under the relevant heading in the 'Budget' section of your application.

You can request:

- your salary on the 'Lead applicant and co-applicants' line under 'Staff costs'.
  - This should be the actual costs requested, adjusted for FTE uptake of the award.
- salaries for support and shared staff on the 'Other staff' line under 'Staff costs'.
  - this should be the actual costs requested, adjusted for FTE commitment to the award
- training and development costs on the 'Training and development' line under 'Other research/award costs'
  - training and development costs are funded at 100% for all contracting organisation types
  - travel and subsistence costs associated with training are funded at the contracting organisation type rate
- equipment and consumables on the 'Equipment' and 'Consumables' lines under 'Other research/award costs'
- research inclusion costs on the 'Research inclusion' line under 'Other research/award costs'
- working with people and communities, previously called patient and public involvement, on the 'Working with people and communities' line under 'Other research/award costs'
- conference fees, travel, and subsistence on the 'Travel and subsistence' line under 'Other research/award costs'
  - conference fees and associated travel and subsistence are funded at 100% regardless of organisation type
- knowledge mobilisation, dissemination and impact costs associated with sharing your research with others on the 'Knowledge mobilisation, dissemination and impact' line under 'Other research/award costs'
  - costs associated with hosting conferences are not eligible and a budget for open access costs is provided separately

Visit our finance guidance (/research-funding/application-support/guidance/finance-guidance-for-applicants) for more information.

Application process

Find out how to apply for this funding opportunity and what you need to do to get your application ready.

How to apply

When you're ready to apply, [log into our new awards management system](https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp) (https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp). You'll need to create a new account to submit your application.

The closing date is 10th June 2025 at 1pm. Applications received electronically after 1pm on the closing date will not be considered.

Please note that you will not be able to submit your application until all parties, such as your Head(s) of Department and mentors, have confirmed their participation on the system. Be sure to allow enough time for these confirmations before the deadline.

Research Inclusion

At NIHR we are committed to [creating a diverse and inclusive culture](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion). We encourage applications from people from all backgrounds and communities bringing diverse skills and experiences.

Additional support

Reasonable adjustments

If you would like to discuss reasonable adjustments to support your application or the undertaking of your award (if successful) please email: [personal.awards@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:academy@nihr.ac.uk) (mailto:academy@nihr.ac.uk) .

You should not provide details of this request in your application. If your application is successful, you will be able to propose funding for reasonable adjustments to undertake your award during the subsequent contracting stage.

Research Support Service

The [NIHR Research Support Service (RSS)](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/) provides free and confidential advice to those developing applications for NIHR funding.

Assistance is primarily focused around refinement of research questions, research design and methodological support. The RSS also assists prospective applicants to develop public involvement and engagement strategies. This includes involvement of service users, carers and practitioners in social care.

The RSS is delivered collaboratively through eight hubs, which each support a broad range of research designs, from pre-application through to post-award delivery, as well as providing

specialist topic or methods expertise.

RSS specialists centres

- [RSS Specialist Centre for Social Care](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/social-care-specialist-centre.htm) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/social-care-specialist-centre.htm)
- [RSS Specialist Centre for Public Health](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/public-health-specialist-centre.htm) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/public-health-specialist-centre.htm)

Local authority settings

If you are based in a local authority setting, you may consider seeking input from elected members within the local authorities, as they represent their communities' interests.

NIHR Applied Research Collaborations (ARCs)

Our ARCs support applied health and care research tailored to local population and system needs. These 15 local partnerships between NHS providers, universities, charities, local authorities, Academic Health Science Networks, and other organisations also focus on implementation research to enhance the uptake of research findings into practice.

You should consider contacting their local ARC prior to applying to explore potential support. Find full information, [including how to find your local ARC](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/infrastructure/applied-research-collaborations) (https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/infrastructure/applied-research-collaborations).

NIHR Schools

NIHR Schools exist to develop evidence bases that will inform and improve practice within particular fields and welcome contact from individuals seeking support and to connect with others who share their interests. Full information is available via the school webpages:

- [NIHR School for Social Care Research](https://www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/) (https://www.sscr.nihr.ac.uk/)
- [NIHR School for Public Health Research](https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/) (https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/)
- [NIHR School for Primary Care Research](https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/) (https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/)

James Lind Alliance (JLA)

JLA is an NIHR funded non-profit making initiative, bringing patients, carers, and healthcare professionals together in Priority Setting Partnerships (PSPs) and is a useful resource to prospective applicants for postdoctoral applicants.

PSPs prioritise unanswered questions or evidence uncertainties, forming a 'Top 10' list of research questions that matter most to those who rely on the research. Over 160 Top 10s have been agreed, and all priority research questions are published on the JLA website (http://www.jla.nihr.ac.uk/).

Existing data resources

You are encouraged to consider whether existing data resources may be able to provide suitable data for your future studies, contributing to the feasibility and scope of a study. The UK Data Service (https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/) provides a unified point of access to an extensive range of high quality social and economic data, including UK census data, government funded surveys, longitudinal studies, international macrodata, and qualitative data.

Local authority researchers

Developing Local Authority Researchers is a new workspace on the FutureNHS platform (https://future.nhs.uk/system/login?nextURL=%2Fconnect%2Eti%2FLocalAuthorityHealthCareResearch) which supports researchers based within local authorities and allied settings to network, share knowledge and receive notifications of future development opportunities. The workspace is open to all, and includes an active forum, monthly virtual catch-up meetings, a members directory, and links to other resources and opportunities.

Contact Details

- for help with your application contact academy-awards@nihr.ac.uk (mailto:academy-awards@nihr.ac.uk)
- for more information, visit the doctoral award page (/node/31446)